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# the Socialist

Issue 1305

16-22 January 2025

formerly **Militant**

# Starmmer's Labour threatens more cuts

# WE WON'T PAY FOR THE BOSSES' CRISIS

**NICK HART**  
SOCIALIST PARTY NATIONAL COMMITTEE

**T**he airwaves have been full of voices from Keir Starmer's Labour government telling us of the need for "ruthless" cuts to public spending this spring.

Why? It's not the fault of workers striving to keep our underfunded hospitals, schools and other public

services running from day to day, on lower pay in real terms than 15 years ago.

But 'the markets' aren't happy. Investors can see the weakness of Britain's capitalist economy, and the cost of government borrowing has shot up.

What's more important: ending queues of ambulances and patients out the doors of hospitals, restoring threadbare council services and fixing our crumbling infrastructure, or

bowing down to the demands of the international banksters?

It's not like there's no money around. Britain has 165 billionaires. The net worth of Britain's 20 richest individuals has more than doubled in the past decade.

Chancellor Rachel Reeves and Starmer have pledged an "iron grip" on government spending and borrowing, so they can protect the loot of spivs and speculators who enrich themselves at our expense.

Already government departments are being asked to prepare swingeing cuts, to services already crumbling and wrecked.

Working-class and young people have to be prepared to fight another round of austerity. The strike wave showed that when workers take action, the bosses and government can be forced to cough up.

We need a mass movement and a workers' party that will take the wealth off the super-rich and

change the 'rules' of the game to win funding for the public services and pay we need. To replace the ailing capitalist system, rigged against working-class people, with a democratic socialist society that can use the wealth and resources to plan a world that can provide for us all.

● **Read what we think: Britain's bond jitters expose economic uncertainty - fight for a socialist alternative page 4**

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

# Broxtowe Independent councillors and the fight against New Labour Mark II austerity

GARY FREEMAN  
NOTTINGHAM SOCIALIST PARTY

Socialist Party members in and around Nottingham welcome the resignation of 18 Labour councillors on Broxtowe Borough Council, who have formed a new council group.

These councillors - Broxtowe Independents - with a combined 250 years of Labour Party membership, have announced that they will be introducing a no-cuts budget for 2024-25, continuing the policies on which they were elected in 2023.

The Broxtowe Independents now make up the largest group of the 44 councillors, and intend to rule as a minority administration.

The councillors have been in conflict with the national Labour Party machine since before Jeremy Corbyn was elected leader. During Corbyn's leadership, Labour's membership grew to almost 1,300 in Broxtowe. That has since declined by an estimated over 40%.

In the 2017 general election, hundreds campaigned for the current deputy leader of the Broxtowe Independents, Greg Marshall, in an inspiring campaign that cut then Tory candidate Anna Soubry's majority from 4,287 to 863.

The reasons for the split are political. In the words of the council leader, Milan Radulovic, that Labour has "betrayed the working class... The word was change; what we didn't know was that they meant change for the worse."

The council was elected promising no cuts to jobs and services, building council-owned council houses, rebuilding leisure centres, and creating parks and new open spaces to represent the area's cultural heritage around DH Lawrence.

Deputy leader Greg Marshall said: "None of that is going to change, we're going to continue building council houses for homeless veterans, build council houses for those most in need."

These councillors wanted to take their no-cuts budget approach into the larger Nottinghamshire County Council and intended to stand as Labour candidates this May, if selected. However, they were blocked from being able to stand for selection by the Labour Party machine.

Increasingly it became clear to the councillors that the Labour Party machine and Keir Starmer's policies were not going to stand up for the working class, something Socialist Party members have been raising in a comradely way since the removal of Jeremy Corbyn.

Therefore, in order to continue with their no-cuts budget in Broxtowe, to be confident they could stand to continue that work in 2027, and to give themselves an opportunity to fight this May's County Council elections, it was necessary to leave the Labour Party. They intend to make links more widely and register themselves with the Electoral



PHOTO: RICHARD KELLY/CC

Commission. Already 80 people have joined Broxtowe Independents.

The development in Broxtowe opens up opportunities to link up with other left-wing, anti-cuts and socialist campaigners, both regionally and nationally, as part of the development towards a new voice for independent working-class political representation.

Starmer's government has no intention of providing sufficient funds for local authorities and is more interested in reducing local democracy by getting rid of district and borough mayors.

Councillors, like those in Broxtowe, could play an important role in the fight against New Labour Mark II austerity. Councils can set budgets to meet the needs of the community, refusing to ask the working class to pay. By mobilising council and other trade unions, local residents, community groups and activists, campaigns could be waged to demand necessary funds from Starmer's government.

Following the resignations, the Nottinghamshire Trades Council agreed to invite representatives from the Broxtowe Independent councillors to discuss independent working-class representation. This follows at least two previous public debates on the issue organised by the trades council. Ex-Labour MP and now Socialist Party National Committee member Dave Nellist spoke at one.

Although a minority, the Broxtowe Independents intend to continue with their budget and to put other councillors on the spot as to how they will vote. It may be that, despite being predominantly ex Lib-Dems, the similarly named Broxtowe Independent Group (or others) votes for the budget, or that a sufficient number of other councillors abstain, for their own agenda.

Broxtowe Independents are awaiting notification about their application to the electoral commission to register their party name. Until registered with a clear name and one that distinguishes itself from the

Broxtowe Independent Group, there can be confusion.

As the Socialist Party and Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) has raised in our material, registering a clear campaigning party name or standing in a coalition like TUSC avoids the problem with the name 'Independent', which does not differentiate between those on the left and those on the right.

Whichever name eventually appears on the ballot paper, all socialists will be showing support for a no-cuts budget and looking to participate in discussions about the next steps, in a comradely way.

## TRADE UNIONIST AND SOCIALIST COALITION CONFERENCE



The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) steering committee has agreed the agenda and timetable for a conference to be held on Zoom on Sunday February 2nd.

The conference has been convened under the heading, 'Fighting for a new party under the Starmer government. And what role for TUSC?', as the need for a working class political alternative to the Tory-lite New Labour government becomes clearer by the day.

The event will also include a discussion on how to achieve the biggest possible socialist challenge at the first widescale electoral test of the new government, the local elections to be held in May 2025.

There is no pre-registration for the February 2nd conference, which starts at 11am to conclude by 1-30pm. The Zoom details will be published on the Events page on the TUSC website nearer the time.

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

Find out more visit: [tusc.org.uk](http://tusc.org.uk)

# Fight for funding and services for victims of child sexual exploitation

NOTTINGHAM SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBER

The intervention of Elon Musk - the world's richest man, and soon-to-be member of Trump's administration - into the issue of 'grooming gangs' in Britain, is shocking exploitation of the horrors of child sexual abuse.

After the Labour government rejected a new national inquiry to investigate the issue, Musk labelled Jess Phillips, the government's safeguarding minister, a "rape genocide apologist". He has been opportunisticly supported by right-wing elements of the Tory party. Shadow Justice Secretary Robert Jenrick, runner-up in the Tory leadership election, has talked of "alien cultures", backed by Tory leader Kemi Badenoch.

The Tory party's motives are clear: to try and win back voters from Nigel Farage's Reform UK, which has also politically weaponised this issue.

These individuals are calling for a new inquiry into child sexual exploitation by organised networks of adults. Their calls have racist undertones, highlighting those networks that have involved south Asian men, although Home Office data does not show that there is a link between race and child sexual abuse.

Those survivors of child sexual exploitation who have spoken out publicly are overwhelmingly against a new inquiry, instead wanting the recommendations of the previous inquiry to be implemented without further delay.

The Independent Inquiry Into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) took seven years and was published in October 2022. It covered child sexual abuse and exploitation in a range of settings, including religious institutions, prisons, schools, six areas where there were organised exploitation networks, and abuse within the family.

Most child sexual abuse occurs within family settings. Research for the IICSA enquiry found that, of the thousands of survivors they spoke to, 47% were abused by a family member and 42% were abused in their own home.

There were twenty recommendations in the final report, none of which have yet been implemented. These included a national guarantee of specialist therapy for child victims, fully funded and delivered by local authorities.

Ensuring that survivors of abuse, children who are currently being

abused and exploited, and children who are at risk of this, get the support they need will require a massive increase in resources to local authorities and other public agencies.

Given that the Labour government is doubling down on its austerity policies, additional funding will only be secured through a mass struggle involving unions and political and community campaigners to demand the money that's needed.

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# Retail workers forced to pay to receive their wages on time!



PHOTO: USAGBW/CC

TOM GIBSON  
LEEDS AND WEST YORKSHIRE SOCIALIST PARTY

Low-paid retail workers at Young-Ones, a firm supplying workers to high street shops, have to pay a fee to access their wages 'early'. 4.8% to receive the wage instantly, 2.9% within three days, or wait 30 days. Exposed in a report in the Guardian, this is charging people money to gain the fruits of their labour in low-paid jobs, making it all the more severe. It is another example of the reality of the gig economy - temporary low-paid jobs in which employers can exploit workers more easily.

The piece also highlighted the culture of fear, with employees scared

that the lack of regulation means they face the prospect of losing their jobs if they ask for a fairer wage. The way the gig economy is set up means workers, often youth and immigrants, are ripped off.

Trade unions, particularly those that organise retail workers, must take up the fight against this barbaric capitalist exploitation. This would include recruiting members and being prepared to strike against companies which undertake this practice. Many workers will face similar injustices in precarious and low-paid jobs in which unions could unite together to fight for terms and conditions and pay workers can live on.

# Mick Lynch retires

After five years as general secretary of transport union RMT, Mick Lynch has announced he is retiring.

