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the Socialist

Issue 1311

27 February - 5 March 2025

formerly **Militant**

END WAR AND AUSTERITY

Build a new mass workers' party

Fight for socialist change



SEAMUS SMYTH
EAST MIDLANDS SOCIALIST PARTY REGIONAL ORGANISER

As the war in Ukraine enters its fourth year, it continues to leave behind a path of devastation and has claimed hundreds of thousands of lives on both sides.

The conflict will no doubt be a major feature of discussions between Keir Starmer and Donald Trump when they meet on 27 February, after the Socialist goes to press.

Trump's pronouncements have caused fear

among masses of people. But it's not the interests of ordinary people that Starmer will be there defending. Trump's words have also caused consternation among big business and capitalist governments in Europe. Starmer will be in Washington DC trying to represent the interests of Britain's capitalist bosses.

From well before either Starmer or Trump took office, British and US capitalism, as well as other European powers, have funded and assisted war in Ukraine. Not out of genuine concern for the rights and safety of ordinary people, but for their own strategic and profit interests.

Starmer and Trump are very different politicians. But both are staunch defenders of the profit-driven capitalist system which drives war, inequality and poverty, and which fuels

environmental destruction. Capitalist politicians worldwide are pledging to increase military funding in anticipation of further conflicts and wars.

Meanwhile, Trump and Starmer alike are both pursuing austerity agendas - cutting back and underfunding public services to serve the bosses' interests.

Rather than focusing on building council housing or improving the NHS, ahead of meeting Trump, Starmer pledged to increase military expenditure to 2.5% of GDP by 2027, an additional £13.4 billion a year, and to 3% beyond that! And has baldly stated that if a Ukraine deal is to be struck, he is "ready and willing" to put British 'boots on the ground'.

To fight back against cuts to services and the horrors of capitalist wars, the working class needs to form its own parties that stand firmly

against war and oppression - in Britain, the US, and Ukraine and Russia.

This type of party, fighting for socialist change, would demand full funding for essential services and fight back against the super-rich elites. Establishing such a party in Britain would do more to undermine and weaken the Trump, Putin and Zelensky regimes, offering a way forward for the working class internationally, than any amount of military spending.

Such a party would champion working-class solidarity internationally, as well as supporting national rights of self-determination with guaranteed rights for minorities, laying the road for genuine peace and an end to capitalist wars once and for all.

Now is the time to fight for that party and for socialist change!

**TRUMP'S FIRST MOVES DEEPEN
WORLD INSTABILITY >>> p8&9**

**STUDENTS: BUILD THE RESISTANCE
TO UNI CUTS! >>> p4&5**

**MALCOLM X: A LEGACY OF STRUGGLE
FOR BLACK LIBERATION >>> p15**

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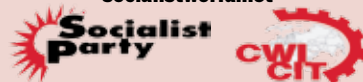
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"The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it."
Karl Marx

Council borrowing bailout: end austerity, we need proper council funding

ROB PETTEFAR
SWINDON SOCIALIST PARTY

Thirty councils in England have been granted 'Exceptional Financial Support' (EFS) by the Labour government. This is not fresh money from central government, so desperately needed by councils which have dutifully implemented cuts from Tory and now Labour governments instead of fighting back. No, it is permission to borrow more money to make up for spending shortfalls of councils closest to the brink.

The support includes allowing capital funds raised through borrowing and the sale of assets to be used for day-to-day expenses. It is expected that the funds are to then be repaid through the sale of council assets, cuts to spending and increases in council tax, while pleading with councils not to sell their 'historic buildings' and artworks.

Taxes and more debt

The most in-need councils have been granted permission to raise taxes by up to 10%. Almost a quarter of London councils face financial collapse without this support, but loans can only keep the wolf from the door for so long. Borrowing to support running costs is not sustainable in the long run. But, along with using reserves, it could be used by a council fighting the cuts while building a campaign to demand adequate funding.

Real funding for local councils is needed. A restoration of the pre-financial crisis grants would be a start. Budgets have been cut to the bone since 2010, and that funding has never been restored. Instead, councils were encouraged to be more 'entrepreneurial'! Several councils have lost big money on property ventures such as Thurrock, Croydon and Woking. Cuts to all services except the minimum required by law have left residents suffering, public spaces poorly maintained while service fees are increased.

My council, Swindon, has a £18.9 million budget shortfall this year. It is getting access to the support, but only £14.7 million. The rest is going to have to come from even sharper

cuts on top of £12.1 million of 'savings', i.e. cuts that have already been proposed.

What more to cut?

With the gristle on the bone already carved off, it's hard to know what councils can even cut. Council tax rises push the burden onto already over-stretched household budgets. It's time that this ludicrous and cruel austerity programme is ended. The rich have never been richer, while overworked public service providers struggle to put food on the table. The working class foots bigger and bigger bills for worse services as private operators and contractors pay themselves huge bonuses and share buy-backs.

We need an end to austerity and the proper funding of public services. Socialist Party members stand in elections as part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition and call for councillors to set needs-based budgets and build working-class campaigns to demand the money from central government. For Labour-controlled councils there are no more excuses, with Starmer's Labour now in power, get to work demanding the resources their constituents need!

Allowing borrowing and letting councils skyrocket council tax rates shows the Labour government can change the rules when councils are on the brink. Councils could be providing the services we need, kicking out the outsourcing profiteers and campaigning alongside council unions for decent jobs and pay instead of attacking council workers. And if Labour, or Green, councillors aren't prepared to do this we need ones who will.



SEND funding

One contributing factor to the local government financial crisis is the ticking time bomb of SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) funding. A special financial arrangement called a 'statutory override' allowed councils to not put deficit spending on SEND on the books. This expires next year with no plans to renew it. The deficit nationally is estimated to be around £2.7 billion for 2025-26, dwarfing the EFS support of £1.5 billion granted this year.

In Swindon the SEND deficit totalled £8.4 million at the end of 2023 and by 2027-28 could total £18.5 million. A report by the County Councils Network estimates that 26 of England's largest councils could declare themselves effectively 'bankrupt' by 2027 because of this. A survey by the Local Government Association put that estimate at one half of councils.



A road collapse in Dunbar JENNIFER PETRIE/CC

Profits for the shareholders, a sinking feeling for us!

ELLEN KENYON PEERS
WALTHAM FOREST SOCIALIST PARTY

While water bills are rocketing by up to 45% across the UK, residents in Surrey are facing a different problem: enormous sinkholes. People living on Godstone High Street were required to evacuate as the cavernous hole engulfed a 20m section of the road, sparking fears of potential explosions from exposed cables. Although the cause has yet to be determined, experts have said the culprit is likely a mains water leak. This is the second such incident in just six months, with a previous sinkhole in Dorking requiring the replacement of 34m of sewer pipe and further repairs caused by the rubble from the initial collapse.

Incidents like these could be avoided with proper investment; infrastructure needs to be replaced and upgraded periodically to keep the water system running. However, greedy water companies - many of whom have reported millions in 'losses' over recent years - would rather line the pockets of their shareholders than maintain the ageing water system. Surrey residents are faced with the worst of both worlds; with their freshwater supplied by SES Water and their sewage system by

Thames Water, the latter of which has faced justified scrutiny over the levels of sewage being pumped directly into rivers with at least 72 billion litres of the stuff going in the Thames since 2020. OFWAT, the inept regulator charged with keeping Big Water in check, has rewarded the company with permission to increase bills by an average of 33%.

SES or SOS?

SES Water, newly acquired by the Pennon Group water monopoly, uses AI sensors to monitor for water leaks. This is another cost-cutting measure framed as a technological development, much like the dangerous proposals by rail companies for robots to monitor for track damage. SES Water has been given permission to put extra charges on their bills to reward their work fixing leaks. In 2022, they lost 76 litres per property served every day!

The only development that can deliver lasting change is the renationalisation of water* under democratic workers' control and management - and that's what the Socialist Party fights for.

*and leaving the bosses in the sinkhole and then paving over it.

SOCIALISM TODAY

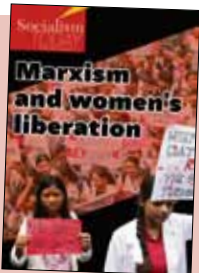
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Hospitality workers: unionise to fight jobs massacre

JOHN WILLIAMS
CARDIFF CENTRAL SOCIALIST PARTY AND HOSPITALITY WORKER

Many of us like a pint or two in the week and enjoy going to our local pub for a good catch up with friends and family, and maybe a dance! So much so, the hospitality industry contributes roughly £93 billion to the British economy annually. But community pubs are struggling. Last year over 300 pubs closed permanently in England and Wales. Over 4,500 jobs were lost, according to British Beer and Pub Association research. And things don't look to be getting any better.

Hospitality industry bodies have warned that would genuinely help hospitality workers in their ability to fight back against the bosses' offensive and for their rights at work. But Starmer's Labour have kicked the can down the road, to allow big business to lobby and attempt to water down the bill. It could be at least a year until it becomes law. Too late for hospitality workers facing the sack, zero-hour contracts, or firing and rehiring on worse terms and conditions now.

Hospitality workers are still one of the lowest paid in the UK economy, and among the least unionised. Increases to the minimum wage to £12.21 an hour this year fall far short of what workers need to live on. It's miles off the TUC (Trades Union Congress) demand for £15 an hour. Capitalism is in crisis and, to maintain their profits, bosses are preparing

how much money they're making and more importantly where its going! There's no reason why the bigger businesses can't be nationalised to save all jobs, invest the money needed or be refitted to provide a service workers and the local community actually want.

Smaller businesses who genuinely can't afford it could be given interest-free loans from the state. We oppose making it financially more difficult for smaller businesses, while Starmer's Labour protects the interest of the super-rich and big business.

Workers' rights bill

Labour's Employment Rights Bill has warned that would genuinely help hospitality workers in their ability to fight back against the bosses' offensive and for their rights at work. But Starmer's Labour have kicked the can down the road, to allow big business to lobby and attempt to water down the bill. It could be at least a year until it becomes law. Too late for hospitality workers facing the sack, zero-hour contracts, or firing and rehiring on worse terms and conditions now.

