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the Socialist

Issue 1309

13-19 February 2025

formerly **Militant**

STAND UP TO TRUMP AND STARMER

END ISRAELI STATE TERROR



PAUL MATSSON, GAGE SKIDMORE/CC, NUMBER10/CC

We need our own party

Build the workers' fightback

IAIN DALTON
YORKSHIRE SOCIALIST PARTY REGIONAL SECRETARY

Donald Trump's pronouncement, that he wants the US to take over Gaza and see it cleared of its inhabitants, has further inflamed the Middle East, giving Benjamin Netanyahu's Israeli government a greenlight to again escalate its state terror in Gaza.

But the US government has been complicit in the Israeli state's massacre of civilians in Gaza since well before Trump's election. 'Genocide Joe' Biden continued to sign off billions of dollars of arms shipments to Israel, except from one token shipment.

Keir Starmer's new Labour has backed the Israeli government throughout too, including Starmer defending the Israeli government's 'right' to cut off food and water to Palestinians.

Desperate for a trade deal with Trump, both Starmer and Foreign Secretary David Lammy couldn't bring themselves to directly criticise Trump when they joined in the widespread condemnation of Trump's 'plan.'

At every step, Starmer's government seeks to do the bidding of the capitalist elite - whether backing wars to try to secure their profit interests, or bringing down the axe on public services alongside wage restraint and privatisation.

It is under a Labour government and home secretary that police orchestrated the arrest of protest organisers and activists during the January national anti-war demo. Labour politicians should be reminded that Tory ex-home secretary Suella Braverman was brought down after she tried to ban us marching.

To step up the movement to bring a real end to war and occupation, including in the West Bank, unions should lead, drawing on the groundswell of opposition to the war. Collective action by trade unionists could bring a halt to arms shipments and other materials that make the occupation of Palestinian land possible.

The election of four Gaza independents as well as Jeremy Corbyn in the general election was a shot across the bow for Starmer's Labour - proof that anger at Labour can be translated into electing our own political representatives.

Workers desperately need our own new mass party, one which fights for a socialist alternative to capitalism's war, poverty and austerity. Trade unionists, socialists and other campaigners standing as working-class representatives in elections against Labour, is an important part of the process of bringing one into existence.

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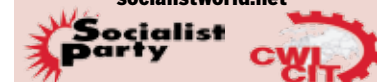
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"The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it."
Karl Marx

Civil service cuts demanded while private sector bleeds it dry

SAM SMITHSON
WALTHAM FOREST SOCIALIST PARTY

Austerity imposed by Keir Starmer's Labour will see already beleaguered public services worsening for us all. A cut of 5% across all departments has been demanded by Chancellor Rachel Reeves. Despite claims by the government that cuts will lead to a more "agile and modern state," the real consequences of this attack will result in increased waiting times for essential government services, such as the issuing of passports and the filing of tax returns. Now the government has suggested that senior civil servants must become personally

responsible for the drive to find so-called efficiencies within the budgets they manage, with the threat of job losses if they don't make enough cuts.

In December, a government source stated that the proposed cuts could result in up to 10,000 jobs being lost. Pressures such as this will mean workers in the civil service will be asked to work harder for less, including those who work in minimum-wage roles.

Cuts for us, profits for the bosses

The cost of private sector consultants to the government has rocketed

to a massive £1 billion paid since the general election, a January report found. This flies in the face of any 'cost-saving' measures demanded. Labour promised in the general election to halve the cost of spending on consultants to prioritise frontline services. As funding is stripped from the public sector, the government chooses to use large corporations to prop up failing departments instead of seeking to properly invest in services to benefit us all. Once again, it is big business lining their pockets in a time of austerity, with the taxpayer being left to pick up the bill.

The Labour Party is acting in the interests of their crony capitalist friends

and donors, who make massive profits year on year from privatised services. It shows the desperate need for a socialist programme that would bring services back in-house and remove the profit motive, running them for the people who use them rather than the bosses who profit off them.

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Blackpool beach, one of the most polluted in Britain NILEFANON/CC

Dump privatisation, not sewage

JESS EVANS
LIVERPOOL SOCIALIST PARTY

Average annual water bills will go up by 7.5% from April, the biggest increase seen in almost twenty years. Water firms claim they need to hike our bills so they can invest in infrastructure, with plans made to upgrade pipes and reservoirs. At the same time, they're paying shareholders massive dividends and top staff mega bonuses.

This hike will hit customers at the same time as other bills, including phone and broadband, council tax and the TV licence, are all set to increase as well. Many households are already struggling from the extortionate increases from over the last few years, another one will only add to the strain.

Privatisation good for a few

The privatisation of the UK water industry in 1989 has meant a decrease in the quality and value for money for us. It's a tale as old

as time for many other privatised companies. Consumers pay £2.3 billion more every year for their water than if it was under state ownership, according to University of Greenwich research. The privatisation of water has emptied our pockets, whilst filling those of the shareholders. In 2024, water company bosses' bonuses rose to £9.1 million!

While water companies are putting bills up for what they claim is necessary to maintain and protect our waterways, recent controversies suggest otherwise. In 2022, there were a total of 301,091 sewage spills. Our once gorgeous rivers and seashores are being contaminated by companies who care more about profit than protection. We need to bring our water companies back into public ownership, and run them democratically to protect our environment, instead of being treated as a way to enrich shareholders. Kick out private profit and lower our bills!

Luton Vauxhall closure – where is Labour's 'growth'? Nationalise!

HELEN KERR
STEVENAGE SOCIALIST PARTY

Despite the workforce meeting every challenge set by the company in respect to vehicle production at the Vauxhall plant in Luton, owners Stellantis are still pushing ahead with closure.

Protests before Christmas involving hundreds of workers peacefully blockading the plant, backed up by supporters, won a stay of execution. However, despite Unite reps holding meetings with Stellantis to put forward viable options to secure the future of the plant, the company announced on 5 February that the plant would close in April.

How does this fit into Starmer and Reeves's "drive for growth"? This doesn't just impact workers at the plant but will have a devastating impact on the town itself. Closure of the plant could have a financial impact of £320 million per year on the local economy.

Stellantis has chosen Ellesmere Port over Luton and is saying it could not keep both UK plants open as both would then be at risk.

We oppose all closures. To defend jobs and the community requires urgent major action, including occupation. Unite should be calling on the government to nationalise the Luton plant, and the wider car industry, with no compensation to the fat cat owners. Nationalisation under democratic workers' control and management would mean that electric vehicles could then be produced at an affordable cost, securing jobs and creating a greener environment.

Unite should be putting pressure on the Labour government to step in as a matter of urgency; it should hold a demo in the town and raise these demands publicly.

The Socialist Party stands in solidarity with the workers in Luton, and everywhere where mass redundancies and closures are threatened.



Protest against the closure in December ROB WILLIAMS



Hottest ever January, again! Join the fight for a socialist future

ALEX SAMPSON
PLYMOUTH SOCIALIST PARTY

January 2025 was the hottest on record, with surface air temperature at 1.75°C above pre-industrial levels. This shocked climate scientists who expected it to be slightly lower than previous due to the beginning of La Niña, which normally brings a pattern of cooling to the Pacific region. Climate scientist Bill McGuire suggests that this shows "dangerous, all-pervasive climate breakdown has arrived."

January was also the month of catastrophic wildfires in California which destroyed 11,000 homes. Despite this, and clear evidence of continued climate crisis, US President Donald Trump has pulled out of the Paris Accords on climate change and is pushing ahead with his "drill, baby, drill" plan to continue US reliance on fossil fuels for the foreseeable future.

Governments who still pay lip service to the Paris Accords aren't taking the action necessary to prevent climate catastrophe. Starmer's Labour Party, prior to the general election, promised to pump £24 billion into green initiatives to work towards the UK's net-zero targets. These promises have since rolled back for the sake of 'fiscal responsibility' as attempts to keep the mean global temperature increase to below 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels seems to slip further out of reach.

Pro-capitalist governments around

the world are more interested in continuing their cosy and profitable relationships with oil-producing companies or racing to corner the market in the 'rare earth elements' needed for current green technologies. Tit-for-tat tariffs and trade wars are becoming the norm rather than the unified, co-ordinated response needed on a global scale.

While the threat of climate change is an existential and very real threat, things are not hopeless, but it will require the socialist transformation of society. Capitalism, a system based on profit and competing nation states, caused this problem and is incapable of solving it.

An alternative to unending climate destruction does exist. By removing profit and putting the working class in charge we could democratically plan production, investment and research for what we need, not

what makes a profit for a few. A socialist plan of production could shift away from fossil fuels without making working-class and poor people around the world pay for the ravages of climate change.

Join the Socialists!

What can we, as individuals do? Well, if you aren't already a member, join the Socialist Party; itself a member of the worldwide socialist organisation the Committee for a Workers' International. Join us in fighting for the socialist transformation of society under democratic workers' control. Billionaires may look to Mars, but we look to each other and only together can we solve the problems inherited from the chaotic capitalist system. We fight for a system where the working class of all countries can work together to improve the conditions under which we all work and live.

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SCAN:



Grenfell Tower demolition: Labour's deregulation hypocrisy

JAMIE SPEKA
WEST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

What should have been a "normal flat fire," according to Peter Apps, a journalist at Inside Housing, culminated in a deadly tragedy, killing 72 people, 18 of whom were children. Grenfell Tower, burnt out and still standing, remains a palpable reminder of "the most serious crime committed on British soil this century."

Prioritising profit over resident safety by way of lax fire safety inspections and building regulations underpinned the tragedy. The blame was mostly placed on the then Tory government, whose cuts and deregulation meant flammable cladding was installed on the tower. Previous governments, including Tony Blair's New Labour, had worsened building standards and regulations.

Eight years on, Labour wants to remind us that they care. This is why Grenfell's covering reads "Forever in our hearts"; but forever seems to have been cut short following Labour local government secretary Angela Rayner's decision last week to completely demolish the tower.

