

# Capitalism's future?



GAGESKIDMORE/CC

- Organise the working-class fightback
- Fight for socialist change

JOSH ASKER  
EDITOR OF THE SOCIALIST

## Is this the future capitalism has to offer?

Donald Trump has entered office for his second term as US president with a storm of executive orders promising to cut government jobs, attack migrants and “drill baby drill” for climate-damaging fossil fuels. Nearly 60 were signed in the first 24 hours.

Reactionary bile drips from his every word.

While at least for now the world’s richest men – the tech bros – are cosying up to Trump, large sections of the capitalist class fear the instability that he brings. They fear the economic consequences of his volatile rule, among other things. But above all they fear the working-class resistance that his policies will provoke, in the US and internationally.

Trump won because the Democrats lost. Because of working-class discontent with rising prices and falling living standards under Joe Biden.

In fact, behind the bravado and beneath the veneer of absolute dominance, the first cracks have already begun forming between different sections of the capitalists who have temporarily swung behind Trump.

For example, Trump’s high-profile former strategist and ‘Make America Great Again’ enthusiast Steve Bannon told Musk: “I will go to war on this issue, the likes of which you cannot possibly comprehend”, referring to the issue of migrant visas.

A majority in the US reject Trump’s most reactionary rhetoric. 70% believe abortion should be legal in all or the majority of instances, for example. Millions can be mobilised in opposition to attacks on a women’s right to choose and on other issues too.

81% of voters said the economy was their number one issue in the election. But Trump will not make working-class Americans feel richer. On the contrary, by trying to rule in the interests of the super-rich capitalist elite, he will provoke workers’ struggle. Trump enters office with the level of strikes at their highest level in a generation.

Through those struggles, the question of the working class having its own independent political representation and party will be writ large. The emergence of such a force, from the world’s most powerful working class, in the world’s biggest capitalist economy, would send shockwaves around the world.

In deepening crisis, the profit system is revealing a very ugly face in the form of Trump and others like him. At the same time, the working class internationally is only just beginning to re-enter the stage.

By building and strengthening mass organisations and parties of the working class, and fighting to take power and wealth out of the hands of the capitalist bosses into the hands of the working class democratically, the rule of the bosses can be brought to an end.

That is capitalism’s future.

### Read more:

- ‘Trumpism and it’s limits’ and ‘Trump’s second presidency begins – interview with a US socialist’ at [socialistparty.org.uk](http://socialistparty.org.uk)

# the Socialist

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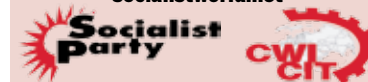
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"The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it."  
**Karl Marx**

# Labour's council merger plans are an attack on local democracy

Labour's English Devolution White Paper, published in mid-December, proposed a wholesale re-organisation of local government, signalling its intent to merge many district councils into larger, less accountable, single bodies – known as unitary authorities – and increase the number of directly elected mayors. It also gave the option to county councils facing elections in May this year to apply to postpone those contests if they could show they could carry out reorganisation plans by 2026. 18 local authorities have applied to the government for permission to delay elections.

## ‘Don’t hold back, send your TUSC candidate application forms now’

“Exactly which English local council elections will go ahead on Thursday 1 May is still unclear at this point”, says the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) national election agent, Clive Heemskerck, responding to the government announcement on 15 January about the fate of May’s polls. TUSC is the electoral coalition in which the Socialist Party takes part.

But, he adds, anyone considering standing against the establishment parties in any of the 31 councils originally scheduled for elections this year, who wants to use one of the TUSC descriptions on their ballot paper, “shouldn’t hold back from sending in their TUSC candidate application form” as soon as possible.

“Larger, more remote councils are favoured by both the Blairite New Labour Party and the Tories”, says Clive, “because it fits with their aim to weaken local democratic accountability”.

“People living in towns and cities like, for example, Exeter, Basildon, Worcester, Crawley or Norwich – which currently hold district council elections every year, for one-third of the seats each time, and a county election in the fourth year – will only have a vote for who controls their

local public services once every four years under the White Paper plans”. “Both parties also admire the American model, of ‘big personality’ mayors only lightly supervised by elected ‘boards’ and handing out contracts for public services to private providers”.

“With such arrangements, it’s far easier to take unpopular decisions to cut or privatise services – or to favour special business interests – than to win support for austerity pro-business policies among a wider group of regularly elected councillors, who have to justify themselves to local people”.

### What happens now?

Not surprisingly, at least 15 Tory-controlled county councils (and the Liberal Democrat-led Oxfordshire one) asked to cancel elections by the 10 January deadline, despite Tory shadow cabinet member Robert Jenrick saying before Christmas that “elections should only be postponed in truly exceptional circumstances... Maybe Labour don’t want to face the electorate?”.

Now it is for the Starmer government to decide whether to table, for each particular council, the necessary ‘order in parliament’ – known as statutory instruments – to allow a scheduled election not to go ahead, which must be done by mid-February at the latest. And for MPs to decide to challenge them or not, which even an individual backbencher can do.

### Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition

TUSC was set up to enable working-class fighters, trade unionists, community campaigners, anti-war or climate activists, and socialists from different parties or none, to stand in elections using a ballot paper description that gives a clearer indicator of their politics than just the bare label of ‘Independent’ – the only description that candidates are legally allowed to use unless they are supported by a political party registered with the Electoral Commission.

The only qualification for candidates who wish to use the TUSC



Socialist Party members and TUSC supporters campaigning in Bevois ward Southampton in 2024 against austerity. Nadia Ditta (centre) won 32% of the votes, coming second behind Labour. SOUTHAMPTON SP

name, or any other of the eight descriptions it has registered with the Electoral Commission, is that they have to endorse the TUSC core policies platform for the relevant election. These are a list of minimum commitments that voters could expect from someone elected using the TUSC banner – while leaving room for every candidate to keep control of their own campaigns. These include opposing all council cuts and closures and to reject council tax, rent, service and other charge increases.

### Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition conference

The TUSC conference will be held on Zoom on Sunday 2 February from 11am-1:30pm. It has 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.

For Zoom details and to read the documents which will be discussed visit [www.tusc.org.uk](http://www.tusc.org.uk)

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## Tories say get used to worsening living standards

In her first speech of the year, Tory leader Kemi Badenoch had an inspiring message: people in Britain aren't rich and need to learn to 'live within our means'.

Working-class people don't feel rich after over a decade and a half of Tory cuts, with our wages slashed and public services shuttered or run into the ground.

But the millionaires certainly do. While we suffer, they live outside the means of the rest of society – getting richer at our expense. Whether that's picking profitable parts of the public sector like vultures, or keeping pay low and rents sky-high.

Badenoch is speaking for the bosses – get used to things getting worse.

Unfortunately that's a message parroted by all the establishment parties, that's why we need a new mass working-class party.



Kemi Badenoch and Tulip Siddiq  
UK PARLIAMENT/ ROGER HARRIS/CHRIS MCANDREW/CC

## Labour anti-corruption minister resigns amid corruption allegations

She says she's not guilty, but Labour city minister responsible for anti-corruption Tulip Siddiq has resigned after accusations of... corruption. Siddiq's aunt, Sheikh Hasina, is the Bangladesh ex-prime minister overthrown by a popular mass movement last Summer.

None of us get to choose our family. But then again, not many of us get gifted a

London flat by our aunt's property developer political friends. Sheikh Hasina, and other leading figures of her Awami League party, face a litany of corruption charges which they deny. What we do know is that her government's state forces repressed student protests last year, killing hundreds. And that, despite reported 'growth' in the economy, millions of Bangladeshi workers continue to be super-exploited by capitalist bosses.

What squeaky clean individual is going to take Siddiq's anti-corruption role? Emma Reynolds, who before the last election was a managing director for big-business lobbyists 'The CityUK'

# LABOUR AND MET CONSPIRE TO REPRESS GAZA DEMONSTRATORS

## Defend the right to protest

ROB WILLIAMS  
SOCIALIST PARTY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The Socialist Party condemns the disgraceful policing operation at the peaceful Gaza demonstration in London on Saturday 19 January, which was stopped from marching by the Metropolitan Police. Up to 80 arrests were made, including Stop the War Coalition vice chair Chris Nineham, as well as a number of other protesters. Since, it has been reported that Palestine Solidarity Campaign director Ben Jamal has been charged, and that Jeremy Corbyn and John McDonnell have been 'interviewed under caution' by police.

Along with the police, responsibility for this clampdown on the right to protest lies with the Labour government of Keir Starmer and home secretary Yvette Cooper, Labour London Mayor Sadiq Khan, and the Labour-run Greater London Authority. It is an outrage that these events have happened on their watch.

### Working-class alternative needed

In addition to Starmer's acquiescence to the Israeli state's destruction of Gaza, it should be a further reason for a debate across the workers' and trade union movement about the need for a pro-worker political alternative to New Labour. On the protest, there was widespread support for the Socialist Party placards with the headline: "Starmer's Labour means war and austerity - build a new workers' party, fight for socialism."

Posting on X (formerly Twitter) on the day, the Met claimed that: "Around 20 to 30 people who breached the conditions are still contained in Trafalgar Square. They are being arrested. Others have already been arrested." The "conditions" they refer to are the banning of the right of protesters to march to the BBC.

In the week leading up to the demo, police had ruled against the demo organisers' original intention

of assembling at the BBC to march to Westminster. The alleged justification of this was that there is a synagogue nearby.

However, there have been well over 20 demonstrations in central London since the start of the horrific assault by the Israeli regime on Gaza, escalating into the West Bank, Lebanon and the wider Middle East. A number of these have started at the BBC, which has become the assembly point for marches on all kinds of issues, with no threat from the demonstrations to that or any other synagogue.

Demo organisers are adamant that they made it clear to the police that it wasn't their intention to lead a march through police lines, but instead for a delegation to lay flowers at the BBC or, if that was prevented, at the feet of the police.

### Police obstructions

Throughout the whole day, in bitterly cold conditions, Whitehall effectively became a kettle of protesters making their voices heard about the slaughter and destruction in Gaza and their lack of confidence in the unstable ceasefire. Police often obstructed people coming and going into the area and sealing off side streets, leading to crush conditions in certain areas. On a number of occasions, police snatch squads arrested individual protesters.

There was clearly a strategy to intimidate, harass and provoke protesters. No doubt this was to attempt to lay down a general message to people on the protest and the wider anti-war movement: "The Gaza conflict is now over – if you protest, you are a troublemaker and will be dealt with."