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Unite Hospitality protest LONDON SP

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ONS dodgy data doesn't justify cuts

MARK BEST
SOCIALIST PARTY NATIONAL COMMITTEE

Behind its attacks on working-class people, the Labour government always has a stat to 'justify' it. Whether that's a rise in economically inactive figures after the Covid-19 pandemic, meaning the NHS 'must' be opened up even more to private health businesses. Or that the number of young people not in work means it 'needs' to bring in a tougher benefits sanction regime.

But for a number of years, official government statisticians aren't even sure if these stats reflect reality. The Office for National Statistics (ONS), responsible for collecting a range of important economic data - from wages and productivity figures to food prices and the cost of living - is in crisis. Reports of the Labour Force Survey, are now being published with the warning: "Official statistics under development". Because of a fall in the responses to the survey, the ONS cannot be fully sure the results actually reflect real trends in the economy. And they're likely to stay this way until 2027!

It's damaging to the prestige of British capitalism and its ability to attract investment. Either productivity is even more dire than they already thought, or it is incapable of accurately measuring important economic metrics.

Biases they have already identified include greater responses

from homeowners than renters and younger people being less likely to answer unknown phone calls or be in to answer door-to-door surveys. So, while Labour is demonising young people, their experiences are less likely to be accurately included in the analysis.

Please please please believe me

ONS chief, Ian Diamond, practically begged MPs on the Treasury Select Committee to "please, please, please don't think I'm being complacent" about the issues with data. He told them he is very confident that there has been a fall in economic activity since the pandemic.

After the pandemic, it became harder to collect responses over the phone and in person. But the ONS is also a victim of cuts which previous and current governments have used their stats to justify. It has been forced to look for £40 million of cuts by 2025. 30% of staff responsible for field interviews left in 2023. The experience of civil servants across the board - low pay and fewer resources for the same tasks - has resulted in shoddy, unreliable data.

But the idea that a capitalist government could read masses of data and pull certain policy levers to shift the economy any way they want is also unrealistic. Policies attempt to shift dials certain ways but underlying it all is the chaotic morass of the market. Companies prioritise

short-term profits over investing in the infrastructure needed to take society forward. The impacts of government policy can have massive unintended consequences - firms taking advantage of youth unemployment schemes to get cheap, disposable labour with no chance of a job at the end, for example.

The capitalist system is unplanned, chaotic and contradictory. And the new Labour government is going into the next period with at least a partial blindfold on. But the cuts that are demanded by the bosses aren't a result of dodgy data, but attempting to make the working class pay for the bosses crisis. To make our living standards worse while their profits go up.

Unlocking the potential from collecting and analysing data is possible, but it requires society to be organised in a different way. Democratic planning of society: producing what is needed instead of what makes a profit, beholden to the whims of the market. The working class, with the wealth and resources of society in our hands and democratic socialist planning of all levels in society, would be able to collect and use data we can rely on, because it would be used to enrich all our lives.

Do you agree?
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Brunel Uni – workers strike against cuts

RYAN LEONARD
BRUNEL SOCIALIST STUDENTS

Staff at Brunel University were informed in October last year of a planned "significant academic re-sizing programme". The plan was to make 130 redundancies of full-time academic staff and 79 profession service staff, a 14% reduction in staffing levels. It goes without saying that students were left in the dark, we were only informed of the university management's plans by our lecturers.

Lecturers in UCU have announced a calendar of 16 strike days, escalating over a period of six weeks, beginning on 28 February. Socialist Students will be building student support for the strikes.

The vice chancellor of Brunel is Andrew Jones, a Labour councillor. He lists on his LinkedIn page "business planning" and "strategic thinking" as skills he's gained from his role at Brunel. Just last year the university

hired 139 academic staff... incredibly strategic.

For the last five years, Brunel has exploited international students, who can be charged far higher fees, as a source of income and despite being warned consistently over the last two years that the law around student visas would change, senior leadership continued on this path.

Students are rightly frustrated. Some of the people I study with have lost their tutors during their dissertations, which is terrifying. Planned redundancies don't include the 69 members of the executive team, all earning over £100k. Nor the vice chancellor, earning £267k a year.

Our uni is not the assorted renovations that Brunel has carried out, totalling five times the savings made by sacking staff. Our uni is the educators, the students and the relationships between us. All of which will suffer if Brunel's redundancy plan goes ahead.

Liverpool Uni – standing in SU elections to fight cuts



Liverpool Socialist Students PHOTO: ALEX SMITH

HANNAH PONTING
LIVERPOOL SOCIALIST STUDENTS

After the numerous job cuts announced at universities across the country, lots of us were worried about similar cuts occurring in Liverpool.

The University of Liverpool has followed other unis and enacted a plan of "voluntary redundancies" of staff. However, uni bosses are being extremely vague about the number of job cuts, despite pressure from the UCU for transparency.

This news comes only 17 weeks after the Labour government's tuition fees hike. Job losses will have a negative impact on students as well as staff, emphasising the importance of

uniting Socialist Students work with the demands of the trade unions.

Students Union officer elections are coming up. We are taking this as an opportunity to stand a socialist candidate in order to give a platform to our ideas. I am very proud to be that candidate, and to stand on an anti-cuts platform, aiming to build the Funding Not Fees campaign, as well as amplifying the voices of the uni workers.

In these times of increasing cuts at universities throughout the UK, it is increasingly important to keep socialist ideas visible on our campuses and to build the Funding Not Fees campaign, as part of our work as Socialist Students.

Students: Build the resistance to uni cuts!

ADAM POWELL-DAVIES
SOCIALIST STUDENTS NATIONAL ORGANISER

The vice chancellors have ramped up their offensive on university students and staff this year. More than 2,000 new redundancies have been planned since the start of 2025 alone. This figure will rise even higher in coming weeks, as a number of institutions are yet to confirm the scale of their announced cuts. At several universities the planned redundancies amount to 10% or more of the workforce.

For students, the threat of mass course closures comes on top of an ongoing cost-of-living crisis, as well as a tuition fee hike next year that will do nothing to resolve the crisis in higher education.

Socialist Students is serious about fighting to end the uni funding crisis, by mobilising students to demand no course cuts, no job losses, and for free, fully funded education.

Workers in the University and College Union (UCU) have responded to attacks by balloting for strike action in at least a dozen university branches so far. And Unison is currently balloting tens of thousands of its members in higher education. Socialist Students groups will organise for the biggest-possible student attendance at picket lines, and build

for solidarity action.

But students should not limit ourselves to an exclusively supporting role in the struggle. We can propose our own initiatives, within which we invite the trade unions on campus to play a leading role. That way we can show that students are serious about fighting and pro-active in our determination to fight shoulder to shoulder with staff. That is the most inspiring kind of solidarity that students can give in this fight for the future of higher education.

For Socialist Students groups, this means putting forward a plan of action that can organise staff, students and working-class people locally in a campaign to fight back as soon as any cuts are announced. We can build for mass meetings, hold protests, organise lobbies of MPs, collect signatures for an open letter or petition – there is no shortage of options.



A plan of activity can bring people together. But what transforms a series of gatherings into an effective movement is a clear political programme of demands to fight for. Socialist Students has launched the Funding Not Fees campaign as a way of putting forward the ideas we think are needed to build such a movement.

FUNDING NOT FEES

Socialist Students says

- No to further fee increases – get organised on campus to fight for free education! Cancel student debt, replace student loans with living grants tied to the rate of inflation. Make the super-rich pay!
- No cuts and no closures! Build democratic student organisations to link up with campus trade unions and the wider working class to fight for the funding our universities need
- Kick big business off campus! End marketisation of our education. Open up university finances to democratic oversight and control, including by elected students' representatives and campus trade unions, with the power to terminate all contracts and research tied to war, occupation, profiteering and exploitation, while guaranteeing jobs and funding
- Students need a political voice. Build a new mass workers' party that will stand up for students and workers and fights for socialist policies
- Fight for socialist change. For democratic public ownership of the banks, monopolies and major industry to provide us with a future

Join the student fightback: join...

socialist students

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- or call 020 8988 8761
- or text your name and school, college or uni to 07749 379 010

Coventry Uni bosses threaten 'fire and rehire'

FRANK HAMMOND
COVENTRY SOCIALIST STUDENTS

Over 90 full-time staff members are set to be cut at Coventry University, with a further 200 staff re-enrolled under a subsidiary called Peoples Future Limited (PFL). A familiar fire-and-rehire fiasco is underway with whole courses set to be terminated along with lecturers' jobs.

Uni bosses argue the recent tuition fees rise will still not cover the uplift of National Insurance contribution rates, and that their contributions to the Teachers' Pension Scheme is 'unaffordable'. The bosses' solution? Fire and rehire to remove staff from the scheme.

It should be noted that vice chancellor and CEO of Coventry University, John Latham, was reported to have received an £80,768 bonus on top of his £312,617 salary during the financial year ending March 2023. Furthermore, only five days after this decision was announced in December 2024, Latham was named as a non-executive director of the Labour government's Department for Business and Trade.

A lecturer within the university has personally expressed to me a fear for their living situation as a result of the unacceptable decision; not originally from the UK and coming from a country that's fought a war throughout the last few years, redundancy is one of the scariest words to throw around. Workers are once again being exploited, threatened and neglected. And yet, we receive nothing but silence or excuses from the ones in charge.

Opposing the decision, Coventry Socialist Students has called a public meeting, working to spread the word to students, lecturers and trade unionists alike, to expose the unjust cuts and plan our fightback. It will hear from a UCU trade union rep. We want to open a discussion of what can be done and ultimately making a shout to the bosses that this decision is not being accepted.

Hard-working people are currently at risk of being punished with seemingly no remorse from the staff at the top. Students kicking up a fuss is a warning to the higher-ups as we continue building the Funding Not Fees campaign.

Cardiff Uni – pressure wins £19 million from Welsh government

ARIS PREVOST
CARDIFF SOCIALIST STUDENTS

On top of 400 jobs cut at Cardiff Uni, 200 job cuts have been announced at Bangor Uni and 90 at University South Wales. Having previously said that there is no more money, and under popular pressure and protests, the Welsh government has announced £19 million investment into higher education in Wales.

However, this does not mean a final victory. A one-time £19 million cash injection will only partially stem

the tide of cuts. Cardiff University alone faces a £30 million deficit. It's £15 million at Bangor and £20 million at USW (see below). But this additional money will not solve the funding crisis. In fact, it remains unclear where this money will go, and what strings are attached.