News broke that the tower would be "carefully taken down," in a statement put out by the government. The decision is said to have been made with careful consideration along with Grenfell Tower survivors. However,

survivors are telling a different story: one where their collaboration has been set aside and replaced with undemocratic decision making.

The tower is in dire need of repair or demolition, according to expert engineers. Yet, deciding to remove the tower completely without survivors, victims' families and the local community having control over the process of memorialisation is not the way to go.

UK Tonight with Sarah-Jane Mee recently featured a survivor, Marcio Gomes, who spoke for the "90%" of survivors who did not get a say in the decision.

"Grenfell should have been the catalyst for change," he said. "And nearly eight years on, not a lot has changed. We're still going through the process, we still haven't had justice. The victims aren't being put at the centre of the decisions that are being made. It's almost like they want to knock it down, out of sight, out of mind."

Labour deregulation

Marcio Gomes's words ring especially prominent in the face of Labour's current mission of deregulation.

The prime minister's recent promise of deregulation looks quite similar to the previous government, only repackaged to fit the interests of the Labour Party's backers - pro-liberalisation billionaires and corporations.

With Grenfell 'out of sight and out of mind,' Labour can get on with business: a new runway at Heathrow Airport, raising taxes on working people, and, pertinently, vowing to relax planning laws.

Deregulation construction and tearing up planning laws would give housing developers more opportunity to build shoddy, unsafe infrastructure. It would allow little to no scrutiny from local communities, who already have few official avenues to fight back against developers. Tipping the scales towards big construction companies in the name of economic growth is reminiscent of the very same kindling that set the flames of Grenfell.

Can we trust big construction companies to build safe houses when they have historically been most interested in making the maximum profit possible? More housing is needed: is it too much to ask of Labour for all new homes to be safe? Taking the big construction companies, material manufacturers and the banks into democratic public ownership would mean we could build the thousands of high-quality, safe and environmentally friendly homes we need.

WHAT'S YOUR VIEW?
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USAID cuts catastrophe

JAMES COLLETT
GLOUCESTERSHIRE SOCIALIST PARTY

The morning after Donald Trump's decision to cut USAID (United States Agency for International Development), catastrophic results were already evident for some of the world's poorest: patients arriving at HIV clinics in South Africa and Uganda found them closed; health centres in Nairobi had to lay off nurses and were confronted with the prospect of running out of medicine; refugee camps along the Thai-Myanmar border announced they have only weeks of food left. If USAID is gutted as Trump and Elon Musk plan, deadly consequences will be felt on a mass scale.

USAID was set up by president John F Kennedy in 1961 with the core aim of using aid programmes to "contain communism", i.e. to further US influence abroad and fend off the threat of revolution.

But US capitalism is no longer in competition with an alternative economic system in the form of the Stalinist planned economies of the Soviet

Union. Instead, the use of aid has focused on shoring up America's influence and global market share against the encroachment of other capitalist powers.

The comments of UK foreign secretary David Lammy revealed the true cynical character of foreign aid: Trump's cuts to the US foreign aid budget could be "a big strategic mistake", Lammy said, and could allow China to step in and further its own global influence. Capitalist politicians typically see foreign aid as a form of 'soft power', a means by which capitalist powers can increase their influence, and open up routes to profit making, particularly in underdeveloped and neocolonial countries.

Crimes of imperialism

Many of the aid programmes funded by US imperialism attempt to partially ameliorate the economic collapse of countries which, through wars, IMF austerity packages and other methods of wealth extraction, have been devastated by that same US imperialism.

Iraq war

After the US-led invasion of Iraq obliterated that country's infrastructure, public services and industry, the US Congress pledged \$2.5 billion towards reconstruction through USAID. At the same time, it awarded lucrative contracts to US companies to 'rebuild' Iraq (in particular its oil industry), opening the way for US exploitation of Iraqi resources.

This is the 'generosity' of the mafia boss who bestows 'favours' which he expects to be repaid with interest. The difference between Trump and previous US presidents is that Trump is a different type of gangster: he prefers to make his associates "offers they can't refuse".

New world order?

But this is about more than personal preference. The reckless behaviour of Trump and Musk reflects deepening splits within the US ruling capitalist class over how to defend their interests. A section of the capitalist class is concluding that the 'rules-based order', working through crumbling international institutions, such as the United Nations, the World Health Organisation and so on, is no longer suitable for maintaining the profits of US imperialism in this new era of fractured and fast-changing world relations. Instead, they look to figures like Trump to use naked force to bend others to his will, and to cut spending, cut taxes, and remove any regulations that stand in the way of maximising short-term profits.

The truth is that capitalism itself has no way forward and it stands more and more exposed before the world's working class and poor people, as a system of gangsterism, greed and extortion, making us pay for the crises of the rich. Only a democratic socialist plan of production can provide the world's population with the food, healthcare and education it needs and rebuild the world order on the basis of cooperation and solidarity.

Billionaire wealth increases three times faster than previous year

\$5.7 billion every day. That's how much the world's billionaires' wealth increased every day in 2024. Meanwhile, 3.5 billion people live in poverty. Oxfam's 'Takers not makers' report confirms Karl Marx's analysis that brutal inequality is inherent in the capitalist system. "Accumulation of wealth at one pole is, therefore, at the same time accumulation of misery [...] at the opposite pole."

It's not enough to analyse society, the point is to change it. Oxfam's programme to fight back against this

monstrous inequality? For governments to act in the interests of the masses, tax the rich and trade fairly...

But governments cannot take the action necessary while wedded to the capitalist system. Marx is clear what is needed - a complete reorganisation of society, putting the working-class across the world in the driving seat. Cancelling debt and confiscating the plunder hoarded by the super-rich. Putting to use the wealth, resources and technique to improve the lives of all, instead of enriching a tiny few.



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Monthly magazine of the Socialist Party
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As Trump goes ahead with his favourite word - tariffs - what will be the consequences for world capitalism?
 - **Fragile ceasefire in Gaza**
Written before the latest developments, Judy Beishon looks at the pressure which led to the ceasefire and the processes which make its future uncertain
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GAZA: TRUMP THREATENS NEW NAKBA

End siege and occupation - fight for socialist change



Most of the capitalist media worldwide reacted with astonishment and condemnation to US president Trump's monstrous assertion that he plans to oversee an expulsion of Palestinians from the Gaza strip, with the US taking ownership of the land and investing in it as a playground for the rich. But that moral uproar was only skin deep. It reflected a view of the capitalist ruling classes that Trump is just going 'too far' in trampling over the norms of 'international law' and capitalist relations, and is increasing the risk of new eruptions in the region, as opposed to the genuine outrage felt by workers and the poor worldwide.

The 1948 Nakba - the forced mass expulsion of over 700,000 Palestinians from their homes around the time of the creation of Israel - is deeply ingrained in Palestinian consciousness, to the extent that many Palestinians in Gaza say they would rather die than be faced with a similar catastrophe today. This will be even more the case as Trump shockingly declared that Palestinians would again be denied the right to return.

Trump's offered bribe of moving to "far safer and more beautiful communities" would be no such thing. If he eventually succeeds in pressurising other countries to host them, the prospect would be poverty-stricken refugee camps with inadequate facilities, as previous waves of Palestinian refugees have suffered.

Trump's real attitude towards the Palestinians' wellbeing is clear in his rapid reversal of Biden's token sanctions on violent Israeli Jewish West Bank settlers and his resending of 2,000 pound bombs to Israel. Also, he has appointed some officials who have few differences with Israel's far right, such as Elise Stefanik, the new US ambassador to the United Nations and Evangelical Christian Mike Huckabee, now US ambassador to

Israel, who both believe that Israel has a biblical right to the entire West Bank.

Middle East editor of the Financial Times, Andrew England, after referring to the Nakba, wrote: "Nobody in the region - with the exception of Israel's far right - can countenance a repeat" (6.2.25). He is wrong; In ruling class circles, those who can countenance a new mass expulsion go way beyond Israel's far right. The mainstream right in Israel has long desired mass expulsion of Palestinians from Gaza and the West Bank. Prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu's governing coalition reiterated just before taking power: "The Jewish people have an exclusive and inalienable right to all parts of the Land of Israel". Its subsequent bloodbath and mass destruction in Gaza, together with ongoing brutal repression in the West Bank, show very clearly its wish to remove Palestinians from their homeland and aim of preventing a Palestinian state.

The 'centre' parties in Israel are also willing to embrace Trump's ethnic cleansing ideas. For instance, Benny Gantz, presently a parliamentary oppositionist to Netanyahu's government, praised Trump's proposals and said that Israel has 'nothing to lose' from them. Likewise with some of the leaders of pro-capitalist former left-leaning parties.

Arab elites

Also wanting to jump on the bandwagon of Trumpism, with its rabidly overt form of capitalist exploitation and super-enrichment, are the already super-rich Arab elites. They feigned outrage over Trump's pronouncements on Gaza, while pledging billions of dollars in deals with the US. Saudi Arabia alone pledged \$600 billion, with Trump promising in return to make that country his first foreign destination.

It's the Saudi Arabian masses and their sisters and brothers across the region who are the obstacle to the desires of Trump's administration, the Israeli capitalists and the Arab rulers, not the fake protests of the region's elites. Those ruling classes haven't forgotten the 2011 'Arab Spring' uprisings that overthrew dictators and they rightly live in fear of the next round of explosive struggle from below.

So, while Trump tries leaning on the autocratic leaders in Egypt and Jordan to agree to resettle Palestinians from Gaza - using threats and bribes - those same leaders warily watch the mood of their populations and join the list of governments once again paying lip service to the need for a Palestinian state.

That list is long, stretching from Saudi Arabia, to Turkey, France, Germany, Australia, Japan and more. Yet those same capitalist powers have never put forward a realisable plan for a genuine Palestinian state and nor will they be able to, faced with the limitations of their own interests and the overall global crisis and



Trump stands behind Netanyahu WHITEHOUSE

No amount of Israeli military force, backed by the world's strongest imperialist power, will ever lead the Palestinians to give up their desire for self-determination

decline of the capitalist system on which they're based.