But it was a weakness of the protest organisers, and most if not all of the rally speakers, not to call out Starmer and his New Labour government – the rally was about 100 yards from Downing Street! In November 2024, arch right-wing Tory Home Secretary Suella Braverman was sacked by Rishi Sunak when she tried to ban a



One of the multiple police lines at the demonstration. PAULA MITCHELL

Gaza demo from marching. This was because she and the then Tory government were met by a mass mobilisation of up to 750,000, which shook the Tories.

It is essential that demonstrations are well stewarded, and that any on-the-spot negotiations with police are clearly discussed and understood by protesters to as much as possible limit the risk of any vicious measures, such as those carried out by police on this occasion.

The mass movement that has developed against the attack on Gaza has drawn in a new generation. To many of them, the role of New Labour has been exposed by Starmer's slavish following of the position of the Tories and the capitalist establishment. It was a major factor in the election of Jeremy Corbyn and the four 'Gaza independent' MPs at last year's general election.

But the war is one side of Starmer's pro-big business agenda, and he is now preparing to move onto the offensive to make workers pay for capitalist crises. The trade unions must now open up the debate that is needed on developing a political alternative for workers, our communities and the anti-war movement.

### Join the fightback

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## Labour government rejects rent caps Fight for rent controls and council homes

JOE WATERS  
GLOUCESTERSHIRE SOCIALIST PARTY

The high cost of renting a home casts a shadow over the lives of millions of people. Home ownership is unaffordable for the majority of young people and it's getting worse. But the burden of renting is also becoming increasingly unbearable. Rents rose an average of 9.3% in the year leading up to November 2024.

Originally envisaged by the Tories, now taken up by Starmer's Labour, the Renter's Rights Bill, currently working its way through parliament, has no long-term solutions to the housing crisis. Despite this, many people will at least be glad to see it ban Section 21 'no-fault' evictions, which leave renters in an uncertain position and allows landlords to throw people out of their homes at their whim.

But the bill does nothing to stop landlords raising rents mid-tenancy, putting even more pressure on ordinary people unable to afford the basic necessities of life. Renters will be forced out of their homes because they can't afford it, without the need for a 'no-fault' eviction.

At the third reading of the bill in the commons, an amendment, supported by over 30 MPs, included the

introduction of rent caps. This would prevent landlords raising rents above the Consumer Price Index level of inflation or wage growth, whichever is lower.

The amendment fell. However, a campaign for rent controls, backed up by a new mass workers' party to fight for them, could win concessions from this pro-bosses Labour government.

### We don't have to wait

Councils could act now to introduce caps on what landlords can charge, with the acceptable level of rents decided democratically by workers and local residents. Councils can introduce compulsory landlord registers mandating affordability and quality standards for landlords to be able to operate in an area. Councils should take over the hundreds of thousands of empty properties.

More homes are desperately needed though. Profit-driven house-building companies, that the Labour government is looking towards to solve the housing crisis, won't deliver. By restricting the supply of homes, house prices are kept high. Planning permission exists for one million new homes which are clearly badly needed.

The long-term solution to the crisis is a nationwide programme of

council house building, which would provide good-quality, environmentally friendly homes and secure tenancies. The large housebuilding companies and the land they hoard should be nationalised in order to carry out a plan which meets the needs of the population rather than shareholder's expectations. And no compensation should be paid to the developers and fat cats.

Councillors who want to stand up for the people they represent should be willing to spend what is needed to alleviate the crisis, and launch a campaign to fight the government for the funding necessary. If councillors are unwilling to do this then they need to be replaced by working-class representatives who are willing to lead a mass campaign against Labour's policy of further austerity.

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PAUL MATSSON

## Schools for more than just teaching

Our education system is broken. Our schools are literally falling to pieces. We can't recruit and retain teachers or college lecturers because wages are too low. Vital support staff are being cut back. Academisation and incorporation has taken away accountability to the wider community, stolen what were shared resources.

Case in point: a Saturday music group I went to when I was a kid had to wrap up after the school that hosted it went from the local authority to an academy chain. They wanted the music group to cough up huge amounts of money where previously the council had provided the space for free. Same with my partner's dad's local archery group.

Our education unions have to campaign on pay and conditions but we can't forget about the questions of who runs our education system, who owns the infrastructure, and what is education supposed to be for anyway?

DUNCAN MOORE  
PLYMOUTH SOCIALIST PARTY

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NEIL OWEN/CC

## Record-high alcohol deaths - fight for a world free from misery

ADAM HARMSWORTH  
COVENTRY SOCIALIST PARTY

There has been a massive rise in alcohol-related deaths since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020. The latest figure for England is a grim new record of 8,274 people killed directly by alcohol in 2023. That is 42% higher than in 2019, and makes alcohol one of the biggest killers of working-age adults.

These are only the deaths purely caused by drinking; many more are likely to be killed by multiple factors. Between 2015 and 2020, the government consistently estimated around 600,000 people were dependent on alcohol.

It should be no surprise alcohol abuse and related death is so widespread. Many turn to drink to cope with stress, anxiety, depression and misery in their lives. Tory austerity has slashed jobs and services, while bosses have increasingly attacked workers' pay and conditions. Poverty has risen along with inequality.

In addition, many addiction and other support services that directly helped reduce alcohol abuse lost their council funding because of the very austerity driving their need! In the immediate short term, alcohol deaths and alcoholism can be partly combated by reversing these cuts and rebuilding these services.

The main proposal to counter

42%  
rise in alcohol-related deaths from 2019 to 2023

alcohol abuse reported in the capitalist media is a minimum price per unit. But a higher price on booze will not solve the problem. Bluntly it would be a sticking plaster over a massive wound in society. People will find ways to drown their sorrows or satisfy their addictions. If anything, for the many who drink because they are in the midst of poverty, alcohol becoming expensive will only make the personal crises even worse. In fact, 15 years of austerity and the more recent sharp rise in inflation has already made alcohol less affordable for millions, but deaths from alcohol have risen regardless.

At its core, the damage of drowning sorrows with drugs can only be ended by ending sorrow. Ending poverty, ending workplace strife, ending oppression. That can only come with replacing the rotten capitalist system that drives human misery with a democratic socialist society. A society that uses the wealth created by workers to improve our lives, eradicating poverty and desperation, would shatter the causes of alcohol abuse.

## BP threaten job losses - workers won't pay for bosses' climate crisis

MARK FINUCANE  
WEST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

Despite making over \$40 billion profits since the start of 2022, fossil fuel giant BP has announced 8,000 job cuts as part of "cost saving" measures. It plans to cut 4,700 jobs from its permanent staff and 3,000 contractor roles. BP bosses have cited net-zero regulation and the oil and gas windfall tax as reasons for the cuts but, in reality, this is just another display of their greed and a method to increase returns for its investors. Once again, the working class must suffer to increase the profits of the capitalists.

With 2024 being the first year that global temperatures breached the key 1.5°C limit above pre-industrial levels, the need for a rapid transition to clean, renewable energy has never been greater. But the working class and employees of these fossil fuel giants must not be forced to foot the bill. The environmental crisis cannot be used as a scapegoat for the fossil fuel industry to increase profits.

London-based climate activism and research group Platform, and Friends of the Earth Scotland, founded in 2023 that over 90% of oil and gas workers would welcome a change to working in green energy, but this needs to come with a guarantee of

\$40 billion  
profits made by BP since the start of 2022

job security, retraining and no loss of pay.

Fossil fuel companies such as BP have shown that, prioritising short-term profits, they are incapable of moving away from fossil fuels. For every £1 BP spent on low-carbon investments in quarter three of 2023, it invested £11 in fossil fuels and gave shareholders £9. Last year, BP announced it plans to significantly reduce even that meagre investment in renewables for the rest of the decade.

The Socialist Party fights for a transition away from polluting energy production, but this will not and cannot happen with the energy sector left in private hands. Only through nationalisation of the energy industry under democratic public control can we prioritise more than just shareholders' greed.

Decisions could be made that would benefit the majority rather than a tiny minority, and a democratic plan could facilitate a just transition to renewable energy that we so desperately need.



GRAHAME C ANDERSON/CC



PFAS chemicals were used for decades in firefighting foam (IAN LUDWIG/CC)

## 'Forever chemicals' - Capitalists put profits over our health

JON DALE  
MANFIELD SOCIALIST PARTY

A public health and environmental threat more dangerous than asbestos or tobacco - that could be the result of the widely used PFAS family of chemicals.

Known as 'forever chemicals', PFAS (per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances) do not breakdown in the environment and spread easily. They have been found across the globe in drinking water, soil and food. Because they don't break down, concentrations in the environment go up. Almost all of us have them in our bodies.

Unborn embryos are exposed - PFAS are found in umbilical cord blood. Newborn children are exposed through breast milk. Sewage plants cannot remove PFAS, which get discharged with treated water into rivers and sea, or with treated sewage sludge spread on land, entering the food chain.

69,000 people living near chemical company DuPont's West Virginia factory have been studied. Teflon, a PFAS, was manufactured there from the 1940s. A "probable link" was found between exposure and high cholesterol (raising heart and liver disease risk), ulcerative colitis, testicular and kidney cancers, thyroid disease and high blood pressure in pregnancy. Other studies linked PFAS exposure to low immunity, fertility problems, low birthweight, birth defects and delayed brain development.

PFAS have many valuable uses, including waterproof clothing, non-stick cookware, electronics, food packaging and firefighting foams. There are safer alternatives for some of these.

Two PFAS chemicals have been widely used in firefighting foams. There are highly contaminated manufacturing sites in North Yorkshire and near Blackpool. Airports, RAF bases and the Fire Service College in Gloucestershire, where fire fighting foams have been regularly used for training, are contaminated, affecting groundwater.

17,000 PFAS-contaminated sites have been identified in Europe.

The Fire Brigades Union (FBU) commissioned research that highlighted firefighters' risks, including cancer death rates 1.6 times higher than the general public and deaths from heart attacks are five times higher. (These death rates are not only due to PFAS exposure.) As well as cancer screening, the FBU calls for better fire station decontamination design.

This needs proper funding and workers' control. Instead, the FBU has battled cuts for years, with more to come from Starmer's Labour.

PFAS appeared in streams near Jersey's airport in the 1990s, where these foams were used for weekly training from the 1960s. Local people drank contaminated water from a well for years, despite 3M, the US manufacturer, and Jersey Water knowing their exposure. Now these residents are being recommended bloodletting to reduce the concentration of PFAS in their bodies.

Profits prioritised  
Like asbestos and tobacco, companies making and selling PFAS knew the dangers long before this became public knowledge. They deliberately kept this secret.

In 1949, evidence showed these chemicals were not biodegradable. 3M company's internal evidence in 1978 showed they "should be regarded as toxic." In 1983, its documents confirmed they were not degradable. Despite that, 3M described PFAS as biodegradable in sales literature until the 1990s and in 1979 as "low in toxicity".