We demand an immediate end to all cuts, and that pressure is put on governments in Cardiff and London for adequate funding.

The fightback at Cardiff Uni is clearly growing weaker by the day. A unified

student and staff pushback can force the university to halt all cuts.

As part of the fightback, there was a demo organised by music alumni on 22 February, where they played a public concert outside city hall. The concert loudly highlighted the cultural impact that music in Cardiff has. Cardiff has many independent music venues and cultural roots which have been under attack, including the closure of the beloved venue The Moon.

Other events are being planned, especially targeting uni open days as well as organising further marches and rallies.

Moving forward, we need to push for an alternative funding model to fix higher education. It is only by running education as a public good rather than a commodity that we will be able to end this crisis and save jobs.

We need a new workers' party that fights for free education, fully publicly funded by making the super-rich pay!



Students and workers protest together in Cardiff PHOTO: CARDIFF SOCIALIST PARTY

Uni South Wales students build cuts resistance

SUZIE MATTHEWS

Following in Cardiff University's controversial footsteps, the University of South Wales (USW) announced on 17 February its plans to axe around 90 jobs, including entire courses.

In response, Rhondda Cynon Taf Socialist Party held a campaign stall in opposition, and student support was immense. Under the hypocritical shadow of a crane building a shiny new block, more than half of the students who passed by stopped to sign the petition.

There was the distinct sense that something ought to be done. Three students left their details to find out more about joining the Socialist Party, one suggested organising a protest. The atmosphere isn't yet one of anger – though that can change when cuts to specific courses are announced.

We have been campaigning at USW for a while now. Staff and

students have told us about cuts to Maths courses and professional services, fearing that what is happening at Cardiff would arrive at their doorsteps. It is difficult to view USW as an institution struggling for money whilst a new building is being thrown up. Students and staff are concerned about where these cuts will fall – many assumed that they will be primarily directed at the arts and humanities.

40% of students at USW are international students, a group that is hideously overcharged. Uni managements have blamed a drop off in international applicants for their budget deficits. But we can't stand for cuts and job losses, we must fight for higher education fully funded by government.

Unions fighting back

BEA GARDNER
UCU MEMBER

A debate is taking place within the main Higher Education (HE) unions about the best strategy to defend members' jobs and conditions, given the onslaught of cuts and the dire state of university finances.

The University and College Union (UCU) is leading a fightback against redundancies at the local level, with strike mandates in place, or ballots under way at tens of UCU branches. At the UK-wide level, the union is

split between those on the left who want to use the current pay dispute as a vehicle for a sector-wide struggle, and the supporters of general secretary Jo Grady who have already delayed a ballot of the membership on this issue, and are pushing to retain a localised response.

Meanwhile, Unison is launching a ballot of its HE members across a number of universities over pay. The recent Unison HE conference passed a series of motions supporting the linking of the political and industrial struggles and campaigning for the

full funding needed.

Socialist Party members in both unions are arguing for a fighting lead to be given at every level of the union – electing fighting candidates in the current union elections is key. A serious UK-wide campaign for full funding is needed, and that needs to be fought for within the unions. Individual branches can push back against cuts and redundancies, and that struggle would be strengthened through greater coordination between branches in dispute, as well as between the unions.

Usdaw GS and DGS elections

A chance to transform the union from a prop for Starmer to one that fights for members

SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBERS IN USDAW

The two senior elected officials in retail and distribution union Usdaw, general secretary Paddy Lillis and deputy general secretary Dave McCrossen, both announced in mid-February that they will retire in July 2025.

Over the seven years since they took office, Usdaw has slipped back in membership, to around 360,000 from 431,000 in December 2018. This is in part due to the situation in the retail and distributive sector, with factors such as competition from online retailers and big cuts and closures on the high street, and the bulk of members having been on the frontline of the Covid pandemic.

But the inaction of the leadership meant that Usdaw members did not take part in the 2022-23 strike wave. The cuts and closures faced by workers in retail have not been fought. Other unions in the distributive sector, in particular Unite under the leadership of Sharon Graham, did take action over pay and conditions and won victories.

Confidence to fight

Those victories have increased the confidence of workers in this sector. Now there are more strike ballots of Usdaw members, and increased wages being won.

In Morrisons, when pensions were attacked in 2024, Usdaw began preparations to ballot supermarket workers there for the first time in many years. This follows the GMB union organising strike action in selective Asda stores last year.

Deteriorating living standards in society have knock-on effects on retail workers, such as an increase in shoplifting. Usdaw's last survey showed that attacks on retail workers have doubled, while shoplifting has increased by a third. Usdaw's 'Freedom from Fear' campaign has focused on legal changes, but companies which short-staff stores and privatise in-store security should not be let off the hook by the union.

With large numbers of retail store closures and job losses announced in the first months of the year, including 3,000 in Sainsbury's and 400 jobs at risk in a Tesco warehouse, plus the scandal of 'freelance' retail workers not being paid, it's clear that there are further conflicts over pay, jobs and conditions to come.

Udaw members will need a leadership which can stand up to these challenges, with active campaigning to mobilise members, including preparing for strike action when necessary.

No to partnership

Since the 1990s, Usdaw has been to the fore among trade union leaders seeking 'partnership' with big employers. These agreements make it much harder for members to fight for their interests. But bosses and



Sainsbury's warehouse workers on strike in 2019. Socialist Party member Amy Murphy, then Usdaw president, fourth from left

workers are not equal 'partners': retail wages have stagnated since the 1990s relative to the cost of living, while the big supermarket chains have become hugely profitable businesses. For example, Tesco projects an operating profit of £2.9 billion for this year, and Sainsbury's expects to make £1 billion.

There is growing resentment at this among members. There are repeated calls and support at Usdaw conferences (ADMs - Annual Delegate Meetings) for voting on pay offers to be restored in Tesco, and to end binding arbitration being written into the recognition agreement with Morrisons. A motion to this year's ADM calls for a review of partnerships altogether.

It is essential that the union has an independent position from that of the bosses. Yet Usdaw's most recent document on the future of the retail sector was launched alongside the bosses' organisation, the British Retail Consortium! Retail bosses may well support Paddy Lillis's call to level the tax burden across the sector (to boost their profits), but they will still resist attempts to increase pay and strengthen workers' rights on the grounds of 'affordability', so as not to cut into their profits!

Left candidates for general secretary and deputy general secretary on a fighting industrial and political programme could help transform Usdaw into the fighting union retail and distributive workers need.

The last time a contested general secretary election took place was in 2008. Socialist Party member Robbie Segal won 40% of the vote. It is therefore not inevitable that Usdaw will remain a prop for New Labour and Starmer. Usdaw members who support this approach should join with Socialist Party members in helping to build the Usdaw Broad Left as a campaigning left group within the union, bringing together reps and activists who want to take this struggle forward against those at the top of the union who cosy up to Starmer and the bosses.

But as Starmer fails to deliver for working-class people, ruling in the interests of big business, even right-wing union leaders can come into collision with the government under pressure from their members. At Labour Party conference, for example, Usdaw backed the Unite motion calling for reinstatement of the winter fuel allowance. The union also supports the abolition of the two-child benefit cap, over which seven Labour MPs were suspended.

Many Usdaw members will ask why not one member of the Usdaw-sponsored group of MPs in parliament was prepared to support those seven? Members would expect Usdaw to contact pro-worker MPs - including Corbyn, independents and suspended Labour MPs - to establish a group in parliament that will speak out in favour of union policies, not just the policies acceptable to the pro-big business outlook of Starmer's leadership.

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London strike wave!

Workers across London are fighting for decent pay and against attacks on conditions, in a mini-strike wave

NEU in schools
27 February; 5,6,11,12,13 March (see facing page)

- Haringey: Fortismere, Gladesmore, Highgate Wood and Hornsey School for Girls
- Waltham Forest: Lammas, Leytonstone, Willowfield
- Lambeth: Vanguard
- Hackney: BSix college, St Dominic's (26,27,28 February; 4, 5, 6,7,10,11,12,13,14 March)

NEU protest at Department of Education 27 February 12.30

PCS outsourced workers
in various government departments, including the Cabinet Office, Downing Street, Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, Department for Business and Trade, the Canary Wharf hub, and the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology: 24, 25, 26 February (see facing page)

UCU at Brunel University:
28 February and escalating over next six weeks (see page 4)

Unite specialist infectious diseases cleaners at Guys and St Thomas's hospitals:
24-28 February, with a protest each day at 10.30am, including at NHS England on Monday and Friday, and the Department for Health and Social Care on Wednesday

Unite cleaners at Heathrow
for British Airways: 25-28 February

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

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Outsourced workers in PCS union keep up the strikes

Strikes by brave PCS union members on private contracts are continuing in various government departments, including the Cabinet Office, Downing Street, Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, Department for Business and Trade, the Canary Wharf hub, and the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology. Workers are fighting over decent pay and conditions, and they also demand that the Labour government takes the contracts in-house on proper civil service contracts and rates of pay.

Despite several days of action since before Christmas, the workers believe that there is still not enough on the table. Whatever agreements are made with private employers, such as ISS and G4S, must be backed up with funding from government, as well as serious talks on in-sourcing. Reps also believe that it is essential that there is lay-member involvement in any discussions to resolve the dispute.

- PCS members employed by G4S as security guards for the DWP are rebalancing



In the PCS elections, for a fighting leadership, nominate Marion Lloyd (pictured above on an outsourced workers' picket line) for president. Scan here for the slate of fighting left candidates for the National Executive Committee

Haringey school strikes: 'Don't damage education - fight the cuts!'

HARINGEY NEU MEMBER

There has been overwhelming support for strike action over Haringey Labour council's proposals to increase class sizes and change terms and conditions in the five local authority-run secondary schools.

In four schools - Fortismere, Gladesmore, Highgate Wood and Hornsey School for Girls - there were massive votes for action, up to 97% Park View School narrowly missed the Tory 50% turnout threshold (scandalously maintained by Starmer's Labour government), with a 49% turnout. NEU members there will be re-balloted.

An agreement has been in place since 1988 that class sizes are limited to 27 students and that teachers have 20% of their timetable protected for planning, preparation and assessment (PPA). These measures have played a huge part in the improvement of student outcomes in the borough over the last 35 years. The current plans to break this long-standing agreement will undoubtedly have a negative impact.

