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# the Socialist

Issue 1303

19 December 2024 - 8 January 2025

formerly **Militant**

# SAVE OUR NHS

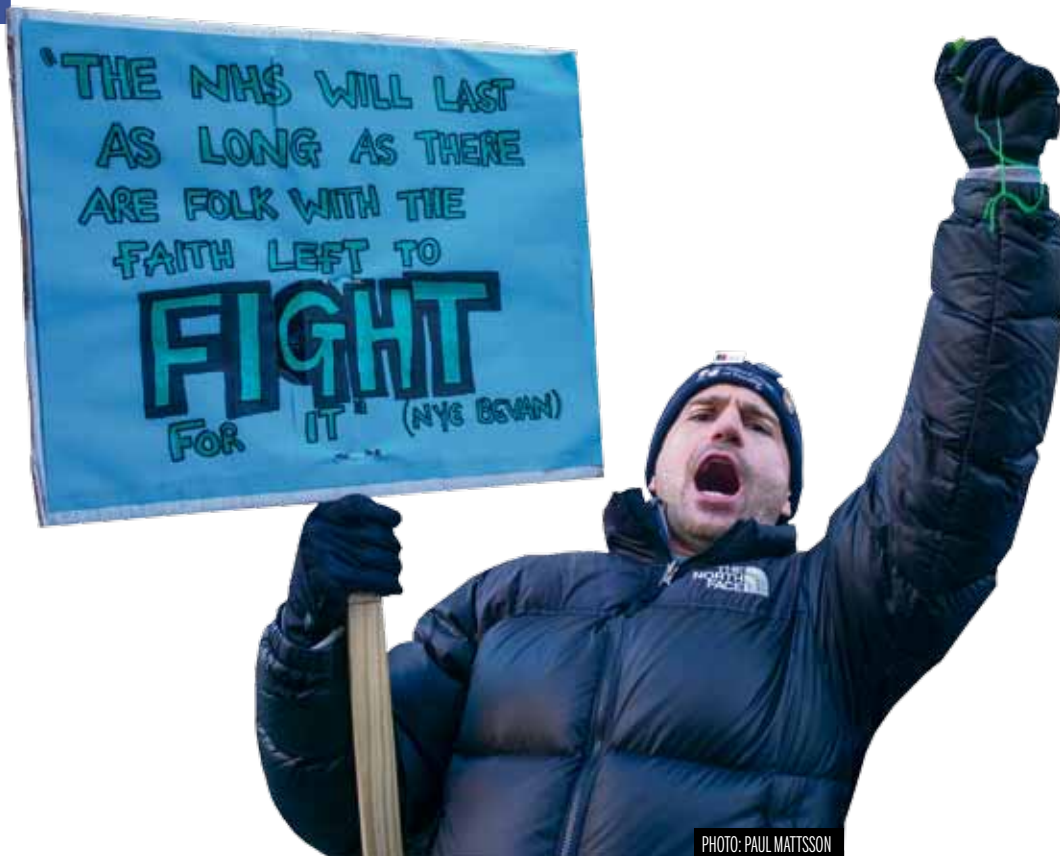


PHOTO: PAUL MATSSON

## Fully fund services, kick out profiteers Give workers a decent pay rise

**HOLLY JOHNSTON**  
NHS TRADE UNION REP AND SHEFFIELD  
SOUTH EAST SOCIALIST PARTY

**Vital action is needed to reduce pressure on the NHS this winter. Many people will be terrified of falling seriously unwell or getting injured, dreading an hours-long wait for an ambulance or in a hospital corridor.**

Staff and unions have repeatedly sounded the alarm, yet the government just wants us to work harder as we face record flu levels, staff shortages, delays in discharges, overwhelmed GP services and huge A&E attendances.

The term 'quad-demic' has been used, with significant levels of four illnesses that all peak throughout winter: flu, Covid-19, respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) and norovirus. There were 3.5 times as many flu patients in hospital during the first week of December than at the same time last year, a 70% increase on the week before.

Winter pressures happen every year, but the readiness is not improving. How can stopping winter fuel allowances for pensioners improve the rates of pneumonia and other deprivation-related illnesses?

At the same time, NHS staff have been told that the

government recommends we get a 2.8% pay rise. With a pay offer as low as this, when we have lost up to 30% in 15 years, it is no wonder NHS workers are talking about needing to take further strike action.

Another huge kick in the teeth is that Keir Starmer has said that departments will have to fund pay increases from their own budgets. Cue Labour politicians blaming NHS workers for cuts.

The NHS will continue to struggle unless we have urgent and meaningful pay rises for staff; a commitment to fully fund the NHS and bring all outsourced workers and services back in house; an end to profiteering, cuts and privatisation; and an end to the social care crisis.

A National Health Service fit for purpose is possible - but only if we fight to save and improve it.

**PUBLIC SECTOR PAY, JOBS AND FUNDING** >>> p4-5

**ENERGY BILLS KEEP RISING: WHAT'S TO BLAME AND HOW TO STOP IT?** >>> p8-9

**JOIN THE SOCIALIST PARTY TO FIGHT FOR A SOCIALIST WORLD IN 2025** >>> p3

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The Socialist is written, read, sold and bought by ordinary workers, trade unionists, young people and Socialist Party members. We want you to write for the Socialist.

Send us reports of your workplace and community campaigns, short letters on working-class issues, or ideas for other articles.

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020 8988 8777 - ask for the editors

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

# Medical misogyny: we need a fully funded, democratically controlled NHS

MARY FINCH  
WALTHAM FOREST SOCIALIST PARTY

The damning government report on medical misogyny has once again highlighted the terrible state of women's healthcare. Pain is regularly downplayed or ignored, forcing many women to fight for years for the care that they need. Exhaustion from battling medical professionals and growing waiting lists is forcing many to turn to the private sector for basic healthcare. Some common gynaecological conditions, like endometriosis, are barely understood by many medical professionals because of a lack of research and training.

This is nothing new. For years, there has been growing anger about the 'gender health gap' as women have become emboldened to share their experiences. But what will Labour do to fix it? They've made it clear that the cuts to public services will continue. There's little hope that they'll invest sufficient NHS funding to cut waiting lists or develop much-needed research.

The report recommends additional training for NHS staff, but who will create this? Senior management are accountable only to themselves. They don't intend for there to be serious input from women who have

experienced medical misogyny, or the trade unionists fighting sexism. And how can incredibly overworked staff be expected to make time to properly engage with training?

After the recent NHS maternity scandals, the inquiries implied that the root cause was a poor 'culture'. But culture doesn't just drop from the sky! The treatment of women in healthcare is a reflection of the sexist society we currently live in.

The current debate on medical misogyny has echoes of the #MeToo movement. Despite huge progress on women's rights, women routinely face harassment and sexual violence, but for years it felt like a normal part of life. The mass campaign has emboldened women to speak out. Sexist attitudes in healthcare have similarly gone unchallenged, until now.

The #MeToo movement also points the way forward: struggle. We need a political campaign, led by women and the trade unions, to fight sexism and for the NHS. A fully funded NHS could make huge strides in closing the gender health gap, but democratic control by workers and service users is also essential.

Workers and service users could shape the training that's provided to staff, and crucially, women can hold services to account.



Nurses on strike in 2023 for pay rises and safe staffing levels. Democratic control involving workers and service users would help tackle medical misogyny. NICK CHAFFEY

## Assad falls: independent workers' organisation needed to struggle for socialist democracy

In an article published online, Judy Beishon, member of the International Secretariat of the Committee for a Workers' International, looks at the events leading up to the rapid disintegration of the Assad regime in Syria. The article analyses what this means for the rivalries between the big capitalist powers and crucially what this means for the working-class and poor masses of the Middle East, and how only independent working-class organisation can lead a way out of endless war and sectarian division, towards a socialist future.

To read the article visit: [www.socialistparty.org.uk/AssadFalls](https://www.socialistparty.org.uk/AssadFalls)

### OR SCAN:



## British state leads pack in climate protesters crackdown

JOE WOOLFALL  
LIVERPOOL SOCIALIST PARTY

The British state arrests climate protesters at nearly three times the global average rate, a recent study has found. The UK is second only to Australia in arrest rates for climate-related protests. 17% of climate protests led to arrests in the UK vs. 20% in Australia; the global average is 6.7%.

Hundreds of activists involved have been arrested, with some facing lengthy prison sentences of years. Climate protesters, such as Just Stop Oil, have employed direct action tactics in recent years, such as disrupting sports events, slowly marching on and blocking roads, and stunts in art galleries.

We defend the right to protest. Climate protesters, who are fighting a just cause, have been targeted and treated unfairly to make an example of them to others thinking of taking action. The state will use these increasingly authoritarian measures

**17%**  
of climate protests in the UK led to arrests

to crack down on workers and other campaigners, too.

### Capitalism is guilty

The fight against climate change cannot be separated from the fight against capitalism. Capitalism created the conditions for the impending catastrophe and is incapable of taking the action needed to prevent it. As such, any climate action should uphold the goal of winning over the working class – the only force in society that can overthrow capitalism – and it is working-class and poor people

who will face the worst effects, in particular, the working class in the global south.

The fight for working-class, socialist action would be massively assisted if we had a new mass workers' party to address interconnected issues like climate change, housing, poverty, and healthcare. It is capitalism which connects them. A new mass workers' party would be key to fight back against big business interests in destroying our planet, just like it is necessary to fight back against NHS privatisation and the cuts to winter fuel payments.



Police arrest a Just Stop Oil protester. PAUL MATTHESSON

# Join the Socialist Party to fight for a socialist world in 2025

MARK BEST  
SOCIALIST PARTY NATIONAL COMMITTEE

This may not be the first Socialist newspaper you've read in 2024, but it is the last one published of the year.

It's been a year filled with globe-shaking events, the bloody effects of capitalism in crisis, and, in many places, workers and young people fighting back. And in the pages of the Socialist there has been analysis of the processes at play, highlighting and learning from struggles across the world and what is needed to fight back and to win – the organised working class armed with a socialist programme.

We finish the year after Trump has won the US presidential election. War continues apace in Gaza and Ukraine, with tens of thousands of people killed and many more having lost their homes. And as the Socialist goes to press, thousands are feared dead after cyclone Chido hit the island of Mayotte, just one of a list of extreme weather events made worse by capitalism's climate catastrophe.

The capitalist system, which puts short-term profits ahead of people's lives, livelihoods and the environment, has got to go! A socialist society, based on democratic workers' control and management, could put an end to the divisions, wars and oppressions of the capitalist world.