It's therefore no surprise that according to polls, neither a majority of Palestinians or Israelis currently see a two-state solution as possible. Such poll results have of course been part of the strategy of Netanyahu and Co in their turning of Gaza to rubble.

What now for Gaza?

Meanwhile, Gaza's Palestinians continue to face the worst conditions imaginable, with no certainty that the ceasefire will hold. Netanyahu repeatedly says he will resume the war in order to destroy Hamas, an impossible mission, because for every Hamas fighter killed there are others stepping into their place. Neither would the horrific objective of expelling the entire population of Gaza remove the existence of Hamas and other right-wing Islamist militias, as adherents would remain among the newly created refugees and are present in the West Bank and other parts of the region. A layer of the Palestinians will continue to look to them for resistance to the occupation and repression until the time when the

Palestinian masses move to take the future into their own hands by entering the road of mass struggle and building their own independent, democratically controlled organisations to take that struggle forwards.

Immediately, as well as demanding an end to the war and building the class-based pressure that can deliver it, workers' movements internationally - including in Israel - must demand that Gaza is rebuilt for the people of Gaza, and with money from the profits and wealth of the capitalists who have done nothing to stop the destruction there, rather than from ordinary people.

This means building to a higher level the regular demonstrations that have been taking place worldwide against Israeli state aggression, and developing trade union-based workers' actions. Also vital are advances in workers' political representation. The presence of five MPs in the UK parliament who were elected on the basis of opposition to the war on Gaza is a potential step forward on the road to the building of a new mass workers' party in Britain that can give solidarity and assistance to Palestinian and other

working-class people across the Middle East. Workers' parties in Britain and internationally will also be able to discuss and debate socialist ideas - the only ideas that can lay the basis for an end to the rounds of bloodshed.

No amount of Israeli military force, backed by the world's strongest imperialist power, will ever lead the Palestinians to give up their desire for self-determination on their own land. At the same time, on a capitalist basis, Israel's ruling class will never concede a genuine Palestinian state, nor be forced to do so. It will only be through workers in Israel - both Jews and Palestinian residents - organising independently as a class to challenge and remove capitalism in Israel, and Palestinian workers in the occupied territories doing likewise against their own pro-capitalists, that socialist economic and social relations can be brought in and two socialist states achieved. Such massively transformative revolutions would inevitably spread across the region, leading to a socialist confederation of the Middle East and the ability of the people of the region to provide a decent future for all.

We say:

- 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



The USAID sign is taped over following Trump's executive order © EDWARD JOHNSON/CC

UCU: Vote for action in higher education, and elect a fighting leadership

ANTHONY BRACUTI
UCU MEMBER AND LEEDS AND WEST YORKSHIRE SOCIALIST PARTY

After years of on-and-off dispute with employers on several issues within the post-secondary education sector, the University and College Union (UCU) sits poised to ballot for strike action once again.

Having won a victory on the return of the USS pension scheme terms (cuts to employers' contributions had been slashed as a result of dodgy forecasts based on Covid figures, and were rolled back after industrial action), the UCU shifted its focus to the 'four fights' dispute: pay, workload, casualisation, and equality.

On 2024-25 pay, the employers' body UCEA were willing to go no higher than a flat rate of £900 with an extra top-up in April for some grades (meaning between 2.5-5.7%), despite real-term wage cuts of almost 40% over the last 15 years. This offer was rejected by the union's Higher Education Committee (HEC).

But despite strong support within the union for action, including HEC resolutions, a winning campaign, demonstrated to be possible by the monumental effort made by members in the successful USS pensions dispute, has so far not been forthcoming.

Ballot

The plan for a campaign to begin from late January has not materialised. The ballot date has been postponed, with very little communication as to why or when it will take place.

Although the UCU is unaligned to

any political party, the leadership and central structures are dominated by the 'UCU Commons' faction, which strongly resists any militancy and pushes for 'Improving Education Together', a new form of social partnership. Its approach is underlined by that fact that there are ongoing strikes by union staff in the UCU HQ, members of Unite.

Particularly frustrating to union democracy, branches are often sidelined in their opinions, as well as congress motions, in favour of 'consultative e-ballots', directed and managed by the head office, with no opportunity for debate. When these polls agree with leadership positions they are sacrosanct, but when they don't they are 'advisory'.

The crisis in post-16 education, manufactured by Labour and the Tories over the last 30 years in particular, leaves British education in a dire state. We have a university sector propped up by milking international students, constant cuts to teaching and services for students, redundancies, and now threats to increase fees once again. That is combined with a further education sector dominated by fat-cat directors with no democratic accountability, slashing budgets.

Members need confidence in the leaders

UCU members need our union to take a lead. However, in universities, the fight on pay, workload, casualisation and equality has been protracted, with little gained. Not because the union is weak, but because of the ever-so-familiar decision of the leadership to quit while we were ahead. Despite motions passed to re-ballot



UCU members at Leeds uni on strike 2023 LEEDS SOCIALIST PARTY

for strike action and to escalate disputes, the central leadership of the union repeatedly delayed and demobilised, losing any industrial advantage built.

A new ballot and industrial action campaign needs to learn these lessons and be properly prepared and built for. Members need confidence that the union leadership will back action all the way.

Many activists in our union are eager for a more militant approach. They recognise that the struggles in post-secondary education require a fight against marketisation and for the full funding of universities and colleges.

The UCU is currently holding elections for seats on the National Executive Committee (NEC), and some other central positions. This is an opportunity to challenge and weaken the hold of the right, and to elect

reps that are serious about giving a fighting lead against the bosses and Starmer's government.

The Socialist Party's Marco Tesei is running for a seat on the NEC representing Further Education (FE), hoping to join Duncan Moore who already represents FE on in this committee. There are also candidates from UCU Left, dominated by members of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), and a number of independent left candidates. Marco has made an appeal for genuine lefts who want a fighting and democratic union to organise together.

We will campaign for a 'yes' vote in the ballot, and have confidence that we can win the extra funding needed to both protect jobs and increase pay in the post-secondary education sector, so that it can perform its core function of providing education to all those who wish to seek it.

Stop Press: UCU leaders overrule democracy

As we go to press, UCU members have received two communications from UCU head office.

One email reminds us that in December the elected Higher Education Committee backed a ballot on pay, to take place early in the year in order to be able to take strike action before Easter. But today, 11 February, we are informed that the HE officers met before Christmas and "decided that the ballot timeframe agreed by the HEC was not capable of implementation", and they will submit new options to a special HEC meeting on 19 February. "Therefore, any ballot will take place later in the spring."

Essentially, the HEC mandated a clear campaign and timeframe but the HE officers didn't agree, so they sat on it a while, and now any new timetable will rule out action in this academic year. In the meantime, no work has been done to build a campaign that would win the confidence of UCU members that the union has a strategy to win.

Surreally, the other communication from HQ is a survey about allegedly strengthening union democracy!

All the more reason to vote for a fighting left VP and NEC candidates!

Vote Marco Tesei #1 in the FE UK-elected seat for UCU NEC

Unison local government committee discusses the fight that's needed

HUGO PIERRE
UNISON LOCAL GOVERNMENT SGE MEMBER, PERSONAL CAPACITY

The Unison Local Government Service Group Executive (LGSSE) met in February nearly ten months after the election of Starmer's Labour government and with the continuation of a worsening outlook for council services. Just days before, six councils were given permission to raise their council tax levels by more than 4.99%, the upper limit set above which they would normally have to go to a local referendum. Working-class and middle-class families will be hit with a further cost-of-living headache.

But this won't solve the problem as a wide range of other councils have asked for emergency government funding to stop them reaching unaffordable deficits. In London alone, councils face a deficit of £500 million this year. And councils across the country will have to pay more than half of the employer's national insurance rise Rachel Reeves announced in November, piling more pressure on after years of government cut-backs to the central Revenue Support Grant.

The LGSSE was presented with a motion to put through to this year's Unison local government conference. It called for a continuation of the campaigns that were started under the Tories, to fund councils back to 2010 levels and to impress upon Labour the scale of the funding crisis.

I moved an amendment to give the campaign more urgency, and particularly to strengthen the campaigning Unison branches could do to bring



Local government workers on strike ROGER THOMAS

together trade unions, community campaigners and councillors opposed to cuts. The amendment also called for urgent support for those councils facing 'section 114' notices, bringing them together to demand that the government plugs the funding gap and that the bill isn't passed on to council tax.

The amendment identified the millions that could be taken from the billionaires to pay for the funding gap. The LGSSE agreed the amendment, recognising that without a mass campaign, thousands of Unison members' jobs and vital local services are at risk.

This means that the SGE has gone further than it has before in being prepared to stand up to the Labour government, and the strategies needed will be debated at conference.

But we need to go further. Branches will get the opportunity to add more teeth to the motion by putting amendments to be taken at conference. That should include the key questions remaining: to demand that councillors set no-cuts needs budgets, and that the union prepares for national action, including a demonstration and day of action to build a fight to save council services.

2025 pay

The local government unions, including Unison, have submitted the pay claim for 2025-26. The claim is for £3,000; a plan to get minimum pay of £15 an hour; a two-hour reduction to the working week; an increase in holiday entitlement; and the right for term-time staff to take one day's holiday during term time, without loss of pay. Winning this from Starmer's government, which has already limited public sector pay to 2.8% with cuts, will require a fight. Unison must start that fight now and prepare to coordinate with other public sector workers on pay.

Reinstate sacked PCS reps at Benton Park View

Following a successful national ballot in November 2022, the Public and Commercial Services Union (PCS) leadership decided to conduct a campaign based on targeted strike action at specific workplaces in early 2023. One of those was the HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) site at Benton Park View, Newcastle, where, in early 2024, three reps were sacked. Since December 2024, members at the site have taken a number of weeks of strike action.

Gordon Askew, one of three sacked reps, spoke to **Elaine Brunskill** on the 5 February picket line.

This situation started back in the spring of 2023. At that time there was a national campaign for better pay. This site was chosen by the PCS to be one of those targeted for industrial action.

Following the industrial action, senior management started disciplinary action against me. This went on for months. During this time, they

started action against Rachel Farmer (another rep) too.