But Labour-controlled Haringey claims it has no choice but to pass on the Tories' changes to the school funding formula, that moved funding per student away from inner-city areas like Haringey in favour of largely Tory-controlled areas. Headteachers, facing budget deficits, are in turn saying that they are simply following through on the council's proposals.

This is a testing ground for other secondary schools in the borough. Staff and students should not be suffering due to underfunding of education. Instead, headteachers, unions, school communities and Labour councillors should be joining forces to campaign for this Labour government to reverse Tory policies and fund decent education for all.

Haringey council facing 'bankruptcy'

The Labour leader of the council said: "In recent years, the reality has been that we have less money to serve more people who require more services which have become more expensive to provide." The council has declared a 'funding emergency' and has applied for a £37 million government grant to stay afloat.

But in all the 14 years of Tory austerity, the Labour council never once challenged the cuts with any serious strategy. Time and again, they passed cuts on to services and communities. Haringey council building work-edly have a negative impact.

Here is an opportunity for Unite and the NEU to join forces, to build a mass campaign involving parents, unions and communities, to fight for the funding we need for all our services from Starmer's Labour government!

RMT victory in Transport for London



PHOTO: PAUL MATSSON

SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBERS IN RMT

The transport union RMT has secured a huge victory in the fight to defend pension rights. The Transport for London (TfL) pension, which covers staff in TfL, London Underground and other TfL subsidiaries, but not subcontractors, will now continue with no change to members' contribution rates and no reduction in pension benefits. This is a complete victory.

This should give confidence to RMT members around the country and other trade unionists, as Starmer and the employers move onto the offensive, that with a serious struggle victories can be won.

The victory has been secured through six days of all-grades strike action between March 2022 and March 2023. Each of these strike days shut down the tube. Seven consecutive ballot mandates were secured from 2022 to October 2024, in spite of the anti-union laws.

Sadiq Khan and big business

The idea of attacking tube workers' pension rights was first raised by the Labour Mayor of London Sadiq Khan following a misnamed 'Independent Report'. The report was written by a panel of business leaders. They produced an impeccable defence of city financiers and big business, that concluded that it would be quite wrong to expect London's rich and powerful business leaders to contribute to public transport and so, instead, the mayor should consider congestion charging, additional council tax charges, and pension reform for TfL staff.

Later on, the Tory government made it a condition of TfL funding

arrangements to carry through pension reform. But because of strike action, the pension reform milestones, the first of which was to agree the changes to be made by 2023, were all missed. The latest funding deal with the new Labour government is hopelessly inadequate for funding public transport, but there is no mention of continuing the TfL pension review.

Mention should also be made of the scandalous role of former TUC (Trades Union Congress) general secretary, Brendan Barber. In order to give cover to the business-led 'Independent Report', Barber was appointed to chair another review, this time specifically into the pension.

This review avoided a direct conclusion, but suggested the Local Government Pension Fund (LGPF) would make a suitable alternative that could save TfL up to £100 million a year in pension costs. Moving to the LGPS would have meant that a tube worker retiring at 60 would lose around 30% of their pension benefits. Contribution rates would have risen, for employees, from 5% to between 5% and 10% of wages.

Workers vs City bosses

Workers on the tube work around the clock. 04:30 starts, 01:30 finishes, and night duties are commonplace. The health risks associated with shift work are now well documented, as are the consequent impacts on life expectancy. While City bosses retire in their 50s, in good health and on six-figure pensions, a tube driver with 30 years' service would expect to see a pension in the region of £30,000. Lower-paid grades and staff with fewer years on the job will retire on far less. To many workers enrolled

in totally inadequate defined-contribution pension schemes the TfL scheme looks almost utopian, but it is the bare minimum that any worker should expect.

At the end of last year, TfL reported to the pension trustees that their pension review was now complete and had concluded there was not a case for reform. In recent weeks, this position has been confirmed directly to RMT by London Underground management.

The fight to defend TfL funding, to protect jobs, conditions of work and services goes on. A new ballot will be needed to allow members to continue this fight. But we can pause for a moment, and celebrate a massive victory that bucks a long-run trend of final-salary pension funds being shut down or decimated by benefit cuts and contribution rate rises.

Shame on Labour

The government and mayor should reflect on their actions. Each strike day is claimed (by the bosses' CBI and others) to cost at least £30 million to the London economy. Some estimates are far more lurid. At any rate, the six shutdowns have cost London's economy at least £180 million. This cost is entirely the responsibility of the mayor and the then Tory government, who were prepared to bankroll an attack on a scheme that allows workers to avoid poverty in old age.

Those who tried to smash up the TfL pension should hang their heads in shame. Instead, they will, no doubt, regroup and consider how else they can rob money from those delivering London's public transport services. RMT must remain ready to resist them.

ROBERT BECHERT

COMMITTEE FOR A WORKERS' INTERNATIONAL

Donald Trump's 'shock and awe' offensive continues, in the US and internationally. The aim is to show his supporters that he is acting decisively, as one decision or announcement after another is made public. And to throw Trump's opponents, nationally and internationally, off balance.

A few of Trump's decisions have not lasted long, especially the rapid realisation that some of the nuclear safety staff fired on 16 February were actually needed, prompting a desperate effort to contact them and entice them back to their old jobs.

Other proposals, particularly those relating to tariffs, are clearly negotiating ploys designed to force concessions.

One thing is already noticeably clear, namely that, internationally, 'Make America Great Again' (MAGA) really means 'at the expense of all the US's competitors or suppliers'. This will add fuel to the increasingly stormy world relations, as great and small powers undertake geopolitical struggles, sometimes involving military action, for influence and resources.

The US administration is blunt in making clear that it alone will make the key decisions, nationally and internationally. Trump's exclusion of Ukraine and other European countries from even knowledge of his opening talks with Vladimir Putin is a classic illustration of 'Great Power' politics.

'Imperial presidency'

At home, Trump is largely ignoring the newly elected US Congress, despite its Republican majorities, by not presenting new laws etc. and is instead relying on the 'Executive Orders' he issues. In this way, Trump is acting in the manner of the British government, which increasingly uses the 'royal prerogative' to issue edicts. Or similar to the way in which Macron's governments in France have used presidential decrees rather than parliamentary votes to enact policies. Not without reason, the comedian Jon Stewart joked on *The Daily Show*, on US TV, that MAGA is really "Make America a Monarchy Again". This tendency towards Bonapartist rule symbolises the way in which Trump is replacing what he calls the "Washington swamp" with an "imperial presidency".

These methods of rule are linked with the highly personal regime Trump is running, which demands total loyalty and expects obsequious behaviour from his underlings. Thus, the new US defense secretary Pete Hegseth explained that in the planned negotiations with Putin over Ukraine: "What he [Trump] decides to allow and not allow is at the purview of the leader of the free world, of President Trump." In other words, one-person rule, reinforced by the recent US Supreme Court ruling that a President has legal immunity for any decision taken in an official capacity.

But the behaviour of the Trump government is not simply kowtowing to the chief. Trump and his crew represent a definite nationalist and combative strand within the US capitalist class. Internationally, the Trump administration is deepening and escalating US imperialism's nationalist



Trump is largely ignoring the US Congress, despite its Republican majority, by relying on 'Executive Orders'



pushback in reaction to the decline in its relative position, especially vis-à-vis China.

This is not the first time that US imperialism has moved against its capitalist rivals. In 1924, Leon Trotsky argued that the US, having become a net exporter of manufactured goods, was acting against its European rivals by setting "limits... with certain restricted sections of the world market allotted to it" (*Perspectives of World Development*). But this is not so easy today given the enormous potential strength of Chinese manufacturing, which has changed the international balance of economic power.

Economic and political

Between the two world wars, the tensions were not simply over questions of trade but of strategic rivalry and potential conflict between the imperialist powers. By the early twentieth century, US imperialism had started its challenge to British imperialism's global power. In 1927, the US military began detailed planning (the 'Atlantic Strategic War Plan') for a war against Britain and its then empire. This policy was approved by the US government in 1930, and the plan was kept active until 1939, when it was decided to make no further preparations for a conflict with Britain.

Significantly it was not just the US which was planning for war at that time. Earlier, in 1921, the Canada

military prepared its own plan (Defence Scheme No. 1) to launch a first strike against the US, occupy Seattle, Great Falls, Minneapolis, and Albany. Their aim was to divert US forces from invading Canada and hopefully give time for British forces to arrive to defend Canada. However, this plan was dropped in 1928, as it became clear that Britain wanted to avoid another war with the US.

China

Today US imperialism's capitalist rivals are not just European powers and Japan, as it was, for instance, in the 1980s. Crucially now its rivals include China and several other countries. The *Financial Times* has commented about "discrete trade blocs developing, but on a geopolitical rather than a geographical basis. Last May, an IMF study found that there were three major politically aligned trade blocs emerging. First, there was a US-leaning one that includes the US, Europe, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. Second, a China-leaning bloc including Russia, Belarus, Syria, and Eritrea. Finally, there was a third bloc filled out by countries like India, the Asean states [in Southeast Asia] and others in the 'global south' that are non-aligned or neutral in their relations to the US and/or China." (London, 17 February). While Trump and others will probably try to disrupt these groupings, their development is another



Between the two world wars, tension was not simply over trade, but strategic rivalry and potential conflict between the imperialist powers

product of the growing international rivalry and tensions.

The period between the First and Second World Wars showed that conflicts are not simply on trading questions but involve power relations and strategic interests, issues which inevitably can have a military angle. While it is unlikely that Trump will reactivate the Atlantic Strategic War Plan's proposals for an invasion of Canada, the US military's centre of attention now is the Pacific. The US is concentrating on China's rapidly growing military strength; a development which raises the prospect of military clashes.

Pacific

Thus, Hegseth, while visiting Nato, told its members that the US's shift away from Europe was necessary. The US, he said, "faces consequential threats to our homeland", adding that "we also face a peer competitor in the communist Chinese" able to threaten the American mainland and "core national interests in the Indo-Pacific". Hence the US's military shift to the Pacific.

As well as concerning US interests regarding the war in Ukraine, Trump's gestures towards Putin's regime can be seen as part of an attempt to weaken Russia's ties with China and hope to move it towards at least a more 'neutral' attitude to the tensions between the US and China. This is a backdrop to Trump's

DEEPEN WORLD INSTABILITY



One of the many huge Gaza demonstrations in London ROGER THOMAS

criticism of the eastern expansion of Nato, pointing out that Russian rulers before Putin also opposed its growth.