And workers fighting back have certainly featured in these pages. Amidst the doom and gloom that gets plastered across the establishment press, victories have been won by working-class action or even just the threat of it. Issues have included articles on the mass movement in



JASPER CHAPLIN

Bangladesh against students' access to jobs that brought down pro-big business leader Hasina. In Sri Lanka, workers and poor people rejected the austerity programmes initiated by previous presidents Rajapaksa and Ranil on behalf of the institutions of world capitalism – the IMF and the World Bank. That led to the mass uprising known as the Aragalaya, and in 2024 the election of a self-proclaimed 'Marxist' as president, whose programme will be tested by the masses and big business bosses on each side.

### Working class stamping its mark in Britain

Going into 2024, the Tories had on the statute books draconian anti-union minimum service levels legislation. Threat of strikes by rail workers left it dead in the water. The law has sat gathering dust on the shelf ever since, soon to be taken off the law-books for good.

Working-class anger smashed the Tories at the general election. Previously the most successful pro-capitalist party in the world, the Tories were unceremoniously booted out and reduced to squabbling rubble.

Rishi Sunak's replacement, Keir

Starmer, had already shown his true colours to many of the people who marched and took action against the war on Gaza; backing the actions of the Israeli state and offering mild criticisms. Independent MPs, including Jeremy Corbyn, were elected on the back of this anger. Although Starmer's New Labour won many seats, its shallow social base shows that we can fight back and win concessions.

Knowing it is on wobbly ground, the government was quick to settle the ongoing public sector pay claims almost as soon as they got in. Chancellor Rachel Reeves acknowledged they were doing so because of the strike wave, to avoid the 'cost' of further industrial action.

Less than six months into the new Labour government, anger is rising. Starmer's approval rating is lower now than any leader in the last 50 years. Many people hoped against hope that the Labour government would offer some alternative to the Tories, but by keeping the two-child benefit cap (and suspending Labour MPs who voted to scrap it), and axing universal winter fuel payments, he's continuing the Tories' cruel legacy on behalf of the capitalist class.

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Working-class struggles, fight-backs by young people and more sections of society loom on the horizon. What will be the spark that sets off a mass movement? The raising of tuition fees and crisis in education? Insulting public sector pay offers to hard-working teachers, NHS staff and more? (see pages 4 and 5) Or it could be another event entirely. The only thing guaranteed is that the anger bubbling under the surface will find an expression somewhere. And to cut across the pretend anti-establishment 'credentials' of the likes of Reform and Trump, we need fighting working-class organisation, in our unions and a party of our own.

### New year, new socialist you?

So, while the Socialist is not being produced – back with the first issue of 2025 coming out on the 8 January, can you ponder a Socialist new year's resolution?

If you're reading this and you're not subscribed to get it on your doorstep or in your inbox every week, can you subscribe to the Socialist? And if you are subscribed, make sure you get your weekly dose of medicine against all the crap in the pro-capitalist media by reading as much of each issue as you can. Is there anyone you know who you've talked to about the state of the world that would get a lot out of reading the Socialist? Can you sell them a copy and see what they think, or even get them a three-month subscription as a Christmas present?

If you're serious about wanting to fight for working-class action and to fight for a socialist alternative to crisis-ridden capitalism, then you need to get organised. A first step is to join the Socialist Party in the new year, come to one of our meetings and discuss with one of our members about what you can do to help fight for a socialist world.

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# UNIONS MUST FIGHT LABOUR OVER PAY AND FUNDING

## Socialist Party WHAT WE THINK

Despite making it through to the end of 2024 without facing widespread strike action, the year ends with several strikes in both public and private sectors, including a national strike in sixth form colleges, and the Labour government is on a collision course with the working class.

In preparation for the 2025-26 pay round, the government is signalling its readiness to go to war with public sector workers over pay – albeit one in which they hope trade union leaders will argue for surrender. The Departments for Health and Education, as well as the Cabinet Office, have all suggested that 2.8% pay increases are on their way to health workers, teachers and civil servants next year.

Government departments have been told that they have to fund pay rises for 2025-26, and future pay rises, out of departmental budgets. This is a first taste of what Labour's austerity agenda, laid out in the October Budget - by and large accepted by the union leaders - will mean in the pockets of millions of workers and trade union members in the next period, unless seriously fought against.

Linked to this, a spokesperson for Keir Starmer had the cheek to say that "for pay awards to go beyond inflation they will have to be met by productivity improvements." Tell that to the health workers, teachers and other public sector workers who have for years already been going above and beyond their contracted hours, including during the Covid emergency, while pay has failed to keep up with the cost of living!

In a written statement to the School Teachers' Review Body on pay, the Department for Education wrote about "the challenging financial backdrop the government is facing."

But what really is the financial backdrop to the government's decision? While Starmer's spokesperson continued to slavishly harp on about the need for "tough decisions" to address the "black hole" in public finances inherited from the Tories, it's projected that the top FTSE 100 companies are set to pay out £84 billion to their shareholders in 2025.

A fraction of that wealth, if under the democratic control and management of the working-class majority, would be more than enough to deliver the pay rises workers in the public sector and beyond desperately need.



Public sector unions marching together in 2023. ELAINE BRUNSKILL

So the only truthful excuse the Labour government has for not giving workers in Britain the pay rises we desperately need is that it is acting to defend the interests of crisis-ridden capitalism. Despite straining to keep a lid on the situation - with the pay awards coughed up over the summer to avoid, in Chancellor Rachel Reeves's own words, "the cost of further industrial action" - Labour cannot and will not indefinitely avoid the constraints afforded to them by the capitalist system which they fight to defend.

### What now?

As the strike wave under the Tories showed however, these attempts to make us pay for the crisis of capitalism can be smashed, but only by working-class struggle.

And the Labour government is well aware of the potential the organised working class has in its hands to halt their policies of pay restraint and austerity. At his speech to the Trades Union Congress in September, Starmer made several references to 'partnership' between the employers, his government and the unions.

This idea of 'social partnership' between the unions and employers isn't new. It's an attempt to tie the unions into a 'consensus' approach with the bosses and government, to get all sides 'working together' and round the table, in the absence of any struggle for what workers need. Anticipating the big potential class battles set to erupt on his watch, Starmer is fighting to enlist the trade

union leaders to help him subdue the fighting capacity of a potentially powerful, independent trade union movement.

This has been the approach taken by Welsh Labour with social partnership. It has been an attempt to sign up unions to Labour-imposed austerity, rather than challenging the cuts from Tories and now Starmer's Labour from Westminster.

Any such barriers to action must be opposed – although no agreement can outright prevent action if workers want to fight. Despite the best efforts of the Welsh Labour government and the trade union leaders to justify and engender passivity amongst trade union members, the 'social partnership' wasn't enough to prevent the upsurge of the strike wave in Wales in 2022 and 2023.

That isn't to say that socialists should be opposed to having the structures and means to collectively bargain with the employers. But workers, and the bosses and government, have diametrically opposing interests. That's why we also fight to defend the ability of trade unions to struggle independently, rather than effectively giving the employers, who are responsible for carrying through attacks to wages and conditions, a voice in the affairs of the trade union movement.

Daniel Kebede, general secretary of the National Education Union (NEU), has said that the 2.8% offer "won't do", and that "NEU members fought to win the pay increases of 2023 and 2024. We are putting the government on notice."

Daniel Kebede is correct to point out that it was determined struggle by teachers and other workers which won those pay rises, not a 'partnership' approach. That's why Socialist Party members in the NEU, including those on the National Executive Committee, and across the whole trade union movement will be fighting against any attempts to go into 'partnership' with the bosses and the government, and defend the right of unions to act independently of the employers and the government – as well as for an independent political strategy in the new era of Labour austerity.

### 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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## NEU: Prepare to fight and see the struggle through



Teachers and doctors supporting each other's picket lines in 2023. KEVIN PARSILOW

DAN WARRINGTON  
SURREY NEU DISTRICT MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY,  
PERSONAL CAPACITY

With the same inevitability as the end of term, the Keir Starmer government's truce with schoolteachers seems to have come to a dramatic end.

Last week, the government submitted its evidence to the School Teachers Review Body (STRB), proposing an unfunded 2.8% pay increase for teachers in September 2025.

After 14 years of austerity imposed on the education sector, many headteachers will be faced with a stark choice in September: either deny the pay increase in the midst of a recruitment and retention crisis, or cut other parts of the school budget in order to fund teachers' pay.

The evidence submitted to the STRB reveals this government for what it is: a pro-austerity government, committed to the same failed policies as previous Conservative governments. It is a far cry from what is needed. The National Education Union (NEU) School Cuts website shows that billions more investment is needed just to reverse the effect of austerity since 2010. And although the Starmer government has pledged to recruit an extra 6,500 teachers, the NEU estimates 33,000 are actually needed.

2.8% barely exceeds the Bank of England's own (optimistic)

projections for inflation of 2.75%. This will do nothing to restore wages in the sector, where experienced teachers currently earn 11% less in real terms than in 2010, and perpetuates the pay differences between England and the rest of the UK. Scottish teachers at the top of the main pay scale currently earn £7,000 more than their counterparts in England.

### Workload

Scandalously, Starmer has told public sector workers to improve 'productivity' – this when school staff already struggle under intolerable workload.

The four main unions representing teachers in England and Wales have been quick to send a joint letter to the education secretary registering their concern. An emergency meeting of the NEU National Executive has been scheduled for January to discuss the issue.

It was eight days of strike action in 2023 that forced the Tories to raise pay by 6.5% and come up with £900 million in funding, and it was the threat of strike action this autumn that forced the new Labour government to implement this year's 5.5% uplift. On both occasions, Socialist Party members argued that we should have pushed for more, building on the momentum of the campaign rather than de-escalating. We need only look to the example of

the junior doctors to see how much more can be gained by sustained action.

Instead, the NEU leadership has paused action and trusted in Labour to deliver better for education. The repeated mobilisations followed by de-escalation have left many members confused and frustrated.

Despite its majority in parliament, Starmer's New Labour government is not in a strong position, its already-low support having evaporated since the election. Ordinary workers did not vote Labour into power in order to see a continuation of Tory austerity. NEU members in sixth forms are already striking across the country over pay, having been excluded from the 5.5% uplift seen by school teachers (see page 7).

Now that the NEU leadership has put Keir Starmer "on notice", it must be willing to see the coming struggle through. The issues in education around pay, funding and workload can no longer be ignored. We must fight for a limit to hours worked alongside restoration of lost pay and full funding.

NEU members have shown that they want to fight, when given an effective lead. A concerted campaign by unions across education could force the government to come to the table, and could become a launchpad for a wider campaign for pay and funding across our public services as a whole.