3M made 16% profit on its PFAS sales in 2022, when the global market for PFAS was \$28 billion. If other major producers made similar profits, that totalled around \$4 billion profit a year.

But the astronomical cost of cleaning up these chemicals in soil and

water, together with healthcare, is estimated to be over \$16 trillion a year, according to the International Chemical Secretariat. 4,000 times higher than their profits!

Profits are siphoned off by big shareholders while costs - health, environmental and financial - are dumped on the rest of us.

Unite the Union has called for PFAS phasing out and better regulation. It pointed out the Health and Safety Executive is grossly underfunded and completely unable to cope with the scale of the problem.

With Keir Starmer parroting every prime minister since Thatcher, promising to "rip out the bureaucracy that blocks investment," it's clear this government will also not prioritise safety over profit.

Giant chemical corporations should be brought into public ownership with democratic workers' control. Their resources should be used for common benefit instead of private profiteering. No compensation for wealthy shareholders, profiting from decades of environmental vandalism!

Scientists and laboratories currently researching armaments and other profit-making destructive industries could be redeployed to develop safe alternatives to PFAS. They could research ways to defend those most exposed and the natural environment. Nationalising military industries is needed to transfer to useful work.

PFAS pollute the planet. The fightback against the giant chemical corporations and their capitalist system must also be international. Working-class people with the world's resources and armed with science and technology could democratically plan to prioritise people's health and living standards, instead of what makes toxic profits for a few.

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## UCU NEC elections Vote for a fighting socialist candidate for further education

MARCO TESEI  
LONDON UCU MEMBER

This year's elections to the National Executive Committee (NEC) of the University and College Union (UCU) run from 27 January to 3 March.

I am standing for a UK-elected Further Education (FE) seat, and look forward to promoting a fighting, pro-worker strategy for our sector. The severe funding crisis affecting us, combined with the union leadership's unwillingness to lead a bold fightback, call for one urgently.

UCU's recently launched campaign, wishfully named New Deal For FE to echo Labour's New Deal For Working People, has aims I support. Besides demanding a 10% pay rise as a start to reversing the 35% loss in real-terms value of FE salaries since 2010, it calls for parity of pay with schoolteachers within three years, and a binding national bargaining framework for the sector to ensure the same improvements in pay and conditions across all colleges.

### Endless austerity and inequality

Since the removal of colleges from local authority control and their incorporation in 1992, local UCU branches have had to fight independently against endless austerity from unelected corporate directors and fat-cat CEOs. And the absence of aggregated national balloting and sector-wide action has impacted heavily on pay and conditions in many colleges.

Today, there are not only huge disparities in pay between colleges, but FE teachers earn an average of £9,000 a year less than their colleagues in schools. Winning binding national bargaining would therefore, firstly, help us fight for levelling-up across the sector. But

also, both campaigning for it and winning it would greatly strengthen our members thinking and acting collectively.

We should also demand full funding and an end to marketisation and casualisation. FE should be under democratic public control.

But ambitious aims call for a bold and consistent fighting strategy to achieve them, or they remain only wishful thinking. Despite the opportunities for an immediate campaign offered by a new Labour government making it clear it is going to deliver next to nothing for working-class people, UCU's general secretary, Jo Grady, is following a tenaciously acquiescent strategy of 'wait and see', or rather, 'wait and hope'.

### No time to wait

But wait for what? FE students and staff cannot wait any longer after decades of devastating neoliberal austerity policies and marketisation! And for what should we hope, when the warning signals have already been so clear?

In September, the chancellor awarded a funded 5.5% pay uplift (itself inadequate) to schoolteachers, but nothing to FE teachers. The Autumn Budget then announced additional funding for FE of £300 million, but with none of that already paltry amount (a bare 4% more to existing funding) ringfenced for staff pay. Now, as a result of strike action by sixth form teachers in the NEU, the government has said £50 million of that existing amount can be used to fund pay.

The demand for binding national bargaining has also had a muzzle put on it. A majority of the union leadership, abetted by the unelected officials, is intent on undermining many members' determination to fight for it via an aggregated national

ballot. Instead, it is promoting a strategy focused on local campaign work, asking reps to 'build up' branch confidence first, and that we all wait until the time is ripe – ie potentially indefinitely – before taking action. At a moment when staff anger is red-hot and crying out for bold solutions, this sort of restraining approach can be damaging to the development of our collective strength.

FE members in UCU must prepare to act, just as schoolteachers in the National Education Union (NEU) have done. It was the chancellor's fear of a repeat of their national action that pushed her to award 5.5% in 2024 and, when a measly 2.8% was offered for 2025, the union has responded with an indicative national ballot. Likewise, let's follow the lead of our sixth form college colleagues in NEU!

### No to partnership

The Department for Education's recent overtures of 'social partnership' between unions, employers and government, should be opposed. We need to face the reality that this is an austerity government.

Similarly, the idea now being floated of bringing FE teachers' pay within the remit of an 'independent' pay review body, possibly even the schoolteachers' We want to negotiate directly with the government, without the intermediation of a sham 'neutral' body disguising the wishes of the capitalist class!

A number of candidates are standing in this election across FE and HE who want a more democratic, fighting union; some are members of different left groups. I have appealed to work with all serious activists to build a strong, genuine broad left within UCU.

Vote Marco Tesesi #1 and use your other preferences for other left candidates.

## WHAT WAY FORWARD NOW FOR THE FBU?



FBU marching against cuts in 2010 PAUL MATTHESSON

ROB WILLIAMS  
SOCIALIST PARTY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The Fire Brigades Union (FBU) general secretary election has seen national vice president Steve Wright elected, after defeating incumbent Matt Wrack by 5,188 votes (59%) to 3,436 (41%) on a 29% turnout. Matt was first elected in 2005, winning with over 12,000 votes, after the national strike in 2002-03 under Tony Blair's New Labour government, as firefighters looked for a more militant leadership. The Socialist Party had written to both candidates offering them the opportunity to put their case in our paper and on our website.

### New Labour austerity

Now the FBU and its members in the fire and rescue service have to face up to Keir Starmer and Rachel Reeves' s New Labour mark II promising more austerity after 14 years of massive Tory public sector spending cuts, as well as the huge cost-of-living squeeze. By the FBU's own figures, "Over 12,000 firefighter jobs have been cut and central funding slashed by 30% since 2010." This was the backdrop to the general secretary election.

Under Steve Wright's leadership, the FBU will face more cuts as chancellor Reeves looks to make the working class pay for continuing capitalist crisis, revealed further by the current government bond market pressures.

It will pose the need for the union to examine its industrial and political strategy. The FBU is a relatively small union, but has a militant history and culture with an enduring high union density. In 2013-14 it took national strike action over pensions, and has fought local campaigns against fire service cuts. The FBU can also act as a lever on the wider union movement, if it is prepared to play this role.

Right now, with Reeves limiting pay rises to 2.8%, the FBU should publicly call for all public sector unions to come together in a united demand for a far-higher wage increase that could claw back what has been lost across the public sector since 2010. This should be backed by serious preparation to take united strike action.

The FBU was one of the first unions in the public sector to settle on pay, in a two-year deal of 7% for 2022 and 5% for 2023, during the Tory cost-of-living squeeze when inflation was nearly at double figures. This offer was achieved after more than 80% of FBU members had voted for strikes, but no action was taken after the union's executive recommended acceptance.

### Political strategy

It is essential that the militant action which will be necessary in the period ahead is backed by a serious review of the FBU's political orientation. The Socialist Party warned that in its rush to reaffiliate to Labour in 2015,

under Jeremy Corbyn's leadership but with the Blairite party structures still in place, the union was giving up its ability to act independently in its own political interests.

The FBU had disaffiliated from New Labour in 2004, as a direct result of the 2002-03 dispute, which saw Blair use the army to try to break the strike. Matt Wrack argued that reversing this move in 2015 was to support Corbyn against the Labour right wing, but the bridgehead gained unexpectedly by the Labour left wasn't sufficiently strengthened and consolidated by taking on the Blairites.

The result has been that the FBU has been emasculated politically within Starmer's Labour, blunting its political demands and preventing its ability to act independently, by supporting candidates in elections or standing its own, on a workers' programme. This is all the more needed now to sharpen the fight against cutting councils, of all parties, that run the fire authorities.

But this debate has to happen now. Like all other unions, the FBU cannot stand aside from the political arena. Over 120 years ago, workers drew the conclusion that they needed their own voice to supplement and strengthen their workplace organisation and industrial action. Faced with Starmer's New Labour, the Tories and now the right-wing populist Reform UK, workers need a political alternative that stands on a socialist programme that offers a way out of capitalist crisis.

## At last PCS executive agrees preparations for dispute with government

DAVE SEMPLE  
PCS VICE PRESIDENT, PERSONAL CAPACITY

After months of blockage from the general secretary and president, the PCS civil service union's National Executive Committee (NEC) met on 15 January and passed a motion, moved by Broad Left Network (BLN) supporters Rob Ritchie and myself, outlining the threat facing our members from the new Labour government, and stating that the only way to get serious progress was to set course now for a dispute.

Labour has already announced cuts. Last July the government demanded 2% 'savings' from civil service budgets, then 5% cuts in the October Budget, and now we face the threat of 10,000 job cuts. 'Voluntary exit' schemes have already been announced in the Department for Transport, Ministry of Defence and the Cabinet Office.

Recognising that many PCS members in the commercial sector are already in a massive fight, and that the situation might be different in devolved Scottish and Welsh areas, the motion outlines how the union must now urgently prepare the ground among members for the likely battle to come.

It sets out that NEC liaison officers should seek immediate engagement with reps across the union, to gain input into how we build momentum towards the kind of campaign that can win members' key demands.