The election of a new general secretary comes at a critical time, as RMT members and the wider working class face up to the reality of a pro-capitalist Labour government attempting to force through even more austerity.

Socialist Party members in the RMT discussed the way forward for the union in an article in the April 2024 edition of Socialism Today entitled 'Militant Mick: Drawing up a balance sheet'.

"Our union needs to prepare for what is ahead. Doing so includes working to bring together the militant reps and activists to fight to reverse the steps back we have taken from Bob Crow's approach. We need to strengthen our democratic structures and wage a campaign of 'membership mobilisation' to prepare our union for the battles we will certainly face under a Labour government. Campaigning for greater coordination with the other rail unions will also be needed. The experience of Starmer in power will also quickly raise the need for us to revisit the political issues, and begin again the pioneering work undertaken by Bob Crow to start to build a party of the working class..."

"A Starmer government acting in the interests of the capitalist class will inevitably try to launch a new offensive against us, as part of its effort to curb the demands of the wider working class. We need to be ready."

- Read the article in full at [www.socialistparty.org.uk/](http://www.socialistparty.org.uk/)
- MickLynch
- And to read more articles from Socialism Today and to get a subscription [www.socialismtoday.org](http://www.socialismtoday.org)



PHOTO: PAUL MATSSON



### John Reid, former RMT NEC member, writes:

Mick Lynch is seen by thousands of trade unionists as someone who personified the ongoing militancy of the largest rail union the RMT. He led the RMT at the forefront of the strike wave and announced that "the working class is back". Mick Lynch also dealt adroitly with the media, launching an onslaught against the bosses and capitalists. This action gave confidence to huge swathes of workers to take action and win.

Just as with Jeremy Corbyn previously, thousands of young people were enthused and became interested in socialist ideas as a result of his comments and the combativeness of the RMT, which many workers regard as the 'praetorian guard' of the trade union movement.

However, Mick had an opportunity to build on the industrial platform by taking the fight on to the political level and building an alternative to Labour after the defeat and expulsion of Jeremy Corbyn and his anti-austerity pro-working class manifesto. The launching of Enough is Enough by Mick Lynch and Communication Workers Union leader Dave Ward offered that opportunity (see 'Is Enough is Enough enough?' in the December 2022 issue of Socialism Today).

However, this project, although sparking massive interest, never got off the ground. Instead, Mick put hopes in Starmer and the incoming Labour government.

Socialist Party members and supporters in the RMT will call on candidates in the coming election for general secretary to pledge to maintain and develop industrial militancy but to couple this with building a new workers' party based on socialism, solidarity and internationalism, to give an alternative to working-class people to the pro-big business pro-billionaire policies of Labour, Tory, Liberal Democrat and Reform.

- Red Line Zoom public meeting 'Where now for the RMT after Mick Lynch?'
- Sunday 9 February 5pm
- Meeting ID: 899 3454 7112
- Passcode: 077984

# Hottest year and LA fires devastation show We need socialist change to prevent climate chaos

ALASDAIR COOK  
DORSET SOCIALIST PARTY

“We lost everything and we don’t know what we are going to do now.” These were the words of a victim who had lost their home of 40 years to the recent Los Angeles (LA) wildfires.

This disaster started in the Pacific Palisades and quickly spread to the neighbouring areas. It has burned through over 40,000 acres of land, 10,000 homes and businesses and has so far killed at least 24 people. The fire still rages on.

What has potentially exacerbated the crisis is budget cuts the local LA fire department has suffered. According to the LA Fire Chief in a December report, the department cuts have affected the “ability to maintain core operations, including training and response to large-scale emergencies”.

Responding to the accusation of cuts, California Democratic Congressman Brad Sherman stated that the cuts “relate to money that’s going to be spent in 2025 and were chiefly for training.”

What a ludicrous ‘justification’! Obviously these fires illustrate the importance of preventing wildfires and other freak weather events. Cuts to the training of new staff will not help the crisis.

Last year was the hottest on record. The average global temperature was 1.5 degrees warmer than pre-industrial times – the limit politicians set themselves to avoid in the 2015 Paris agreement. This level of warming and

above will lead to increased natural disasters such as floods, droughts and wildfires.

Considering this, the notion of the need for budgetary cuts is absurd when top oil and gas companies ExxonMobil, Chevron, Shell, and BP had profits totalling over \$100 billion in 2023.

The profits of the super-rich in the US and globally could be used to fund the services we desperately need. Furthermore, the capitalists’ hoarded wealth could be used to dramatically decarbonise the economy and fix the climate crisis. The climate crisis will create more chaos and destruction if nothing is done and the impact of this will fall on the heads of the working class and poor people around the world.

Already this year, the top 1% have emitted more carbon emissions than it would take a member of the bottom 50% to create in three years.

The US working class cannot rely on Democrats or Republicans who espouse the need for any budget cuts (see pages 8-9). These representatives are only interested in ensuring the profits of the 1% continue and are not interested in holding them accountable for their climate destruction.

A mass workers’ party is desperately needed, in the US and here in Britain. In December, Keir Starmer once again watered down plans for green investment. Only socialism, the working-class using the wealth and resources of society to democratically plan production, can prevent man-made climate change and ensure a habitable planet for future generations.



Firefighters battle a blaze in the Palisades area of LA

## Leicestershire floods – cuts to fire services could lead to disaster

HEATHER RAWLING  
LEICESTER SOCIALIST PARTY

Just because you live on a hill doesn’t mean floods won’t affect you. I’m thankful that my house is not in danger of flooding, but we were virtually cut off from major routes into Leicester after flooding at the start of the year.

My daughter was due to attend a two-day residential training course and I was needed to look after my grandson. Knowing that bad weather was forecast and some parts of my route can be flooded, I checked the flood warning map the night before: no flood alerts.

Nevertheless, I set off in good time. Just after leaving my village, I realised it was not going to be an easy journey. There was much more surface water and puddles across the whole carriageway than I have ever seen before. On the main road, the first bit of flooding wasn’t too deep but the water had brought a stream’s load of stones and gravel onto the road. I hadn’t experienced that before.

Further on, cars had stopped as deep water blocked the way. I turned around and took a different route, in

the dark, with driving snow and deep puddles across the roads. I eventually arrived after diverting down the M1. My daughter missed her train, which was cancelled anyway, as were all others.

Why were warnings not given? Emergency services were overwhelmed!

East Midlands Ambulance Service declared its first ever critical incident and Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service announced a major incident, it received over 380 calls and crews rescued 59 people on the day.



Debris in a lock north of Leicester, flooded in January 2025. MAT FASCIONE/CC

### Saved from cuts

And yet in 2015, Leicestershire Combined Fire Authority proposed to make £1.5 million of cuts which would have led to the loss of eleven appliances (specialised vehicles) and 88 frontline jobs, and fire stations including Leicester Central closing. Thankfully, a massive campaign led by the Fire Brigades Union stopped most of those cuts from taking place. I dread to think what would have happened if they had gone ahead.

Emergency services cannot be run on a ‘just enough staff and resources to just about cope’ basis. Austerity

has cut these services to a minimum, including ambulance services. They should be resourced at all times to be able to deal with critical incidents. We need to fully fund Fire and Rescue and ambulance services and the NHS to ensure that ambulances are not left queuing outside A&E. Kick the privateers out!

Roads near me flood on a regular basis and it seems to be getting worse. Property developers have built houses in areas known to flood. Conservative-run Leicestershire County Council is the Lead Local Flood Authority, and has already cut £262 million from its services since 2010. A mere £1.5 million has been earmarked to tackle flooding in a county where flooding is widespread, even from minor streams, and is getting more frequent. As the effects of climate change are increasingly felt, major flooding incidents will become a bigger problem that working-class people will have to face.

Trade unions and community campaigns can organise to demand no cuts in council services. And to fight for the funding for the emergency services, flood defences and all the services we need.

## Fossil fuel bosses’ bonanza

The effects of fossil fuel-driven climate change are writ large daily, often with deadly consequences. But while the climate plunges us further towards disaster, fossil fuel bosses’ profits boom.

In just a three-hour period during Britain’s cold snap at the start of January, two private gas power station operators charged £12 million for the electricity they generated – at up to 50 times the market rate. And you know who will be asked to pay more in their bills to cover it!

With little wind, high demand, and Britain’s lack of a greener alternative, gas power stations power up to fill the gap. Bosses rub their hands with glee, the energy price system is rigged in their interests, in theory to ensure the power plants stay profitable.

We say nationalise without a penny going to the fat-cat polluting bosses, with compensation only where there is proven need. A fully public energy system, democratically planned by the working class in our interests and those of the environment, could manage the blend of energy to meet need, without shelling out millions in profits to shareholders. It could plan immediate investment in green energy, to remove all fossil fuels from electricity generation, whatever the weather.

# BRITAIN’S BOND JITTERS EXPOSE ECONOMIC FRAGILITY

## Fight for a socialist alternative



### WHAT WE THINK

“This is not a Liz Truss moment”, declared a former director of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) as the pound plummeted and borrowing costs increased to their highest level for nearly 30 years. Maybe not, this time.

Maybe Chancellor Rachel Reeves won’t be going begging just yet to the IMF for an austerity-linked bailout, as the Labour government did in 1976. But the mass sell-off of government bonds, or ‘gilts’, on the financial markets showed yet again what will happen to any government playing within the rigged rules of a crisis-ridden capitalist system. And of course, it will be working-class people who pay the price – unless we organise and fight back.

Even if an acute market crisis is avoided, for now, increased borrowing costs would still lead to a further squeeze on living standards, including via increased remortgaging rates. Labour chancellor Rachel Reeves has tried to play down the market turmoil, insisting that her ‘fiscal rules’ still stand and that Labour’s policies will promote growth. Others have blamed the turbulence in the financial markets on fears that a Trump presidency will lead to inflation and lower global growth.