I was sacked in January 2024, via email. I've been here almost 29 years! It was summary dismissal (ie immediate). Subsequently, Rachel was sacked, then another rep, Joel Hamilton, was sacked on an unrelated issue. This was clearly an attack on the branch. Other reps were also threatened with disciplinary action.

Obviously this has had a devastating impact on myself, my wife and our three kids. Previously, I had a totally spotless record, so to be treated this way, handed the worst possible penalty the department could give, left me in a state of complete shock. If it wasn't for the financial and emotional support from PCS and my family, I don't know how I would have coped.

This matter has been dragging on for almost two years and the fact that HMRC has steadfastly refused to make any effort to resolve the dispute tells you everything you need to know about how they treat trade union reps.



PCS members in the Broad Left Network - including Dave Semple, Bobby Young and JP Rosser - have worked tirelessly to ensure there is PCS financial and legal support for the victimised reps and to support the branch campaign to get the reps reinstated

Joel and Gordon, second and third from left ELAINE BRUNSKILL

PCS needs a fighting leadership!

Nominations have opened in the PCS union elections. Please nominate candidates who are prepared to stand up to Starmer's Labour government to defend jobs, pay and pensions.

Nominate Marion Lloyd for national president and see 'Nominate Marion Lloyd for PCS President' at socialistparty.org.uk for the full slate of fighting left candidates



Unite elections important to build and strengthen the union's fighting approach

KEVIN PARSLAW
UNITE WALTHAM FOREST COUNCIL BRANCH

All of Unite the Union's constitutional elections, with the exception of elections to the Executive Council and general secretary, are taking place this year. Elections for branch officers and workplace representatives take place in the first quarter of the year, with those elected taking office on 1 April.

Elected reps and officers can then attend regional conferences to elect regional industrial and equalities committees, and area activist committees. The new committees will, in turn, elect reps to national industrial sector and equalities committees, and regional committees.

Those are the basic details, but why is this important? Fighting unions are ultimately built from the base upwards, as the pressure of the



PAUL MATTISON

working class is felt on its leaders. It is true that, since the election of Sharon Graham as general secretary, Unite has been at the forefront of industrial action to defend working conditions and win better pay. In 1,551 disputes, 80% have been won, and an extra £500 million put in members' pockets. That record needs to be built on.

But the challenges now include building the political strategy for

Unite. The union has already campaigned against the removal of the winter fuel allowance from most pensioners, and has warned against pressure from the capitalist class diluting measures in the Employment Rights Bill.

The question is will Unite continue funding Labour if it doesn't make workers better off - or even leaves us poorer? This year's policy conference must pass motions that urge Unite to

The following Socialist Party members are seeking nomination to stand for Unison National Executive Council

- April Ashley** Black members female seat (standing for re-election)
- Rae Cox** South East reserved seat
- Balaka Fell-Holden** London reserved seat
- Jim McFarlane** Scotland general seat
- Eve Miller** West Midlands reserved seat
- Adrian O'Malley** Health general seat
- Amy Sage** Police, Probation and Cafcass female seat
- Ellie Waple** Disabled members female seat

We are also supporting other candidates standing for a fighting union: James Robinson North West general seat and candidates on the 'Time for Real Change' list standing in other seats

Join the fightback

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

JOIN THE SOCIALISTS

- Visit socialistparty.org.uk/join
 - or call **020 8988 8777**
 - or text your name and postcode to **07958 032071**
- to find out more today!

Get all the latest union news



- Socialist Party members have played a key role in helping to launch a new left in the union, Unite Broad Left, to bring together the most combative reps and members to fight for a militant industrial and political programme**

SOCIALIST STUDENTS CONFERENCE 2025: YOUNG PEOPLE PREPARE FOR STRUGGLES AGAINST STARMER'S LABOUR

THEO SHARIEFF

SOCIALIST PARTY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Over 100 students met in the Highfields Community Centre in Leicester for Socialist Students annual conference on 8 February. School, college and university students, as well as young workers in attendance, contributed to a lively and serious discussion. It was inspiring to see newly established Socialist Students groups sending delegations to this year's conference, including from Hertfordshire, York, Aberystwyth, Manchester, Sussex, and Brunel Universities, joining those societies who have already begun to sink roots.

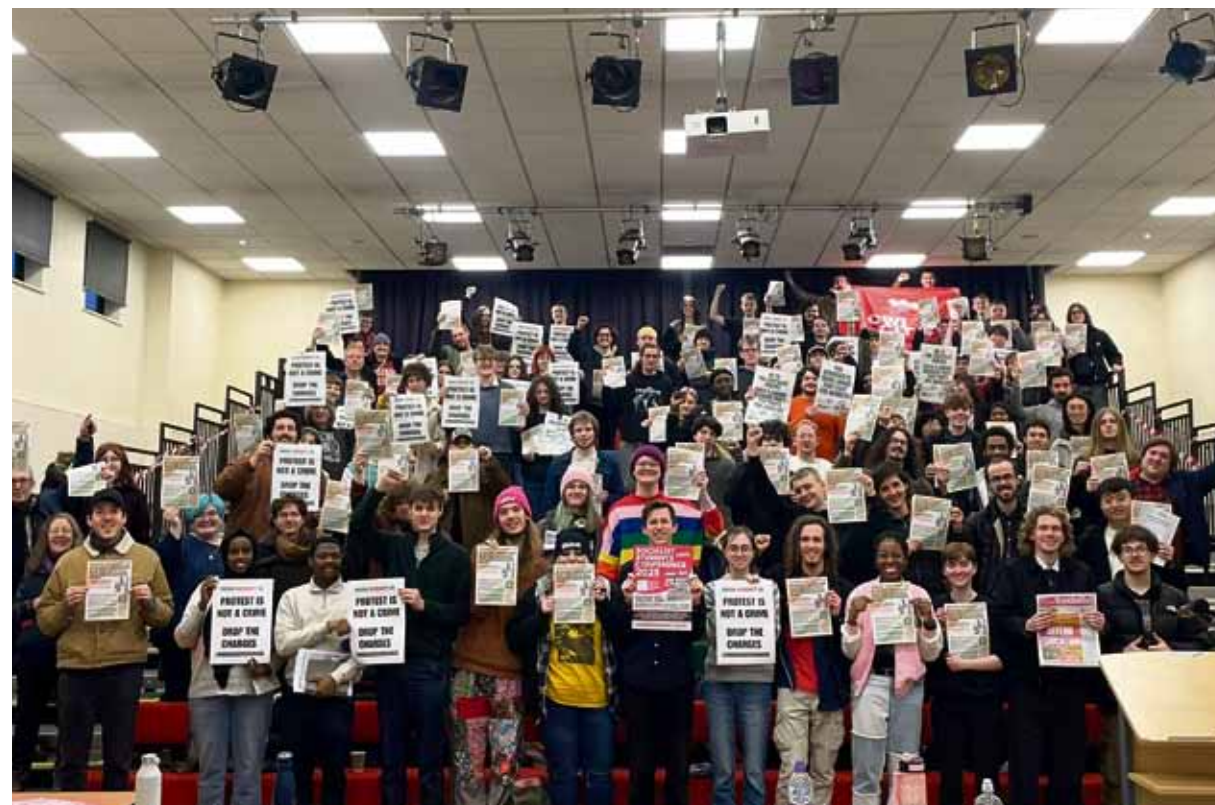
The conference took place just months after Labour announced an increase in tuition fees for the first time since 2017. Socialist Students launched the Funding Not Fees campaign last autumn in anticipation of the new wave of cuts and attacks on students and staff on campuses in the pipeline from the new Labour government.

The conference discussed and agreed a national campaigning strategy for fighting Starmer's tuition fee hike, including organising a calendar of campaign action in the run-up to Labour's summer spending review. Socialist Students delegates discussed building campaigns alongside anti-cuts groups, local trade union branches, tenants organisations, and students' union officers and course reps. A lively discussion confirmed the need to demand university managements don't implement any future increases to fees, and to organise lobbies of local MPs to demand they put forward free education amendments in Parliament to the summer spending review - all linked to building a movement to win the funding necessary for the higher education sector as a whole.

Campaigning

That isn't to mention the campaigns Socialist Students is already leading on campuses, linked to the question of funding not fees. Like for example, Cardiff students against the cuts, campaigning against 400 planned redundancies at Cardiff University. Manchester and Southampton Socialist Student groups are fighting against sky-high student rents. At Queen Mary University, Socialist Students are campaigning for funding gender-neutral changing facilities in the students' union. And York Socialist Students are protesting against the Reform UK society recently registered at York uni, who offer no solution to the uni funding crisis, just division.

The conference provided a forum for discussion on the instability and chaos writ large by capitalism globally, a system in a state of rot and decay. Trump's presidency in the US is just another confirmation of this - introducing a fresh dose of chaos into capitalist world relations, and fresh



Conference shows solidarity with the movement in Nigeria (above)
Shockat Adam speaks (left)
Closing rally platform (below) SOCIALIST PARTY



threats of attacks on some of the most oppressed in society and the environment, as well as the working class as a whole.

Mass fightback

But Socialist Students conference also discussed the potential for a mass fightback of students and workers against Trump and all pro-capitalist politicians and parties attempting to play the divide-and-rule game around the world, including here in Britain. In the US, public support for trade unions is at an all-time high, with working-class struggle on the increase. This points towards the key missing ingredient in the situation globally - mass working-class political parties, armed with a socialist programme to unite workers and young people of all different backgrounds in a common struggle against racist division and against the bosses' system.

This was a feature of the final rally too. The closing rally was addressed by students covering issues from the slaughter in Gaza to the crisis and attacks on democratic rights in Nigeria, to fight the far right as well as fighting

for free education and a socialist alternative to capitalism. The rally was pleased to welcome Independent MP for Leicester South, Shockat Adam, who spoke movingly about the slaughter in Gaza and the wave of revolt against the Labour Party for its support for the war on which he was elected.

Socialist Students speakers on the platform welcomed the stance Shockat has taken on the war, and highlighted the role he and the other sitting independent MPs could play in providing a political voice not only to the anti-war movement, but also to the struggles of students and workers on campuses against cuts and fees.