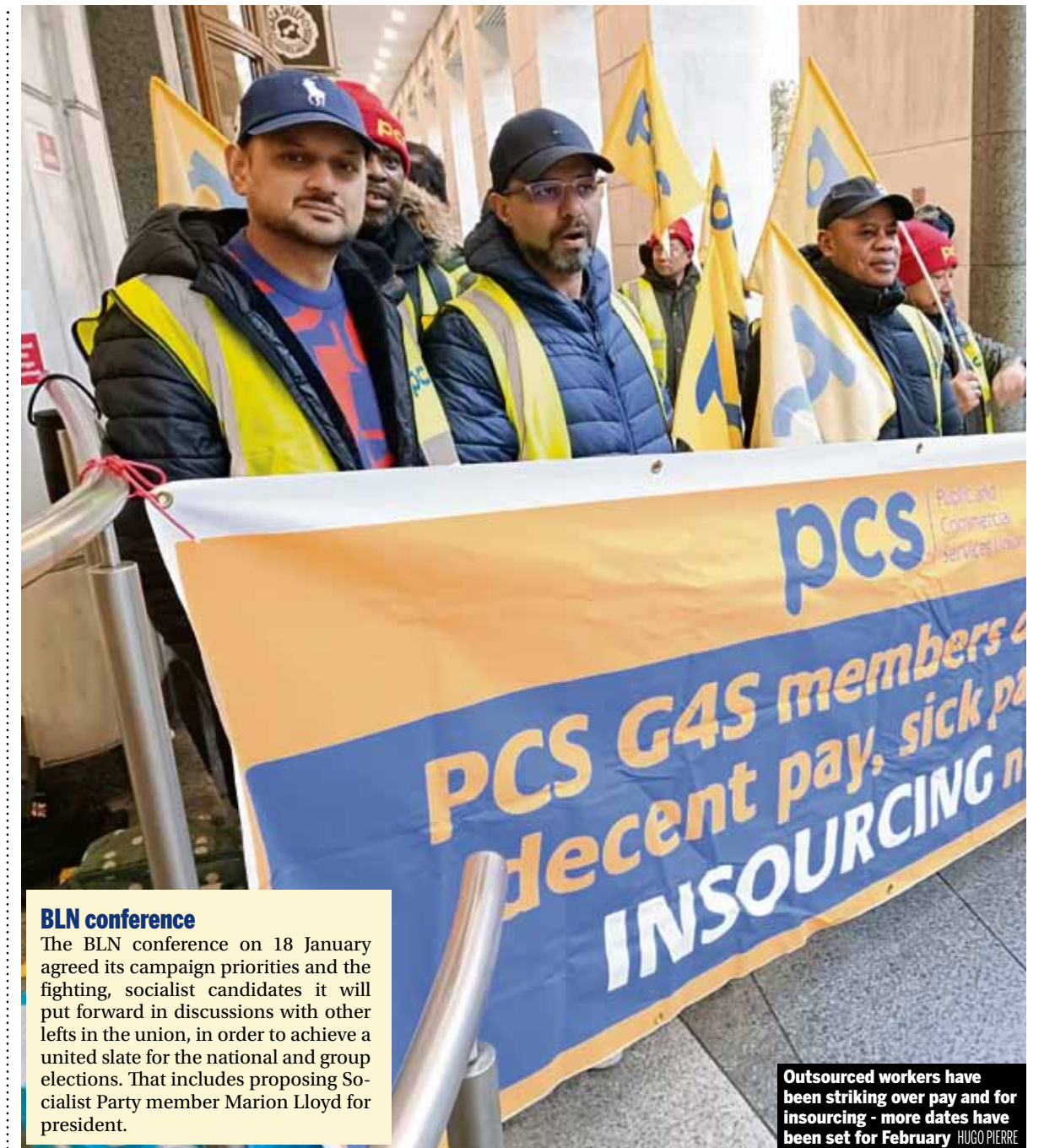
### Block by president and general secretary

There has been no national campaign on pay, jobs, pensions etc since the premature winding up of our dispute in June 2023. A strike ballot from March to May 2024 won a mandate for action for over 20,000 members, and the 2024 conference expressly demanded that the NEC rebuild the national campaign. But this mandate was never used and the campaign was blocked by the president and general secretary.

Inaction by the previous NEC (led by the 'Democracy Alliance', which includes the mis-named 'Left Unity' grouping) led to members making a historic change to the union's leadership in the May 2024 elections.

A coalition of the BLN (in which Socialist Party members participate), Independent Left (IL) group and independent socialists won a majority on the NEC in May 2024. However, the positions of president and general secretary were retained by the old leadership that was otherwise swept away - Left Unity members Fran Heathcote and Martin Cavanagh.

Reps across the union are becoming increasingly aware of the role played by Cavanagh as president, blocking every significant move to build the campaign necessary to win for members. Cavanagh has ruled the NEC by presidential decree, vetoing any proposals from the NEC majority that counter what is recommended by the general secretary.



Outsourced workers have been striking over pay and for insourcing - more dates have been set for February HUGO PIERRE

### BLN conference

The BLN conference on 18 January agreed its campaign priorities and the fighting, socialist candidates it will put forward in discussions with other lefts in the union, in order to achieve a united slate for the national and group elections. That includes proposing Socialist Party member Marion Lloyd for president.

It is for this reason that many branches have passed motions calling for a Special Delegate Conference (SDC). But the total number that have written to Heathcote to call for an SDC has still not been revealed to the NEC!

### NEC majority motion passed

So given all the obstruction up to now, how was the motion passed at the 15 January NEC?

Because the general secretary, in her national campaign paper, did not make a single recommendation!

There was nothing put forward about if and how the union would build a campaign to protect jobs, improve pay and conditions, or tackle the reports in the press over Christmas that signalled potential further attacks on our pensions.

Faced with their own poverty of ideas on how to fight for members, Heathcote and Cavanagh tried to claim that the proposals put forward by the NEC majority were what they had been saying all along.

NEC member and BLN supporter Fiona Brittle had only to read out the recommendations in previous

papers from the general secretary to expose that.

The months of endless vetoes at the NEC delaying any kind of national campaign mean that the only serious course of action now is to go back to basics and build up campaigning momentum from scratch.

It could not be clearer that we need to fight hard to win a further left majority in this year's elections – and that we also need a fighting president who will not obstruct the NEC majority from defending members when their jobs and pay are under attack.

If you are a PCS member reading this, then act now. Invite members of the BLN to speak at your regional, branch and group executive committees and members' meetings, to discuss how we build the necessary campaign to win for our members.

We urge all reps to join the Broad Left Network in campaigning to rebuild a fighting, democratic PCS!

• A copy of the motion can be found on the BLN website bln.org.uk, along with more detail on the general secretary and president's undemocratic tactics



Marco marching against the Gaza slaughter

### 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!

### Get all the latest union news

[nationalshop  
stewardsnetwork](http://nationalshop.stewardsnetwork.com)  
with the NSSN bulletin  
[shopstewards.net](http://shopstewards.net)

# GAZA CEASEFIRE BEGINS

## END SIEGE AND OCCUPATION FIGHT FOR SOCIALIST CHANGE

**JUDY BEISHON**  
INTERNATIONAL SECRETARIAT OF THE COMMITTEE  
FOR A WORKERS' INTERNATIONAL

**E**motions ran high across the world at the news of a ceasefire deal for Gaza. But alongside that wave of relief have been two big questions: Why did it take 15 terrible months before a deal? And will it really lead to an end to the war?

A report in the Lancet medical journal estimated that over 64,000 Palestinians have been killed in the war. Over 100,000 have been injured and most of the Gaza Strip is rubble. Even after outgoing US president Joe Biden had announced the ceasefire deal, the Israeli military slaughtered a further 100 Palestinians in Gaza before it came into effect a few days later.

The ceasefire will bring Gaza's highly traumatised population a desperately needed chance to gain some medical help and basic necessities. But the right-wing Israeli government led by prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu has threatened to end it after its first phase, and remains determined to maintain a military stranglehold on the strip, keeping the Palestinians there confined in conditions that will be much worse than before the massive devastation caused by the war.

### Pressure for deal

The negotiations brokered by world and regional powers that led to the deal were shrouded in secrecy. Biden clearly wanted to claim it as a final success for his presidency in its final days. But Israel's leaders had no need to succumb to the demands of a US administration that was about to leave office, and that had stood by for 15 months while Gaza was pummelled to ruins, including with many US-supplied weapons. Biden had put forward a similar ceasefire proposal in May 2024 but without willingness to exert the necessary pressure to force Netanyahu to agree to it.

The planned timing of the present deal – for the day before Donald Trump became president – was among the obvious indications that it had a link with his inauguration. Trump declared last year that the war had to be over before he takes office and his Middle East envoy, Steven Witkoff, met Netanyahu on 10 January to demand support for a deal.

None of this means that any support should be given to Trump, who has no genuine concern for the Palestinians. In his first term as US president he declared Jewish settlements in the Palestinian West Bank to be legal and didn't intervene against the siege of Gaza that trapped and



**Gaza destruction**  
PALESTINIAN NEWS & INFORMATION AGENCY/CC

impoverished the 2.3 million Palestinians there.

Rather, he wants to promote the interests of US imperialism by trying to lessen the instability caused by the war, including the threat to marine trade routes, and not forgetting the impact of anti-war protests in the US and worldwide. Also, he wants to aid US trade and strategic links with the Gulf states and encourage links between those states and the US's strong ally Israel, as he did in his first term of office through the Abraham Accords.

For Arab regimes like Egypt, and across the Gulf, the war on Gaza was a great obstacle to such links, because of the outrage of the Arab masses towards the Israeli regime and US imperialism's support for it. As the Saudi regime is demanding a "clear and credible pathway to a Palestinian state," which is utterly opposed by Netanyahu and co, it is possible that Trump will make Netanyahu offers that it would be difficult for him to refuse, as part of preserving US influence over the region. However, the form of Palestinian state that the Saudi regime and the imperialist powers would propose would not be one in the real interests of the Palestinian masses.

**Volatility in Israel**  
As well as the Palestinians in Gaza reacting to the ceasefire with enormous relief, the families of Israeli hostages held in Gaza have been consumed with hope and expectation, desperate for their release, although not knowing which of them are no longer alive. The first day of the ceasefire brought the release of three Israeli captives, and from Israeli prisons 90 Palestinians.

### Volatility in Israel

Throughout the war on Gaza, Netanyahu strongly resisted a ceasefire, partly due to threats from the far-right parties in his coalition that they would withdraw and collapse the government if a ceasefire was agreed. One of those parties, Jewish Power led by Itamar Ben-Gvir, has indeed resigned from the governing coalition following the ceasefire. Another, the Religious Zionism party led by Bezalel Smotrich, has threatened to resign in 'phase two' of the deal, when a lasting end to the war is scheduled for negotiation. That second resignation brought the release of three Israeli captives, and from Israeli prisons 90 Palestinians.



**Gaza aid**  
NASER JAFARI/CC

scenario, Netanyahu could continue by heading a minority government, because opposition parties have said they would keep it afloat in order to maintain the ceasefire agreement. In the Israeli population there is majority support for the deal. For instance, an Israel Channel 13 TV poll showed 61% supporting it, 24% opposing it and 15% not knowing. When asked: "Should we continue to phase 2 of the deal and end the war?", it was 60% in favour, 28% for restarting the war and 12% unsure.