Those fears are probably justified. But within a fragile and volatile world capitalist system of cut-throat competition for profits, markets and prestige, it’s the weakest economies that are most vulnerable to the ‘bond vigilantes’.

The ‘markets’ have looked at a

British economy that is barely growing and passed their verdict – no confidence that Reeves and Starmer can turn things around. In a new year Financial Times survey of 96 economists, most expected ‘tepid’ economic growth this year, well below official government projections of 2%. The prospect is one of ‘stagflation’ – a stagnating economy combined with persistent inflation, not the boost to growth Labour was promising.

### Cancel the debt

Even before the latest market meltdown, the cost of servicing Britain’s debt was £100 billion a year – more than the entire annual education budget! A workers’ government would refuse to pay the debt to the wealthy shareholders and use that money to invest in crumbling public services and ending the cost-of-living crisis. It would nationalise the banks and financial institutions, implement capital controls and mobilise the working class to democratically control and plan an economy in which the major companies were under public ownership, not in the hands of the super-rich.

At the same time it would appeal to workers in other countries to do the same, as a step towards the international planning and cooperation that is necessary to meet the needs of the majority in society, safeguard the environment, and bring an end to war and conflict.

But, of course, we have a capitalist Labour government whose priority is placating the financial markets and protecting the profit system, not funding our public services and defending workers’ rights and living standards. That’s why Reeves has said she is sticking to her self-imposed ‘fiscal straitjacket’ of no borrowing to fund day-to-day spending – and no taxes on the rich. Starmer has backed that up: “We will be ruthless, as we have been ruthless in the decisions



Reeves and Starmer  
SIMON DAWSON / NO 10 DOWNING STREET/CC

that we’ve taken so far. We’ve got to keep fiscal rules, and we’re going to keep those fiscal rules.”

### More cuts

The capitalist economists themselves are clear what that will mean – even more brutal cuts to decimated public services on top of the austerity already announced in the Budget. The crumbs that Reeves threw then at the NHS and schools are barely enough to keep services at their current dire level. Cancer units at 42 hospital trusts have frozen staff recruitment. More and more hospitals are declaring ‘critical incidents’, overwhelmed by a flu pandemic, with staff working in conditions they liken to the time of Covid.

The prospect of even less funding for hospitals and schools, alongside deeper cuts to local councils, transport, universities etc because of the bond market turmoil, is a nightmare scenario that workers and service users will be forced to fight against.

Many health workers, education staff and civil servants are already livid at the unfunded 2.8% pay increase announced in the Budget. Not only will it do nothing to restore workers’ living standards after years of austerity, it’s also expected to be paid for by cuts to services and jobs. How can public sector union leaders justify to their members agreeing industrial ‘partnership’ with a Labour government that can only offer never-ending austerity?

With great difficulty. Which is why the current situation is untenable. Union leaders, even those on the right of the movement, will come under increasing pressure to channel workers’ anger into strike action on pay and funding.

The new year has begun with members of the NEU education union taking strike action over pay in non-academised sixth form colleges. The NEU has also agreed to carry out an indicative online ballot of teachers – as a possible prelude to a strike ballot. Even right-wing leaders of Unison’s health service group executive have felt compelled to reflect the mood among health workers by speaking out against the pay offer and supporting a campaign for £15-an-hour minimum wage.

### Union action

Of course, the left in the unions will need to continue to organise to put maximum pressure on the union leadership to translate mood and words into action, through calling strike ballots and launching a real campaign for a ‘yes’ vote, and fighting for unions to link up in a coordinated struggle over pay and funding; as well as ensuring that the government sticks to its original pledges on scrapping anti-union laws and improving workers’ rights.

The bosses’ CBI Federation blamed Starmer’s yet-to-be-implemented Employment Rights Bill for making the situation worse, showing that the capitalists are opposed to even its weak potential challenges to the likes of zero-hour contracts and fire and rehire.

A victory for the left in upcoming union elections in civil service union PCS, Unison, and college and university union UCU will strengthen workers’ position in the battles that are looming with the employers and the Labour government.

The recent economic tremors in Britain – a prelude to greater storms here and internationally – and the



**Victory for the left in upcoming union elections will strengthen workers’ position in the battles that are looming**

Starmer government’s anti-working class response to them, will also help to accelerate workers questioning their unions’ ‘political partnership’ with Labour. The idea of standing and supporting workers’ candidates, of looking for political representatives that will promote workers’ interests, and creating a workers’ party that can fight for those both inside and outside parliament, will gain more of an echo and begin to take on flesh.

And as the ‘market madness’ has exposed – any workers’ party would need to organise around a programme that challenged the rotten capitalist system and outlined how a socialist alternative could be built.

Join the fightback

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NEU members on strike in 2023. GLENN KELLY

# Unison NEC elections

## We need a fighting leadership to take on the Labour government

HUGO PIERRE  
UNISON LOCAL GOVERNMENT SERVICE GROUP  
EXECUTIVE, PERSONAL CAPACITY

On 13 January, the nomination process for electing Unison's new National Executive Council (NEC) begins. The election for Unison's national leadership will take place against a background of crisis for members in all the areas the union organises in.

According to the Local Government Association, there is a £4 billion projected deficit in funding of local councils this year, rising to £6.5 billion in 2025-26. This is after councils have lost 22.6% of their core funding since 2010.

In the NHS there are near-record waiting lists in the midst of a winter crisis. Universities face a funding crisis because of the commercialisation of the sector - which could result in some going bankrupt either this financial year or possibly the next. The social care sector is massively understaffed, with nearly a quarter of a million vacancies across all types of care.

The water industry is wracked by rampant profiteering, and the probation and justice services are unable to play the role of rehabilitating offenders because of funding crises.

Labour's Budget severely short-changed public sector workers regarding dealing with any of these long-term crises. And potentially made them worse, with increases to employers' national insurance adding to funding pressures.

The recent government announcement of a 2.8% pay envelope for public sector workers in 2025 will do nothing to repair 15 years of damage that saw most workers lose around 20% of the value of their pay, and now makes working in the sector massively unattractive.

### History of right-wing leadership

Unfortunately, Unison's national leadership has not stepped up to meet the challenges members face in their workplaces. A history of right-wing leadership has left the union organisationally weak, even though it is the largest trade union in Britain with 1.3 million members. Their policy of building a 'members-services-based union' reduced the activist layer, as well as attacking the democratic structures and participation of the membership.

It is clear that the current general secretary, a large section of the paid officials, and a layer of self-serving lay officials want Unison to become a 'partner union' of the Labour government. They have never been prepared to fight alongside the membership in militant struggle, but have largely seen the role of the union as another pressure group or lobbying organisation when opposing attacks on members.

Now they have received documents from the government aimed at



PHOTO: PAUL MATSSON

getting partnership in schools, and presumably the intention of a cost-cutting Labour government is for other sectors to follow.

The only real option for Unison members in the face of these attacks is to develop a fighting programme that organises the members to win on a local and national level, against a government that has set out its plans to protect the bosses' profits and reduce public services to suit their demands. Only a programme that sets its task to fight Labour in power can rebuild the strength of our union.

### Left needs a fighting approach

Since 2021, the left has controlled the NEC, although with a narrow majority since 2023. The left also controls the large Local Government Service Group. An internal battle for the direction of the union has been fought out at this level, but so far it has tended to concentrate on organisational issues that have not involved the wider membership.

The decision by the left bloc Time For Real Change (TFRC) to back for union president an NEC member who was under investigation for harassing female members and staff set the left back. It mobilised a demoralised right wing to win conference decisions to sanction the NEC and force it to reverse some of its decisions.

The wider membership now has to have a say in the direction for our union. The Socialist Party stands for a complete transformation of Unison's leadership and the biggest possible victory for the left in these crucial elections.

Although we have been critical of TFRC's approach on a number of issues, we have nevertheless proposed working together to maximise the possibility of defeating the right. We submitted a programme for a fighting Unison around which the left could organise in the NEC elections, and the election for general secretary which will take place later in the year (see 'For a fighting Unison' at socialistparty.org.uk).

The Socialist Party wants a fighting general secretary who will clearly oppose the 'partnership' model for members and is prepared to develop a fighting trade union that will face down a Labour government.

### Electoral agreement

Unfortunately, TFRC did not agree to adopt this programme. The discussions, whilst largely fraternal, did reveal weaknesses in TFRC's approach to candidates who may be sitting Labour councillors and who are not openly fighting the cuts in their councils.

They were also not prepared to

back a Socialist Party member who supported the women who lodged a complaint of harassment against the ex-president - even though he has since been expelled under the left NEC leadership, subject to his right to appeal.

TFRC have selected Andrea Egan as their candidate in the general secretary election. Socialist Party members will clearly not be bystanders in an election that could have a significant impact on the direction of battles for Unison members in the next five years. We will continue to put forward our ideas for developing a fighting union to the TFRC candidate and during the election campaign.

Seven Socialist Party members will be standing in the NEC elections and TFRC will be standing aside for them. The candidates will stand on our programme and aim to work with TFRC candidates fighting in other constituencies. This will include calling for nomination for nearly all of them, which they have agreed to reciprocate.

Unison members will get the chance to vote for candidates that could make a major difference to the direction the union takes, if they are successfully nominated over the month-long nomination period.