Capitalist hypocrisy

Trump's capitalist-politician critics in Europe are completely hypocritical as they also act in their own interests. They argue about the need to defend Ukraine while largely remaining silent on the Israeli state's onslaught in Gaza, Lebanon and now the West Bank. Neither side in the war in Ukraine is allowing the peoples of Ukraine and Russia to freely decide their own futures. The reality is that the way in which the talks between the US and Russia are being arranged is typical of imperialist politics, where not only are working people excluded but also weaker capitalist powers are treated as mere pawns in the game.

Tariffs

This is the backdrop to Trump's twin drive to defend US capitalism and for trade concessions that started with the announcement of the 25% tariffs on all Canadian and Mexican imports into the US, and 10% on all Chinese imports. While the imposition of the increase on Canadian and Mexican goods was postponed until early March, the tariff rise on Chinese goods went ahead. However, the attack on Chinese imports into the US was rapidly modified when US Post hastily dropped its sudden ban on



Trump's capitalist critics in Europe are completely hypocritical. They argue about defending Ukraine, while remaining largely silent on the Israeli state's onslaught in Gaza

parcels from China carrying goods worth less than \$800 to freely enter the US. Trump did not want to anger the millions who had bought over-the-internet Chinese goods for their personal use.

While Trump felt it necessary to warn at the beginning of February that higher tariffs may bring "pain" to the US population, he is clearly fearful of the rise in tariffs leading to higher prices. This is especially given that a main plank of his recent election campaign was attacking the inflation under Joe Biden's presidency.

The announcements of higher tariffs are an opening play in negotiations and Trump may secure some concessions. But this is not certain in all cases and, even if this happens, they can still have a negative economic impact. However, if serious tariff increases go ahead, the possibility of a trade war looms. This will deepen the bitterness over how Trump has shut out the European powers, as well as Ukraine, from the initial discussion of a truce in Ukraine.

Capitalism's wars

The world is seeing the destructive nature of capitalist competition and rivalry in all spheres. Capitalist ideologies speak of capitalism's "creative destruction", ignoring the unnecessary pain and suffering this will bring. This inevitably happens in times of capitalist crisis and wars,

but now it is also the result of the political decisions in Washington. Trump's abrupt closure of USAID means that, in Nigeria alone, around 28,000 health workers are no longer being paid, and the continuation of treatment for 20 million HIV sufferers is threatened.

Workers resist Trump

Already in the US there is the beginning of resistance by public sector workers to the wave of job cuts being brutally imposed by the Elon Musk-led DOGE team. This will build when it becomes clear that Trump cannot deliver the 'good jobs with good wages,' he promised. Already excuses are being made as to why US prices are not already starting to come down, as Trump promised would happen if he won the election.

Workers internationally will learn that they need to act in their own interests in the same ruthless way that Trump and his gang operate. Obviously, this would not be in the interests of the elite and profit-making but for the benefit of the vast majority.

The world today is more inter-linked than ever before. The world economy is greatly tied together, and its functioning gives an indication of how it is possible to plan on a global scale. But under capitalism, the competition for profit between rival companies and also between nation states prevents that possibility being fully realised. Millions of people do



Already in the US there is the beginning of resistance by public sector workers to the wave of job cuts being brutally imposed by the Elon Musk-led DOGE team

not even have technologically simple things like clean water or regular electricity.

Trade war

The threat of a trade war is an illustration of the character and limits of capitalism. However, what can be done if the capitalist nations are heading down that road? For socialists, the starting point is that under capitalism neither free trade nor tariffs ultimately benefit working people. Neoliberals favoured breaking down trade barriers to open new areas for exploitation and to strengthen the grip of the large manufacturing, trading, financial and service concerns at the expense of local rivals. Local capitalists often supported tariffs and closed markets to boost their own profits by limiting competition from foreign competitors. While action needs to be taken against the immediate suffering both policies cause, fundamentally the alternative to both capitalist practices can only be found in the socialist alternative. This means the collective ownership and democratic planning of the key worldwide economic sectors, in individual countries to start with, setting an international example for others to follow.

To achieve this fundamental change means building and strengthening workers' and socialist organisations so that a collective resistance can be built, and support won for a socialist transformation.

The fact is that many capitalist societies are beginning to go backwards, with stagnant or falling living standards, and basic needs like health and housing are not being met. A result is tens of millions of people having less hope for the future. This is amid rising tensions internationally and increasing military spending, alongside a worsening of climate conditions and the environment. This combination illustrates the stormy period we have entered. There is no scientific or technical reason why these conditions continue; the reason is the character of capitalism.

Socialist way out

There will be a search for a way out by working-class people and youth everywhere, for answers to the many questions about the future and what can be done, alongside the crucial experience of mass struggles. This can give socialists the opportunity to lay the basis for building a movement that can challenge the ruling classes of the world and make the fundamental socialist changes necessary, so that life can be fully enjoyed.

● Published online at socialistworld.net, 18 February 2025

● The article Trump's tech bros don't want you to read

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Defend UAL students right to protest over Gaza

UAL SOCIALIST STUDENTS STATEMENT

Student Justice for Palestine held a peaceful protest at the University of Arts London (UAL), protesting against our university's compliance in the current genocide of Palestinians. The university has continually ignored and blocked student demands that our tuition fees should not be used to fund war and arms deals.

Management threats

Protesters temporarily occupied a space on Chelsea campus on 17 February to declare that the university chancellor Clive Myrie cannot and will not get away with silencing students and staff. Just two hours after the occupation, students received verbal threats from the management to vacate the premises by 9pm, or face disciplinary action.

The purposeful use of vague terminology of the code of conduct, and heavy police and security presence is part and parcel of the university's intimidation tactics. UAL has a history of abusing its code of conduct to silence its students and staff from

expressing their freedom of speech and right to protest.

After an emergency rally to protest university's intimidation tactics, it was decided that we would end the encampment, as this was in the best interest of international students, who are here on visas, and already facing disciplinary action for peacefully protesting.

Occupation

Student Justice for Palestine has stated that it will continue to hold space on the campus, hosting readings, discussion, and other pro-Palestine events over the next week until its meeting with the university chancellor and other board members.

This is where they will again negotiate student demands on divesting from Lvmh, Lloyds Bank, and L'Oréal, changing its current definition of antisemitism that protects Zionism, and to protect and support its Palestinian students.

UAL Socialist Students stands in solidarity with Student Justice for Palestine. We condemn the university management on their consistent refusal to cut any ties with big

companies who are complicit in the slaughter of Palestinians.

We support the demands that students have put towards our university. And we support our fellow students and staff's right to strike, protest, and occupy as means of getting these demands met.

We should decide

We call for elected committees of students and staff to have democratic control over how our money is being spent. We should all be asking ourselves why do our universities continue to invest and collaborate with arms dealing companies in the first place?

Keir Starmer's Labour government must tax the super-rich, and create a fully funded education system that is of higher quality, and accessible to all students of all backgrounds.

Socialist Students believes that this is all comes to a much larger issue that needs a systemic change - socialist change. We need a new mass workers' party that stands on an anti-war, socialist programme - fighting for free education, decent, affordable housing, and against war and austerity.

UAL student occupation over Gaza

CARMEN LEHER



Northampton Tories evict 'Umbrella Fair' community hub

Following a hasty eviction notice for the Umbrella Fair from their building, Socialist Party members joined protesters outside West Northamptonshire Council. The organisers of the Umbrella Fair explained that they had refurbished the council building when they first gained the contract.

Renovated

Not only had they used mostly reused and recycled materials to develop

the building to be a safe community hub, they offered voluntary roles to the individuals with substance abuse issues who had been squatting in the building.

The Pavilion at Northampton Racecourse had become a much-loved part of the community thanks to the hardworking volunteers from the Umbrella Fair. They now face eviction in just two months.

Curtns

The response from the community has been of outrage, with a slew of comments condemning the Tory council, who advertised the building as a new Delapre Abbey-style project. Essentially a hub for those with money, rather than for important

community work. One of the speakers at the protest said prospective buyers had already been round to measure for new curtains!

New home

The Umbrella Fair is fighting for more time to find a new home. But they shouldn't have to move!

It shows the need for action to oppose all cuts, and for anti-cuts candidates to stand in this year's local elections in West Northants, because services like the Umbrella Fair will continue to be forced out of action by a Tory council interested in money from potential businesses, rather than community services.

KATIE SIMPSON

NORTHAMPTON SOCIALIST PARTY



Solace, Tower Hamlets

Our fight to save domestic violence service will continue

PIPPA EVANS

TOWER HAMLETS SOCIALIST PARTY

Solace workers held a vigil outside to remember and stand in solidarity with victims of domestic violence. The vigil outside Tower Hamlets Town Hall on 19 February emphasised the importance of the work that the Solace workers do in the borough, which has the second highest rate of domestic violence in London.

Strike

The workers voted overwhelmingly for strike action - 100% in favour, on a 92% turnout - after the Solace charity threatened to make a third of the workers redundant. The indefinite strike was due to start on 14 February, but this has been temporarily paused to allow for negotiations.

Workers from Solace - members of the United Voices of the World (UVW) union - led the vigil, and members from other unions and domestic violence services spoke in solidarity with their historic campaign. The workers rightly see strike action and the campaign as key to protecting their

vital service, ensuring that survivors are able to access lifesaving support when needed.

Tower Hamlets Council is run by the independent Aspire party. It was elected because local people were sick of Labour and Tory austerity, and has introduced popular policies, like extending free school meals.

Council must step in now

The workers are demanding that the council acts now to protect the jobs, allowing them to continue providing support to survivors. And this is more than properly funding domestic-violence services. The council must also build safe and affordable council homes, so that those fleeing violence have somewhere to go, and must fight against all cuts to other services that provide protection and support.

The Socialist Party says that Tower Hamlets Council needs to help build a mass movement of trade unions and community groups to fight for the funding from the government to stop cuts to all services, which survivors in Tower Hamlets desperately need.