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A significant factor in the Israeli government's agreement to the deal is that Netanyahu is in his most confident state since the start of the war, because of his veneer of success following the major blows struck against Hezbollah militias in Israel's recent war on Lebanon, the attacks that degraded military facilities in Iran and Yemen, and the fall of Assad's regime in Syria that had hosted Iranian forces. He also points to the fact that many Hamas fighters in Gaza have been killed, including leaders such as Yahya Sinwar, and he tries to portray the terrible devastation in Gaza as successful, justified retribution for the Hamas-led attack on Israel in October 2023.

However, none of those wars, assassinations and attacks have brought greater security for Israelis and they do not amount to a strategic victory for the Israeli state. Even Hamas, while severely weakened, can rebuild its forces, and according to Biden's secretary of state Antony Blinken it has already recruited new fighters to replace nearly all of those killed. It is a humiliation for Netanyahu's government that it has had to negotiate with Hamas, the organisation it swore to wipe out.

It is also a climbdown, because the deal abandons a number of obstacles that Netanyahu deliberately placed in the way of previous attempts at a deal, such as keeping the Netzarim and Philadelphia corridors in Gaza under Israeli military control. Journalist Ben Caspit wrote in Israeli newspaper Ma'ariv: "I ask myself where did all the obstacles go? All the conditions? All the ridiculous spins that were thrown out by the leader and were echoed by his mouthpieces?"

No trust can be placed by either the Palestinians or by Israeli Jews in Netanyahu's government abiding by the planned terms and phases of the ceasefire. As well its repeated blocking of a ceasefire, it is a government that consistently prevented basic humanitarian aid from being delivered to the strip and it deregulated the United Nations relief organisation, UNRWA, the main provider of aid and services to Palestinian refugees.

However, while it is uncertain, it seems that Netanyahu is more likely to carry on with the ceasefire phases in some form than not to, because the wars he has waged have now distanced him from the legacy of security failure on 7 October 2023, and his government's relations with



**Protest in London**  
IAN PATTISON

Trump's administration are no doubt high in his priorities. This view was taken by a Jerusalem-based research group, Israel Democracy Institute, whose president Yohanan Plesner said: "I think his mind is already in the next big move. If he has to choose between an intimate relationship with the Trump administration and Smotrich and Ben-Gvir, he'll opt for Trump."

### The deal

As well as a "full and complete ceasefire" the deal stipulated a withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza, that Palestinians can return to their destroyed neighbourhoods, the release of the 94 hostages held in Israeli jails, and an increase in humanitarian aid.

In 'phase one', to last six weeks, a third of the hostages are to be released, along with 1,900 Palestinian prisoners. Phase two is designated to bring the release of the remaining hostages, more Palestinian prisoners, withdrawal of the Israeli military from Gaza and an actual end to the war. The third phase would start reconstruction work in the strip.

Even if it all happens, as well as being too uncertain, it is all much too slow for the Palestinians in Gaza, as they are suffering crisis conditions. They need a complete end to the war now, the withdrawal of all the Israeli forces now, and an immediate, massive influx of humanitarian aid and construction materials.

### Preventing further war

Pressure from working people internationally – including against the governments supplying arms used for repression by Israel – shouldn't end in the face of the ceasefire news. We must demand not just a ceasefire but an immediate stop to the war and the siege, and the complete withdrawal of the Israeli military from the occupied territories.

Backed by workers' solidarity internationally, Palestinian workers and the poor in the occupied territories need to build their own democratically run organisations, unaligned with any of the Palestinian pro-capitalist parties, including Hamas and Fatah, for resistance and mass struggle against the occupation and to fight for national liberation. There must be opposition to any form of imposed rule on Gaza's people by the regional or



**Anti-Netanyahu protest in Tel-Aviv**  
OMER TOLEDANO/CC

world powers – the Palestinians have the right to democratically determine their own future.

So too across the entire region, including in Israel, the building of mass workers' organisations is the way forward to counter and challenge capitalist parties and interests.

In Israel, a general strike took place on 2 September 2024 demanding that the government implement a ceasefire in Gaza to obtain the release of Israeli hostages. There was also a nine-month-long mass movement against Netanyahu's government before the Gaza war, which also included a general strike.

It is only a matter of time before anger erupts again in Israel, whether against austerity measures being inflicted, a breaking of the ceasefire, or over many other possible issues. Also, following the two previous mass uprisings of the Palestinians – the first intifada in 1987-93 and second intifada

in 2000-05 – as repression and occupation remain, their anger will inevitably erupt again.

For future movements to be able to bring peace and security for people on both sides of the national divide, adopting socialist ideas will be crucial, as only those ideas offer an alternative to the capitalist system that is the underlying cause of oppression, conflict and war.

The building of workers' mass political parties armed with socialist programmes – to take wealth and control out of the hands of the ruling elites and to develop socialist economic planning to raise living standards for all – is the route towards achieving workers' collaboration across the region and an end to the cycles of conflict and suffering.

● This article is an updated version of an article posted on socialistworld.net on 17 January 2025

- End the siege of Gaza and the occupation of all the Palestinian territories. For the permanent withdrawal of the Israeli military from those areas
- For a mass struggle of the Palestinians, under their own democratic control, to fight for liberation
- For the building of independent workers' parties in Palestine and Israel and links between them
- For an independent, socialist Palestinian state, alongside a socialist Israel, with guaranteed democratic rights for all minorities, as part of the struggle for a socialist Middle East
- No trust in capitalist politicians internationally. Fight to build workers' parties that stand for socialism and internationalism

# Why we're coming to Socialist Students conference

## Fight fees, and build socialist opposition to Starmer

HANNAH PONTING  
LIVERPOOL SOCIALIST STUDENTS

Even before Starmer's recent tuition fees hike, many young people had come to the conclusion that the Labour government is not interested in a decent future and opportunities for young people.

### Labour

Decisions such as scrapping the winter fuel allowance and refusing to end the two-child benefit cap prove that this Labour government will make working-class people bear the brunt of its political choice to act in the interests of the capitalist bosses.

25% of young people have skipped a meal in order to save money, according to one survey. As well as the tuition fee hike, students are also facing increases in rent from private landlords, as well as student accommodation prices going up.

The Labour government offers no solutions. We need a new mass workers' party that acts in our interests, against those of the super-rich bosses - one which demands free, fully

funded education, council homes and rent controls.

Environmental issues are another topic at the forefront of young people's minds. But this government has scaled back its green investment plans saying they are unaffordable, meanwhile the big fossil fuel companies rake in billions in profits. The failure of capitalist government leaders like Keir Starmer take meaningful action on climate change highlights the need for socialist change.

### Capitalism is rigged

Whatever makes you angry about the rigged capitalist system, and if you want to learn more and discuss further, then you should come to the Socialist Students conference. It will be a fantastic opportunity to hear a range of brilliant speakers talk about a variety of issues affecting young people, to discuss ideas and to plan how we are building the fight back.

I hope to see many of you there!

- Socialist Students conference 2025 - Saturday 8 February. Highfields Centre, Leicester, LE2 0DS, 15 minute walk from Leicester station
- socialiststudents.org.uk

### Gaza slaughter

JOE WOOLFALL  
LIVERPOOL SOCIALIST STUDENTS

Socialist Students has been involved in the movement against the slaughter in Gaza. In Liverpool, we attended the student encampment and demonstrations, calling for divestment from companies which uphold Israeli state terror.

Even if the ceasefire deal holds, and the immediate killing stops, the pressure must continue.

We must keep on questioning why the Labour government continued to supply weapons used for murder in Palestine. We must demand an immediate stop to the violence, and the complete withdrawal of the Israeli military from occupied Palestinian territories.

Students rage at their universities investing in companies involved in the Israeli state's war. Universities should open their books, so students can know exactly what the money we spend on fees is being used for.

Socialist Students is fighting against tuition fee rises, and for free education. Education should be available to all.

A mass movement of workers and poor in Palestine and Israel, fighting for socialism, can build on a ceasefire, challenge capitalist division, and end the cycle of conflict and suffering.

The Socialist Students conference on 8 February will discuss a range of topics, including Gaza, and the next steps for the student movement. If you want to be part of the fightback, come along and get involved in Socialist Students.



TOM PORTER-BROWN

## Socialist roots in Leicester

# We're excited Socialist Students conference is coming to town

## Independent MP to speak

HEATHER RAWLING  
LEICESTER SOCIALIST PARTY

Having the Socialist Students conference in Leicester is exciting for us. It's the product of work socialists have done in the community over many years. Socialist Students and Socialist Party members have been organising campaign stalls, and putting up posters to advertise the conference.

Highfields Centre is enthusiastic about hosting this conference, because they have huge respect for the Socialist Party and Socialist Students.

De Montfort University in Leicester announced late last year that it was planning to raise tuition fees and cut staffing. Socialist Students is campaigning for free education and against staffing cuts.

Over many years, the Socialist Party has been out campaigning against Labour council cuts in this area of Leicester. Highfields Centre was originally supported by council funding, but the Labour mayor cut this completely.

### We backed them

We supported their campaign against that cut. We organised a 'needs budget' conference in 2015, where the Highfields Centre was represented.

Campaigning with young people affected, together we pushed the Labour council back on plans to cut post-16 SEND transport. Socialist Students and the Socialist Party have campaigned against rent and council tax rises, increases in energy costs, and against illegal wages in the textile industry.

We successfully played a leading role in a campaign to save the East Midlands Children's Heart Unit in Leicester. These campaigns have earned us respect in Leicester, especially in Highfields.

Early in the 2024 general election campaign, the Socialist Party hosted a meeting where Shokat Adam, the independent candidate MP for Leicester South, was one of the speakers. He defeated Labour's Jonathan Ashworth.

Highfields is in the Leicester South constituency, and Shokat will be attending the Socialist Students conference, and speaking.

Many issues facing students and the wider community will be debated at the conference. Come and add your voice, and get involved in our campaigns.



Socialist Party on the most recent protest in London opposing Gaza slaughter. PAULA MITCHELL

## Selling the Socialist

Just some of the events where the Socialist newspaper was sold in the past week...

BILL REED  
WEST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

How soon can you sell 100 Socialist papers in 2025? That challenge was put to Socialist Party members in west London.

2025 is going to be a year of protest, strikes, and opposition. It will be easier to sell the paper on demonstrations, picket lines, and on the street, than it has been previously.

In fact, it should be easy to sell 100. We just need to be out there, and have the right approach.

People respond to calls to 'reinstate Winter Fuel Allowance', and 'public service, not private profit - nationalise the energy companies'.

### Want to know more?

In the Socialist, you can read how we say the super-rich should be made to pay to fund public services, like the NHS. Increasingly, people who buy our paper want to know more about what we do, and where we meet.