### Socialist Party members standing for nomination:

**Jim McFarlane** - Scotland General seat  
**Rae Cox** - Unison South East reserved seat  
**Eve Miller** - West Midlands reserved seat  
**Adrian O'Malley** - Health general seat  
**Amy Sage** - Police, Probation and Cafcass female seat  
**Ellie Waple** - Disabled Members female Seat  
**April Ashley** - Black Members female seat

In the last week, the current president (a TRFC member) has decided not to stand for re-election to the North West general seat. **James Robinson**, secretary of Knowsley branch, has put his name forward. Knowsley is one of only two branches nationally that smashed through the Tory turnout threshold in last year's pay ballot, and some members are currently taking strike action against Livv Housing. James wants to stand on our programme, and we will back him even though TFRC have belatedly found another candidate.



**We need complete transformation of Unison's leadership and the biggest possible victory for the left in these crucial elections**

### Join the fightback

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

**JOIN THE SOCIALISTS**

• Visit [socialistparty.org.uk/join](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!



PHOTO: PAUL MATSSON

SHEILA CAFFREY  
NEU NATIONAL EXECUTIVE MEMBER, PERSONAL CAPACITY

Labour made many election promises, including the aim to improve the life chances of children and young people, and part of this would be to recruit and retain 6,500 new teachers. So when they put forward a 2.8% pay deal for schoolteachers with no funding - so that schools have to take

it from their already cash-strapped budgets - it went down like a lead balloon.

76% of primaries and 94% of secondaries won't be able to cover the costs. All local authorities will be forced to make cuts.

At an emergency National Executive of the National Education Union (NEU) 7 January, general secretary Daniel Kebede said any campaign should be framed through the funding crisis as well as recruitment and

retention of teachers. The Exec was unanimous in voting to conduct an indicative ballot of schoolteacher members over the level of pay and lack of funding.

Labour still hasn't repealed the Tory anti-trade union turnout thresholds (which Socialist Party members continue to argue trade unions should demand Labour does immediately), and much of the discussion was around how to build the

# NEU agrees indicative national ballot of teachers over pay

Louise Cuffaro, Socialist Party member, raised the importance of leadership and the 'messaging' from the national union. The slogan 'Pay Up' has been criticised widely as not having any real content, as well as not addressing funding - or the myriad other issues including academisation and the loss of accountability in schools. Unfortunately, there weren't any clear answers on this, so it will continue to be something to push.

### No to partnership

In November, the NEU Exec decided, with no membership consultation, to enter a partnership deal with other education unions, employers and the government. Socialist Party members opposed this as an attempt to tie the unions to 'consensus' with employers and make action more difficult - but the majority of the Exec voted for it, including members of the Socialist Workers Party.

Within five days, the 2.8% unfunded pay deal was announced. Louise pointed out that this was no coincidence. The government saw a chance to push back unions further. These points were ignored in the Exec meeting, but the agreement is to be debated at the NEU's annual

conference, so we will continue to campaign against it.

### Support staff

The most heated part of discussion was whether to include the NEU's over 50,000 support staff members in the ballot. I argued that the deliberate attack on funding again is going to put a further burden on schools, where in almost every area we've already seen 'restructures' and redundancies. That disproportionately affects support staff.

I said: "This will disproportionately affect our lowest-paid members, women and part-time members. A strong indicative ballot of support staff over funding would strengthen any action taken by teachers. It'll strengthen local work in schools. It'll strengthen pay negotiations for support staff later this year, as well as add to pressure on other support staff unions to fight."

At least 17 Executive members had been contacted by support staff members before the meeting. Unfortunately, this amendment was heavily lost. However, the discussion has continued to rage on various union social media forums, with support staff members arguing that they want to be balloted to fight alongside the other NEU members in their schools.

# PCS Broad Left Network conference to debate the lead needed to fight Labour's austerity

### SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBERS IN THE BLN

Socialist Party members in the PCS union, which organises civil service and outsourced government workers, played a major role in setting up the PCS Broad Left Network (BLN) in 2019 to help organise members to fight for their interests against the then ruling group in the union, the misnamed Left Unity (LU).

The BLN quickly established itself as the rank-and-file socialist group leading the fight in the union.

In 2023, the BLN formed a coalition with other left groups and individuals on an agreed programme for a fighting and democratic union to contest the PCS general secretary election. BLN chair and Socialist Party member Marion Lloyd came within 800 votes of winning.

In 2024, an agreed left slate of candidates achieved an outstanding victory, winning a 19-16 majority on the National Executive Committee (NEC). Since then, the NEC majority has been blocked at every turn by the president and general secretary, who are members of LU. They have ruled by presidential decrees, which need a two-thirds majority to overturn. So in effect, they are acting as if the vote of members to change the NEC means nothing.

Socialist Party members believe it is vital to continue to build the BLN as a force to give a lead within the union and the wider trade union movement, to take on Labour's new austerity programme.

We also believe it is essential for BLN to continue the electoral coalition which had success in the last national elections, in order to have the best chance of extending that victory so that PCS can resist Starmer's attacks.

The BLN conference on 18 January will be the launch pad for this year's elections and the nominations made by branch AGMs.

The BLN conference will be in agreement on most questions, but there will be two areas of debate.

### Be ready to fight

Firstly, there is the levy paid by PCS members to our union strike fund. The outgoing LU majority imposed the levy without any consultation with reps or members. When they lost the election they opportunistically argued for it to be stopped, thinking this would be popular with members.

The new left NEC majority said stopping the levy would be a mistake, but that there should be a review, with an immediate reduced rate for lower-paid members. Despite the

NEC voting for this, the president has ruled to prevent it happening.

Socialist Party members agree with this position. Stopping the levy would give the wrong message to the government, that the union is not prepared to fight for decent pay and defend jobs. In addition to 2% cuts in the Autumn Budget, Labour has announced a further 10,000 job cuts. We are just about to start talks on 2025 pay. We need to build up our finances now in readiness for the struggles ahead.

### Fighting socialist candidate needed for president

Secondly, there is the issue of who should be the alliance candidate for president. We believe it should be Marion Lloyd. In terms of unifying activists and preparing members for the battles to come, there is no one better placed. She has an outstanding record over many years in challenging the union bureaucracy and leading successful campaigns, and has played a leading role in battling the attempts of the general secretary and current president to block the elected NEC. Marion has huge respect and experience across the union.



PHOTO: ROB WILLIAMS

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# TRUMP'S SECOND PRESIDENCY BEGINS

## Interview with a US socialist



The Socialist spoke to Clare Bayler, member of Independent Socialist Group – the Socialist Party's co-thinkers in the United States.

**Donald Trump is being inaugurated on 20 January. Lots of people in Britain are repulsed by his reactionary rhetoric and find it hard to understand what led to him being re-elected. How did he win?**

Donald Trump won the 2024 US presidential election with a narrow majority of the popular vote. Working-class people are rightly concerned about the brutal attacks that will come from a second Trump Presidency. Ultimately Kamela Harris and the Democratic Party were unable to defeat Trump because they represent and defend the same capitalist system as the Republican Party.

Workers have experienced plummeting living conditions in the last few years. In pre-election polls, 81% of voters said the economy was their number one issue in the elections. Inflation has increased 21% since 2020, the federal minimum wage has remained at \$7.25 an hour since 2009, and housing costs are at a record high.

Yet at the same time as Trump was re-elected, ballot questions (direct

voting on policies) passed in states – including traditionally 'Republican' and swing states – to protect abortion rights, expand union rights, and raise minimum wages.

70% of Americans supported abortion 'in all or most cases' in a poll from June 2024. In November, in ten states where abortion was on the ballot, votes in eight showed a clear majority in support of the right to choose. Far from a massive rightward shift, these results show that reproductive rights remain popular with a large majority of Americans.

Voters approved ballot measures making it easier for workers in Oregon and Massachusetts to unionise. Arkansas and Missouri passed measures to increase those states' minimum wage to \$15 an hour. These two states, along with Nebraska, also

the failures of the Obama administration to raise living standards, end the war in Iraq (and elsewhere), pass universal healthcare, and more. Many working-class people's lives were devastated by the 2007-09 Great Recession, during which Obama bailed out banks and large corporations, while allowing mass home foreclosures and the removal of pensions.

Trump's claims to be a political outsider spoke to people's real need for change. When Trump in turn failed to improve the lives of the majority of Americans, his popularity fell such that he was unable to secure a second term. Joe Biden was elected as the 'anyone-but-Trump' candidate, and vowed that he would champion the status quo that voters rejected just four years before.

### Biden's legacy

The Biden administration laid the grounds for Trump to make a comeback by refusing to entertain the idea of universal healthcare during the pandemic, bailing out big business (again) during the Covid recession, taking no measures to stop historic 'greedflation', allowing the overturn of abortion rights, and backing Israel's genocide in Gaza. Harris, running in Biden's place, defended and campaigned on the same unpopular policies.

A serious strategy to defeat Trump would have been to offer real improvements. Left-wing demands like universal healthcare, raising the federal minimum wage, taxing the rich, and many others are overwhelmingly supported by voters. The Democratic Party has repeatedly refused to move in this direction, dangling reproductive rights, student loan cancellations, and closing the ICE detention camps in front of workers' faces during campaigns and then abandoning these demands once in office – including periods when Democratic administrations controlled both houses of Congress. The Democrats are also adept at derailing and co-opting mass protest movements which can challenge the right in the streets – the Anti-Trump marches, Black Lives Matter, and abortion rights protests most recently.

By posing as the representatives of the left, while in reality working to prevent independent working-class political representation, the Democratic Party has created an enormous vacuum for real left-wing, class-based politics. Some turn to Trumpism in vain hope, but there's also a tremendous opportunity for a new political party to emerge that is in reality of, by, and for the working class.