Rally speakers invited Shockat to continue to work with Socialist Students and be part of the Funding Not Fees campaign in Parliament - which includes scrapping tuition fees, cancelling student debt and replacing loans with living grants for students, all funded by taking the wealth off the super-rich, as a step towards building that working-class political opposition to all the attacks of Starmer's Labour.

Flash points for struggle

Adam Powell-Davies, Socialist Students national organiser, introduced the discussions. We print edited extracts of his speech

The Tories were booted out at the general election last year, suffering their worst ever defeat. When you look back it's no wonder. Life just kept on getting worse for the vast majority of people under the Tories, all while the richest individuals, the capitalists and the financial speculators, were allowed to line their pockets. Of course, MPs also got a tidy pay rise, not to mention the university vice chancellors, the academy heads, the college executives and others.

The Tories' fate is a warning to any party that seeks to rule on behalf of an increasingly sick capitalist system, including Keir Starmer's Labour government. Because at the same time, there is also a growing layer of working-class and young people who are refusing to accept the horrors of this system.

Opposition to capitalist governments is growing globally, including with it the reemergence of working class struggle in many countries, taking strike action at a level not seen in a generation.

Look at Serbia where there's an ongoing movement led by students which has so far brought down a prime minister, and the movement keeps going. Similarly, there was the mass movement in Bangladesh last year which brought down the hated prime minister Sheikh Hasina.

Revolution

Many will have seen the latest findings from a Channel 4 survey which says 47% of 13 to 27-year-olds in Britain think the "entire way our society is organized must be radically changed through revolution".

Socialist Students is very clear about what type of revolution we think is needed. We call for the socialist transformation of society to put wealth, resources and technology into the hands of working-class people. And on that basis, draw up a democratic plan for how to meet the needs of all, including the need to protect our environment. Through socialist revolutions taking place internationally, working-class collaboration globally could replace the competition, conflict and war between capitalist states that exists currently.

Socialist Students sets ourselves the target of finding and organising the young people in schools, colleges and universities who want to fight for that kind of socialist world.



Socialist Students marching on a Gaza demo, October 2024. Adam second left ELAINE BRUNSKILL

This Labour government will prove utterly incapable of meeting the aspirations of millions of workers and young people, laying the ground for numerous battles against it.

Starmer's first budget in October was proof. Just take the example of colleges and schools. Labour's spending plans will do nothing to stop the epidemic of cuts and the recruitment crisis in education. The crises of overcrowded classes and students being left without the support they need. £300 million to further education does not touch the sides of what is needed. £1.4 billion to schools will not stop a situation where most secondary schools are not able to meet costs next year.

Corbyn and Starmer

What a difference five years makes. Up until 2019, the Labour Party was under the leadership of Jeremy Corbyn, who drew the hatred of big business and the capitalist class for putting forward a hugely popular programme of reforms to British capitalism: anti-austerity and including the call for free education for all.

It wasn't Corbyn the mild-mannered man that struck fear into the hearts of big business, but rather the movement that he had the potential to mobilise.

Unfortunately however, he did not sufficiently mobilise his support base to stand up to the right wing of the Labour Party, the Tories, and the capitalist class behind them. And with

that, Starmer has been able to rescue the Labour Party as a 'second eleven' for British capitalism. While initially Starmer was compelled to adapt to aspects of Corbyn's manifesto, all of that has now gone.

There was a glimpse already in the general election, of the potential for the fight to be taken to this government. At the same time as Labour coming to power, five anti-war MPs were voted in based on a mood of disgust against Labour and Tory support for the Israeli state's war on Gaza. Those five independent MPs included Jeremy Corbyn and Shockat Adam, MP for Leicester South, who is speaking at our rally today.

We would like to see these independent MPs, as well as the now three MPs who are still suspended from the Labour Party, to go much further and to come out as a clear parliamentary voice giving expression to all the struggles that are going to break out against this government.

Gaza
Many will be horrified watching on at Trump's warmongering rhetoric about turning the Gaza Strip into a 'riviera of the Middle East'. Socialist Students demands an immediate end to the Israeli state's war, and a withdrawal, right now, of the Israeli military from all occupied territories.

There are going to be battles on our campuses from students and workers too. Well over half of universities now are making cuts to courses,

redundancies to the tune of hundreds. 400 at Cardiff University, for example, is a sign of what is to come elsewhere. Socialist Students has been able to take part in and lead a campaign in Cardiff, we called a meeting on Monday attended by over 70 students and members of staff.

We also have to expect further movements over the climate catastrophe, including for many of those to be spearheaded by young people.

The invaluable lesson that a new generation of young people has learned from the strike wave is that striking works, and nationwide strikes will break out against the Labour government at some stage too.

Right to protest
In the face of growing opposition, Starmer has already shown he has no problem using heavy-handed measures to put down protest. On his watch we've seen the heaviest ever prison sentences for direct action given to Just Stop Oil climate activists, as well as the arrest of over 60 on the last national Gaza demo in London. A crackdown on the right to protest can also become a further accelerator of opposition against this government.

These are just some of the flash points where battles will erupt under this government. The discussions at this conference are vital to discuss the next steps to develop Socialist Students as an organisation, and prepare to fight for our socialist ideas in the movements that are to come.



FUNDING NOT FEES

The serious and passionate debate on motions addressed campaigning in colleges, ending sexism and violence against women on campus, fighting right populism and the far right, the student housing crisis, socialist change to end climate change. A new steering committee was elected. And a lively discussion on 'Funding not Fees: sharpening the campaigning edge of Socialist Students' resolved to turn the day's ideas and energy into action:

1) That every Socialist Students group strives to build the Funding Not Fees campaign in their university, college or school, taking the following steps as a guide:

i) Call a Funding Not Fees campaign meeting with invites sent to other student campaign groups, students' union (SU) officers and course reps, local trade union branches, tenants' groups, and community organisations
ii) Build for the campaign meeting - which we could bill as an 'anti-cuts, anti-fees summit', or something similar - through a concerted plan of leafletting and posterling

iii) Using the campaign meeting as a launchpad to organise a calendar of campaign action, including the potential for:

- A student-worker lobby of the local MP
- A Funding Not Fees campus protest
- A delegation to meet with student representatives, calling on them to publicly support the Funding Not Fees campaign
- A protest letter to the university vice-chancellor, demanding they refuse to increase tuition fees in line with the new 2025/26 cap

2) That Socialist Students groups consider electing a Funding Not Fees campaign officer

3) To reaffirm our commitment to fighting for a free, fully funded education system that is under the democratic control of students, staff, and the wider working class

4) To continue our fight for a new mass party, based on the independent organisation of the working class, that stands for free education as part of a socialist programme to take control over society off big business and the super-rich



Protesting against the devastating cuts by Caerphilly Labour council in 2024. SOCIALIST PARTY WALES

Caerphilly Labour cuts - We should decide how council reserves are spent

CAERPHILLY TRADES UNION COUNCIL PRESS RELEASE

A potential bonfire of Caerphilly Council libraries and leisure centres, and the loss of 600 jobs - that's what we're facing.

Council reserves have risen from £184 million to nearly £190 million. The Labour council says a large proportion of these reserves are earmarked for 'projects'.

Caerphilly Trades Union Council president and Caerphilly Unison secretary, Lianne Dallimore, said:

“Why is it that council reserves just keep going up, year on year? Where's the delivery of these projects? We believe that the

public has the right to a say in how those reserves are spent. Give the public the opportunity to decide whether they want to keep our libraries, leisure centres, and pools open. Whether they want to save 600 jobs. Or whether they'd rather finance these earmarked 'projects'.

Irreplaceable

Nearly every Caerphilly Council department underspent last year. Jointly, they returned £8.2 million from their allocated budgets. So, why do we need to lose these irreplaceable resources and jobs from our communities?

Our communities deserve better than this yearly merry-go-round of service cutbacks and closures.

Councillors need to start working together to save our services and get down to the Senedd (Welsh parliament) to insist on the funding we need.

We have a Labour government in Westminster now. They can't blame the Tories anymore.

We don't elect councillors to be accountants. What are they for, if they can't call on the Senedd to properly fund local government? What is the Senedd for, if it can't demand the funding so badly needed in Wales?

Victory in the fight for Blackwood Miners' Institute shows that if the community puts up a fight, it can win. We can stop all the cuts, if there's the will to fight for our services and our communities.

Sheffield unions push no-cuts, people's budget

GARY DRABBLE SHEFFIELD NORTH WEST SOCIALIST PARTY

£500 million has been robbed from Sheffield Council budgets over the last 14 years by the previous Tory government. This has resulted in huge cuts to jobs and services.

At the general election, Labour was elected promising change, but the cuts continue. Nothing is being done about the housing crisis in the city.

The Labour, Green and Liberal 'co-operative council' is pushing ahead with the privatisation of services,

most recently of sport and leisure centres.

Following a successful resolution passed by the Sheffield Unite the Union branch for 'not for profit' workers, Sheffield Trades Union Council agreed to campaign for a no-cuts, people's budget. The Unite motion called for an end to privatisation and austerity, and restoration of government funding to 2010 levels.

A well-attended public meeting to build the campaign heard from Simon Jenkins from the union branch whose resolution initiated the campaign. Unite national officer Onay Kasab,

and Derbyshire council Unison union secretary, Martin Porter.

The meeting then had workshops on housing, services, and privatisation, which developed ideas for taking the campaign forward by engaging with trade unions, service users, tenants, and residents. It discussed how to hold councillors to account for continuing with cuts.

A report of the event will be considered by Sheffield Trades Union Congress executive to determine the next steps, and to consider holding a protest against cuts at the council's budget-setting meeting.

Labour and Tories conspire to call off elections But it won't stop our anti-austerity fightback

DAMIAN COSGROVE EAST SUSSEX SOCIALIST PARTY

Voters in East Sussex are part of the 15 million disenfranchised under Labour's short-sighted devolution plan. East Sussex Council is one of the many Tory-run authorities that asked to postpone their elections.