500,000 people signed up for Mick Lynch's 'Enough is Enough', and 350,000 joined Labour because of Jeremy Corbyn. These people are still looking for a lead. And many of them would find it in our paper, if we only offer it widely enough.

In general, we are short of sellers, not buyers. So perhaps 2025 is the year we promote the Socialist paper more widely.

We've devised a new record sheet, and four Socialist paper sales are organised for each week. One member already had 23 sales in the first 15 days of the year. And we sold 14 at Acton station on 14 January.

The '100 challenge' - if West London branch can do it, why not yours?

## London - Stand up to Starmer

### Acton, west London

Members of West London Socialist Party branch sold 14 Socialist papers in just 30 minutes at Acton, before our new members' reading group. We were campaigning against the rising cost of energy bills. Despite the cold weather, people are really warming to our ideas.

### Camden, north London

We sold the Socialist using the slogan: "Stand up to Starmer's austerity agenda". We noticed that it was mainly younger workers coming out of the tube and interested in getting involved in a fightback. HELEN, HAMZA, AND AMNON LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

## Oxford - fighting cuts

Lots of engagement and enthusiasm on our campaign stall for the lobby of the council we're holding against cuts. One person took multiple leaflets to give to friends.

RAE COX  
OXFORD SOCIALIST PARTY

## Birmingham - Plenty of anger at Labour

There was plenty of anger towards the Labour council's plans to reduce bin collections to fortnightly, and downgrade experienced bin collectors' jobs.

With cuts to multiple other frontline services planned in the council budget next month, there's a pressing need to organise workers and service users to put pressure on the Labour council and government to fund services.

NICK HART  
BIRMINGHAM SOCIALIST PARTY

# Council u-turns as fightback against cuts develops

## West Yorkshire campaigners feel we can win

IAIN DALTON  
LEEDS AND WEST YORKSHIRE SOCIALIST PARTY

U-turns on proposed cuts by Labour councils across West Yorkshire have been coming thick and fast. Kirklees scrutiny committee rejected proposals to privatise two care homes, referring it back to the council cabinet. Campaigners had previously saved these homes from closure.

Kirklees Council confirmed its plans to reduce the size of household wastebins are assigned to the rubbish heap of history. A policy the ruling Labour group was forced to come out against just six days after the Labour cabinet announced it!

Calderdale Council has dropped plans to cut road gritting. Leeds Council plans to close 32 crown green bowls sites were shelved until the end of summer. This marks a series of victories for local campaigns

### Saved

Last year, campaigners saved two leisure centres in Kirklees, and delayed the closure of three nurseries in Leeds.

Socialist Party members played important roles in several of these campaigns - as part of the leadership

## London - 'People want to hear from you'

This march was another demonstration of the fact that people are desperate for an alternative to capitalism and the two-party system, but simply did not know where to turn. The turnout was several thousand, as it prepared to march to Westminster.

Police were few and far between, busy kettling people at the Gaza demonstration down the street. People were open to listening to us, and we had almost run out of Socialist Party leaflets by the time the speakers came up.

People wanted to send a message to Donald Trump and other leaders, that what he was proposing and doing in the US wouldn't be allowed to happen here. The lack of organisation and direction made our presence at the march especially important.

I sold my first copy of the Socialist to one protestor. She told me to be more confident in offering them to people.

"People want to hear from you. If they're here, they're open to it."

A good thing to remember. A lot of the time, no matter how it feels, we're not actually fighting uphill.

DIANA YAZOVSKAYA  
HACKNEY SOCIALIST PARTY

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



Kirklees anti-cuts march. IAIN DALTON



London. HELEN PATTISON

## Leeds - Gaza

1,000 gathered. The demo was called on the back of Trump's elections, and the attack on women in the US over abortion.

And also the campaign in the UK for

the decriminalisation of women who have abortions after 24 weeks. There's still women being prosecuted today. But it was a mixed demo on various issues. The biggest contingent was around the destruction of Gaza, especially the impact getting aid to women and children.

of the Save Little Owls nurseries campaign in Leeds, and leading on the strike ballot of Union members in the care homes in Kirklees.

Campaigns are now developing to save the Kirkstall Abbey museum and Send 16+ transport in Leeds. In December, children protested against plans to get rid of school buses in Bradford.

Campaigners are gaining in confidence. Some have faced down cuts proposals before, or feel galvanised by seeing the success of others.

There is growing anger at Labour-run councils, who have dutifully carried out the cuts for the last decade, whilst pointing the finger at austerity from Tory central government.

Now the Tories have gone, but austerity remains. Working-class people are demanding that austerity goes, and if Labour councillors won't fight, then they too!

### Independents

In last year's council elections, independent candidates, primarily campaigning on the issue of Gaza, won seats in Bradford and Kirklees. One of the newly elected Kirklees councillors, Tanisha Bramwell, was a leading figure in the anti-cuts campaigns. She has used her council position to take that battle into the council chamber, galvanising other councillors alongside her.

A group of right-wing Labour councillors, former leaders of the council, have broken with Labour, and are now publicly opposing privatising the very care homes that they had proposed closing.

Councils are finding it harder to implement austerity. Bradford Labour council has actually failed to implement £110 million worth of proposed cuts.

Councils have sometimes had more volunteers for redundancies

than they needed. But, this year, Wakefield Labour council has had volunteers for 92 full-time equivalent redundancies, out of the 236 it wants to carry out.

Every single West Yorkshire council has overspent by at least £10 million for 2024-25. Bradford is financing a £120 million overspend through a 'capitalisation directive' agreement with the Labour government, financing day-to-day spending via borrowing and asset sales.

### 15% hike

Bradford Labour council projects that, even with making £50 million cuts every year, the capitalisation directive will end up costing them £640 million in total. They've now proposed increasing council tax by up to 15%, yet again putting the cost of austerity on the backs of workers.

Excluding Bradford's 'bailout', over £200 million 'needs' to be cut this year across the five West Yorkshire councils. There is an urgent need to bring together trade unions, anti-cuts campaigns, and anti-cuts councillors to discuss how to further coordinate this fight.

That should include drawing up no-cuts needs-based budgets, that could be moved in council chambers, utilising reserves and borrowing powers to plug the immediate shortfall, whilst mounting a campaign to demand back the over £1 billion stolen from West Yorkshire councils over the last 15 years.

Labour council leaderships will be breathing a sigh of relief that there are no elections in West Yorkshire this May. In 2026, there will be all-out elections in Bradford, Kirklees and Wakefield.

TUSC is striving to ensure that the widest possible anti-austerity challenge is mounted, ideally on a common no-cuts and socialist platform.

## Northampton - momentum

Over 100 marched, chanting "Women and workers, unite against the right", and "Women's rights are human rights".

Our Socialist Party leaflets were snapped up. After speeches, including from two Socialist Party members, our stall was inundated with women wanting to keep the momentum of the demonstration moving forward, and learn more about our party.

KATIE SIMPSON  
NORTHAMPTON SOCIALIST PARTY

## Nottingham - inspired by US

Inspired and motivated by groups in the US, responding to the reelection of Donald Trump, the Nottingham march was one of many taking place in the UK and further afield.

300 people attended the march, which included parents with pushchairs. The atmosphere was positive, with no opposing groups present. Our Socialist Party leaflets and Socialist paper were received well.

SARA BULL  
NOTTINGHAM SOCIALIST PARTY



## WHAT WE STAND FOR

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

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

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

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

### WORK, PENSIONS AND BENEFITS

- A £15-an-hour minimum wage for all, without exemptions. For the minimum wage to automatically increase linked to average earnings or inflation, whichever is higher.

- Share out the work. A maximum 32-hour working week with no loss of pay or worsening of conditions. The right to flexible working, under the control of workers not employers. An end to insecure working, for the right to full-time work for all who want it; ban zero-hour contracts.

- All workers to have trade union rates of pay, employment protection, and sickness, parental and holiday rights from day one of employment. End bosses using bogus 'self-employment' as a means to avoid giving workers rights.

- No to austerity through inflation. For all wage rates to be automatically increased at least in line with price rises.

- Open the books of all companies cutting jobs or claiming they can't afford to pay a real living wage. State subsidies, where genuinely needed, for socially-useful small businesses.

- For trade unions independent of the capitalist state, with members having democratic control over their own policies, constitutions and democratic procedures. For all trade union officials to be regularly elected, subject to recall by their members and paid a worker's wage.

- Reduce the state retirement and pension age to 55. For decent living pensions.

- Replace universal credit and the punitive benefit system with living benefits for all who need them.

### PUBLIC SERVICES

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

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

- For local councillors who are committed to opposing austerity and all cuts to local services, jobs, pay and conditions.

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

- Renationalise privatised utilities – including rail, mail, water, telecoms and power – under democratic workers' control and management.

- 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.

- 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.

### 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](https://socialistparty.org.uk/join)
- or call **020 8988 8777**
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all workers involved in the production, processing, distribution and retail of food.

### DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS

- For united working-class struggle to end discrimination on the grounds of race, gender, disability, sexuality, age, and all other forms of prejudice and oppression.

- Repeal the anti-trade union laws and all others that trample over civil liberties. For the right to protest and to strike! End police harassment. For the police to be accountable to local committees, made up of democratically elected representatives of trade unions, local community organisations and local authorities.

- For the right to choose when and whether to have children – for the right to access abortion, contraception and fertility treatment for all who need it.

- For the right to asylum – with democratic community control and oversight of emergency funding resources. No to racist immigration laws.

- Expand democracy. For the abolition of the monarchy and the House of Lords. For all MPs to be subject to the right of recall by their constituents at any time, and to only receive a worker's wage.

- For proportional representation and the right to vote at 16.

- For the right of nations to self-determination. For an independent socialist Scotland and for a socialist Wales, both part of a voluntary socialist confederation of Wales, England, Scotland and Ireland.

- Oppose the dictatorship of the billionaire owners of the media. For the nationalisation of newspaper printing facilities, radio, TV and social media platforms. Access to these facilities should be under democratic control, with political parties' coverage being allocated in proportion to the popular vote at elections.

- For a new mass workers' party, based on the trade unions, and drawing together workers, young people and activists from workplaces, and community, environmental, anti-racist and anti-cuts campaigns, to provide a fighting, socialist political alternative to the pro-big business parties.

### SOCIALISM AND INTERNATIONALISM

- No to imperialist wars and occupations!

- Take the wealth off the super-rich! For a socialist government to take into public ownership the top 150 companies and the banking system that dominate the British economy, and run them under democratic working-class control and management. Compensation to be paid only on the basis of proven need, not to the fat cats.