## Get ready to fight measly NHS pay recommendation

LEN HOCKEY  
UNITE BRANCH SECRETARY, BARTS HEALTH TRUST,  
EAST LONDON

NHS workers hoping to see real moves towards restoration of the 40% real-terms pay cut suffered in the last 15 years will be sorely disappointed at the measly 2.8% recommendation by the NHS Pay Review Body (PRB).

The recommendation, if not significantly increased, will mean 200,000 Band 2 workers being paid below the £12.60 per hour Real Living Wage rate.

This spectacularly fails to tackle the recruitment and retention crisis, with over 100,000 vacancies in England.

My union Unite has a policy for abolition of the long-discredited PRB and instead calls for direct negotiations with the government for health workers. With the financial envelope set by government, the supposedly independent body has delivered year-on-year real-terms reductions in pay.

Health unions must immediately respond to this recommendation and call reps' meetings, and coordinate campaigning and strike ballots.

The decision by this austerity-driven New Labour government, in the sixth-richest economy in the world, to deny the necessary funding for healthcare can be defeated. A real wage increase can be won, but only if the required leadership is given.



PCS members on strike in 2023. AUSTARITICE

## Threat of even more civil service job cuts – PCS must fight!

DAVE SEMPLE  
PCS VICE PRESIDENT, PERSONAL CAPACITY

Business as usual has quickly been restored for the UK civil service under Labour prime minister Keir Starmer.

Civil servants witnessed the Labour chancellor announce a 5% pay remit for 2024 in July, meaning average pay across Westminster departments could rise by that amount. This was coupled with a demand for 2% savings from all departments.

Over the last few weeks, the picture has darkened, as repeatedly warned would be the case by Socialist Party members in the Public and Commercial Services Union (PCS), the largest civil service union in the UK.

First came early warnings of attacks on staffing, with the Department for Transport already moving towards redundancies, even as Labour scrapped the official Tory aim of 60,000-plus job cuts.

Then came an announcement that 5,600 jobs are at risk at the Ministry of Defence. This was quickly followed

by an announcement of 5% further cuts to departmental budgets.

Further attacks on staffing have followed, with a new target of 10,000 job cuts set! Smaller departments, such as the Cabinet Office, look set to suffer, with 400 redundancies proposed in a department of only 6,000 staff.

For months, Socialist Party members in PCS, and our allies in the Broad Left Network, have argued that while a 5% pay rise was better than previously, it hasn't repaired the damage done by 24% inflation since 2020. Moreover, we warned that simply accepting this would invite an attack on jobs.

It is crucial now that the PCS union - allying with other public sector unions where possible - sets down a very clear marker against further cuts and attacks, no matter who is in government, by renewing our union's national campaign on pay, pensions, jobs, rights and more.

This is the urgent task for socialists in PCS and the wider civil service in 2025 - we hope you will join the fight!

## Royal Mail handed over to a new billionaire boss CWU must demand nationalisation

GARY CLARK  
SOCIALIST PARTY SCOTLAND AND  
RETIRED CWU MEMBER

The government has approved the takeover of Royal Mail by EP group whose majority shareholder is Daniel Kretinsky, with a personal wealth said to be over £9 billion. The Communication Workers Union (CWU) has said it has reached a "ground-breaking" negotiators' agreement which covers a number of issues related to the future of Royal Mail, including job security, improved terms and conditions, and a "radical" new governance and business model, with a meaningful stake in the business for employees.

Royal Mail was privatised in 2013, and since has been completely run

into the ground with shareholders and company directors gaining millions while the quality of service has been destroyed.

CWU members took strike action in 2022 for better pay and conditions. But the lack of planning and leadership at the top of the union led to many members losing faith in the leadership. The union lost thousands of members and has struggled to recruit new Royal Mail workers on worse terms and conditions.

Another serious mistake from the leaders of the union was their retreat from demanding that Royal Mail is brought back into the public sector. A CWU motion to Labour Party conference in 2022 changed Labour Party policy in favour of renationalising Royal Mail. Royal Mail workers

will be seeing railway companies brought back into public ownership. Meanwhile, the CWU, which is affiliated to the Labour Party, has a leadership which fails to demand this from the Labour Government. Many will be asking: why are we still affiliated?

We need to be clear, the new owners are there for one reason only: that's to make money for the shareholders and not to look after the workforce or the quality of service. The only thing that would do that is a complete renationalisation of Royal Mail - not with the same management structure but democratic worker and community control of our postal service. This is what the leadership of the CWU should be fighting the Labour government for.

## Cardiff: Princes juice workers fight pauper pay



Princes picket line PHOTO: DAVE REID

DAVE REID  
CARDIFF SOCIALIST PARTY

Nearly 200 workers at Princes juices in Cardiff are on strike 17 and 24 December as the company reneged on a pay offer.

Members of Unite at Cardiff, Wisbech, Long Sutton, Bradford and Glasgow were offered between 4% and 7% by the original owners of the company, Mitsubishi. But the

company was sold to Newlat S.p.A. which tore up the offer and unilaterally imposed a 3% pay increase. Some workers will get slightly more but only because they will be captured by the increase in the minimum wage, which is going up faster than their pay.

The company says it cannot afford more than 3% but then boasted to investors of a big increase in profits. Its website says: "The combined 'New

Princes Group' will have a turnover of €2.8 billion, a global network of 31 plants, 8,800 employees, and over 30 brands."

All plants will be on strike 9-10 January, but members in Cardiff are on strike in December because of the surge in demand for juices over Christmas. The strike will mean there could be a shortage this Christmas that will hit company sales. So spirits are high and determined.

## DBS workers strike in Liverpool

STEVE ION  
LIVERPOOL SOCIALIST PARTY

PCS members working for the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) in Liverpool were out on strike 9-10 December. Members in the Complex Enquiries Team took strike action, supported by members in the Customer Services team working to rule until 24 December.

The dispute is over a new customer contact system called Max Contact, which uses AI to 'streamline' the process with a WebChat facility. Understandably, users prefer to deal with a member of staff directly.

PCS is asking for this new system to be withdrawn or amended. So far, its implementation has been put back until next year.

In addition, extra work is also being passed on to the workers from the outsourced call centre run by Hinduja Brothers-owned HGS, where workers have had their own recent pay dispute.

Six Socialist Party members, including Dave Semple, the union's national vice president, visited to support the picket over the two-day strike, discussing escalation and routes to victory with strikers and branch officers.



DBS picket line PHOTO: ALEX SMITH

## Striking Plymouth care worker speaks out against draconian Labour council



PHOTO: RYAN ALDRED

A CARE WORKER FOR PLYMOUTH CITY COUNCIL

Essential care workers organised in Unite the Union and employed by the Labour-run Plymouth City Council have taken strike action for the first time demanding that they are paid what they are owed.

The Independence@Home (I@H) department provides care and support to vulnerable adults both day and night, working with those with mental health issues, substance addictions and terminal illnesses.

Since care services were brought back in-house in 2019, it has operated a 'shortfall shift' system where-by management records "downtime between home visits", despite this clearly being working time. So, if an appointment is cancelled at short notice or there are no appointments at certain times within a working day, carers can be left sitting in their cars, sometimes alone at night, waiting to be allocated work.

The council then makes them work this time again in subsequent weeks, often on a designated day off, but with no pay of any kind. In no other department is this the expectation and workers have had to resort to strike action.

"You were always on edge, always on call and it was always stressful not being able to properly switch

off. None of us want to be here on the picket line, we want to be caring. I worry about my clients but if you don't stand up for yourself and stand together as a family then what is the point?"

We're told by Tracey Lee, Plymouth City Council's chief executive, that the council has 'plans' but so far there has been no negotiation with management whatsoever, and the only thing they have offered is an independent audit to be conducted by Devon County Council. The problem is that an independent audit has already been done and it's inconvenient for the council because it backs up our claim as a legitimate one. It's frustrating because they're willing to throw money at that to stall the strike but they won't just pay us what they owe.

We just want recognition and an apology that they got this wrong, with a bit of compensation to pay us for all those hours we've worked unpaid. But where money is concerned, nobody wants to give any away.

Having already come out from 25-29 November and from 9-15 December, we are determined to stand our ground to make clear we won't budge. We've seen nothing yet from management but we are planning to be out again 23 December - 5 January if they continue to try to ignore us.

## NEU sixth form strikes: 'We care about our young people and their education'

National Education Union (NEU) members at sixth form colleges have now taken four days of strike action - on 27 November, and 3, 4 and 13 December - over their demand for funding from the Labour government for a pay rise. A further three days of action are planned in January if the dispute is not resolved.

SUE ATKINS, SOUTHAMPTON SOCIALIST PARTY, REPORTS FROM HAMPSHIRE

Three Hampshire sixth form colleges took part in the strikes. After the early morning picket on 13 December they held a joint rally at a Southampton hotel.

There was incredulity that non-academised colleges have been excluded from the national pay award when all sixth form colleges do the same job.

The workers are baffled that a Labour government is digging its heels in over the tiny amount of money involved, which was likened to 'finding the cash down the back of a sofa'.

If the government valued the workforce, this dispute, and the obvious injustice, could be solved overnight. This is not an oversight. The government says that austerity is over, but refusing to restore pay is a continuation of austerity.

Maggie Fricker, vice-president of Southampton Trades Council, brought solidarity from the trades council and all the unions at Southampton General Hospital where she works. She made comparisons with recent strikes involving nurses and doctors, which were not only

about pay but also about protecting the important services that workers provide.

Hannah from Itchen College explained the important role that sixth form colleges play in the lives of working-class students. 50% of their students are from the most deprived areas of town and 75% have part-time jobs to help fund their studies. "We have no choice but to withdraw our labour as we care about our young people and the education they deserve. Some of our students will become teachers themselves and it is important they see we are fighting for them."

A non-funded pay rise cannot be achieved by 'efficiency savings' and will inevitably result in cuts to courses and larger class sizes.

The NEU regional secretary also addressed the meeting and urged members to support a motion to national conference demanding that all colleges be brought under local government control.

IAIN DALTON, LEEDS SOCIALIST PARTY, REPORTS FROM YORKSHIRE

NEU members at Notre Dame sixth form college in Leeds were in festive spirits as they sang alternative Christmas carols on their picket line. On the fourth day of strike action, it was clear that there was deep anger at the fact they were having to take this action to receive a pay rise.

One picket commented: "We thought we were voting for a left-wing Labour government, but instead we've got another centre-right government".

This anger culminated in a protest outside the office of local Labour MP and Chancellor Rachel Reeves in Bramley, West Leeds. Strikers came

## Manchester transport workers say 'stop the drop' in pay



PHOTO: UNITE NORTH WEST/FA

ZAKK BROWN  
MANCHESTER SOCIALIST PARTY

Socialist Party members joined Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM) workers in both Unite and Unison unions on their picket line on the second of four strike days over pay.