Protesting to stop Umbrella Fair eviction

BEA GARDNER



Labour works with private developers to wreck Southwark



The Socialist Party is campaigning for genuinely affordable housing for working-class people. BERKAY KARTAV

JAY COWARD

SOUTH EAST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

Housing in London is notoriously crooked, morbid, and exclusionary. This includes historically working-class, culture-rich areas like Brixton, Lewisham, and Peckham.

South East London Socialist Party has launched a new campaign. We are building for a people's budget in Southwark - an opportunity for the local community to decide how money is spent on in our area, to reverse cuts to services, and to make genuinely affordable housing a given, rather than a luxury.

Promises

To fight for this, we are opposing the plans by private housing firm Berkeley Homes. The company has been given consent and contract by the Labour government to develop housing in the Aylesham area of Peckham, promising to include 'affordable' social housing.

But Berkeley plans to build 877 homes, with only 12% 'affordable'. So-called affordable homes are 80% of market rent, so these are often actually unaffordable for many people.

4,000 families

If this wasn't bad enough, in Peckham there are 4,000 families on the waiting list for social housing, and Berkeley Homes has already lowered their promised number of affordable homes from 270 to just 77.

There will be 13 new high-rise tower blocks, in a historically low-rise area. This would block Peckham's skyline completely, destroy its character, displace current tenants and businesses, with no plans for relocation for them, and make Peckham High Street a wind tunnel, due to the location and height of the buildings.

But how do we fight these conditions? Well, many already are.

Housing repair workers - employed by Southwark Labour council - are

fighting the good fight for better treatment for their vital work. And local group Aylesham Community Action is raising consciousness about Berkeley's plans, and organising demonstrations against it.

How long until it happens again?

If Labour and the property developers get away with this, how long until it happens again? We cannot wait for another private housing plan to demolish another working-class area.

We need to obliterate the conditions that make this possible. Instead of the existing spineless and money-hungry Labour government, we need a new mass workers' party - comprised of activists, workers, trade unionists, and local tenants, fighting people's budgets, mass council housing building, and rent control.

The working class must be organised when situations like this arise to prevent and reverse them.

Why I joined the Socialist Party - We're struggling, but together we can fight back

As a transgender woman, I watched as Keir Starmer said that Gender Recognition Certificates would be 'useless' under his administration, days before receiving one myself.

Desperation is the word I'd use to characterise my choice in the last election. I found myself voting for the Green Party, even if the politics of the party as a whole left me less than happy.

Why is that?

Struggle is a word we see a lot in the modern world. People are struggling with the cost of living, their mental and physical health.

Unfortunately, this language is largely pacifying. But in a socialist context, struggle is used as an act of class action, solidarity, even strength.



Desdemona (centro) campaigning with the Socialist Party. SCOTT HUNTER

To say that restructuring my understanding of struggle as a word has helped me massively, would be an understatement.

I am struggling uphill, regardless of class or politics. At least as a Socialist Party member, the struggle takes form, and gains greater meaning.

I fight for my own preservation and

that of my kin. But I will also fight tooth and nail for all of us to be free from the shackles of capitalism.

I thank you all for the struggle already hard fought, and I thank you in advance for the further struggle. The working class will be victorious.

DESDMONA STOTT

SWINDON SOCIALIST PARTY

Cardiff campaigning helps fund socialist fightback

CATHERINE PEACE

CARDIFF CENTRAL SOCIALIST PARTY

We have had a lot of success raising funds for the Socialist Party in the last few months. We have held three street stalls a week, using petitions to engage the public.

We have been campaigning on Gaza, student finance, and winter fuel allowance. Different parts of Cardiff Central cover different student and working-class areas.

The decision by Cardiff University to cut so many jobs and close course, such as nursing, music, languages, and many others, has resonated with local people, who are outraged and devastated.

Can you donate?

We think carefully about where to place our campaign stalls, and which signs to use to attract people, to individually ask them to sign our well-thought-out petitions, and tell them about our campaigns. Everyone who we discuss with is asked to donate to our campaigns.

We have a variety of campaign material available on the stall - leaflets, Socialist papers, details of meetings,



Socialist Party and Socialist Students campaigning against Cardiff uni job cuts. DAVE REID

with QR codes. We always have card readers, as well as donation tins.

We also get vital information from talking with people on stalls, which we can pass on to others through this Socialist paper, and through the next person we meet on the stall. So get on a Socialist Party stall, and help with the fightback!

Help fund the fightback

DONATE
socialistparty.org.uk/donate

SOCIALIST PARTY FIGHTING FUND

AREA	£ RECEIVED	£ TARGET	Q1: JANUARY-MARCH 2025	DEADLINE: 31 MARCH 2025
Northern	696	800		87%
Southern & SE	1,758	2,400		73%
South West	1,510	2,100		72%
North West	554	1,200		46%
Wales	1,078	2,400		45%
London	1,418	5,000		28%
Yorkshire	697	2,650		26%
Eastern	305	1,300		23%
West Midlands	596	2,700		22%
East Midlands	345	2,050		17%
Other	635	2,400		26%
TOTAL	9,593	25,000		38%

Worcestershire - stop Labour and Tory plans to attack democracy and make cuts

MARK DAVIES

WORCESTER SOCIALIST PARTY

Worcester Socialist Party joined other members of the public at a Worcester City Council meeting discussing the 'devolution' proposals put forward by Keir Starmer's Labour government.

Worcester City Council, along with other district councils in Worcestershire, disagrees with the County Council's proposal for just one county-wide authority. One county-wide authority would only give the council greater chance to keep control and where any devolved powers would be remote to local residents.

Worcestershire County Council is run by the Tories. It unsuccessfully

tried to cancel this year's elections - an opportunity for local residents to use the ballot box to express their response to the council's continued failings and cuts.

While Labour, Green, Liberal Democrat, and independent councillors in Worcester are opposed to Labour and Tory anti-democratic plans, they made little mention of delivering services that would actually meet the needs of the local population, and no mention of the insecurity now faced by council workers.

Socialist Party members will now take the opportunity of the forthcoming county council election to stand Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) candidates, and energetically put out the message that any changes should be made democratically by people locally, and lead to more funding and representation, not less.

Do you agree?

JOIN THE SOCIALISTS
socialistparty.org.uk/join



Review: Bob Dylan biopic 'A Complete Unknown' - Stalinism's role



DAVE GORTON
CHESTERFIELD SOCIALIST PARTY

A Complete Unknown, the Bob Dylan biopic, has received three Oscar nominations for acting roles. To me, the best portrayals were the music industry's businessmen who come across, correctly, as leeches. Dan Fogler - as Albert Grossman - certainly makes Dylan's manager live up to his surname! (Grossman took 50% of Dylan's song publishing rights).

1960s US was turbulent. There are newflashes, for instance, of the assassinations of President Kennedy and Martin Luther King used as devices but the film insufficiently highlights the struggles that came to the fore. For example, Dylan played at the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom where King delivered his 'I have a dream' speech.

The artistic world reflected the views of millions of Americans against racism, war and imperialism. But to understand fully their importance, later generations need more than just passing references to such events.

The film's central theme of Dylan 'going electric' omits much. We see Pete Seeger pleading with Dylan at the 1965 Newport Folk Festival to only play acoustic because the festival was 'ours'.

Trapped

Like many artists, Dylan was influenced by the battles of the period and wrote songs opposing inequality and tyranny, but he never claimed to be protest music's central figure. In the mid-sixties he was becoming increasingly frustrated feeling himself becoming trapped in one style - a poet rather than a musician.

It's a very short clip but Dylan walking into a bar where Bobby Neuwirth and band are playing The Wild Rover to a crowd enthusiastically joining in, speaks volumes. Music was to be enjoyed, not just an incidental accompaniment to a lyrical 'message'.

In fact Seeger's 'ours' really meant belonging to the Stalinist Communist Party and hangers-on. They were responsible for organised campaigns of interruptions on tours as they sought to protect the 'authenticity' of 'their' music.

Thirty years previously in the Soviet Union, Shostakovich's opera Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk was termed 'muddle instead of music' by the Stalinist state. The Russian Revolution, through isolation and Stalin's bureaucratisation, had deteriorated so that instead of freeing art from the confines of capitalism, the Stalinist bureaucracy simply announced what the people wanted and threatened artists with ostracisation or worse.

In the 1950s and 60s, a huge explosion of Black 'free jazz' in the US sprung up, directly influenced by not only the civil rights movement but also colonial revolutions in Africa. This radicalisation swept up the largest figures. John Coltrane alone released albums titled Africa, Dakar and Tanganyika Strut.

In protest against the Vietnam War later, already established Black soul

artists released highly political material, not just against the war but slavery and continuing injustice - 'The Staple Singers' When Will We Be Paid (For The Work We've Done) and the Chi-Lites' Give More Power To The People.

Socialist realism

It is entirely false to portray music's part in this radicalisation as solely stemming from mostly white folk musicians, as the Stalinists were trying to have the world believe, ironically relegating Black music in the process. It is, in fact, the embodiment of what had become known as socialist realism which virtually banished artistic exploration and, in effect, defined art as only being useful as propaganda.

Go and see the film. Its omissions don't detract from its entertainment value. Towards the end is a scene where session musician Al Kooper, told he can't play guitar, simply sits at the Hammond organ and produces those electrifying opening bars of Like A Rolling Stone. It signifies the release of Dylan from his trap. It is meant to be uplifting. It is. Then continue your own exploration of the music that arose from the period's struggles.



Welsh NHS critical

Former nurse writes to Labour MP over treatment of mother

MARK EVANS
SWANSEA AND WEST WALES SOCIALIST PARTY

My family's recent experience of the NHS was an example of what most people know - the NHS in Wales is on the critical list.

My wife's mother suffered a fall and, after waiting for five-and-a-half hours for an ambulance, then spent over five days on a trolley in A&E with no privacy or call bell. She did not have an appropriate pressure relieving mattress, increasing the risks of pressure sores. She was unable to get the attention of staff and no one offered to take her to the toilet, which she could not do on her own. As a result, she twice wet herself and was left in this condition for a considerable period of time.

Grossly underfunded for many years and understaffed, in large part due to insufficient pay levels, the NHS in Wales cannot meet the needs of its population. This is despite over 25 years of a Labour government in the Senedd. Most people in Wales would have been astounded by Mark Drakeford's (ex-first minister and

before that health minister) remarks on a podcast that he thought there were 'too many hospitals and too many beds' in Wales!