- A democratic socialist plan of production based on the interests of the overwhelming majority of people, and in a way that safeguards the environment.

- No to the EU bosses' club. Organise a campaign with European socialists and workers' organisations to use the talks on post-Brexit relations to tear up the EU pro-capitalist rules. For a real collaboration of the peoples of Europe on a socialist basis as a step towards a socialist world.

## Exhibition review: Streic! 84-85 Strike! Miners' Strike brought to life



PHOTOS: SCOTT JONES

SCOTT JONES

National Museum Cardiff exhibition 'Streic! 84-85 Strike!' brings the Miners' Strike to life, telling the story of that year, very movingly, through the voices and personal photos and objects of miners and their families in Wales. The bits on what Christmas 1984 was like for miners' kids is particularly touching.

The curator is Ceri Thompson who was a striking miner himself, and you can tell. He says: "At the heart of the dispute was a fight to stop pit closures and save jobs. It was a tough year but also a year that saw immense tightening of communities, of families doing everything they could survive, and people outside of the mining communities fighting side by side with the miners for a fair deal." The exhibition shows this and more.

Supporting the strike throughout and fighting for solidarity and victory was the Militant (forerunner of the Socialist Party), and the paper pops up in the main video (above right). There are also museum pieces on display donated by Vi John (below), a Militant member during the strike in



South Wales and a leading member of the women's support groups.

The exhibition is also brought to life using a quarter-scale replica headgear, colliery roof supports, miners' work clothes, lamps and badges, National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) lodge banners, the biggest lump of coal I have ever seen and a model of Oakdale Colliery, which was the local pit in my hometown.

The struggle in the coalfields during the strike and the tens of thousands of ordinary miners who stayed out for a whole year are an inspiration to those who have come after them and the exhibition is a fitting tribute in this anniversary year, as well as an educational experience for those who don't yet know the story.

- **Streic! 84-85 Strike! runs until 27 April 2025** is 'pay what you can' with a minimum price of £3

### Further reading

- *A civil war without guns - the lessons of the 1984-85 miners' strike* by Ken Smith, £7
- *Red Violet - a brief memoir of the 1984-85 miners' strike* by Violet John, £5
- *Ken and Violet were both supporters of Militant and members of miners' support groups during the miners' strike in South Wales*
- *Buy from leftbooks.co.uk*

## Documentary film review: The Bibi Files

### An inside look at the life of Benjamin Netanyahu

AMNON COHEN

The Bibi Files gives us a look at the sordid affairs inside the household of Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

The documentary consists of excerpts from over 10,000 hours of recordings of police interrogations of Netanyahu and his associates which were leaked to the makers of the film. The footage is damning, exposing the corruption of Netanyahu, where he accepted bribes and favours from capitalists Arnon Milchan, Sheldon Adelson, and Shaul Elovitch, in return for political favours.

In the case of Shaul Elovich, he prevented his bankruptcy by organising funds for him, in return for getting favourable coverage, bordering on adulation, in 'Walla! News' which was at the time the main internet news site in Israel. In the case of Arnon Milchan, Netanyahu mobilised the Israeli foreign ministry to press the US State department not to cancel Milchan's visa allowing him to reside in the US.

The film also contains commentary by the former head of Israel's security

agency, Ami Ayaon, who says: "After the catastrophe on the 7 October, the war became another instrument to stay in power. He survived in a state of instability. He survived when we fight each other."

The footage of the police interviews shows the arrogance and sense of entitlement of Netanyahu, his wife Sarah and his son Yair. Netanyahu is clearly lying when he describes the allegations against him as "ridiculous". Sarah describes her husband's treatment by the police as "outrageous" saying: "Do you know how much respect he gets when he visits America?" Their son Yair - who lives in Miami, apparently under the tutelage of one of Netanyahu's billionaire benefactors, thereby evading military service during the war - describes the police as like the Gestapo.

The fact that video footage of the police interrogation of the PM has been released shows the deep splits among the capitalist class in Israel. Netanyahu - an Israeli Trump-like figure - has been in power for most of the last 15 years. Big sections of the Israeli capitalists correctly fear him,

his provocative actions, and his alliance with ultra-nationalist settler parties. Regional instability threatens their investments and undermine their profits. The judicial system has been used to try to depose him. Netanyahu, like Trump, responded by painting himself as the 'enemy of the establishment' (despite having been PM for so long). This was also the basis of Netanyahu's 'judicial reforms' which attempt to give him control of the judiciary, to prevent the courts from convicting him in his four trials which have been ongoing since 2020. In order to carry out these 'reforms', Netanyahu brought fascist far-right parties like Ozma Yehudit into his government.

The documentary does a good job of exposing the corruption and arrogance of Netanyahu and his inner circle. But it sees him as the source of the crisis in Israeli society. But the rise of reactionary right populists like Netanyahu and Trump are not the cause of the crisis of capitalism but its reflection. Netanyahu's survival for so long, despite his responsibility for calamities and his corruption, is the result of the failure to create a political alternative, because no alternative which bases itself on capitalism can offer anything to ordinary Israelis. Ultimately a workers' party armed with a socialist programme which offers a future to ordinary working-class people is necessary.

- **The Bibi Files can be streamed on YouTube, Amazon and Apple TV**



## Remembering Alan Hardman



The speakers and chair left to right: Jane Ingham, Tom Gibson, Clare Doyle and Iain Dalton PHOTO: YORKSHIRE SOCIALIST PARTY

On Saturday 18 January, the Leeds and West Yorkshire branch of the Socialist Party organised a memorial meeting in Leeds for our late branch member and Militant cartoonist Alan Hardman, on the first anniversary of his death. Those in attendance heard testimonials about Alan's life and works from Clare Doyle, Jane Ingham, and Iain Dalton. Many highlighted Alan's ability to convey considerably more with a single image than many could with pages of writing. Need Not Greed, a book of Alan's cartoons, selected by himself shortly before he passed away, was also displayed and discussed.

ANTHONY BRACUTI

LEEDS AND WEST YORKSHIRE SOCIALIST PARTY



DO YOU HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY?

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

## THE SOCIALIST INBOX

### Big Pharma's profit influence

Mary Finch's article 'Medical Misogyny: fully funded, democratically controlled NHS needed' (see [socialistparty.org.uk](https://socialistparty.org.uk)) motivated me to write in. In addition to the NHS demands that Mary raises regarding women's health, I want to add nationalisation of the pharmaceutical industry.

I was diagnosed with adenomyosis (a form of endometriosis) and was told the cause was unknown and that surgery and pain killers were my only option. My own research has led me to draw my own conclusions about why there's no treatment.

The pharmaceutical industry is the largest private funder of research and development (R&D) in the UK and globally. Two of the world's top five companies are based in the UK. Seven of the ten largest pharmaceutical companies (by revenue) spent \$97.3 billion on R&D in 2020 alone. Their business models therefore have a big impact on our health culture.

I believe, to maximise profits, the pharmaceutical industry tends to focus research on: quick fixes, the most patentable products, and 'product-first' rather than 'disease-first' research.

Any belief that that the pharmaceutical industry research is 'demand-led' can be countered by the estimated \$54 billion spent on marketing by big pharma in 2022. This includes things such as donations, sponsorship, consultancy fees, partnership deals, expenses, as well as donations to patient groups lobbying for NHS approval of specific medicines. There is no part of the health - care system these private interests don't try to exert their influence.

I believe the lack of understanding and awareness about conditions such as endometriosis, adenomyosis and polycystic ovary syndrome is because of their association with excess oestrogen levels. It suits the pharmaceutical bosses for there to be an oversimplified

understanding of oestrogen as being the female, anti-ageing hormone. Oestrogen treatment is big business, worth billions for the pharmaceutical industry.

Capitalism has seriously damaged my health. Profit needs to be taken out of all healthcare including pharmaceuticals and research and decisions made democratically based on scientific knowledge and patient/community needs.

NOTTINGHAM SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBER

### Labour 'no value' nonsense

I wrote the following email to my local Labour MP after she voted for Labour's U-turn not to pay compensation to WASPI women (women who were forced at short notice to change their retirement plans when the government raised the women's pension age).

EILEEN HUNTER

Dear Rachel, please listen to this broadcast by William Beveridge in December 1942 in his address to the nation sharing the proposals for the creation of the welfare state (YouTube link)

To justify this decision not to pay the promised token compensation to women who have been impacted by the rise in retirement age on the basis that it offers 'no value' is a complete disregard for the principles the Labour Party was built on; never mind the absence of integrity.

Whose interests is this decision in? Who does the Labour government and Labour Party represent? You voted in conscience on the bill on assisted dying: where is your conscience now? The focus should be on supporting the living!

If you support this U-turn, then you are failing your constituents. Your constituents will conclude there is 'no value' in having a Labour Party.

Jam tomorrow just doesn't cut it anymore!



PHOTO: PAUL MATTSOON

# East London school strike: 'We strike for the children, to make our school better'

Strikers at Newbury Park School in Redbridge, on strike over conditions in the school, spoke to Martin Reynolds



"I think the biggest issue that is concerning staff and parents is 'split classes' where, instead of finding cover for a class when a teacher is sick, they put the children into other classes. Those classes end up with 40 or so children, some without a chair, without pencils, sitting on the floor all day. No other school in our borough is using split classes.

We've been trying to communicate with management to resolve the dispute, yet parents have been told it's all resolved, and it's not! There was one meeting, I believe, between the union and management, and in that meeting they denied that split classes even happen! When in the autumn term it happened 39 times.

The teachers at this school do not want to leave. We love our community, we love our children. But at the moment most of us are looking for other jobs. The reason we strike is for the children, because we want to change the school. We want it to be better so that we can stay and carry on with the jobs that we love."



The picket line with a placard (inset) PHOTO: WALTHAM FOREST SOCIALIST PARTY

# Nigeria Solidarity UK: End Michael Lenin's 'treason trial', defend democratic rights!

The 'treason' trial of Michael Lenin and ten other #endbadgovernance protesters is scheduled to commence on 29 January after its postponement last year. The trumped up charges of treason and terrorism financing could potentially earn them a death penalty, if not quashed.

In the early hours of 5 August 2024, Adaramoye Michael Lenin and a few others were abducted and detained. It took a serious local and international campaign by socialists, activists and trade unions before they were granted bail after almost two months.

The campaign to demand the dropping of charges and an end to the trial and victimisation must now be intensified. We call on socialist groups and trade union activists to join this campaign and to demand an end to attacks on the democratic rights of working people in Nigeria.

The conditions that gave rise to the #endbadgovernance protests last year have worsened, with an escalating cost-of-living crisis. The horrific deaths of about 65 people, including 35 children, in Christmas charity stampedes last year, is a huge

testament to the height of hunger and desperation to survive.