500 workers gathered outside Greater Manchester Labour mayor

Andy Burnham's office the previous day.

One TfGM worker stated: "For many workers, pay has gone down about 30% over ten years."

Others on the line reported that the pay award they'd been offered would put them on around £13 an hour, which is likely to render the pay increase worthless once the minimum wage goes up in April.



Oxfordshire PHOTO: SARA GILLMAN



Notre Dame PHOTO: IAIN DALTON

The strikers also highlighted that the employer's maternity policy hasn't been updated in years, and is "one of the worst when you compare it to other transport employers and elsewhere in the public sector." The workplace has seen many women workers leave over this policy, with others forced to make a decision between starting a family and remaining in work.

There was a palpable sense of anger directed at Andy Burnham, following his comments that the offer (£1,290 up to a certain pay grade, or 2.5% above that) is a good one, and extrapolating the larger salaries of the engineers to be indicative of overall high wages. The strikers suggested that this 'senior manager-speak' from the Labour mayor is giving the wrong impression to the public, and is not based on facts.

In fact, Burnham could resolve this dispute immediately. TfGM policies are set by a committee made up of councillors and the mayor himself.

• The workers have a website where you can find more information and donate to the strike fund at [stopthedrop.uk](http://stopthedrop.uk)

from Hull, Huddersfield and Manchester, and were joined by NEU general secretary Daniel Kebede.

Whilst Reeves was nowhere to be seen, this pressure forced another two local MPs to attend the picket line, Alex Sobel and Richard Burgon.

NEU rep Allan argued that winning this battle should be a step to getting pay parity for teachers in further education colleges.

SARA GILLMAN, READING SOCIALIST PARTY, REPORTS FROM OXFORDSHIRE

On 13 December, Socialist Party members were there in solidarity with NEU strikers at Henley College.

Although it is the season of 'good-will to all men', it would appear that not all teachers qualify even for the meagre pay rise the government offered!

One striker did think that perhaps this was just an oversight on the part of government, not to fund a pay rise for teachers in sixth form colleges without academy status. But we discussed this further and concluded it could be part of the push for all education establishments to become academies.

A new teacher was incensed that his wages were not going up - he now earns just about minimum wage!

We also discussed our demand for councils to set needs budgets. Local governments have been accepting Tory cuts and putting taxpayers' money into speculation and corporate ventures to attempt to make money instead of fighting the government for the funding needed for services. And now the new Labour government is blaming councils' bad financial management for the lack of services instead of their national cutting agenda!

One of the teachers even talked of 'a summer of discontent' being on the cards, as we talked about the anger of other groups of workers. We also experienced many toots from other workers in vans.

One teacher told us: "This is the first Socialist paper I've ever bought." We wished them well and promised to be back again in January to continue our support - and our discussions about socialist ideas!

## Vauxhall workers protest closure



PHOTO: ROB WILLIAMS

Unite members at Luton Vauxhall car plant have shown they're not prepared to just accept the closure decision that was announced by Stellantis senior management in this pre-Christmas period. On 16 December a mass meeting of up to 500 workers in the plant clearly sent that signal. That message of defiance continued when Unite announced day-long protests outside the plant on 17 December. Hundreds gathered outside the main gate of the plant, effectively an unofficial picket line. Showing the mood of solidarity, workers told the Socialist that a whole number of car

transporters refused to go in. Socialist Party national trade union organiser Rob Williams spoke on behalf of the National Shop Stewards Network (NSSN) and brought solidarity to the workers. Rob told them about his experience of being a Unite convenor when, despite a massive battle, his plant closed 14 years ago.

We've seen in the last few months mass redundancies including at Tata Steel in Port Talbot. The demand should be put on Starmer's government to take the plant into public ownership to save jobs and communities.

# ENERGY BILLS KEEP RISING



# What's to blame and how to stop it?

NICK HART  
SOCIALIST PARTY NATIONAL COMMITTEE

This month, the new Labour government released its Clean Power Action Plan for 95% of Britain's electricity to come from renewable sources by 2030. According to Energy Secretary Ed Milliband, this will mean "A future where our energy system is reliant on homegrown clean power... that will provide energy security, good jobs and lower bills". Though even this is a retreat on Labour's original pledge from before the election for 100% clean electricity by the end of the decade.

Looking to tap into the growing hatred of Keir Starmer's Labour government, right-wing commentators and politicians, including new Tory leader Kemi Badenoch, have declared their opposition to 'net-zero' policies designed to eliminate the use of fossil fuels. Reform UK MP Richard Tice recently took to social media to declare: "Britain paying highest electricity prices in world despite sitting on vast oil and gas treasures. Due solely to high renewables and the zealots."

With energy prices up 34% in the last three years, many working-class people will be angry at the extra strain placed on already tight budgets by any further increase in the cost of electricity and heating. At the same time, devastating recent floods in Valencia along with 'freak' weather events and flooding becoming a regular occurrence here in Britain will leave many equally anxious about the growing pace of climate breakdown, and see the urgent need to phase out fossil fuels.

## So is clean energy more expensive? And if not, what is behind the rising cost of our bills?

The truth is, the cost of generating electricity from wind and solar farms dropped below that of natural gas (now the most commonly used fossil fuel for electricity in the UK) way back in 2015. The cost per unit of electricity from wind and solar farms being built today is less than half of that for gas.

During 2022 and 2023, renewables made up over half the electricity used in the UK. So why have we been paying more than ever for what comes out of our plug sockets at home?

The reason we aren't already rolling in cheap and clean energy is the failure of the capitalist markets

championed by Starmer, Badenoch and Nigel Farage alike.

Prices on the UK's wholesale electricity market are based on the 'marginal cost' system, where the most expensive method being used to produce electricity during any one half hour sets the price paid for electricity as a whole. When renewables and nuclear are unable to meet demand for electricity, gas power plants are fired up.

Prices for natural gas on the world market surged following the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Gas producers charged more, and renewables producers benefited too.

It is a win-win situation for UK energy producers - their costs decrease as more energy is made from cheap renewables but the price they can charge for it stays at the higher rate.

In addition, the Contracts for Difference scheme introduced under the Tories in 2014 guarantees a minimum price per unit of energy paid to producers to smooth out fluctuations depending on demand and weather. A levy is paid by energy retailers to fund this and factored into bills at a cost of roughly £100 per household per year.

No wonder the UK energy sector made profits of £420 billion in the last three years! Despite this being very good news for shareholders of those companies, money being sucked out of the budgets of businesses and consumers to be spent on ever-increasing electricity bills is a problem for British capitalism as a whole.

That, as much as environmental concerns, is likely guiding the attempts of the Labour government to try and wean the UK off natural gas, including through its newly launched Great British (GB) Energy company. However, this threatens to be just a drop in the ocean.

Far from bringing electricity production, distribution or retail back into public ownership, GB Energy amounts to a state-backed investment fund to try and nudge the existing private energy companies down the road to net-zero greenhouse gas emissions.

The hope is that, by taking minority stakes in new solar, wind and tidal energy projects, GB Energy is able to encourage more investment from developers, often backed by investment funds, and existing energy producers. By the government's own estimates, roughly £150 billion is needed by 2030 to decarbonise electricity production, with just £24 billion pledged by the private sector since the election.

New clean energy sources funded by this money won't directly take



ANDREA DE SANTIS/CC

the place of gas plants, but will be released into the energy mix to compete with them. And where capitalists have invested in assets, they're reluctant to let them go (as an instant ban on fossil fuel extraction would mean) or see revenue taken away from them (as diversifying into clean energy could do).

Capitalist businesses involved in the production and supply of oil and gas will want to generate the maximum return on the (literally) sunk costs in having built the offshore platforms and pipelines used to extract fossil fuels and transport them to power stations and consumers.

Unsurprisingly, only a quarter of oil and gas companies operating in UK waters in the North Sea have any plans to invest in clean energy projects.

But the cost of investment against returns is also one of the problems of renewable energy when operated on a for-profit basis: though renewables are much cheaper per unit over their lifetime, much of the overall cost comes in the initial outlay involved in purchasing and installing the turbines and panels.

These costs have to be recouped over the 20 to 30-year lifespan of the installations and stay the same in cash terms, unlike gas, biomass and coal plants where a larger slice of the overall costs come from the labour taken to operate them. Along with the fuel itself, which can both be scaled up or down depending on demand.

A further barrier from the point of view of big businesses towards investing in more efficient technologies in energy production (or any other field) is that, in the long run, the less capitalists have to pay in wages to produce something, the less it is worth, hitting their rate of profit against the money invested. A complete removal of electricity produced from gas from the wholesale markets could lead to a fall in the wholesale and retail price of electricity due to the marginal cost pricing described earlier.

Even if wind and solar power generating capacity is massively expanded, phasing out natural gas would still require some form of backup energy source for when the sun isn't shining and the wind drops. Leaving aside the possibility of increasing nuclear power use (with a 14-year or more wait to complete new stations), that means developing ways of storing power when there is an oversupply of electricity, to be released later on.

## 1/4 only a quarter of oil and gas companies operating in UK waters in the North Sea have any plans to invest in clean energy projects

This could potentially be done through use of giant battery systems, or through other technologies such as using excess electricity to pump water or compress air to propel turbines when needed. Existing gas-fired and nuclear power plants already act as backup to renewables, there's less financial incentive for energy companies to invest in scaling up zero-carbon backups to compete with them.

In addition, decarbonisation is able to be blown off course by wider economic problems caused by operating in a capitalist economy. One of the factors in the rising wholesale cost of electricity has been down to the energy producers having to pay more to borrow for investment in recent years as interest rates have shot up.

### GB Energy

To try and overcome these hurdles, GB Energy has been given an overall budget of just £8.3 billion over five years towards investing in new clean energy projects (down from Labour's original pledge of £140 billion), with only £100 million provided upfront in October's Budget! However, even this may amount to pushing at a string as long as the grid itself is not able to support more clean energy.

As well as having the highest electricity prices in Europe, the UK has one of the most privatised and fragmented energy systems. Alongside the multitude of companies competing in the generation of energy and its sale to businesses and homes, the energy grid infrastructure that connects users to suppliers is controlled by eight for-profit monopolies covering different regions of Britain.

Only the overarching planning, including new connections and balancing of supply and demand, is controlled by the government-owned National Energy System Operator (and that only since October this year).

Due to a lack of investment in capacity, connections for new solar and wind farms to the grid are experiencing up to a 12-year wait time.