Everyone's experience of the NHS would contradict these claims. The point that Mark Drakeford was clumsily trying to make was that more money should be spent on primary care. We assume to prevent hospital admissions but the whole of the NHS is underfunded and putting more of the inadequate funding into primary care at the expense of hospital funding is not a solution.

The Welsh Labour government has tried to close hospitals before and has had to abandon these plans as working-class people rose up in opposition. The Welsh Labour government has been complicit in the deterioration of the NHS in Wales through passing on central government underfunding.

Rather than trying to make a silk purse out of sow's ear by claiming that the extra funding they received from the Labour government in Westminster, while welcome, was a game changer when the amount the

NHS receives in Wales will have the effect of dropping a pebble in the sea. They should be demanding and campaigning for Starmer's Labour to fully fund the NHS, and other public services, in Wales.

Our family's recent experience is a graphic example of how an underfunded NHS cannot meet the needs of those that use it and can't do without it.

My wife, a nurse who worked in the NHS in Morriston Hospital, Swansea, for 30 years - 25 of these years under a Labour government in the Senedd - wrote to our local Labour MP for Gower Tonia Antoniazzi about the poor treatment her mother received in Morriston Hospital, calling on her to call for the Labour government to fully fund the NHS.

Frankly, we are not going to hold our breath. The health unions, including Unison, need to demand a fully funded NHS and if Labour refuses to do this then the trade union leaders should draw the conclusion that they need to build a new mass workers' party that fights for a fully funded NHS and other socialist policies.

Dental records

When I was a child, all my elderly relatives had false teeth. My parents' generation did not. Why? Because of the NHS.

My grandparents were born before World War One and grew into adulthood before there was an NHS. In poor working-class families, they had no dental care and had terrible teeth. I remember stories from my granddad about pulling out his own teeth. Then in 1948, the NHS was founded and they all got false teeth. It's one of my strongest childhood memories, visiting my Nan and seeing her beaming at me with gleaming teeth every time she got a new set.

My parents' generation were also born before the NHS but grew up into it, and during their teenage

years and most of their adult lives they had access to dental care. And while that didn't eradicate problems completely - mass production of sugar-based and processed food also grew in that time - they never needed false teeth.

Now, neither myself nor my grown-up children are registered with NHS dentists. What will that mean for the future? Are we going back to the generation before my grandparents, whose rotten teeth remained with them all their lives?

What has happened to dentistry is, to my mind, one of the starkest examples of the difference a public service can make, as opposed to privatisation.

PAULA MITCHELL

MAY DAY GREETINGS 2025

Celebrate international workers' day. Send the Socialist solidarity greetings

For prices visit socialistparty.org.uk/mayday
20% discount deadline 2 April 2025

US egg prices boil as avian flu cracks capitalist food production

JUNE ANGUS
WEST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

In the US, the price of eggs has become a symbolic marker of inflation and the increased cost of living. In January 2025, the national average price of a dozen eggs reached \$4.95 (£3.93), a 65% increase since 2024. In some states, like California, a dozen eggs costs as much as \$13.49 (£10.71).

While inflation has caused prices of many groceries and household goods to skyrocket, the increasing price of eggs has also been accelerated by an outbreak of H5N1 (a strain of avian flu) that has been spreading across North American farms since March 2024. Millions of chickens have been culled, 15% of egg-laying chickens have been culled in the last four months. The decrease in total laying chickens is driving prices up. The disease, the spread of which has been exacerbated by unsafe intensive farming methods, has also begun spreading into the human population.

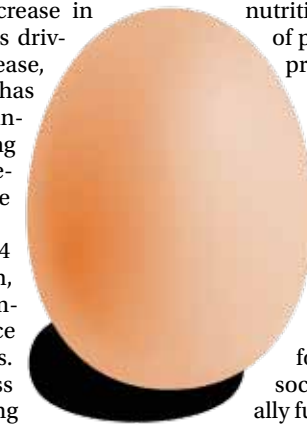
During the 2024 presidential election, Donald Trump promised to reduce the price of goods such as eggs. Many working-class Americans struggling

with the cost of living voted for him based on these promises, but Trump has no interest in helping working-class people, only the interests of himself and the ultra-wealthy in his close circle of supporters.

Despite the spread of H5N1, he has also launched attacks on the sciences: he aims to defund essential research, has withdrawn from the World Health Organisation (WHO), and appointed Robert F. Kennedy Jr. - a leading anti-vaccine activist and conspiracy theorist - as Secretary of Health. This could be catastrophic for both agriculture and health and will remind many of the tragic mis-handling of the Covid-19 pandemic. Trump's tariffs, particularly on Mexican agricultural products, will also likely drive further price hikes.

The solution to these problems, both pricing and public health, is to bring big agriculture and food production businesses under the democratic control of the working class. Instead of pitting health and nutrition against the interests of profit, agriculture should provide the food that people need. Increased safety measures and publicly funded research could prevent future outbreaks of diseases like H5N1.

Under capitalism, our very essentials like food will always be at the mercy of the drive for profits; it's time for a socialist system that actually fulfils our needs.



Taxi talk: Care workers being stitched up by Starmer?

Health and social care is already one of the most underpaid careers in the country. It's clear that carers in workplaces up and down the country are being underpaid and overworked, which is matched with a high staff turnover.

Speaking with a carer in Knowsley shone a light on exactly where the wage rises of the past 20 years have been.

This carer doesn't want to be named as is the precarious nature of the profession.

He gets in my taxi and I ask if he was starting or finishing, he explains how he's starting but he's had to go back to work because he couldn't afford to be off with the serious condition he's been struck with, as statutory sick pay won't be able to pay the bills, and the multi-million pound company doesn't pay sick leave.

I ask if he's in the union, he says yes. I ask if he thinks the Labour government will solve the wide-ranging problem with underpaid care workers in the country, he thinks not.

"Starmer went to some care homes explaining how they are underpaid and he'll give them a rise to £15 an hour, which is still not enough in a skilled profession. But he's got in now and he's done nothing".

He told me that the company he works for has hundreds of homes up and down the country and that they can make up to £5,000-£10,000 a week, per resident. This equates to millions of pounds a year, a large

chunk paid by the government, in an industry where staff are overwhelmingly underpaid for long, hard hours supporting, medicating and caring for people with severe and complex health conditions.

This is the same situation up and down the country. This level of in-work poverty is the breeding ground for many people coming to the conclusion that there isn't enough to go around and far-right ideas creep into the minds of workers with constant media coverage of migrants in boats.

However, the reality is that there is enough to go around, and the hoarding of subsidies and government funds by big business is exactly where the wage rises for workers in many industries are hidden.

NEILL DUNNE
KNOWSLEY



Fareham bus strikers say no to latest offer

NICK CHAFFEY
SOUTHERN AND SOUTH EAST SOCIALIST PARTY

First Bus Solent Unite strikers have been told that their pay dispute is over after being given a 4.8% pay award and told they should return to work. That was the local news on Friday 21 February. The following morning, the picket line was solid as over 140 strikers sent a message loud and clear: "Our strike continues!" Strikers who began their action in November are clearly more determined than ever.

Fareham is part of the area covered by the Hampshire devolution application, welcomed by local MPs and council leaders who include the development of the transport network as a key justification. Yet so far none have given support to the dispute. This is despite the fact that First Solent receives public subsidies for a service that is currently all but non-existent. Serious questions need to be answered. Not only is First Solent taking public money and failing to deliver a service, but management

is offering a £50 daily bonus to any driver willing to break the strike. So public money is being used to try and break the strike, and break the union to boost profits for the company.

The behaviour of First Solent management and the silence of local councillors and MPs show that privatisation has nothing to do with providing public services, serving local communities and respecting the commitment of their drivers. Elections have been cancelled in Hampshire for this May, while this strike continues and local councils carry out a new round to cuts to jobs and services.

Socialist Party members give our full support to Fareham bus strikers and pledge we will carry the call for fully funded public transport into our election campaigns for next year's postponed elections. Public transport, run under democratic control by elected committees of drivers and service users, is what can deliver a genuine public service delivered by well-paid and respected workers.



Fareham picket line 22 February PHOTO: NICK CHAFFEY



WHAT WE STAND FOR

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

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

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

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

WORK, PENSIONS AND BENEFITS

- A 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.

- For local councillors who are committed to opposing austerity and all cuts to local services, jobs, pay and conditions.
- For a socialist NHS to provide for everyone's health needs, including dental and eye care – free at the point of use and under democratic control. Kick out the private companies! Nationalise the pharmaceutical industry under democratic workers' control and management.

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

- Free, publicly funded and democratically run, good-quality education, available to all at any age.

- Abolish university tuition fees and write off student debt, end marketisation, and introduce a living grant. No to academisation. For all schools to be under the genuine democratic control of local education authorities, school staff, parents and student organisations.

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

ENVIRONMENT

- Prioritising major research and investment into replacing fossil fuels and nuclear power with renewable energy, and ending the problems of early obsolescence – where products are designed to 'wear out' and be replaced - and unrecycled waste.

- Nationalisation of the energy companies, under democratic workers' control and management, with compensation paid only on the basis of proven need, in order to carry out a major switch to clean, green energy, without any loss of jobs, pay or conditions.

- A democratically planned, massively expanded, free to use, publicly owned transport system, as part of an overall plan against environmental pollution.

- For a major, publicly funded, insulation and energy transition plan for existing housing stock.

- Agribusiness to be taken into democratic public ownership. For a food processing and retail industry under workers' control to ensure that standards

are set by consumers, small farmers, and all workers involved in the production, processing, distribution and retail of food.

DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS

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

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

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

- For the right to asylum – with democratic community control and oversight of emergency funding resources. No to racist immigration laws.
- Expand democracy. For the abolition of the monarchy and the House of Lords. For all MPs to be subject to the right of recall by their constituents at any time, and to only receive a worker's wage. For proportional representation and the right to vote at 16.

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

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

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

SOCIALISM AND INTERNATIONALISM

- No to imperialist wars and occupations!
- Take the wealth off the super-rich! For a socialist government to take into public ownership the top 150 companies and the banking system that dominate the British economy, and run them under democratic working-class control and management. Compensation to be paid only on the basis of proven need, not to the fat cats.

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

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Do you agree? Join the fightback!