### What faces Trump during his first year in office?

As the Trump administration takes office, it will be unable or unwilling to do anything but sharpen the many crises in which capitalism finds itself. Tariffs and other protectionist measures, tax cuts for the rich, and cuts to social programmes will not shore up the foundations of US capitalism or meet the aspirations of workers hoping for the return of good jobs.

Attempts to reposition US imperialism to better confront the rise of China will be hamstrung by the shaky economy. While Trump, and others inspired by him, attempt to pose as 'pro-labor', they are likely to run up against a labor movement which has record support from the public, especially if sections of the capitalist class push Trump to play hardball with attacks on workers' rights and wages to prop up their profits.

While there is a lot of anxiety around Trump's administration, he

doesn't rule with impunity. Sections of the capitalist class and political establishment are anxious that his actions could provoke mass movements in opposition. They will exert pressure behind closed doors, or even use legal challenges to try to keep the Trump administration within the limits of acceptable 'presidential behaviour' to accomplish their goals. Any number of crises, whether economic, political, or geopolitical, could come to a head under Trump's administration and result in him losing the support of the sections of the capitalist class that back him.

In carrying out policies in service to corporate interests, the Trump administration may end up in head-on confrontations with the labor movement, losing the support of his working-class voters. We are not powerless – mass movements and workers' action can defeat Trump's attacks.

### The last time Trump was inaugurated there were Women's Marches of millions across the US. There were protests in Britain too. Are there protests planned in the US this time?

The Independent Socialist Group is calling, helping organise, and participating in Inauguration Day protests where we have members. These protests need to be used as a launching point for a new, sustained, mass protest movement against the Trump administration, its corporate backers, and the far right.

Mass protests and strike mobilisations during the first Trump administration were able to halt or reverse the Muslim travel ban, repeal of the Affordable Care Act (limited healthcare reform), and the government shutdown resulting from Trump's demand for border wall funding. Isolated victories like these will not be enough to defeat Trump. But they proved that the working class isn't powerless against a Trump presidency and prevented or delayed him from pushing parts of his anti-worker agenda through.

Opposing Trump means creating a movement of working people able to draw in significant layers of the working class. Repression like the crackdowns on Gaza protests and encampments last year is intended to create a chilling effect, pressuring organisers to be less visible and limiting the ability for protest movements to develop. Understandably fearing further repression under the Trump administration, some groups organising anti-Trump actions are turning towards more underground methods of organising. But small underground groups can't substitute themselves for the power that the working class wields when organised openly on a mass scale. Premature use of these underground tactics of organising leaves the working class as a whole in the dark and stands in the way of the formation of such a mass movement.



Women's march in Washington in 2017 TED EYMAN/CC

Nebraska AFL-CIO trade union federation endorsing pro-worker candidate Dan Osborn RAMSEYWILL/CC



### What are the tasks for socialists in the US with Trump in the White House?

We need to help build not just a defensive, but an offensive campaign to take on the conditions and the capitalist system that creates figures like Trump and the far right.

It's crucial for the working class to build its own political party in order to break the stranglehold of the ruling corporate duopoly. A mass, left-wing workers' party – made up of working-class people including socialists, progressives, and organised labor – backed and funded largely by unions, and firmly independent of the two existing capitalist parties, has the potential for massive popular support. But it will need significant finances and resources to get off the ground.

Unions can play a major role in this. For the eighth year in a row, support for unions exceeded 60% while support for the two corporate parties reached no more than 51%. Gallup polls have also shown around 60% of all Americans are in favour of a third major political party. If the 70% support for the labor movement in

2024 had translated into vote shares for a hypothetical candidate in the presidential election, it would have equalled 107 million votes, over 30 million more votes than either the Democrats or Republicans received.

### A mass workers' party could win

The viability of such a party was demonstrated by the Dan Osborn campaign for US Senate in Nebraska. Osborn, a former union strike leader, campaigned as a pro-working class, pro-union candidate, independent of both the Democrats and the Republicans. He called for increasing the minimum wage, adopting the pro-union PRO Act, and ending corporate money in elections. He secured the endorsement of many unions and raised nearly \$8 million without accepting any corporate donations. While he narrowly lost (47.7%), he pulled even with the Republican incumbent in the polls towards the end of the campaign, before a big-money ad offensive against him.

Osborn outperformed every Democrat candidate for US Senate in Nebraska since 2006 and got a higher percentage of votes than Harris (47% to 39%). While there are valid criticisms of Osborn's campaign, especially around his position on immigration, it demonstrated that working-class demands resonate even in states written off as 'conservative' by liberals. Osborn was a first-time candidate, campaigning without the benefit of any sort of party infrastructure, and also outperformed any other independent or third-party candidate anywhere in the 2024 elections.

Imagine if the political resources of the labor movement were put towards establishing a new working-class party. In 2020,

unions spent \$1.8 billion on the elections. Those resources mean that a new party backed by a major union would immediately be seen as a much more serious force than even long-established third parties.

Socialists need to be at the forefront of making the case for a workers' party, including agitating inside the unions and campaigning for a new political strategy for the labor movement. However it will likely be necessary to lead by example, with socialist groups running independent candidates and pushing protest movements and other left and progressive groups to do the same. Between now and the 2026 and 2028 elections it will be key for socialists to initiate and fully participate in movements to defend those who will be targeted by the Trump administration, as well as campaigns to win concessions from the capitalist class. Socialists will need to be making the case for an independent, working-class political party as an indispensable tool in the fight for workers' interests.

Even starting at the local or state level, individual candidates or small groups can make some major breakthroughs and help lead campaigns for higher wages, improved funding and staffing for public services, taxes on the rich and large corporations, and much more. With some momentum from victories and the outline of a party, major labor unions may be broken away from the Democratic Party.

A new party with a clear pro-worker platform could help build a workers' movement around shared needs, class issues, and struggles. With socialists campaigning within such a party for it to take up socialist ideas, it could open the way for demands neither corporate party will touch, such as nationalising key sectors of the economy like heating, electricity, telecommunications, and healthcare, as well as point the path toward building a socialist alternative to capitalism globally.



# SOCIALIST STUDENTS CONFERENCE 2025

SATURDAY 8TH OF FEBRUARY AT 10AM  
REGISTRATION OPENS AT 9AM  
HIGHFIELDS CENTRE, LEICESTER LE2 ODS

COME ALONG AND DISCUSS HOW TO FIGHT FOR  
FREE EDUCATION, AN END TO WAR AND SOCIALIST  
CHANGE!



# Stop Manchester uni doubling rents

ROBBIE DAVIDSON  
MANCHESTER SOCIALIST STUDENTS

The University of Manchester has announced that the rents will more than double at three student housing complexes in Fallowfield: Oak House, Owen's Park, and Woolton Hall.

Following the success of last year's student rent strike in Manchester, rents in Fallowfield were reduced by 30%, standing out against the cost-of-living crisis.

The complex also hosts the cheapest venue for students in the city by far, Squirrels Bar. Squirrels will also be demolished, chipping away at our ability to socialise affordably.

### Labour disgrace

Combined with Labour's disgraceful hike in tuition fees, the rent hike means students in Oak House will pay almost £5,000 more per year. This is amidst already brutal conditions for many young people, with average expenditure far exceeding student loans.

Food bank use amongst students

stands at record highs, as do the rates of self-harm and suicide. But the bosses at the University of Manchester are using the people they are supposed to look after as a tool to close the funding gap left by a decade and a half of austerity.

Students will pay almost

# £5,000

more per year

Socialist Students is demanding that rents are not doubled, and that they remain at a fixed, stable rate. We believe that high-quality, affordable housing must be made available to all, overseen by a democratic body of students, staff, and the community, who decide how our homes are priced.

The rent rises will come after the student blocks are redeveloped. Regeneration of the complex is necessary, it is falling apart. Students face regular

infestations, broken amenities, and share a few dozen washing machines between thousands of people.

### Multimillion privatisation

Regeneration, while keeping rents stable, is not possible with a multimillion-pound contract with a private construction company. But a nationalised building service, under the democratic control of working people, would be able to do that.

We demand that Squirrels, and other affordable venues, are protected, allowing students to relax and socialise, without further straining our cost of living.

This attack can only be fought by a unified response, bringing together students, trade unions, and campus activist groups. To achieve this, Socialist Students is calling for a general meeting that everyone can attend to discuss the fight back – not just to protect a few blocks, but to fight for the funding our universities need, out of the pockets of the super-rich.

Read 'End the student housing crisis' at [socialistparty.org.uk](https://socialistparty.org.uk)

# Labour's failure brings people to Waltham Forest's socialists

ELLEN KENYON-PEERS  
WALTHAM FOREST SOCIALIST PARTY

Waltham Forest Socialist Party was glad to welcome 20 people to our first meeting of 2025. Camden and Haringey Socialist Party member Nick Avache spoke brilliantly about 'What Brexit means: British capitalism and the bosses' EU in crisis', which set the tone for an engaging discussion in the room around the 2016 European Union referendum.

In the discussion, we were able to point out how the Socialist Party campaigned, independent of the official Leave and Remain campaigns. Some of our newer members were surprised that the Socialist Party had run a socialist and working-class campaign to leave the bosses' EU, even asking if we regret this position in hindsight.

Our speaker reminded the room that David Cameron's austerity Tories led the Remain campaign. A workers' Brexit could have split Labour and the Tories, creating space for a Jeremy Corbyn and trade union-led left-wing exit of the EU.

This serves as an important reminder that some newer Socialist Party members are being introduced to the socialist arguments around relatively recent events for the first time. Several were not old enough to vote when the referendum was held, and were largely unaware of debate in the workers' movement around leaving the capitalist, bosses' EU.