By Labour's own estimations, £200 billion of new energy projects are currently stalled due to waiting on connections to the grid. Though as many as two thirds of these may be speculative zombie projects without planning permission agreed or the developers even having purchased the land!

Meanwhile, due to bottlenecks in the grid, during 2024 the UK has spent more than £1 billion in "congestion costs" to turn off wind farms when they have been generating more

electricity than the grid can handle in their locality. And the existing infrastructure has been showing signs of wear due to underinvestment; in 2022 as much electricity was leaked from the UK network as was imported from abroad!

Not that the companies responsible have been short on cash - roughly 23% of the average electricity bill goes towards paying the 'network costs' of transporting electricity to homes.

National Grid has paid out over £28 billion to shareholders since it was privatised in 1990, while in 2021 the seven Distribution Network Operators (the companies who own the local power lines) enjoyed profit margins of 42.5% - among the highest of any sector of the UK economy!

On top of this, there are several other hurdles for developers of clean energy projects to clear, from waiting for planning permission from underfunded local councils for projects on dry land, to the fact that outside of China there are fewer than two dozen ships capable of installing an offshore wind farm, with a waiting list of several years.

The tangled web of UK energy production and distribution is an example of how, in a capitalist market system, attempts by governments to offer the 'carrot' of subsidies or the 'stick' of regulation to make them more sustainable will likely lead to unintended consequences, perverse incentives and businesses seeking to exploit loopholes.

Though the UK and many other capitalist countries are slowly staggering

towards producing more of their electricity from renewable sources, under the anarchy of the market there is no guarantee this will progress at the pace needed to avert climate meltdown, while also providing the electricity needed to power new technology such as electric vehicles and the data centres underpinning AI and other digital services. And still less in a way that leads to lower bills for consumers, or protects the livelihoods of workers currently employed in polluting industries.

### Nationalise

The profits of companies in the UK energy industry so far this decade could pay for the cost of removing fossil fuels entirely from electricity production in this country three times over.

With a national plan of energy generation, new onshore wind and solar farms could be sited in places that balance the need to protect the natural environment with generating and storing electricity close to where it's needed, rather than simply where land is cheapest. Workers in North Sea oil and gas could be retrained and put to work expanding offshore wind and tidal energy. Training and jobs could be offered to the half a million unemployed young people in building and installing the transformers and cabling needed to connect these new developments to the grid.

But what kind of government would put such a plan in place? At the last general election, oil and gas investing hedge fund Quadrature Capital donated £4 million to

Labour's campaign, twice as much as the combined total from trade unions. This was closely followed by wind-based electricity retailer Ecotricity's £1.2 million. Both will expect the new government not to do anything to cut across their ability to profit from selling electricity, whether dirty or clean.

Clearly bringing gas and electricity generation and distribution back into public ownership (as it was before 1986) is not going to be part of Labour's capitalist agenda. Meanwhile, the Green Party limits itself to calling for the nationalisation of the 'big-five' energy retailers and 'community ownership' of new power generation. What is needed is a party with a programme for nationalisation and socialist planning; one which mobilises and organises the working class to challenge the capitalist system.

The threat of mass extinction from climate collapse under capitalism has fed a feeling of powerlessness and despair among large numbers of the generation who've grown up in the era of global warming. But the technology, knowledge and wealth to massively cut carbon emissions already exist in the world today.

What we can't rely on is the profit-driven chaos of the capitalist market to bring these things together in a coherent and timely manner. That needs democratic planning of the planet's material and human resources for the benefit of the whole population and environment - in other words, socialism. Don't despair, join the struggle to make it happen.

**£420bn**  
the UK energy  
sector made  
profits of  
£420 billion in  
the last three  
years

Unite the union  
protesting against  
Labour cut to  
pensioners' Winter  
Fuel Payments  
JAIN DALTON



# 'Don't let profit come before our care'

## Stop Kirklees Labour closing care homes

IAIN DALTON  
LEEDS AND WEST YORKSHIRE SOCIALIST PARTY

Kirklees Labour council thought it had finally washed its hands of the two specialist dementia care homes it currently owns and runs, with a vote to privatise them. But families of residents and Unison, the union representing the workers, showed their determination to keep fighting, with a 30-strong public meeting on 13 December.

Videos of families and messages from residents at Claremont House in Heckmondwike and Castle Grange in Huddersfield demonstrated how vital both homes are, as well as the horrors of understaffed, corner-cutting private homes they'd previously been at. One resident pleaded: "Don't let profit come before our care".

The council has hid the identities of the five new possible private providers under 'commercial confidentiality'.

But the campaign has named them. Only two of the five run elderly care homes in Kirklees, and one has no experience of running care homes at all!

### Independent

Councillor Jo Lawson is chair of the council's health and adult care committee, a member of the Kirklees Community Independents group, and one of three councillors at the meeting supporting the campaign.

She said staff are being "treated as heroes to be disposed of". Opposition councillors are 'calling in' the decision to privatise the homes.

### Strike

Kirklees Unison is balloting its members in the care homes for strike action. With privatisation, the workers could lose continuity of their West Yorkshire Pension Fund. The workers successfully beat closure in 2023.

Socialist Party member Angela Waller is the lead Unison steward liaising and organising with the workers affected. She was quoted in a BBC article, saying: "The thought of working for a private provider was 'filling the staff with dread', as they were 'worried about their pensions and terms and conditions'".

### No more cuts

The independent anti-cuts councillors can bring the community and trade unions together to oppose all of Labour's cuts. Labour doesn't have a majority. They've already had to climb down over bin reductions, a week after proposing cuts.

Campaigners are determined to continue the fight, and exhaust every angle of opposition possible, including challenging councillors who support privatisation at the next elections in 2026.

## Stop Derbyshire care home closures



Socialist Party campaigning against Derbyshire care home closures JON DALE

### BOLSOVER SOCIALIST PARTY PRESS RELEASE

People opposed to closing 12 care homes and dementia day centres held a protest against Tory Derbyshire County Council.

"It has been heartrending to hear from families whose loved ones are going to have to face moving, and the effect it will have on their health", said Bolsover Socialist Party member Elaine Evans.

### Scandal

Socialist Party member Ronnie Rogers said: "It's an absolute scandal that the council spent £2.9 million refurbishing New Bassett House in 2023, and now plans to close it. Elderly residents in a lovely home, with lovely staff, will be turfed out.

"If a private company takes it over, we all know what that means - worse jobs and worse care for the residents, so the owners can make a profit. That's what's happened to children's homes across the county. Profiteering means we pay more, but get less."

Campaigners have raised questions at Shirebrook and Old Bolsover Town Councils, calling on them to liaise with Bolsover District Council, and take action to save these homes.

Speaking at the 14 December

protest, Socialist Party member Jon Dale said these Labour-controlled town and district councils should make clear they will obstruct planning permission for any new owners attempting to redevelop or change use of the sites.

### Labour's choice

"If the county council rushes through closure of the homes, our district and town councils should use reserves and borrowing powers to keep the homes open, until May's county council election.

"Labour should commit to reopening all closed homes, if they win that election. They should demand the money needed from the Labour government. But if Labour councillors won't fight for these vital services, we need councillors who will."

Local Socialist Party members will discuss with other trade unionists and community campaigners about standing candidates, as part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC).

Help fund the fightback

**DONATE**  
socialistparty.org.uk/donate

SOCIALIST PARTY FIGHTING FUND				
AREA	\$ RECEIVED	\$ TARGET	Q4: OCTOBER-DECEMBER 2024	DEADLINE: 31 DECEMBER 2024
West Midlands	1,854	2,700	69%	
Yorkshire	1,691	2,650	64%	
North West	753	1,200	63%	
Wales	1,328	2,400	55%	
London	2,677	5,000	54%	
Southern & SE	1,170	2,400	49%	
South West	946	2,100	45%	
East Midlands	793	2,050	39%	
Northern	305	800	38%	
Eastern	219	1,300	17%	
Other	771	2,400	32%	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>12,507</b>	<b>25,000</b>	<b>50%</b>	

## Save Applecourt Arts from Newham Labour cuts

JAMES IVENS  
EQUITY AND SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBER

The fight is on to save another local cultural centre in Newham, east London. Performing arts union Equity protested outside the Labour council's cabinet meeting on 3 December, demanding an emergency grant for Applecourt Arts.

Applecourt is a small theatre and cafe, home to eight arts companies serving an already-deprived borough. It's a workplace for a constant stream of professional arts workers, direct employer of local workers in other roles, and important community resource for Newham's working class.

The crisis is immediate cashflow. All Applecourt needs is a one-off injection of £100,000. Beyond that, it's a going concern which can continue operating (on a shoestring) for the foreseeable. Without it, Applecourt will close for good at Christmas.

### Labour have let it happen

The Labour council and mayor would like to just let it happen. Meanwhile, they had been bidding to become London Borough of Culture 2025! Following their destruction of Stratford Circus arts centre, which Equity also fought, what next from a council that proclaims Newham "the beating heart of London culture"?

But while £100,000 means life or death to a local arts venue, it's loose change to a local authority. Newham's 2024 financial statement reported £11 million in general fund reserves. A one-off spend of less than one percent would save Applecourt!

The council did not even respond to Equity's request for a deputation to address the cabinet making this case, a democratic right. Instead, they announced £75 million of fresh cuts at the full council meeting on 16 December.

Labour's 'flagship' local authority has dug itself into a £175 million budget hole by accepting years of Tory and now Labour government austerity. By

One of the protests opposing local cuts outside Newham Labour council - this time Applecourt Arts NEWHAM AND EAST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY



refusing to invest in council housing it has run up a monstrous temporary accommodation bill, the main cause of its immediate crisis.

But Newham still holds those reserves, alongside over £4 billion of assets, and therefore has huge borrowing powers.

Newham Trades Union Council led a large protest outside Newham's full council meeting on 16 December, demanding the local authority ends austerity in Newham and joins forces with unions and other councils to win the funding from the new Labour government.

## Labour council forced back on Markhouse Centre cuts



Protest before Waltham Forest Labour closed Markhouse Centre

NANCY TAAFFE  
WALTHAM FOREST SOCIALIST PARTY AND WALTHAM FOREST TRADES COUNCIL ASSISTANT SECRETARY

Campaigners, including Socialist Party members, gathered outside Waltham Forest Town Hall to lobby the council, which was about to ratify its cabinet decision to close the Markhouse Centre, a centre for adults with learning difficulties, serving local adults and their carers for over 40 years. Around 50 people use it.