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Turkey crackdown on opposition End attacks on democratic rights



Socialist Party members join the protest outside the Turkish embassy in London on 20 February PHOTO: BERKAY KARTAV

BERKAY KARTAV
LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

Turkish President Recep Erdogan's regime has stepped up its crackdown on all opposition activists, targeting trade unionists, socialists, journalists, and Kurdish activists. Between 14 and 18 February, over 282 people have been arrested.

This includes the chair of the BIRTEK-SEN textile workers' trade union, Mehmet Turkmén. His 'crime' was to support workers' action against low pay and bad working conditions. There is an undemocratic ban against demonstrations in Gaziantep.

Other arrests were aimed at left organisations, such as the Labour Party (EMEP), and the Socialist Party of the Oppressed (ESP), as well as the pro-Kurdish DEM party.

This follows a series of arrests and removal of democratically-elected mayors across Turkey, a nationwide crackdown by Erdogan's regime, allegedly accusing them of having links to the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), a banned organisation.

The mayor of Van was removed from office. When Erdogan's government tried to annul the last local election results for Van in 2024, the government was forced into a U-turn after citywide protests.

Charges against the mayor of Istanbul – Ekrem Imamoglu, a member of the opposition CHP – could lead to four years prison time, and a political ban. He is a likely contender in the next presidential election.

However, these attacks on democratic rights come not from a position of strength, but weakness. The austerity programme implemented by the government, with brutal cuts to public spending, has hit home and added to the growing unpopularity of Erdogan.

The meagre increase to national minimum wages at the beginning of the new year, while the super-rich rake in billions, have shown whose side Erdogan is really on. Certainly, not on the side of workers.

Erdogan is trying to use intimidation against all opponents in desperation to stave off any potential future unrest. His government has no answer for the cost-of-living crisis.

It is dreading the consequences of facing any mass movement similar to the Gezi Park protests in 2013. A new mass movement can shake the core foundations of Erdogan's regime and capitalism itself, if the working class puts itself at the helm of the movement.

There is an urgent need for all trade unions, socialists, and campaigners to make preparations and build a united front of workers' and socialist organisations. A movement like that could bring people together to challenge Erdogan's attacks on democratic rights, and the regime worsening the cost of living.

A united front of workers could offer a socialist way out – fighting to take the banks and other giant companies that dominate the economy, like textile and steel, into the democratic control of the working class, planning society in our interests.

- *Solidarity messages can be sent to birlesiktektilsendikast@gmail.com, and tag [@birlesiktektstil](https://twitter.com/birlesiktektstil) in social media posts*

- *Letters of protest can be sent to the Turkish ambassador in Britain embassy.london@mfa.gov.tr*



The Committee for a Workers' International (CWI) is the international socialist organisation which the Socialist Party is affiliated to. The CWI is organised in many countries. We work to unite the working class and oppressed peoples against capitalism, and to fight for a socialist world.

MALCOLM X



A legacy of struggle for Black liberation

MILA HUGHES
COVENTRY SOCIALIST PARTY

On 21 February 1965, Malcolm X was assassinated. Sixty years later, the lessons of his life remain just as relevant. He was one of the most radical and uncompromising fighters for Black liberation. His assassination was not just an attack on him as an individual but on the ideas he was increasingly an advocate for – a mass movement uniting Black liberation with working-class struggle. As socialists, we don't just remember Malcolm X as a historical figure, his life and struggles have important lessons for our ongoing fight against racism and all oppression, and the capitalist system which breeds it.

Malcolm's life was shaped by his conditions, facing consistent racism and poverty. He was born in 1925 into a working-class Black family that suffered directly from white supremacist violence. His father, an organiser as part of Marcus Garvey's 'Back to Africa' movement, was likely murdered by the white-supremacist Ku Klux Klan or one of its offshoots. Malcolm himself was pushed through the racist 'justice' system, landing in prison by his early twenties. Like so many young Black men then and now, he was criminalised by the racist capitalist system working to keep Black workers and youth down.

“You can't have capitalism without racism.”
- Malcolm X

Nation of Islam

It was in prison that Malcolm developed his political consciousness, joining the Nation of Islam. The Nation's Black nationalist message struck a chord with thousands of Black workers and youth who had seen firsthand the reality of racism and white supremacy. But the Nation, for all its fiery rhetoric, didn't offer a real path to liberation. It preached religious doctrine and racial separatism rather than fighting for working-class unity and revolution.

As Malcolm X became one of the Nation's most well-known figures, he also began to come up against its limits. His involvement with the Nation coincided with the developing civil rights movement which, although its leadership also had its own limitations, was beginning to mobilise hundreds of thousands in struggle against racist segregation. The Nation's leadership however, derided the movement, even banning its members from attending the 1963 March on Washington. Malcolm and hundreds of other members defied, attending the march while raising criticisms of its leaders. He eventually broke with the Nation of Islam in 1964.

Malcolm was beginning to understand that racism wasn't just about individual prejudice – it was built into the system. He started to understand that capitalism itself depended on racism to divide

the working class and exploit Black workers even more brutally than their white counterparts.

Dangerous ideas

Malcolm X was becoming increasingly dangerous to the ruling class. During his international travels he met revolutionary leaders involved in anticolonial struggles in Africa and the Middle East. He was beginning to see that the fight against racism in the US was part of a global struggle against imperialism and capitalism, and began pushing for a mass movement that could connect Black liberation with a broader fight against the system.

If Malcolm had lived longer, there's a real possibility that he would have become a socialist. He was moving in that direction, recognising that the only way to truly defeat racism was to overthrow capitalism.

State repression

The US government saw this shift and acted accordingly. The FBI's 'Cointelpro' program worked to infiltrate and destroy radical Black organisations, including Malcolm's, using informants, spreading lies and division. It is still not clear exactly who fired the shots that killed Malcolm X, but there is a lot of evidence that points to his murderers acting on the orders of the Nation of Islam's leaders, including with the likely involvement of state operatives. The ruling class has always

feared Black leaders who could inspire workers to rise up – not just Malcolm, but Martin Luther King Jr. Fred Hampton, and countless others who were targeted, jailed, or assassinated.

The system that killed Malcolm X is still in place today. Racism, police violence, poverty wages, and mass incarceration continue to define life for millions of Black workers. The ruling class still tries to divide us – by race, nationality, gender – so they can keep paying us less, keeping us down, and making profits off our backs. But we've also seen new waves of struggle: the Black Lives Matter movement, the rise in strikes, and the growing interest in socialism all show that people are fed up with capitalism.

Legacy

Malcolm X's legacy isn't just about resistance – it's about learning the lessons to win.

First, that capitalism and racism go hand in hand. As Malcolm famously said: "You can't have capitalism without racism." Capitalism thrives by dividing workers and superexploiting Black labour, paying lower wages, denying opportunities, and using racism to justify mass incarceration and police violence. The ruling class uses racism to keep workers fighting each other instead of uniting against our real enemy: the billionaires and politicians who profit from exploitation.

Second, to bring an end to the racist capitalist system, protests alone are not enough – we have to build a movement that can challenge the system at its core. For that we need real revolutionary organisation.

Third, we need internationalism and working-class unity. Malcolm saw that Black workers' struggle was part of a global fight. Today, we need to connect our struggle with workers everywhere – whether they're fighting against police violence in the US, against dictatorships in Africa, or against corporate exploitation in Latin America and Asia.

In the struggle we have to understand that the capitalist state apparatus, which exists to defend the interests of the exploiting capitalist class, will do everything it can to stop us. The ruling class has a long history of repression, and we need strong, democratic, and militant organisations to withstand those attacks.

Malcolm X was killed because he was fighting for revolutionary ideas. His life and experience in struggle saw him develop an understanding of racism as a systemic issue, baked into the capitalist system. Increasingly he was arguing for a mass struggle of Black workers for liberation, alongside the struggles of white workers.

We honour his legacy not just by remembering his words but by continuing his struggle. The best way to do that is to fight for a socialist movement that unites all workers – Black, white, Latino, Asian, immigrant, and native-born – against the system that exploits and divides us.

Malcolm X once said, "If you're not ready to die for it, put the word 'freedom' out of your vocabulary." The ruling class feared his words because they knew he was serious about revolution. Today, we have to be equally committed to the struggle.

If you want to be part of that fight for Black liberation and socialism, join us.

- [Read more about Malcolm X's life and struggle – 'Where was Malcolm X going?' at socialismtoday.org](http://socialismtoday.org)

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formerly **Militant**

Prices Profits Bankers' bonuses

UP

FIGHT BACK

Take the wealth off the super-rich

For most people, 2025 promises to be another year of uncertainty and hardship. We can expect council tax rises across the country in April, while councils of all colours continue to carry out cuts. Rent, utilities, transport, food - the list goes on, and all are set to become more expensive. Speaking to workers on Socialist Party campaign stalls, picket lines, and in my workplace, I haven't met a single person who can say their pay will rise this year to meet these price increases.

Who's benefiting from the current state of things? Barclays CEO CS Venkatakrishnan has

more than doubled his pay to £10.5 million this year, as Barclays overall reported pre-tax profits of £8.1 billion. One Barclays banker even took home £14 million - more than the CEO!

Meanwhile, the Chief Executive of HSBC Georges Elhedery has the chance to earn up to £15 million this year. This is linked with proposals to delay the bank's climate targets by 20 years. HSBC now says it plans to hit 'net zero' in 2050, instead of 2030, citing that they have "seen more challenges" than expected.

If any of us so dramatically fell short in our own jobs - pushing back a deadline decades

- we would expect the sack instead of a pay rise! Yet, for the bankers of the world, these failures have no negative impact. This is because the likes of Venkatakrishnan and Elhedery have done their real jobs: increasing the profits of the bank and the wealth of their shareholders.

Wealth doesn't just come out of thin air - it's created by our hard work. Why should it go into the pockets of bankers who just move money around? Or the bosses who put their feet up while we do the hard graft? The banks, energy and water companies, and all the private profiteers should be nationalised under democratic workers' control so that we can

put their wealth and resources to work for us rather than the few at the top.

The wealth is there to provide fully funded public services, pay rises and quality social housing for all. If we planned society utilising the resources and scientific discoveries to democratically cooperate with workers across the world, a decent standard of living could be provided to all without destroying the environment. If you want to join us in the fight for a better world, join the Socialist Party today.

SCOTT HUNTER
SWINDON SOCIALIST PARTY

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



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