In Waltham Forest, Labour's failure to deliver has undoubtedly resulted in some previously socialist-curious and Socialist Party-curious people to seek out an alternative. We need to demonstrate to these people that we are a fighting organisation week-in, week-out – ready to take the struggle to the streets, and get stuck in with local campaigns.

The important questions being

posed by these new people are central to our programme of Socialist Party meetings in Waltham Forest. We must revisit what our role has been in recent history.

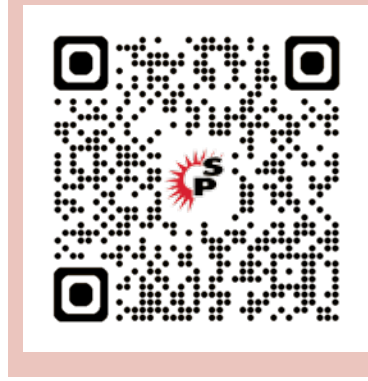
In addition to improving attendance in branch meetings, we are also happy to see new people joining us for campaign activity on stalls and picket lines. Long may it continue.

- What is your Socialist Party branch discussing? Let us know at [editors@socialistparty.org.uk](mailto:editors@socialistparty.org.uk)
- Read more - 'Socialists and the EU referendum' at [socialistparty.org.uk](https://socialistparty.org.uk)

## Come and discuss Come to a Socialist Party meeting near you

The Socialist Party has regular meetings in towns and cities across the country.

- If you would like to participate: [socialistparty.org.uk/events](https://socialistparty.org.uk/events)
- Or text 07761 818206 with your name and postcode.



Waltham Forest Socialist Party campaigning

# Croydon Tories close libraries

BEN GOLDSTONE  
CROYDON AND SUTTON SOCIALIST PARTY

Croydon Tory council closed the doors on four libraries in November. The council announced that this closure would allow it to increase the opening hours and offer more services at the remaining nine libraries.

They have also been forced to put on a shuttle service for residents whose local library has closed down, to ferry them to the nearest library. It's only for particular days, but it shows the pressure councils are under from residents not to make cuts.

The council has announced they could open up closed libraries as 'community hubs', but this time only run by residents and community groups. These public services should be staffed by workers. The unions have huge power to fight these cuts.

### Labour and Tory cuts

In a consultation, two thirds said that they opposed the library closures, ignored by the council. Labour and Tory councils in Croydon had already reduced library opening hours, and cut funding by £800,000 between 2019 and 2022.

Residents' council taxes have increased by 21% over the last two years, with another 4.99% increase proposed for this year. Residents continue to pay more, whilst receiving less.

Libraries offer a vital service to the community. Not just books, but computers with internet, a warm place during the winter for people unable to afford their heating, and company and community for those experiencing loneliness.

The council says it will provide more activities and events, and a library outreach service. But this will



Socialist Party campaigning against Croydon library closures

pale in comparison to having an actual local library.

Croydon Council should not be closing some libraries to fund others. Instead of cuts to public services, there should be a massive expansion.

### Unelected

The council is mired in financial dispute, announcing 'bankruptcy' three times since 2020. This meant unelected commissioners were sent in to make cuts, which Labour and Tory councillors did nothing to oppose. And now it's a Labour central government instructing commissioners to make cuts in Croydon.

Local councils should be fighting for funding from central government, instead of passing on cuts to the working class. The money is there in society, so that these public services can be properly funded, it just lies in the hands of the capitalist elite.

### We decide

Labour and Tories have shown that they are not willing to fight for this funding. We need a mass anti-austerity workers' party that will fight for a socialist alternative, where we can decide how society is run, and how public funding is spent.

# Unions demand fair pensions from Plaid's Carmarthenshire Council

## Workers gave blood, sweat, and years

MARK EVANS  
CARMARTHENSHIRE COUNTY UNISON, RETIRED MEMBERS' BRANCH SECRETARY (PERSONAL CAPACITY)

For the first ten years as Carmarthenshire Unison secretary, with 4,000 members, I cannot recall a case of a member being refused ill-health retirement, or being unhappy with getting a higher (worse) tier than they expected.

But three years ago, the pension doctor retired, and the council employed a company from Cardiff. Suddenly, a significant number of members were either refused ill-health retirement, or given a worse tier than they expected.

### Refused

We raised this issue. But senior management refused to acknowledge it was happening.

Workers were being dismissed on 'ill-health', as they could not perform any job in the council. But when they applied for ill-health retirement, they were told they were not eligible!

Management said they would only let workers know if they would be getting ill-health retirement in exceptional circumstances. Some workers were getting PIP disability payment,

not easy to get, but could not get ill-health retirement!

Often the explanation from the company doctor was our union member was awaiting an operation, and this could improve their condition, so that they would be able to work. Never mind that there was a waiting list of several years for some operations, with no guarantee of success. Members were left unable to work, and without an income.

### We feel squeeze

Making ill-health retirement harder to access is a consequence of cuts. The council tightens its belt, and we feel the squeeze.

The retired Unison branch and Unite the Union lobbied Dyfed Pensions Board, which includes Carmarthenshire, on 8 January. We will continue to demand the council makes acquiring ill-health retirement a fair process, and that the council stops passing on cuts.

The Plaid Cymru council, with its fingers crossed behind its back, is promoting 'social partnership'. But it cannot even ensure staff that have given blood, sweat, and years to the local authority get the pension they have paid for and deserve.

# Amazing end to 2024: £53,471 raised

CHRIS NEWBY  
SOCIALIST PARTY FIGHTING FUND ORGANISER

The Socialist Party has smashed it's final quarter fighting fund target of 2024, raising a fantastic £53,471 – more than double our target. Thank you for the tremendous effort from Socialist Party members and supporters. Much of this was raised at the excellent appeal at Socialism 2024. £12,000 of this appeal was donated to help fund the work of the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI) around the world. The remaining £37,197 went into the fighting fund total.

The Socialist Party also received donations on our street and campaign activity. £100 raised on a Gaza demo in Sheffield, £65 raised in Carlisle campaigning to nationalise the energy companies, £34.50 raised in Birmingham campaigning to stop the cutting of winter fuel payments, or £37.50 raised in Swansea campaigning on 'fund services not war'.

On these campaign stalls, the anger of people towards the Labour

government comes through loud and clear. The donations that we receive show the support that people have for the campaigning work that we are doing, and the socialist policies that we put forward.

The fundraising efforts did not stop there. Socialist Party members did all they could to raise as much as possible to make sure that we have the necessary funds to produce our leaflets, posters, and placards for the stormy events of 2025.

In Hackney, east London, £152.50 was raised at a Christmas meal, £50 was raised at a Christmas party in Teesside, and £270 was raised at a social event in Liverpool.

With 2025 promising to be a year of struggle, it is vital that we now do all we can to meet the fighting fund target for the new quarter, and make sure we can get the socialist message out as widely as possible. We have a target of £25,000 to raise in this quarter, ending on the 31 March.

[socialistparty.org.uk/donate](https://socialistparty.org.uk/donate)



## SOCIALIST PARTY FIGHTING FUND

AREA	£ RECEIVED	£ TARGET	Q4: OCTOBER-DECEMBER 2024	FINAL CHART
Southern & SE	6,534	2,400		272%
South West	4,718	2,100		225%
West Midlands	5,020	2,700		186%
East Midlands	3,524	2,050		172%
Yorkshire	4,450	2,650		168%
North West	1,893	1,200		158%
London	7,722	5,000		154%
Wales	2,994	2,400		125%
Eastern	1,596	1,300		123%
Northern	805	800		101%
Other	14,215	2,400		592%
TOTAL	53,471	25,000		214%

### Breaking news – Nigeria Solidarity

The start date of the trial for Democratic Socialist Movement (DSM) member Micheal Lenin, the Socialist Party's sister party in Nigeria, and other #endbadgovernance protesters has been rescheduled for Wednesday 29 January. They face

charges of treason, with a potential death penalty, for protesting against hunger and economic crisis.

Please urgently step up letters of protest, support for the online petition, and trade union solidarity. Details at [nigeriasolidarity.com](https://nigeriasolidarity.com).

### Independents that ousted Labour speak at Batley to Dewsbury Gaza march

Nearly 100 marched from Batley to Dewsbury in West Yorkshire to protest against the Israeli state's occupation of and attacks on Gaza. Such is the feeling in the area that in both the general and local authority elections, independent candidates were elected to oust sitting Labour representatives that refused to oppose the war on Gaza.

At the end of the march, two of these independents councillors spoke at the rally. They recounted how their campaign had helped lose Labour its majority in Kirklees, making an impact in opposing the killing of Palestinians in Gaza.

Reference was made to the 76,000 killed Palestinians in a region that, in the past, had seen Christians, Jews, and Muslims living side by side peacefully. We need a new mass political party for the working class that fights for justice, in defence of Palestinians, and against the war.

JOHN VASEY  
WAKEFIELD SOCIALIST PARTY



## WHAT WE STAND FOR

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

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

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

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

- 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 sick pay, 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

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!

Help fund the fightback!

## DONATE TODAY

[socialistparty.org.uk/donate](http://socialistparty.org.uk/donate)

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.

# Sheffield bin workers fight 'duplicitous' bosses



PHOTO: ALAISTAIR TICE

ALAISTAIR TICE  
SHEFFIELD SOCIALIST PARTY

In the weeks before Christmas, Sheffield refuse workers at outsourcing company Veolia were angry and dismayed after the company backed out of an agreed recognition deal at the eleventh hour.

Unite members have been on strike now for over 20 weeks, seeking a recognition agreement as they make up a significant proportion of the workforce at the Lumley Street depot.

A deal had been reached following months of strike action, protests and painstaking negotiations by Unite representatives. Unite members voted on the picket line on a proposal that the company put forward and this was agreed. This agreement was relayed to Veolia.