We were planning to stand Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) candidates in East Sussex. Our main message is that we need to organise the community around a campaign to oppose any cuts to our services.

Austerity is a political choice. Our council could shield us from the devastating cuts pushed by Westminster.

the service with up to £4 million of cuts.

We need to tackle the housing crisis by building council homes, owned and run by the community, and introduce rent caps to ensure local people can afford to live in the place they've grown up in.

We were also going to focus our campaign on the crisis facing our schools. Socialist Party members are helping to lead National Education Union (NEU) strikes locally.

This gives us an insight into education privatisation through academy trusts. Often, this redirects funds from where they are needed, like SEND (special educational needs and disability) support.

Winter Fuel

For example, East Sussex Council could provide winter fuel payments to residents that have had them cut by the Labour government. Instead, councillors from all major parties - including Labour and the Greens - have run smaller 'second-tier' councils in East Sussex, uncritically passing on cuts, decimating our services.

Hastings has the worst rates of homelessness in south east England, with one in 79 people homeless. The situation is made continually worse by a deadly mix of gentrification, causing increasingly high rents, coupled with a complete disregard for building social housing.

East Sussex Floating Support offers support for those who are homeless, or at risk of homelessness. Despite all this, the Tory council has threatened

Our education

Education should be regulated and controlled by the students, parents, and the communities they serve, as well as the teachers and other staff. They all understand the needs of the school far more than any corporate academy trust ever could.

Despite the opportunity to stand being taken from us this year, we will continue our campaigning, as well as preparing to stand for election to whatever body the reforms create.

Our message is clear - the conditions we find ourselves in now aren't inevitable, there is capacity to change society, and build it in the interest of working-class people. Part of the fight for that means building grassroots, working-class campaigns against austerity, and a new mass working-class party.



NEU members in Hastings on strike last year against their academy school chain withholding funding. SOCIALIST PARTY



Skype on the protest against cuts to Solace domestic violence service. HUGO PIERRE

On strike to save our domestic violence service

SKYE MINCHER TOWER HAMLETS SOCIALIST PARTY

There was one statistic on my mind during the protest - 97%. The UN reported that 97% of women in the UK aged 18-24 have experienced sexual harassment. Of these, 45% did not report it, because they believed that reporting it "wouldn't help".

Rather than relying on the police, who notoriously under-convict sexual assault cases, many women rely on specialist services.

Solace is an organisation that provides help for victims of domestic violence, particularly those facing economic crisis as well as domestic abuse.

One third cut

Solace has announced that one third of its domestic violence advisors are due to be made redundant, and up to half of the whole team could face losing their jobs, due to cuts made by charity bosses.

On 6 February, Solace workers organised a lobby outside of Tower Hamlets town hall, through their union, United Voices of the World (UVW), in an effort to stop these cuts. Hundreds of people gathered to support them.

Solace workers have voted 100% in favour of a strike, with a 92% turnout. It will be the first indefinite strike in the domestic violence sector in Britain, and is due to start on 14 February.

Why do the charity bosses believe it is reasonable to lay off so many workers, from such an important role? The charity has not said why they have made this decision or where that money would be spent, which is disturbing for workers and service users.

Aspire

Tower Hamlets Council is run by the independent Aspire party. The council commissions Solace to provide services to victims of domestic abuse.

The council says it has not cut funding for Solace. And Aspire councillor Abu Talha Chowdhury repeated this when he spoke in support at the protest.

Solace's financial books should be opened to inspection by the trade unions, council, and the local community. Let's see where the money is going.

The council should take all necessary steps to stop the redundancies. The UVW union has said that redundancies should pause, which would allow this to happen.

Seeing the crowd of people gathered to support Solace workers was an uplifting sight. Apsana Begum MP, who remains suspended from Labour for opposing Keir Starmer's austerity, was among the speakers.

Solace's website states that it gives priority to "victims/survivors who are identified as high risk, homeless, or experiencing economic abuse". But with poverty rates increasing, how will Solace continue supporting victim/survivors while making cutbacks?

Highest child poverty

Tower Hamlets has the worst child poverty rate, currently a horrific 48% of children living in poverty. Many of those experiencing abuse have children to provide for. But, without appropriate support, they are unable to afford the necessities needed for their children, if they attempt to escape an abusive relationship. Solace, and other services like it, need more resources to impact the lives of those facing hardship, not less.

Members of the Socialist Party in Tower Hamlets are organising solidarity for the Solace strikers. They will speak at our Socialist Party public meeting on 11 February, and we are raising their dispute in our trade union branches.

Save libraries and street cleaning in Enfield

Lobby Labour council for a budget based on need not cuts

ENFIELD SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBERS

Enfield has the highest youth knife crime in London. Last summer, a community meeting identified the need for places where young people can hang out safely. But Enfield Labour council is cutting not increasing them.

Under the Tories, Enfield Labour council closed most of its youth services, instead of building a campaign to fight for the money to fund them. Privatising leisure centres takes these important facilities further out of the reach of young people.

Scandalously, Enfield has 6,401 families on the social housing waiting list, while private homes are being built on public land. We need council homes!

Now, with a Labour government in place, instead of demanding the resources to reinstate those much-needed services, they are doubling down - library cuts of £630,000, and a proposal to close eight libraries.

The money is there

When they say there is no money, it is not true! Enfield Council has over £100 million in reserves.

While Britain's billionaires continue to get £35 million richer every day, Keir Starmer's Labour government repeats the 'need' for "ruthless" cuts.

Enfield Labour council is proposing fewer street-cleaning services. The

'savings' are peanuts, while the potential social costs are huge!

The council was planning to stop paying caretakers to lock park gates each night. But they've now backed down, showing our pressure on them works.

The argument that cuts are necessary has been disproved by experience. Enfield has made enormous cuts, and now is in financial crisis.

Arms trade

Anti-war campaigners correctly call out any links between our council and the arms trade. Councils should be funded by central government to provide all the public services we need, rather than getting into deals with big business, including war profiteers.

Workers and young people in Enfield need to organise to fight for funding not cuts. Enfield Trades Union Council has debated and agreed on a campaign for a needs budget. Join the lobby of the council's budget-setting meeting.

15 years of austerity has 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.

- Lobby Enfield Labour council
- Meet at civic centre on Silver Street, Thursday 27 February, 6pm



Protesting the plans by Enfield Labour council to make cuts to services. SARAH SACHS ELDRIDGE

A day in the life of a bus driver - why we are on strike for better pay

Bus workers, members of Unite the Union, across Portsmouth and Hampshire have been taking strike action since talks stalled in December. The company, First Group, failed to make a fair pay offer. It offered workers just a 4% pay deal, and has also refused to reinstate many of the terms and conditions that were removed during the Covid pandemic. Meanwhile, the First Group CEO was paid more than £1 million in salary and bonuses last year. One driver spoke to the Socialist about the important and challenging day in the life of a bus driver and why they deserve better pay.

Being a bus driver in the UK is more than just steering a large vehicle from point A to point B. It's about ensuring passenger safety, maintaining punctuality, and navigating through often challenging roads.

My working day starts about two hours before I actually get to drive a bus. The average start time for early duties is around 6.30am, so I'm generally up about 4.30am. You need to be well awake and fresh for the long day ahead, so rushing in to work is not an option where safety is concerned.

When I arrive at the depot, my first task after signing on, checking any diversions on my route and being issued with my duty card, is to conduct a thorough pre-trip inspection of the bus. There are 29 different checks to carry. Any issues I find must be reported to the network controller onsite and fixed before departure. This meticulous inspection is crucial. The passengers we carry deserve nothing less than to know that they are in safe and capable hands when boarding our buses.

The first routes require heightened alertness and awareness of your surroundings due to the busy roads and increased pedestrian activity. Navigating through the morning rush hour, managing timing schedules, while ensuring passenger safety, is paramount.

As the morning rush subsides, the midday period can bring a mix of different tasks and challenges. Some drivers may have longer routes covering suburban or rural areas, while I may be shuttling passengers between city centres in Portsmouth and Southampton. This time is also when me and the other drivers may have their allocated breaks, allowing for a much-needed rest. During breaks,



Fareham bus strike
PHOTO: SOUTHAMPTON SOCIALIST PARTY



The passengers we carry deserve nothing less than to know that they are in safe and capable hands when boarding our buses

me and the other drivers often review our routes, check for traffic updates, and prepare for the next segment of our shift.

Afternoon shifts often include school runs, which require special attention and care. Ensuring the safety of young passengers is a significant responsibility. This period can be particularly busy and requires excellent time management skills to maintain punctuality. We as drivers must also be vigilant, keeping an eye out for children boarding and disembarking the bus, ensuring they do so safely.

As the day winds down, I support the evening commute, which can be as busy as the morning. After the last

route, I return with my bus to the depot, where I conduct a final post-trip inspection before logging off. I will report any issues or incidents, and complete the necessary paperwork.

Being a bus driver comes with its set of challenges - traffic, inclement weather, and dealing with various passenger behaviours. However, the role is also incredibly rewarding. Drivers play a crucial part in their communities, providing a reliable service that helps people get to work, school, and other essential destinations.

• Strikes have taken place every weekend in January and early February and are planned for 12-14, 16-23 and 25-27 February

Reading traffic wardens strike: Bosses put profits first

MELANIE DENT
READING SOCIALIST PARTY

The struggle of Unite members at Modaxo in Reading continues. When I visited the picket line again, bus drivers and motorists tooted in support of the strikers and there was a sense of unity and community against the bosses' greed.

A striker reported that they had been offered £3 an hour extra or nothing. They want £13.50 an hour.

Striker Richard said: "Members are staying united as we begin the fifth week of strike action. The company is continuing to put profits before staff and the residents of Reading. We will be continuing with strike action as well as making the case for Reading Borough Council to bring this contract back in-house."

Labour-run Reading council outsources traffic enforcement duties to Modaxo.

The Socialist Party fully backs these workers - as well as continuing to campaign for a £15-an-hour minimum wage.