After standing in the general election in July as part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition, a number of people had written to ask whether, as we had stood on an anti-austerity platform and had a consistent record of campaigning against such cuts, we would help to keep it open? I took this campaign to the local trades council, and we organised a joint meeting with the Markhouse Centre supporters' group. We immediately got to work campaigning.

### No expense spared

The council had claimed that the building would cost £1.2 million to repair, with the boiler alone costing £100,000. We have pointed out that they have £50 million in reserves and spent at least £25 million renovating the town hall! Sitting in the public gallery felt positively palatial and it was quite obvious that no expense had been spared.

The local trades council hosted a public meeting in October, we pledged to be present at scrutiny committee meetings, cabinet meetings and then the full council. We spoke to the workers at the centre, we engaged with the carers' group, and we spoke to the press. The councillors would like it if what was said in the council chambers, stayed in

the council chambers; campaigners were determined for that not to happen.

A survey, commissioned by the council from a company called Evolve Norse and called 'independent', condemned the building. The council has a 25% stake in this company, with a councillor and council official on the board! Councillors eventually admitted that using the word 'independent' was inaccurate. The officer involved has now (fortuitously) left the council. The health and adult care scrutiny committee has commissioned another company to ratify the original report.

### We won't go silently

We believe if we hadn't been out campaigning, the centre would have silently been closed. But the campaign has paid off, at least temporarily, and the decision to close the centre was pushed back, with a new decision due towards the end of February.

On the night of the lobby, dozens of people also turned out to oppose car parking charges. The local Tories took to the plinth outside to lead the charge against the council. We made sure they didn't get away with going unchallenged for their 14 years of year-on-year cuts.

The Markhouse Centre is the first big cut by this Labour council under a Labour government. The parking charges look like the next attack. After Christmas, cuts to council tax relief are coming down the line. We will fight back against every attack, and continue to make the case for councillors who are prepared to resist further austerity by backing needs-based council budgets. As part of that we will continue to stand against the cutting councillors at the ballot box.

## Capitalism's mask has slipped

### Why I joined the Socialist Party

DANIEL BASSEY  
YORK SOCIALIST PARTY

Young people have lived only to see seemingly constant economic crises and political instability.

Years of austerity, a failing NHS, astronomical house prices constantly rising along with other basic living expenses, the botched exit from the European Union, and a callous pandemic response that let hundreds of thousands die while society's richest lined their pockets.

### Surviving

Despite repeated assurances by our political establishment that they hold the solutions to the havoc wreaked upon us by whatever administration that came before, the reality for many is that it has become increasingly tough to survive under the pressure.

We are taught how global warming is destroying our planet and threatening our survival. But political solutions

are rarely discussed. Instead, we are consoled that future 'advancements' will solve our problems, or blamed as individuals.

The civil mask of our global elite slipped off when Israel state initiated its genocidal military campaign in Gaza. Everybody witnessed the horror. Yet, our governments and media did nothing but excuse, obfuscate, distract, and lie outright about the reality unfolding before our eyes.

### Built into capitalism

Mainstream critics of the establishment are happy to voice their frustrations, but stop short of drawing the necessary conclusions - that our world is held hostage by a corrupt ruling class of wealthy elites that seek only to maintain and increase their wealth and influence. This phenomenon is built into capitalism itself.

Armed with that realisation, I sought out how I might play my part in transforming society. I joined my

university's Socialist Students society, and met Socialist Party members.

### Take a stand

I attended Socialism 2024, and learnt of the role that the Socialist Party takes in fighting for change, through organising the working class to take a stand against the injustice maintained under global capitalism.

The Socialist Party campaigns to improve the lives of the people it represents. And through this process, aims to help build a working-class movement capable of carrying out a revolution, abolishing capitalism.

**Join the fightback**  
**JOIN THE SOCIALISTS**

Visit [socialistparty.org.uk/join](https://socialistparty.org.uk/join) or text your name and postcode to **07761 818 206** to find out more today!

## Wales uni fees rise - Welsh Labour tails Starmers attacks

ARIS PREVOST  
CARDIFF SOCIALIST STUDENTS

The Welsh Labour government announced recently that it would be following the Labour government in Westminster by raising university tuition fees. From September 2025, Welsh students in Wales will be charged £9,535 a year, an increase of £285. Fees had already been raised by £250 this September.

The changes bring the university

sector in Wales in line with the English system, though key differences still remain.

### Welsh powers

The university system and its finances have been in the hands of the Welsh Government since the creation of the Senedd (Welsh Parliament) in 1998. The Senedd can set the tuition fee cap for Welsh universities and set out funding and loans that students can get to help with finance.

In England, students receive a tuition fee loan to pay off tuition fees, and a maintenance loan to help with living expenses while at university. The amount a student gets depends on how much their family earns. In Wales, maintenance loans and grants work differently. All students get the same amount, but family earnings determine how much is a grant versus a loan. In addition, maintenance loans in Wales are higher than in England. English students living outside of London get up to £9,978 a year. Welsh students who live outside of London are entitled to £11,720.

### Better deal?

Generally, the Welsh government has offered a marginally better deal for students. This would not have been the case were it not for students and organisers fighting to put pressure on the Welsh government.

Now these concessions are coming under threat.

The Welsh government is looking for ways to solve the lack of higher education funding, and trying to solve its own money problems. The solution it is choosing is to charge students more money while allowing universities to cut courses and staff members.

This is why the Funding Not Fees campaign and Socialist Students are so important, to fight back against the cuts that students in Wales have had to face.

We demand the Welsh government immediately reverse the planned fees increase, and campaign alongside students in England for free, fully funded education with liveable maintenance grants, funded by the super-rich.

**SOCIALIST STUDENTS CONFERENCE 2025**

A day of discussion on how students and young people get organised against Labour and the capitalist system it defends

**FIGHT FEES**

**END GAZA SLAUGHTER**

**BUILD THE SOCIALIST OPPOSITION TO LABOUR**

**SATURDAY 8TH FEBRUARY, 10AM**

**HIGHFIELDS CENTRE, LEICESTER, LE2 ODS**  
**(15-minute walk from Leicester Railway Station)**



## DO YOU HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY?

- Send your news, views and criticism witheditors@socialistparty.org.uk - or if you're not online, PO Box 1398, Enfield EN1 9GT
- We reserve the right to shorten and edit letters. Confidentiality will be respected if requested

## THE SOCIALIST INBOX

## • This land is our land

In all the noise about retiring farmers and their children, I'm surprised (or maybe not!) that no-one in the mainstream media has discussed the alternative of land nationalisation.

If all agricultural land were to be state-owned, with initial compensation paid only to enable the retiring farmers to live on the current median pensioner's income, then there would be no question of future generations of farmers having to pay any tax at the end of their working lives: they would simply be able to save for retirement like everyone else.

Future tenant farmers could be chosen on the basis of their record in the industry and their study at agricultural college, etc. and be able to rent at a nominal level for as long as they personally worked the land concerned.

Sometimes, when he was in a good mood, my father was known to break into the chorus of the (Liberal Party) land song from the early 1900s: "Why should we be beggars with our ballots in our hand, when god gave the land to the people?" Although then of working age, well over 12, he would have been too young to vote in 1906. But it was during that Liberal government that he became an active Labour supporter.

Solidarity!

STEVE CAWLEY  
CAMBRIDGESHIRE

## • Can't do that

I had a text from my sister who lives in Canada, saying she will send no Xmas cards as the postal workers there have been on strike for a month. They do not seem to do things by halves there.

PETE MCNALLY  
WORCESTER

## TV review: Strike: An Uncivil War

DAVID KAPLAN  
CAMDEN AND HARINGEY SOCIALIST PARTY

I was 18 during the miners' strike in 1984-85. I was already a supporter of Militant, the forerunner of the Socialist Party. The documentary, Strike: An Uncivil War, reminded me of that time and showed so clearly how the Tory government of the day, under Margaret Thatcher, had provoked the strike in order to teach the working class a lesson. It showed the role of the state (the police and the judiciary) and the media in supporting the ruling capitalist class.

At the time, the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) was, in terms of its industrial muscle, the strongest union in the UK, with 187,000 members. Union membership was much higher then, with 10.6 million members compared to 6.2 million today.

The backdrop to the 1984-85 miners' strike over jobs was the successful strike by mineworkers in 1972 over pay. Then, the strike lasted seven weeks. A turning point in that strike was the mass picket at the Salsley Gate coking plant in Birmingham, which supplied fuel to power stations. Thousands of trade unionists blockaded the works, preventing lorries from transporting the coke (refined coal) around the country. The police were utterly outnumbered and were forced to shut the gates to the plant. It was a massive victory for workers, which paved the way for the defeat of the Tory government in 1974, and for future struggles by workers in the 1970s.

Orgreave coking plant, near Sheffield, South Yorkshire, was just down the road from where I used to live. Arthur Scargill, president of the NUM, hoping for a repeat of the 1972 blockade at Salsley, put out a call for a mass picket of the plant on 18 June (I wasn't able to go there on the day).

At Salsley, in 1972, 15,000 workers faced 800 police officers. At Orgreave, twelve years later, 5,000 miners faced 6,000 police.

The documentary focuses on the events of the day: on the hopes of the



mineworkers leading up to the event and on the brutal reality that they faced on the day. 18 different police forces from around the country converged on Orgreave. The pickets gathered in a field overlooking the coke works; police equipped with long riot shields were positioned at the bottom of the field; on one side of the field was a road which allowed mounted police to be rapidly deployed; at the top of the field was a railway cutting, which made it difficult and dangerous for pickets to retreat. When the pickets surged forward at the arrival of the first lorries, mounted police charged and dispersed the pickets, without discrimination. Time and again, mounted police charged the pickets, followed by snatch squads of police officers with batons and short shields who battered individual mineworkers. Miraculously, no one was killed on the day.

The BBC evening news portrayed the police as the victims at Orgreave. It showed footage of the events of the day, from police surveillance cameras, but not in the order in which they had occurred. The message that they wanted to get across was that police were defending themselves against violent protesters: the police were not the instigators - the picketing miners were. There are other examples given in the documentary of the relentless barrage of propaganda against the mineworkers.

Time and again, Thatcher said that the government would not intervene in the strike. However, behind the scenes, that was exactly what it was doing. The documentary reveals the existence of a manual, approved by the Home Office in 1983 but not discussed by parliament, for use by Chief Police Officers. The manual, on 'police tactical options', outlined how to deal with public disorder in a paramilitary way.

Over 90 arrests were made on the day, including charges of riot, which carried a life sentence if held up by a court, and unlawful assembly.

The documentary interviewed a former police officer on duty at Orgreave on the day. He confirmed that the statements in relation to arrests he had made on the day, had been changed by his seniors, and testified to more serious charges. In the event, all charges against those arrested were dropped: the establishment were frightened of the Chief Police Officers' manual coming to light.