Unite representatives were then due to meet to discuss a return-to-work agreement - a common issue following strikes and a further indication that a recognition agreement had been reached.

However, at the last minute, Veolia reneged and backed out of the deal, leaving Unite members on the picket line furious at such a betrayal.

Unite national lead officer Onay

Kasab said: "Our members are rightly furious that Veolia would reach an agreement, which is based on a document which they drafted and proposed, only for them to now say they will not stand by it. In effect, Veolia has withdrawn its own proposal once the union agreed it. We made no additional demands. This is straightforward duplicity. But we will not back down. We will not give in."

Returning to the picket line in the new year, the strikers are even more determined to win recognition for the union of their choice. The leverage campaign has intensified with Unite organisers increasing pressure on Sheffield City Council, which out-sources the waste contract, and at Veolia's Paris headquarters.

A deal had been reached following months of strike action, protests and painstaking negotiations by Unite representatives. Unite members voted on the picket line on a proposal that the company put forward and this was agreed. This agreement was relayed to Veolia.

Unite strikers remain confident that they will win recognition. They will have to rebuild trade union density and unity with those in other unions to be able to defend all workers from victimisation and fight for better pay and conditions.

# Sixth form strikes 'We are the backbone of society. If you want good teachers you have to pay for it'



Wyke College NEM MCCALL

## Coventry teachers fight pensions attack

JANE NELLIST  
COVENTRY SOCIALIST PARTY

NEU and NASUWT teacher members at the Coventry Foundation Trust took strike action on 9 January over the removal of all teachers from the Teachers' Pension Scheme - meaning an effective 12% pay cut and a threat to 'fire and rehire' teaching staff. A further eight days of strike action is planned over January.

Teachers on the picket line were

determined to fight this atrocious attack on their pay and pensions, making the retention and recruitment of new teachers more difficult.

According to Coventry NEU, the organisation has a bloated management structure with outrageous salaries at the top of the trust.

What was clear from talking to those teachers on the picket line was that they are determined to fight these attacks on their conditions of service.



PHOTO: COVENTRY SOCIALIST PARTY

## Livv Housing strikers determined to fight poor pay and conditions

ROGER BANNISTER  
LIVERPOOL SOCIALIST PARTY

Workers on strike at Livv Housing in Knowsley, Merseyside, are determined to fight on. Members of Unison and Unite are involved in this dispute.

The CEO of this housing trust has a salary in excess of the prime minister's, and Livv continues to report year-on-year surpluses amounting to millions of pounds, but she expects Livv employees to manage on a pay rise that takes no account of the drop in real earnings as a result of inflation.

In addition to low wage rates,

Livv workers have a poor pension scheme compared to public sector schemes, poor sick pay, and a draconian sickness absence policy that leaves them afraid to go off sick. Contact centre workers are expected to work evenings and weekends with no enhancements for the unsocial hours, call-out rates have not been increased for 15 years, and annual increments have been abolished.

Against this background, few people will be surprised that these workers have resorted to strike action!

The unions have planned a programme of strike action throughout January, and are drawing up plans

HANNAH COULSON  
NEU MEMBER IN WYKE COLLEGE

Having met the threshold for strike action, my colleagues and I have now completed five days of industrial action over December and January.

I am one of two National Education Union (NEU) representatives at Wyke Sixth Form College in Hull, and myself and my fellow rep are so pleased with the action staff members have taken. We have seen great picket lines, despite the freezing cold temperatures, on each of our strike days and a real determination to fight for a fair pay deal.

Every one of our members who has walked out believes in the same thing: that we deserve exactly the same pay award as colleagues in academised sixth forms. That the government has created this bizarre two-tier situation is beyond common sense to us and we are all increasingly frustrated with the lack of response.

Our January strike days were particularly effective because we managed to get some local media presence. A few colleagues and I spoke to the local BBC news and were on various radio stations across a couple of days, and an article about our strike action was also on the BBC website. This has given us some hope that we are getting somewhere.

As teachers in a non-academised sixth form college, we feel like a very small group of professionals, and easily ignored. However, as one of my colleagues told the BBC, we (along with teachers in all sectors) are the backbone of society: without us, there are no doctors, nurses, lawyers, engineers. So, we keep on fighting. For the pay, but also to stand up for our profession. If you want good teachers, you have to pay for it.

# Princes workers stand up to greedy bosses



Cardiff DAVE REID

DAVE REID  
CARDIFF SOCIALIST PARTY

Unite members at Princes factory in Cardiff took their second round of industrial action against the attempt of the company's new owners, Newlat, to renege on a pay offer of 4.5% and impose a 3% pay deal that does not begin to address the losses from increases in the cost of living.

While food companies like Princes have increased their prices by up to 20% over the last three years, their workers are being given 3% without any negotiation at all - the company even refuses to take the dispute to ACAS.

Cardiff workers have been joined in action by workers at the Princes plants in Bradford, Glasgow, Long Sutton and Wisbech. GMB and Usdaw unions are balloting at some plants too. With a threat to the production of Branston and Cross & Blackwell products, this really is a 'spreading' strike.

"It's not just about 1.5%," Jason said on a freezing Cardiff picket line. "We've got to think what will happen next year too. If they get away with this then they'll try another low offer".

Newlat bought Princes from Mitsubishi last year, and 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."

Unite says: "Newlat borrowed huge sums of money to pay Princes and is now looking to cut corners and penny-pinch to pay that money back. Unite won't let them do so with our members' livelihoods." Workers will not accept paying for the sale of their own workplaces.

Despite the polar weather, members of Cardiff Socialist Party and of eight union branches, mobilised by Cardiff Trades Council, have been warmly welcomed as they brought solidarity to the picket line.

Action is planned at the five plants for another two days starting on 28 January and if necessary for other strike days.

### Bradford

At the Bradford site, strikers told us how after five months of ignoring the union, on Monday morning management contacted Unite asking for talks. Pickets told us that while this shows the strike action is having an effect, they'll believe the company is genuine when they get the rise they are due.

### IAIN DALTON

LEEDS AND WEST YORKSHIRE SOCIALIST PARTY



Bradford IAIN DALTON

# Canada Trudeau resigns amid growing working-class disillusion

CLARE HUDSON  
CWI CANADA

Within the first days of 2025, the Canadian Liberal Party prime minister Justin Trudeau announced his resignation. In response, US president-elect Donald Trump reiterated his threats of a 25% tariff on Canadian and Mexican exports and continued to call for Canada to join the US as the '51st state.'

These events reflect the chaos and instability of capitalism internationally. At a time of stagnation and crisis, the question of how to ideologically shore-up and force the continuation of the capitalist system is being 'fought out' among the billionaires and their politician friends. Those in the camp of holding onto the status quo, such as Trudeau, are losing support from large sections of workers and youth who are desperate for an alternative to poverty and are struggling to survive in the face of the cost-of-living crisis.

## Election

A Canadian federal election will be called this year and, due to Trudeau's resignation, it is predicted to take place in the first half, once a new Liberal leader is chosen. Trudeau was elected in 2015 with a majority Liberal parliament after ten years of a Conservative parliament. The last federal election in 2022 resulted in a minority Liberal parliament, forcing them to rely upon the support of the New Democratic Party (NDP) and Bloc Quebecois (BQ) to pass motions and bills.

The NDP, which is considered 'centre-left', withdrew support from the Liberals in parliamentary votes in September 2024, in preparation for a 2025 federal election and the need to be seen as politically separate from one another. Being in cahoots with each other, the NDP with BQ have been able to use their position as leverage to push through policies such as free dental care for seniors (old age pensioners) and those on low income. Given that a third of Canadians do not have dental insurance, this policy, despite limitations, was understandably welcomed by many working-class Canadians. However, despite the NDP calling-out the billionaires and pointing to the disparity between rich and poor, its lack of a clear alternative to the system that causes these inequalities is a missed opportunity to build a real workers' alternative.

Trudeau's announcement to resign on 6 January came as no surprise given months of internal pressure for his resignation among Liberal Party caucuses, in addition to growing anger among many Canadians who have seen their quality of life deteriorate during the cost-of-living crisis. In spring 2024, nearly half (45%) of Canadians reported that rising prices were greatly affecting their ability to meet day-to-day expenses. Young people, people with disabilities, First



PHOTO: PRIME MINISTER JUSTIN TRUDEAU/CC

Nation, Inuit and Metis communities and seniors are disproportionately represented in these numbers. According to Food Bank Canada, food bank usage across Canada in 2024 increased 90% compared to 2019, with a third of monthly clients being children.

Canada is also in the midst of an opioid crisis, whereby 49,105 deaths since 2016 have been attributed to opioid toxicity. This epidemic is taking the lives of predominantly young people and is a symptom of a sick system that causes mental illness, unemployment and underemployment, and homelessness. In addition, global climate change has taken its toll on many Canadian communities that have faced devastating consequences from fire, drought and floods. Meanwhile, the gap between the rich and poor continues to widen. Due to these conditions, anger and discontent at this system is rising among workers and youth, many of whom want to see an end to inequality, discrimination, and exploitation.

However, in response to many of the societal ills caused by capitalism, the anger that exists among a section of workers and youth is being reflected in misguided illusions, and a corresponding growth in support for right-wing ideologies and right-populist ideas. Centred with their anger

specifically at Trudeau and the Covid-19 restrictions and mandates, the 'Canada Convoy protest' and blockade of downtown Ottawa in 2022 illustrated the growing influence of right-wing populism in Canada.