BIRMINGHAM SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBERS

With the strike staying solid a month in, Birmingham bin workers have increased the number of strike days to three per week. As rubbish piles up and the bill for agency crews to try to cover the rounds increases, so does the pressure on the Labour council to reverse the scrapping of Grade 3.

Meanwhile, Birmingham's councillors voted a 5.7% increase in their allowances, citing an "increase in emotional and financial pressure". Try telling that to bin workers facing an £8,000 pay cut and their job becoming more dangerous!

At the same time they are preparing to sign off a further £148 million in cuts to services, alongside a 7.49% increase in council tax. The cuts will be voted on at a council meeting on

25 February. Mass protests outside the council house in the run-up to this, bringing together the bin workers, other council workers and service users, could force the council to use its powers to fund services, and be the start of a campaign to force central government to cough up the funds our city needs. Strikers talked about how they would like to see council-wide coordinated strike action.

At the gate meeting at the Atlas depot in Tyseley, one picket said: "We're the ones who keep this city running. Without us, businesses, schools and homes would be drowning in rubbish!"

Workers at Lifford Lane told us: "It's about standing strong and keeping what you've got. They're coming for us first then it will be the rest of the council."

First ever Civil Aviation Authority strikes



DIANA PROSPECT STRIKER

On Thursday 6 September, members of the Prospect union working for the UK Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) went on strike for the first time in the organisation's history. This followed the first strike by members of the PCS union a few weeks prior.

The Prospect picket line was at Aviation House, near Gatwick Airport, and people from all over the organisation gathered at the entrance to the car park. Socialist Party members also came out to support the picket, with papers and flyers.

The picket was cheerful despite the cold, with cups of tea and coffee, sausage rolls, and cupcakes passed around, as it was someone's birthday. We waved at each car that passed the picket line and held up signs and flags,

including one sign that said "Honk for better pay", which got a lot of interaction both from cars driving in and the bus drivers passing by on the street.

The topics of conversation, however, were a lot more sombre. Some picketers exchanged concerns about the political situation happening in the USA, and whether it could happen here. Others exchanged book recommendations on the effects and progress of climate change.

But the main point of discussion was how the board of the CAA had received a pay increase of up to 35% last year, whereas regular workers only got a 3% increase, and how the board also got £50,000 put into their pensions. People were understandably angry - and looking forward to the next strike, expected to happen in the next few weeks as the fight for fair pay continues.

Cardiff uni job cuts - we are fighting back

ARIS PREVOST
CARDIFF SOCIALIST STUDENTS

Since the news of 400 jobs cuts at Cardiff University, there has been a flourish of activity to fight back against the cuts.

The University and College Union (UCU) held a rally outside of the Senedd (Welsh Government) building to show their members' outrage on 4 February. Over 400 people were present.

There was a sea of pink, with the UCU handing out their iconic pink beanies to students and attendees. There was a defiant mood.

People at the rally were fed up with how the university is run, against the brass nature of these cuts, and out to demand change.

UCU general secretary Jo Grady spoke at the rally to say that the fight back against these cuts is a national issue. With the Office for Students reporting that 72% of universities are trending towards deficit in the next academic year, universities across the UK are considering cuts to staff members and more.

If Cardiff University gets away with these cuts, then it will only encourage other universities to do the same. This national scope was seen with seven different trade unions turning up to show solidarity with their banners and placards.

In particular, a huge number of



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- Visit socialiststudents.org.uk/join
- or call 020 8988 8761
- or text your name and school, college or uni to 07515 921 699

Triumph over far right in Cheltenham

Billy, speaking for the Socialist Party, at the protest PHOTO: GLOUCESTERSHIRE SOCIALIST PARTY



BILLY JONES
GLOUCESTERSHIRE SOCIALIST PARTY

Two days before, it came to our attention there was a far-right demonstration organised for 8 February in Cheltenham.

Despite having only two days to prepare, the Socialist Party put out the call to organise a counter-protest, planning to meet where their march was supposed to start. The Unite the Union community branch for Bristol, Bath, and Gloucestershire passed a motion in support of this.

Over 50 people gathered for our anti-racist protest, including representatives from Unite, Unison, NEU,

UCU, and Usdaw unions. We made our stand, selling the Socialist paper, fighting against the racist and xenophobic rhetoric.

There is anger among working people. And we agree that Britain is a country in crisis. But it is a crisis caused by capitalism, not immigration.

What's the reason you can't buy a house? It's because the government refuses to build affordable housing. What's the reason NHS waiting lists are so long? It's because the NHS is being sold off to the highest bidder by a government more interested in profit than saving lives.

What's the reason you have no money for food? It's because wealth

is being concentrated into the hands of the rich elite.

We stood strong, letting the far right know we won't allow divisive rhetoric to fester in our streets. Clearly this had an effect, because by the time their event was due to start, they had decided not to march after all. The most they could do was throw some insulting comments towards us and scamper off.

Our success proves once again that through working-class organisation we can fight against this rhetoric designed to divide the working class, and distract us from the real enemy - the ruling class, who can only exist as long as they exploit us.

nursing students turned up to show their support, forming their own line, and at times drowning out the rest of the crowd with their chants. The nursing school is being cut under the plans. This set the stage for the nursing rally on 7 February.

Nursing protest

Attending the protest, helping out with set-up and the sound system, I was blown away with the number of people that turned up - 150 - and how energetic people were.

The Royal College of Nursing Union (RCN) spoke, as well as Save Nursing, a campaign to fight on behalf of nurses at Cardiff University. Linking up between nursing students, and students from music, modern languages, and other cut or merged departments into a unified voice is key in achieving results.

Socialist Students has been attending these rallies. And, from the meeting of 80 that we initiated on 3 February, we have created Cardiff Students Against Cuts, in combination with other student groups.

We are trying to build a united student voice to protest against the cuts, and build student-staff solidarity, at a time when the university wants to divide us.

We have been building for a rally on 12 February, with speakers from students, staff, UCU and other trade unions. This affects everyone in Cardiff, Wales, and beyond.

After this rally, we'll see what the reaction is from the university, and decide what next steps we can do. But, whatever action we decide to take, we will link up students and staff, and build solidarity.

Stop Chorley Hospital ward closure

CAROLE, JENNY AND DAVE
CHORLEY SOCIALIST PARTY

200 people gathered to protest against the sudden closure of Cuerden Ward at Chorley and South Ribble Hospital. The ward was only opened in 2022.

Staff, hospital campaigners, trade unionists, and the community are shocked. The decision has been made without warning, information, or consultation provided to staff and the recognised trade unions.

The protest was organised by 'Protect Chorley and South Ribble Hospital Campaign'. They have bravely campaigned every Saturday for years against NHS cuts and privatisation.

Unite the Union was well represented at the protest. Unite's

Lancashire Area Activist Committee has officially condemned the ward closure, insisting it be reversed. Socialist Party and Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) supporters were well represented too.

There is a strong head of steam demanding reversal of the closure. The hospital management will never be forgiven if they did otherwise.

The proposed closure also needs to be seen in the context of the Labour government pushing back the 'New Hospital Programme' by several years.

Our hospitals are suffering dreadful cuts and closures, massive staff shortages, seriously deteriorating buildings, and increasing privatisation. With Labour health secretary Wes Streeting's support of NHS privatisation, this has to be fought tooth and nail.



Obituary: Sharan Hendry

GLoucestershire Socialist Party

Many will not have known Sharan Hendry, who died in January, but in Gloucestershire she is a legend. As a working-class disabled woman, suffering from a debilitating neurological condition along with other health problems, Sharan had a deep and hard-won understanding of what it means to suffer under capitalism. In 2012, when she met with Gloucester's Tory MP Richard Graham to tell him her fears about the Bedroom Tax, Sharan witnessed the cold indifference of the ruling class: it meant nothing to him to meet a victim of the cuts, the discrimination, the poverty and cruelty for which his party's austerity agenda was responsible. Capitalism demanded cuts, and he was there to defend the interests of his class.

Sharan decided to stand up for her own class and join the Socialist Party. Attending a public meeting organised by the Labour Party, Sharan related her experiences - but if the Labour hacks had expected an anti-Tory victim statement, they were disappointed. "We are not to blame," she said. "It's the capitalist system and we need to fight it. That's why I joined the Socialist Party."

On another occasion, Sharan braved the cold weather, propped up by other protesters, to confront Ed Miliband at a packed street meeting: "Will Labour finally end privatisation? What will you do for people like me?" She had no kind words for New Labour Mark II either. Last June, when the Labour parliamentary candidate knocked on her door, she told him that she wouldn't be voting Labour as she was a socialist. He replied that he was a socialist too! "No you aren't", she said. "If you were a socialist, Starmer would have kicked you out!"

The aforementioned Tory MP soon learned not to knock on Sharan's

door. He once tried sneaking a Tory leaflet through her letter box but she shouted after him as he scurried away: "Come back here!" and made him take his leaflet away with him. And when an Asian council candidate canvassed her for the Tories, he was rebuked: "How can you be in a party like that?" Sharan agreed to take his leaflet only on condition that he took a copy of the Socialist paper. He did, and weeks later returned, telling her the local community was talking about the socialists. Despite being confined to home, Sharan still made waves!



A business woman complaining about 'jobless parasites' was told by Sharan: "One day people like me are going to rise up and take what's ours, and there's nothing you can do about it". We are determined to fight, as Sharan fought, to ensure that her promise is fulfilled.

Active whenever her health allowed, Sharan fought her pain as well as the ruling class when she stood up from her wheelchair in order to sell the paper at demonstrations and picket lines. She was determined to get to Socialism at least once in her life, and, though she was in bed for a week afterwards, in 2018 she finally made it. Despite everything life had thrown at her - and everything the capitalist class had thrown at her, all the insidious and sadistic ways in which they'd tried to crush her spirit - there she was, her fist raised in the air, singing the Internationale.

Behind her physical frailty and lack of confidence there was a tough, compassionate woman who came

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through a difficult childhood, poor education, domestic violence and disability as a single parent who lived a full life and also found her place in our party. However hard things got, she always found the words to comfort and encourage others. For those of us fortunate enough to have called Sharan a friend, our lives were permanently changed by her kindness, but Sharan's personal qualities cannot be separated from her contribution to the party: she was the heart of our branch, and an example to us all of what it means to be a fighter.