The documentary talks a little bit about the international support that miners received, or about the 'Women Against Pit Closures' movement, predominantly miners' wives, who built a support network to ensure families of striking miners did not go hungry. It doesn't talk about the despicable role of the leaders of the Trades Union Congress, which had countless opportunities to call for a 24-hour general strike of all workers to defend miners' jobs and mining communities. As one of the miners recounts: "I was young and I believed the working class could rise up against the system." But it's one thing to be right and another to win.

In 2016, David Cameron's Tory government ruled out a public enquiry into policing at Orgreave. 40 years on, the mineworkers are still searching for justice.

- *Strike: An Uncivil War, was released in June, 40 years after the Battle of Orgreave. Directed by Daniel Gordon, it is currently available on Netflix*

## In memory of Lynn Walsh

Socialist Party members joined the family and friends of Lynn Walsh to celebrate his life on 16 December. Lynn, for decades a member of the leadership of the Socialist Party and its predecessor Militant, sadly passed away on 15 November.

In Lynn's memory, we publish a letter from Lynn to Eric Segal, jailed for 30 days for his refusal to pay Margaret Thatcher's hated Poll Tax - one of 2 million who adopted Militant's

defiant non-payment stance which ultimately won.

Lynn's political life was rich with experience, taking part in and witnessing significant historical events, that included visiting the Soviet Union in the final months and years of its existence, and as a leading member of Militant during the epic poll tax battle.

- Read more: 'Obituary: Lynn Walsh - A major contributor to Trotskyism' at [socialistparty.org.uk](http://socialistparty.org.uk)

Socialist Party members at Lynn's funeral on 16 December  
PHOTO: SOCIALIST PARTY

PHOTO: ETHAN DOVRE WHITE



## WHAT WE STAND FOR

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

The Socialist Party organises working-class people to fight against the attacks from this rotten system on our lives and livelihoods, and for a socialist alternative: a society which takes the wealth out of the hands of the super-rich

and is democratically run by working-class people to meet the needs of all not the profits of a few.

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

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



## WORK, PENSIONS AND BENEFITS

- A £15-an-hour minimum wage for all, without exemptions. For the minimum wage to automatically increase linked to average earnings or inflation, whichever is higher.
- Share out the work. A maximum 32-hour working week with no loss of pay or worsening of conditions. The right to flexible working, under the control of workers not employers. An end to insecure working, for the right to full-time work for all who want it; ban zero-hour contracts.
- All workers to have trade union rates of pay, employment protection, and sickness, parental and holiday rights from day one of employment. End bosses using bogus 'self-employment' as a means to avoid giving workers rights.
- No to austerity through inflation. For all wage rates to be automatically increased at least in line with price rises.
- Open the books of all companies cutting jobs or claiming they can't afford to pay a real living wage. State subsidies, where genuinely needed, for socially-useful small businesses.

- For trade unions independent of the capitalist state, with members having democratic control over their own policies, constitutions and democratic procedures. For all trade union officials to be regularly elected, subject to recall by their members and paid a worker's wage.
- Reduce the state retirement and pension age to 55. For decent living pensions.
- Replace universal credit and the punitive benefit system with living benefits for all who need them.

## PUBLIC SERVICES

- A massive expansion of public services including the NHS and council services. Reverse all the cuts, kick out the privateers. Bring private social care and childcare facilities into public ownership under democratic control, in order to provide free, high-quality services for all who need them. Expand services for all women suffering violence.
- For local councillors who are committed to opposing austerity and all cuts to local services, jobs, pay and conditions.
- For a socialist NHS to provide for

everyone's health needs, including dental and eye care - free at the point of use and under democratic control. Kick out the private companies! Nationalise the pharmaceutical industry under democratic workers' control and management.

- Renationalise privatised utilities - including rail, mail, water, telecoms and power - under democratic workers' control and management.
- Free, publicly funded and democratically run, good-quality education, available to all at any age. Abolish university tuition fees and write off student debt, end marketisation, and introduce a living grant. No to academisation. For all schools to be under the genuine democratic control of local education authorities, school staff, parents and student organisations.
- The right to a safe secure home for all. For the mass building of genuinely affordable, high-quality, carbon-neutral council housing. For rent controls that cap the level of rent. Fair rent decisions should be made by elected bodies of tenants, housing workers and representatives of trade unions. For cheap low-interest

mortgages for home buyers. Nationalise the privately owned large building companies, land banks and estates.

## ENVIRONMENT

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

processing and retail industry under workers' control to ensure that standards are set by consumers, small farmers, and all workers involved in the production, processing, distribution and retail of food.

## DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS

- For united working class struggle to end discrimination on the grounds of race, gender, disability, sexuality, age, and all other forms of prejudice and oppression.
- Repeal the anti-trade union laws and all others that trample over civil liberties. For the right to protest and to strike! End police harassment. For the police to be accountable to local committees, made up of democratically elected representatives of trade unions, local community organisations and local authorities.
- For the right to choose when and whether to have children - for the right to access abortion, contraception and fertility treatment for all who need it.
- For the right to asylum - with democratic community control and oversight of emergency funding resources. No to racist immigration laws.

- Expand democracy. For the abolition of the monarchy and the House of Lords. For all MPs to be subject to the right of recall by their constituents at any time, and to only receive a worker's wage. For proportional representation and the right to vote at 16.
- For the right of nations to self-determination. For an independent socialist Scotland and for a socialist Wales, both part of a voluntary socialist confederation of Wales, England, Scotland and Ireland.
- Oppose the dictatorship of the billionaire owners of the media. For the nationalisation of newspaper printing facilities, radio, TV and social media platforms. Access to these facilities should be under democratic control, with political parties' coverage being allocated in proportion to the popular vote at elections.
- For a new mass workers' party, based on the trade unions, and drawing together workers, young people and activists from workplaces, and community, environmental, anti-racist and anti-cuts campaigns, to provide a

fighting, socialist political alternative to the pro-big business parties.

## SOCIALISM AND INTERNATIONALISM

- No to imperialist wars and occupations!
- Take the wealth off the super-rich! For a socialist government to take into public ownership the top 150 companies and the banking system that dominate the British economy, and run them under democratic working-class control and management. Compensation to be paid

only on the basis of proven need, not to the fat cats.

- A democratic socialist plan of production based on the interests of the overwhelming majority of people, and in a way that safeguards the environment.
- No to the EU bosses' club. Organise a campaign with European socialists and workers' organisations to use the talks on post-Brexit relations to tear up the EU pro-capitalist rules. For a real collaboration of the peoples of Europe on a socialist basis as a step towards a socialist world.

Do you agree? Join the fightback!

## JOIN THE SOCIALISTS

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



# Serbia: Protests follow deadly train station disaster

MIRA GLAVARDANOV  
ENFIELD AND LEA VALLEY SOCIALIST PARTY

A roof at the train station collapsed in the city of Novi Sad in Serbia on a busy November morning, killing 15 people. It collapsed two months after a 'reconstruction' job where tonnes of new material were added without adding more structural support. Reconstruction was done quickly and the new glossy train station was opened. The corrupt government officials took photo opportunities, while wilfully ignoring alarm calls from some building experts.

This event prompted huge protests all around the country, at the same time as protests were going on against the Rio Tinto lithium mine. The protests more or less merged and 15-minute (for 15 victims) blockades of roads and towns centres have been organised.

Students then took the centre stage, starting to occupy university campuses. By now most campuses in Belgrade, Novi Sad and Niš (the three largest cities) have been occupied. Students had issued demands, including publishing all documents on the reconstruction of the train station, releasing all arrested student protesters, and importantly, increasing funding for state universities.

Very significantly, they are organising assemblies in occupied universities, taking democratic decisions on further actions. Students are also protesting on the streets, and in some cases joined by secondary

school walkouts. Most teachers are coming out in support.

The regime's answer from the start has been heavy handed, with full riot police and also plain clothes police arresting protesters, or simply using thugs to bully and beat up people on the streets.

Meanwhile, several prominent anti-mining and anti-regime farmer activists had their farms closed by the authorities. This has prompted further protests and blockades by farmers, who have also declared solidarity with students.

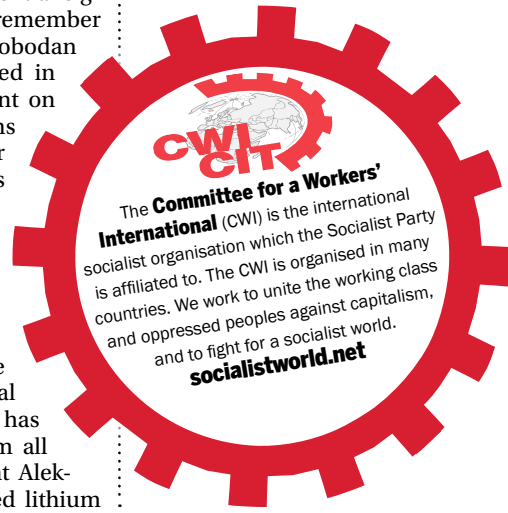
### Students' protests

Even though many teachers support their students, and there was a teachers' union one-day protest, the workers' unions are still largely absent. One student banner said: "Students in blockades. Workers on strike", clearly calling on workers to take action, recognising its potential significance. Many people remember that former president Slobodan Milošević was only toppled in 2000 once the miners went on strike, after many months of street protests by other sections of society. This is clearly what is desperately needed now.