The momentum against Trudeau has been somewhat channelled by the right-wing populist, Pierre Poilievre, who is leading the Conservative Party of Canada. Poilievre is being openly endorsed by billionaire Elon Musk, and Trump saying that Poilievre "aligns with his views." Poilievre's platform is vague and often lacks specifics but has garnered attention and support with generalised soundbite slogans, such as that he is the "champion of a free market" and a "fighter for people taking ownership of and responsibility for their own futures." The 'axe the tax' election campaign, which refers to the carbon tax, has gathered support among workers struggling to afford fuel amidst the cost-of-living crisis. However, Poilievre is no friend of workers and youth in Canada. He has voted against women's reproductive rights five times. In addition, the Conservatives have attempted to block bills pertaining to workers' rights.

The coming federal election will take place during an unprecedented time. In addition to issues such as employment, housing, health and

cost-of-living at home, the continued support from Trudeau's government in relation to the genocide in Palestine is causing anger and disillusion among many. The Canadian economy, which is an important factor related to Trump's tariff threats, relies heavily on natural resources, such as oil, lumber, natural gas, and hydroelectricity, in addition to vehicle production, agriculture, dairy etc. Many of these resources are exported to the USA, including over Canadian \$309.3 billion in the first three quarters of 2024 alone. Trump was quoted as saying: "We [USA] don't need anything they have." However, the facts are that the US relies on Canada for many exports that cannot be supplied from within the US.

The events that are unfolding should be understood in the context of the complexities of the population, geography, and the history of Canada. The country is divided into ten provinces and three territories, spanning six time zones, and has two official languages: French and English. The history of colonialism in Canada is complex and inevitably leaves many unresolved issues of racism and discrimination that stem from it and which are unsolvable under capitalism. The genocide of Indigenous peoples throughout Canada is the foundation upon which the country was built. In addition, the national question regarding the rights of self-determination for the people of Quebec is one which is unresolved.

There is a rich history of trade union activism, workers' solidarity and social movements in Canada which, despite the weakening of the trade union movement in recent history, is accredited for the fact that over 30% of the population remain members of trade unions and there have been developments seeing previously unionised workers forming unions. Recent strikes by Canada Post workers and dock workers in Vancouver and Montreal show the potential strength of workers when fighting for better pay and conditions.

## Workers' party

The need for a mass workers' party is an urgent task. The trade unions, many of whom have significant resources at their disposal, have a duty to the working class in helping to fight against divisive right-wing ideas and to develop an alternative to the pro-capitalist governments both provincially and federally. Unions with ties to these parties should cut those affiliations so that that workers and youth can be free to be part of building and organising a party to call their own. The ramping-up of the alliance between the super-rich and politicians, which is nothing new, has taken on a new and sharper appearance with the open and public collaboration of figures such as Trump and Musk.

These developments are a warning to workers and youth internationally of how, if given the opportunity, this system will leave us with nothing that represents a decent quality of life. Under capitalism, the full potential of humankind and solidarity will never be met. Therefore, we need to organise and fight for a genuine democratic socialist world built by and for workers and youth internationally.

Committee for a Workers' International  
**FIGHTING FOR A SOCIALIST WORLD**  
socialistworld.net



# Austrian coalition talks collapse

## Oppose the far-right Freedom Party, fight for a working-class socialist alternative

Negotiations to form a new coalition government in Austria have been under way since elections in September. Talks between conservatives, social democrats and liberals have broken down, mainly over the budget.

The far-right Freedom Party (FPÖ) received the most votes in the election, with 28.8%. It is likely either an agreement will be made between them and the conservatives or otherwise new elections with the prospect of the FPÖ gaining ground.

There have been big efforts by sections of the Austrian capitalist class to keep the FPÖ out of government. At the same time, big parts of it are eager for a government to force through massive cuts on the working class.

The political crisis, with further attacks on workers threatened, dramatically poses the question of a working-class, socialist political alternative.

Below is the text of a leaflet by **Sozialistische Offensive (CWI Austria)** for a demonstration against the FPÖ entering government on 9 January 2025.

### Glossary

- FPÖ - Freedom Party (far right)
- ÖVP - Austrian People's Party (conservative)
- SPÖ - Socialist Democratic Party of Austria
- NEOS - The New Austria and Liberal Forum (liberal)
- ÖGB - Austrian Federation of Trade Unions

### How can we fight against fat-cat chancellor Kickl?

Another blue-black government [a coalition between the far-right Freedom Party and the conservatives] is looming, this time with Herbert Kickl as Chancellor. That is frightening. So what can we do to stop the FPÖ?

The new government will implement a more radical programme of cuts against all those who are not rich. These will be hidden behind attacks on all those who are not 'normal' or 'Austrian' in their eyes, to deflect attention.

### 'It's the economy'

The background to this situation is the economic crisis. But while we are being told how badly companies are doing, banks and energy companies for example are making high profits. The rich are getting richer. There is no shortage of money. It is not a law of nature that we have to take a cut in living standards. It is a political decision whether corporate profits are secured by cutting social benefits and wages - or whether profits are cut!

All the established parties are prepared to cut living standards in order to secure these profits under the pretext of 'competitiveness'. The negotiations between ÖVP, SPÖ and NEOS were behind closed doors - what are they hiding? What has been leaked from those talks shows that the SPÖ, led by Andreas Babler, was also prepared to make drastic cuts, although perhaps less so than the others. Many had hoped that a three-party coalition could have blocked the FPÖ. But

any such government that implements such a programme of cuts would have made the FPÖ even stronger. Lesser evilism does not work!

The next government will cut wages and unemployment, pensions, the climate, healthcare and education. They will deflect from this with divide-and-rule tactics, and the exclusion of people with the 'wrong' citizenship or religion. And because someone has to do the work that can no longer be done in hospitals, nursing homes and kindergartens, a conservative gender and family image is propagated. Anyone who doesn't fit in is treated with hostility and discriminated against. Far-right and fascist forces outside parliament (smaller ones outside the FPÖ - albeit with links to the FPÖ - that are even more to the right, like the 'Identitären') can become more confident, attacks can increase and the FPÖ will put "their people" into positions in the state apparatus. All of this is dangerous!

### Learning from the 'resistance' movement in 2000

In 2000, when the first FPÖ-ÖVP coalition government came to power, there was a huge 'resistance movement' for months, with hundreds of thousands of participants. Impressive - but unsuccessful. Even new elections did not change anything. However, when there were major strikes against the pension reform and the attacks on the ÖBB railways in 2003, this put the government under massive pressure, because it wasn't



just the roads that were blocked, but also the companies.

The fact that the government was not toppled at that time was only due to the fact that the ÖGB trade union federation did not continue the strikes consistently until they were successful. One reason was the lack of a political alternative, because there was and is no party for workers and young people - and the SPÖ did not reverse the FPÖ-ÖVP measures afterwards. We have to learn from this. It's a huge problem that now the tops of the ÖGB were obviously prepared to agree to major cuts alongside the SPÖ. We need trade unions that fight instead of making lazy compromises!

### What can be done?

What can we do about this? There are plenty of things you can do. Going to demonstrations is good - but getting organised is better! There will be a wide variety of protests in the near future: We have to bring them together and make sure that they really hurt

**Sozialistische Offensive members joined protests on 9 January against a the far-right Freedom Party entering government**

IMAGES: C.STADLER/BWAG/CC AND SOZIALISTISCHE OFFENSIVE

big business. This is only possible if we hurt them in their bank accounts - which is why strikes are the most effective means of struggle. Action committees in workplaces can build up massive pressure on the union leadership to finally take action. Action committees can also organise protests in schools, universities, etc.

Future struggles will help to build a party for workers and young people. In order to stop the rise of the right, it cannot give in to the 'cuts logic' of capitalism but needs a programme and a policy that breaks with capitalism. The capitalist economy is in crisis.

The existing political parties are parties of big business and create the framework to optimise profits at the expense of working people and the environment. What a sick system that discriminates against, deports and exploits people - for the profits of a few. That is why the best protection against the right-wing danger is the fight against its basis - capitalism!

Join us now in the struggle against the far right and the madness of capitalism!

£1 / £2 solidarity price

socialistparty.org.uk



# the Socialist

Issue 1305

16-22 January 2025

formerly **Militant**

# BUILD THE MOVEMENT TO END GAZA SLAUGHTER

**Y**oung people and students have been at the centre of mass protests, in Britain and around the world, against the Israeli state terror being inflicted on the Palestinians.

At different points during over fifteen months of protests, young people have defied attempts to stop us speaking out.

Despite all the attempts of the capitalist establishment to cover for the crimes of Benjamin Netanyahu's bloody regime, and to intimidate Gaza protesters, tens of thousands still march.

Keir Starmer's Labour government continues to make excuses for the Israeli state's slaughter - looking out for the strategic interests of Britain's capitalist bosses. If trying to protect profits for the super-rich elite means backing war and destruction, Starmer is prepared to do what it takes. Just like he is prepared to hike uni tuition fees and freeze pensioners in Britain.

Students and young people have to keep fighting back. That's why Socialist Students invites you to attend its annual conference in Leicester on Saturday 8 February.

School, college and uni students from all over England and Wales will discuss how we can build the fightback against Starmer's attacks. We are building on campuses, in colleges and schools to resist the uni fees hike, demanding free, fully funded education for all.

And we are fighting for a socialist alternative to capitalist misery, not just in Britain but around the world, as the only way to win a decent future free from poverty, war and oppression.

**COME TO  
SOCIALIST STUDENTS  
CONFERENCE 2025**

REGISTER YOUR INTEREST

£5 - PAY ON ENTRY

**SATURDAY 8 FEBRUARY, 10AM**

**HIGHFIELDS CENTRE, LEICESTER, LE2 ODS (15 MINUTE WALK FROM LEICESTER STATION)**

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