A business woman complaining about 'jobless parasites' was told by Sharan: "One day people like me are going to rise up and take what's ours, and there's nothing you can do about it". We are determined to fight, as Sharan fought, to ensure that her promise is fulfilled.

Even in her final weeks, Sharan championed her class, always interested in the hours and conditions of her carers, and eager to tell them about the Socialist Party. Her funeral took place on 10 February and Sharan's wish was that everyone was to wear red at the service and to salute her with the raised fist of working-class solidarity, of which she was an impeccable ambassador. Our condolences go to daughter Gemma, grandson Jensen, Lee, her sisters, niece, the many friends and neighbours to whom she meant so much.

The Socialist: Not just interesting, a vital tool



Each week, when I get my copy of The Socialist I flick through to see what is inside. I always try and read the editorial straight away, and other key articles. Sometimes I skim through some articles, aiming to read them properly later, but not always managing.

This week, I had half an hour before I left for my weekly Socialist Party campaign stall (above). We decided to campaign against increases to council tax and this what was featured on the front page of the paper. I thought I would re-read that article to help me think about the points I might make on the stall. My son was happily playing, so I took the rare opportunity to read on. I read in more detail the articles on the experiences of disability claimants and the article on tax evasion which I had previously skimmed.

It was different this time. I was now reading specifically with the stall in mind. I really thought about the key points being made and the figures used to support them. Reading the

paper turned out to be the best preparation I could have had for the stall. In every conversation, I referenced one of the articles.

In response to someone who was angry about council tax rises, but suggested the main problem was people on benefits, I could say that in our paper I had just read that there is £23 billion of benefits which people are entitled to and which go unclaimed each year, and that benefit fraud was very low relative to the £40 billion in unpaid taxes.

Our paper is not something just to be read for personal interest, but it is a vital tool. It politically arms us with ideas to provide a clear response to the confusion which exists in society, to be able to say what is really going on and what we can do about it. Reading it with that purpose in mind means it isn't just another thing to do, but the best thing you can do each week to prepare for the rest of your political 'to-do' list each week.

BEA GARDNER

Tesco-Usdaw 'partnership' used to hold back struggle

MAX MCGEE

NUNEATON SOCIALIST PARTY

Reading the article 'No to partnership between unions and employers' in the Socialist (see socialistparty.org.uk) I was reminded of my time as an Usdaw shop and distribution workers' union rep for Tesco forklift drivers and warehouse pickers during the first lockdowns of the Covid pandemic.

Tesco saw its profits soar by millions since the start of lockdown in 2020, but by December 2021 the warehouse in which I was a union rep and branch secretary balloted in favour of strike action. It was a call that was answered across multiple sites in England as the 'partnership' agreement between Usdaw and Tesco bosses mandated all of these depots must also vote to strike for it to be accepted in negotiations.

Our tools were to be set down over the Christmas period, affecting over 5,000 workers at my site after a disgusting initial offer of a 1.5% pay rise, as Tesco tried to claw back some of the furlough pay we had forced them back on. We also had successful

victories on unsafe working practices and intimidation of agency staff, the bosses trying to play on the language barriers between workers, which we overcame by translating bulletins.

With Covid deaths and deaths partially caused by exhaustion and overwork at the depot, it was reflection of the risks taken by the working class in general during this period just before the strike wave kicking off.

After a final negotiation mandated by law following the preliminary strike ballot, Tesco offered a below-inflation 5.5% offer. While a significant improvement on the initial lowball, it was still an insult to the essential workers that had risked their lives to keep the rest of society fed. Reflecting a growing fear of the organised working class, bosses across Britain ramped up victimisation of trade unionists, including sacking me during the course of the ballots. Socialist Party members in Usdaw made the point that the union should not be hosting a Tesco-organised and paid for social at all at its annual conference, and not least when their union reps were being attacked by

Tesco bosses!

At Usdaw's 1998 conference an EC statement announced social partnership explaining it "will mean both unions and companies learning to do things differently. Some of the traditional ways we have of doing things may need to change." This approach has been a disaster for Usdaw members in Tesco, resulting in deterioration of conditions over the years and the loss of a ballot by workers on pay offers.

Partnership agreements muzzle workers and our organisations; there can be no overlap of interests between workers and bosses, social partnership in any sense is completely impossible.

The National Shop Stewards Network since Covid has detailed the marked increase in workplace tribunals year on year. It shows that we can't just rely on strong unions for our class interests to be realised.

As part of the struggle for socialism, we need a political wing of our industrial struggle, otherwise we lose the minute the ink on our contracts dries and are forced out back on the picket line, as Tesco warehouse workers have seen as they reballoted for strike action over pay during August 2024!



across the world. Our demands include:

WORK, PENSIONS AND BENEFITS

- A trade union struggle for the immediate implementation of the TUC demand of a £15-an-hour minimum wage for all as a step towards a real living wage, 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.

affordable, high-quality, carbon-neutral council housing. For rent controls that cap the level of rent. Fair rent decisions should be made by elected bodies of tenants, housing workers and representatives of trade unions. For cheap low-interest mortgages for home buyers. Nationalise the privately owned large building companies, land banks and estates.

ENVIRONMENT

- Prioritising major research and investment into replacing fossil fuels and nuclear power with renewable energy, and ending the problems of early obsolescence - where products are designed to 'wear out' and be replaced - and unrecycled waste.
- Nationalisation of the energy companies, under democratic workers' control and management, with compensation paid only on the basis of proven need, in order to carry out a major switch to clean, green energy, without any loss of jobs, pay or conditions.
- A democratically planned, massively expanded, free to use, publicly owned

transport system, as part of an overall plan against environmental pollution.

- For a major, publicly funded, insulation and energy transition plan for existing housing stock.
- Agribusiness to be taken into democratic public ownership. For a food processing and retail industry under workers' control to ensure that standards are set by consumers, small farmers, and all workers involved in the production, processing, distribution and retail of food.

DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS

- For united working-class struggle to end discrimination on the grounds of race, gender, disability, sexuality, age, and all other forms of prejudice and oppression.
- Repeat the anti-trade union laws and all others that trample over civil liberties.
- For the right to protest and to strike! End police harassment. For the police to be accountable to local committees, made up of democratically elected representatives of trade unions, local community organisations and local authorities.
- For the right to choose when and whether to have children - for the right

to access abortion, contraception and fertility treatment for all who need it.

- For the right to asylum - with democratic community control and oversight of emergency funding resources. No to racist immigration laws.
- Expand democracy. For the abolition of the monarchy and the House of Lords. For all MPs to be subject to the right of recall by their constituents at any time, and to only receive a worker's wage. For proportional representation and the right to vote at 16.
- For the right of nations to self-determination. For an independent socialist Scotland and for a socialist Wales, both part of a voluntary socialist confederation of Wales, England, Scotland and Ireland.
- Oppose the dictatorship of the billionaire owners of the media. For the nationalisation of newspaper printing facilities, radio, TV and social media platforms. Access to these facilities should be under democratic control, with political parties' coverage being allocated in proportion to the popular vote at elections.
- For a new mass workers' party,

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

SOCIALISM AND INTERNATIONALISM

- No to imperialist wars and occupations!
 - Take the wealth off the super-rich!
- For a socialist government to take into public ownership the top 150 companies and the banking system that dominate the British economy, and run them under

democratic working-class control and management. Compensation to be paid only on the basis of proven need, not to the fat cats.

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

Do you agree? Join the fightback!

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the Socialist

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formerly **Militant**

NO COUNCIL TAX RISES

STOP CUTS

Councils must set budgets to meet needs

TOM GIBSON
BRADFORD SOCIALIST PARTY

Bradford city council, run by Labour, has announced it will raise council tax by 9.99%. It was given permission to do so, without a referendum they would be sure to lose, by Keir Starmer's Labour government.

We have been out campaigning across Bradford, opposing the council's utterly cruel actions. People are angry. "Why do we get poorer while the rich get richer?" is a sentiment I hear over and over.

The anger about council tax reflects the anger from ordinary working-class people generally, as poverty and unemployment surges. In Bradford, 36% of children live in poverty. All while the capitalist bosses increase their wealth by billions, and MPs increase their wages.

We say no council tax rises, make the super-rich pay instead.

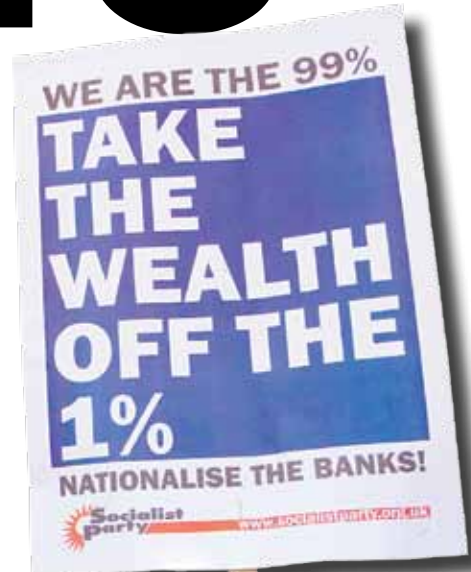
Rather than making working-class people pay more, local councils should be pressuring the Labour government for the funds we need. By setting budgets that meet the needs of the community, making no cuts, councils could mobilise trade unions and communities to join the fight for funding.

We deserve to live in cities with high-quality public services and with councillors who are prepared to fight for the interests of the working class, rather than taking yet more money out of our pockets.

The fight back in Bradford is just one important part of the battle against austerity. Another will be the fight trade unionists and socialists take to the ballot box in the May elections, in the 29 council areas where they are due to take place, standing as part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC).

We need councillors prepared to fight for the working class, and a party of our own too. Get involved to help us build one, and fight for socialist change.

● **Read more page 5, 10, 11**



PAUL MITSON

WHAT WE STAND FOR: THE SOCIALIST PARTY'S MAIN DEMANDS >>> see column on p14-15

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