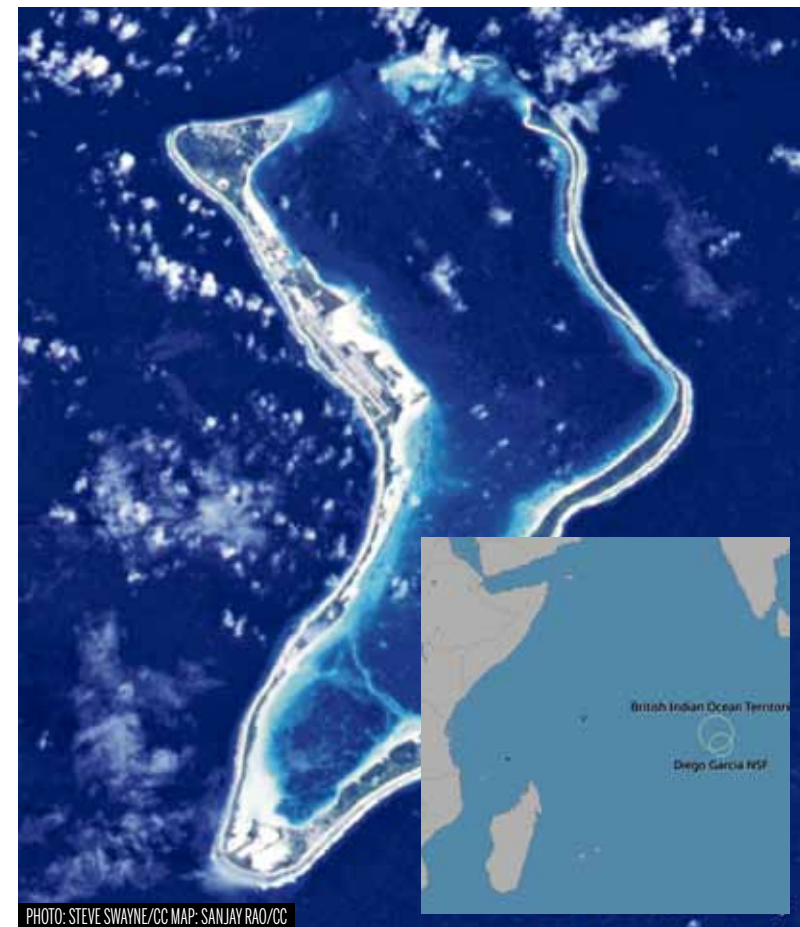
The regime feels shaken and very nervous. The student and farmer protests are genuinely from below and not led by the largely distrusted official opposition. But the regime has support from abroad, from all imperialist sides. President Aleksandar Vucic has promised lithium

to the EU. China has mines and other stakes in Serbia, and so does Russia. No power wants him gone because it is equally risky for all. Ordinary people do not have friends in foreign powers. But they have in other ordinary people - students in the Croatian city of Rijeka held a 15-minute protest in solidarity.

The question who will replace the Vucic regime also looms. The opposition is mainly pro-EU and nationalists are pro-Russia. The left is small and many are pro-China. The student and farmer protesters are not visibly signed up to any camp. Their simple wish, to live in a 'normal' country not ruled by autocrats and not threatened by the interests of foreign mining or other interests, where 'the country belongs to us', can only be realised in a democratic socialist society. Student assemblies give a taste of that.



# Refugees abandoned on Diego Garcia by UK government finally released



LAWANYA  
TAMIL SOLIDARITY AND THE REFUGEE RIGHTS  
CAMPAIGN

A group of refugees fleeing persecution, violence, and the risk of torture in Sri Lanka were left stranded in the Indian Ocean in October 2021. They were rescued by a British navy vessel and taken to the nearby island of Diego Garcia, part of the Chagos Islands. The British government made no efforts to provide adequate facilities and process them faster. Instead, they have been kept there for the last three years.

Diego Garcia is a British overseas territory situated in the Indian Ocean, over 1,500 miles from the nearest mainland. It is mainly used by the British government as a military base. The refugees have been detained in a 100x140m encampment for three years with no access to education, internet, or the outside world. They lived in small, damp tents infested with rats, under 24/7 surveillance by guards from a private security firm, along with regular patrols by police officers. All entry and exit points to the camp were strictly guarded.

In November 2023, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) conducted a

monitoring visit to Diego Garcia and reported that the conditions failed to meet essential standards of privacy, safety, and dignity. They noted that the harsh environment was causing severe distress and mental health issues among the detainees. The UNHCR raised serious concerns about the heightened risk of suicide, attempted suicide, self-harm, and protest hunger strikes. Several individuals made such critical suicide attempts that they had to be evacuated to Rwanda for emergency medical treatment.

On 2-3 December, the refugees were flown to the UK after the government finally accepted that the situation was unsustainable. They are now very relieved to be in the UK. They have arrived with very little and are still struggling with inadequate facilities. They are now housed in a hotel by the Home Office, which provided just £68 per person to buy warm clothes and other necessities, which is not even enough to buy winter clothes. They are also restricted from receiving visitors in the hotel. Security at the hotel informed Tamil Solidarity visitors that they are barred from entering any part of the premises. Tamil Solidarity has been working with the refugees since they were stranded in Diego Garcia. There

are 16 children in the group, most of whom need medical help and assistance to continue their studies.

The treatment of the most vulnerable people is part of government policy. The previous Tory government was instrumental in rolling out divisive and racist policies that created a hostile environment. Now, Keir Starmer's Labour government continues with these same Tory policies.

The safety of asylum seekers can never be assured in a system where their lives are treated as political bargaining chips for electoral gain. We demand a fundamental shift, both domestically and internationally, to guarantee protection for those fleeing persecution and war. This requires not only providing safe refuge but also addressing the root causes of conflict and crises that drive people to seek asylum in the first place.

This means that the fight for the security and rights of refugees is linked to challenging the capitalist system as a whole. Tamil Solidarity continues to provide basic assistance to these refugees. They need winter clothing, food, and educational supplies for the children. We request anyone who can assist with providing these basic needs to make a donation or get in touch with us at lawanya@tamilsolidarity.org

# THE BIG SOCIALIST QUIZ OF 2024



- In the first issue of the year, what event did we correctly predict 'beckoned' in 2024?
- Also in the first issue of 2024, we reviewed a new Committee for a Workers' International book commemorating what event on 11 September 1973?
- Which group of transport workers won the equivalent of £30 million following strike action?
- What is the name of the titular character in the drama about the subpostmasters scandal reviewed in the second issue of the year?
- What boozey animal claimed to be 'all about the people' but implemented pay cuts to its workers this year, prompting one angry reader to write in and call them "charlatans"?
- The biggest-ever strike in what place happened in January?
- A national TUC demo took place in what unlikely place in January?
- Which revolutionary's death was marked in the Socialist at the start of the year, 100 years on?
- 2024 saw the launch of a new branch where in Wales?
- February 2024 saw the sad death of which Militant and Socialist Party cartoonist?
- Which social media billionaire got a \$700 million payday in February, while the rest of us suffered a cost-of-living crisis this year?
- Throughout the year we commemorated the 40th anniversary of a mighty strike by which group of workers?
- Twickenham rugby ground

- states on its stadium signage that weapons are prohibited from being allowed in, but for what did they make an exception in March?
- Which Socialist Party member won a fantastic five and a half thousand votes in the National Education Union's vice-president election in March?
- Which unlikely figure opposed cuts in Nottingham in 2024?
- Workers, trade unionists and socialists marched throughout South Wales in February in defence of what?
- We said French president Macron set what Pacific territory "on fire" following a vote in Paris that prompted protests?
- In the May local elections, TUSC candidate Nadia Ditta won a third of the votes where?
- 2024 saw several changes in leader where: Wales or Scotland?
- May saw the Socialist organise its annual May Day Greetings, reflecting our links with and support for the workers' movement. How much did we raise this year?
- In the general election this year, what proportion of the electorate voted Labour?
- The bloody Russia-Ukraine war continued throughout all of this year. In August, Ukrainian troops invaded which area of Russia, famous for a World War Two battle?
- Members of our sister party led massive cost-of-living protests in Nigeria before being arrested and repressed by the state. They were outrageously charged with what?
- This autumn, the Socialist

- had two special 'wraparounds' on the paper. What for?
- Which Socialist Party member finally had his name cleared this year, after decades in a miscarriage of justice?
- In October, we had a headline 'Game Over'. What was the article about?
- Simpsons character Jasper and his paddle featured on a placard in the Socialist in October. Which union's picket line was he attending?
- Which Socialist Party member spoke to Jeremy Kyle on the telly this year?
- How many people came to the Socialist Party's fantastic Socialism 2024 event in November?
- And finally, the Socialist and its predecessor Militant celebrated a big birthday this year. How big?
- Find the answers below to see how many you got right...



- A general election which arrived in the summer
- The 1973 Chile coup that overthrew the Chilean revolution
- Tube workers
- Mr Bates
- Beer company Brewdog
- Northern Ireland, when 150,000 workers struck over pay
- Cheltenham, commemorating the anniversary of the GCHQ union recognition struggle
- Lemin, who died in January 1924
- Rhonda Clyn Taff
- Alan Hardman, search for his name on our website to see his amazing artwork and learn more about his life
- Mark Zuckerberg
- UK miners who started their year-long strike in 1984
- An arms fair
- Shelia Carrey
- Port Talbot steelworks
- New Caledonia, where France ramped up colonialist and repressive policies in May
- Bevois ward Southampton where TUSC won 32.3%
- Wales, Scotland narrowly misses out
- Over £8,500
- TUSC and Socialist Party's Dave Nellist was interviewed on Talk TV about the new Labour government
- Over 700, read more about the event online
- 60 years
- Treason, the fight to get the charges dropped continues
- Kurk
- The lowest ever for a general election at 20.1%
- Port Talbot steelworks
- Port Talbot steelworks
- The Tory leadership contest won by Kemi Badenoch. How long will she last in 2025?
- In an article about university workers pay, we used a photo of writer Mary's homemade placard from a Unison strike in 2022
- TV about the new Labour government

£1/£2 solidarity price

socialistparty.org.uk



# the Socialist

Issue 1303

19 December 2024 - 8 January 2025

formerly **Militant**

# FUND SERVICES NOT WAR

## Fight for a socialist alternative to war and capitalism

**G**overnments spent a record-high \$4,220 billion on military expenditure in 2023. The figure for 2024 is set to be even bigger. For what?

So far an estimated 233,000 people have been killed in conflicts this year. There has been a 300% increase in bombing over the last five years. Overwhelmingly working-class and poor people suffer, their lives and livelihoods taken away from them because of the super-rich bosses' pursuit of profit.

Keir Starmer's Labour government continues to utter mealy-mouthed words warning Israel's government not to 'go too far', while at the same time making excuses for the brutal slaughter of tens of thousands of Palestinians.

Billions is sent abroad as so-called 'military aid'. It will do nothing to bring peace and stability for ordinary people, and isn't intended to, but rather to try to bolster British capitalism's 'strategic interests'.

Our interests, those of the working class, have nothing in common with the bosses' interests that Starmer's government defends. The Labour government says it can't find the money for a decent pay rise for health workers or teachers, or for pensioners freezing in their homes.

But the money is there! Evidenced by the vast military spending, and by the monster profits of the energy companies and others.

The fight for fully funded services and an end to war and national oppression will continue throughout 2025. Help us build and strengthen the working-class fightback. Join the Socialist Party to fight for a socialist world.

**Do you agree?**  
**JOIN THE SOCIALISTS**  
[socialistparty.org.uk/join](http://socialistparty.org.uk/join)



WHAT WE STAND FOR: THE SOCIALIST PARTY'S MAIN DEMANDS >>> see column on p12-13



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