There is no other cause of the mass hunger other than the brutal neoliberal policies of past and previous governments. The current government has doubled down on the attacks by fully deregulating oil and gas refining and devaluing the currency, amongst others, and now plans to introduce big business tax cuts.

These attacks are occurring against a backdrop of a meagre minimum wage of N70,000 set in 2024, that has yet to be fully implemented across all states. With inflation running at over 30%, it is not enough. The trade union leadership, particularly the NLC and TUC trade union federations, must be prepared to mobilise for serious struggle to force the implementation of the minimum wage, while also putting forward demands for reversal of all the anti-poor policies of deregulation, privatisation, education fee hikes, and currency devaluation.

There is also need for the trade union leaderships, socialist groups and activists to take on the Nigerian government, against repression of

workers, activists and socialists. In addition to the attacks on the #endbadgovernance protesters, Abbey Trotsky, who is a coordinator of the Campaign for Democratic and Workers' Rights in Oyo State, has faced state prosecution for six years. He has suffered harassment, including arrest and detention, over this period. He has been arrested no less than eight times and is facing trial on trumped-up criminal charges for the role he played extending solidarity to thousands of casual workers at Sumal Foods Ltd, who went on strike protesting against poor pay and slave working conditions.

Join us in building the solidarity support against an attempt to continue to enslave the vast majority of Nigerians. The huge natural and human resources possessed by the country could, if placed under collective ownership and democratic control and management of working people, guarantee decent living standards for all. That is why we need to fight to end the rule of the rich few elites by organising for a democratically run mass workers' party, armed with a socialist programme.



Michael Lenin PHOTO: CWI NIGERIA



**Protest at 1pm Wednesday  
29 January at the  
Nigerian High Commission,  
9 Northumberland Avenue,  
London WC2N 5BX**

**Can your trade union branch or  
organisation send solidarity, donate  
and send a letter of protest?**



"The director of education put out a letter to parents which stated that we've been whipped up into this by external agitators. But we approached the union with a document, maybe 12 pages long, of concerns from staff who'd come to the rep in a state of distress.

The government supplies money to the school to cover teachers when they're ill. But the school budget is low and the pay rise was not funded. So the head is trying to save money. Staff are enthusiastic and they still have goodwill. I've never been so lucky to work with staff like this. There are teachers who are managing to complete the tasks that management give them, but only at the expense of their entire personal lives. There are teachers who are working upwards of 60 hours a week, when we're contracted and paid for 32 and a half.

In the summer term last year, the children in Year 5 were split for two weeks consecutively. There's no excuse for that. You don't know all the children's needs, you have no plan for them. We had no lunchtime resources whatsoever last week.

Another issue is the leadership make the children and staff all stand in lines in the playground every morning, in all weathers, chanting a mantra instead of being able to run. And I worry about safeguarding, because we've got some vulnerable children. We're losing that little bit of slightly more casual time that allowed important disclosures and one-to-one interventions to take place.

We're lucky to have a really diverse demographic. We have children from families who are struggling financially. There's a hotel down the road that's used to house refugees, and last year kids from the hotel had such a good time in my class that when they were moved from the hotel they travelled upwards of an hour to keep coming to school to finish the year, which was lovely. The kids are excellent, we're really lucky to have them and it's great that the parents are just so supportive. The leadership team have no idea how lucky they are to have such an enthusiastic staff and student body."

# Long shifts and low pay A day in the life of a care worker



JULIE  
PLYMOUTH CARE WORKER

I have worked in the care sector on and off for a large part of my working life, starting on a Youth Training Scheme at 16, on £29.50 a week, and have worked in a variety of settings.

Since, privatisation and a move away from local authority-run care facilities has led to the dire situation we have now, with councils paying in some cases thousands per week for private companies to provide care for individuals. This is despite the fact that the facilities in many care homes are poor and wages low.

Most care jobs involve extremely long hours, often 11- to 16-hour shifts in my current service and at many others. These include nights. If there is no relief as the shift is not covered, the employee is mandated to stay on for up to a further 6 hours until another carer can be found.

We can easily be doing between 3 and 6 night shifts in a row. My record is 11 nights during Covid. Despite the fact that ordinary care workers aren't generally 'on call', there is an expectation in many care jobs to have your phone on and to be available for work on your days off. I have been woken up at midnight, when I've just done a night shift, and been asked to come and do a 'sleep in'.

We all get paid the minimum wage, whether on days or nights, and get no breaks. We just eat when we can. We asked once could we have a break and got told we could have one but would lose an hour's pay.

Some care residents have very challenging needs, may not understand personal boundaries or acceptable language and conduct. Some can even be violent. It takes a lot of skill, tact and experience to work in these environments. The job can also

expose people to very distressing scenes. It's not for the faint-hearted. Much like in the emergency services or hospitals, we can't just walk away and have a short break if we witness a death.

Many people see care work as a manual job, which it is. However, like in all workplaces, paperwork takes over everything and the level of paperwork now is on a par with nursing and social work, despite the low pay. The sheer number of reports that have to be filled in is breathtaking. In some cases everything from number of hours slept, to quality of stools, to general behaviour has to be recorded repeatedly during a shift.

Increasingly care workers need to be IT literate. In many cases we are required to have a full clean driving licence and our own cars, despite being on the minimum wage. We can be sent miles away and required to stay over - and it's not like they are business trips with expenses to match!

## Not only care

Much of the work involves not only care - which of course can involve dealing with bodily fluids and personal care - but cleaning, cooking and in some residential care facilities even making sure the home is in order, which in some smaller homes may even include gardening, dealing with home IT issues and even basic DIY. Think of all those little tasks you might do round your own house - now imagine having to do them around your own workplace as well as the proper tasks on your long anti-social shift.

Occasionally I have worked in places where workers have collectively refused to complete these sorts of tasks. Often though, people will grudgingly just accept it.

The long hours, stressful conditions, burnout, poor treatment and

awful pay leads to plenty quitting. Hence the vacancies. Why not work in Aldi instead for a higher wage with no legal liability for human life, long night shifts, and actual benefits such as discounts on food? It is no surprise that when a supermarket opens up, care vacancies shoot up!

Employers exploit the fact that many care workers are migrants, young people and women, which they see as being less likely to get organised. Many migrant workers live in fear of deportation if they lose their jobs and are often bullied by bosses and agencies, for example.

Care homes are staffed in some cases by only a few workers who don't often get to meet their colleagues from other sites. This compartmentalisation of the workforce makes it hard to organise.

But the trade unions could be doing much more to help us organise from the grassroots level up. The only contact I've had from my own union recently was to ask for more subs. Most of the trade unions in the care sector, including Unison, GMB and Community, are affiliated to the Labour Party - now in government.

The union leaders need to be demanding that Labour carries out its pre-election policy of creating a National Care Service immediately - kicking out the profiteering bosses and bringing social care back in-house. Delaying a decision until 2028 after yet another 'review' is not good enough.

Although I am very critical of what goes on behind the scenes, I love my job. My hope is that we are seen as professional and treated accordingly, with the same training and standards everywhere, so it's seen as a job that people want to work and stay in. So the fabulous people I support get the best care possible.

## Labour stalls care reform plans and just keeps cutting

In 2019, with Jeremy Corbyn as leader, Labour published its plans for a National Care Service to "ensure that social care is a universally available service, with personal care provided free at the point of use, and that all who need it can access it."

The policy included plans to shift back away from profit-driven private care towards local authority-run care services, although the immediate nationalisation of big private care services needed was not promised.

At least the words 'National Care Service' survived Starmer's bonfire of popular Corbyn policies to make it into Labour's 2024 general election manifesto. Now it emerges that will have to wait for the outcome of yet another commission not making its recommendations until the end of 2028. But the crisis is acute now.

Meanwhile local councils, responsible for providing social care services, continue to face grinding austerity under Labour, as under the Tories. And Labour councillors just keep making cuts, refusing to mount a struggle to demand the funding our communities need.



Social workers and occupational therapists (OTs) at South Gloucestershire Council walked off the job for three days, taking a stand on pay inequalities in 2023 PHOTOS: ROGER THOMAS



## The Socialist Party fights for

- A minimum wage of £15 an hour now, with no exemptions. Full pay for overnight stays and travel time, including expenses
- A maximum 32-hour week, without loss of pay. Free childcare for all. Free comprehensive training for all those who need it
- For democratic fighting trade unions in social care, with recognition across all employers
- Reverse privatisation. Nationalise care service providers, with compensation to small shareholders only on the basis of proven need
- For publicly owned care services to be run democratically by elected bodies of service users and their families, care workers and the community
- End council cuts, re-open closed services - for councils to set budgets based on need
- Free social care for all those who need it

£1/£2 solidarity price

socialistparty.org.uk



# the Socialist

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formerly **Militant**

# FUND OUR SERVICES

## Make the super-rich pay



PHOTO: DAVE REID

ALEX SAMPSON  
PLYMOUTH SOCIALIST PARTY

### £13.4 million

more cuts. People in Plymouth are bracing themselves for more attacks from the Labour-run council. We already know social inclusion provision for elderly care home residents faces the axe.

Meanwhile in Bristol, the Green-led majority council is showing its true colours by getting ready to vote for £51 million of cuts over

five years, leading to the closing of museums and slashing budgets for council house repairs, library services and council tax support, as well as selling off council housing.

Instead of standing up for residents and setting budgets to meet the needs of our communities, councils everywhere are slashing services while increasing council taxes and charges.

Following the Tory playbook, the Labour government tells us it 'has' to cut government spending to stick to its 'fiscal rules', as capitalist speculators' confidence in the British economy falters.

Just like through the last 14 years of Tory austerity, this Labour government is looking to make working-class people pay for the chaos of the capitalist system.

Britain's billionaires continue to get £35 million richer every day, and at the same time the Labour government considers reforms to work incapacity benefits in an attempt to squeeze every last penny out of disabled and sick people.

Too many people continue to have to decide whether to heat or eat while energy companies and supermarkets make record profits. Water bills keep rising while bosses' profits

boom and sewage flows into our rivers. The NHS is on its knees while health secretary Wes Streeting continues to hand out billions of pounds in contracts to private healthcare companies.

15 years of austerity have brought untold suffering. We need to bring it to an end.

That means getting organised to fight every attack on our services, and every attempt to make the working class pay more. We need a new workers' party that fights on our side, and that is prepared to take the wealth off the ultra-rich to fully fund our services and fight for socialist change.

WHAT WE STAND FOR: THE SOCIALIST PARTY'S MAIN DEMANDS >>> see column on page 12



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