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WE CAN'T TRUST ANY OF THEM!

WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM, GAGE SKIDMORE, UK PARLIAMENT, PRESIDENT OF UKRAINE/CC

We need our own political voice
Build a new mass workers' party
Fight for socialist change

**Socialist
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CAPITALISM'S BRUTAL REALITY...



WHITE HOUSE/PUBLIC DOMAIN

Socialist Party WHAT WE THINK

Under Donald Trump's brutish 'America First' presidency, US imperialism's ruthless determination to defend its own interests is no longer disguised by diplomatic fig leaves. Instead, naked self-interest is the order of the day. That was demonstrated to the world at the jaw-dropping Oval Office press conference where Trump and vice-president JD Vance gave Ukrainian president Zelensky a verbal battering. Summoned to Washington, Zelensky was there to sign over to the US – with his arm twisted up his back – a large part of Ukraine's mineral rights. But domestic pressure meant Zelensky could not do so without publicly pleading for security 'guarantees' from Trump. As a result, he was given a metaphorical kicking in front of the world's media.

Trump's presidency is launching an onslaught on the crumbling 'rules-based' order, through which the US previously dominated the globe. Still the strongest power on the planet, US imperialism has nonetheless been in relative decline over a long period, as a consequence of China's rise in particular. It is therefore no longer as able to set the framework for the world. The resulting growing global 'multipolarity' predates Trump, but his presidency is acting to dramatically accelerate the process as he blatantly defends what he sees as the best interests of the US billionaires against all comers, whether an 'ally' or not.

Of course, US imperialism has always acted in its own interests,

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US imperialism has always acted in its own interests, including in its previous arming of Ukraine, where it saw an opportunity to test and undermine Russia's military strength

including in its previous arming of Ukraine, where it saw an opportunity to test and undermine Russia's military strength. Superficially, president Joe Biden appeared to successfully unite the members of NATO behind this approach, particularly after the Russian invasion in 2022, but they were always going to fall out when it came to deciding when the war's goals had been achieved, and in drawing up the cost balance sheet. It is clear that if Kamala Harris had won the presidency, she too would have soon decided that, regardless of the views of other NATO members, US imperialism's aim – which was never the national liberation of the Ukrainian peoples but rather the weakening of the Russian armed forces – had been largely reached and the time had come to negotiate. Trump's approach is nonetheless far cruder and more public. No one can doubt that we are in a new world of capitalist disorder.

Starmer fawns

But while the world is in turmoil, some things have not changed a jot. The day before Zelensky's visit, the UK prime minister Sir Keir Starmer came to pay homage to the new 'king'. His nauseating fawning over Trump was nothing new. It was typical of British prime ministers over generations. In particular, it was straight out of the playbook of Tony Blair, Starmer's New Labour predecessor.

Blair's prostration before the then Republican US president, George W. Bush, led to the New Labour government sending British troops to take part in the invasion and occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq. An estimated 600,000 Iraqi civilians perished during the occupation, along with nearly 5,000 US and British troops. Far from bringing the stability, prosperity and democracy promised by Bush and Blair, Iraq has since been

riven by civil war, an ISIS insurgency, and social disintegration.

Blair was opposed by the biggest anti-war movement in British history, which almost forced him out of office. And he began with a far stronger social base than Starmer, who was elected by the lowest share of the electorate of any government since 1918. The consequences of Starmer licking Trump's boots – who is not even pretending to offer prosperity and democracy for the world – are likely to be even more disastrous than those faced by New Labour Mark One. For millions of people, the events of the last week have already driven home the conclusion that Starmer's government is fundamentally no different to the Tories. It too defends the interests of Britain's capitalist class at the expense of the rest of us.

Like all supplicants, Starmer arrived at the White House with an offering. Britain's military spending, he promised, already the fifth highest in the world, would be increased further immediately, with foreign aid cut to do so. Even Lord Richard Dannatt, retired head of the British Army, opposed the cut to foreign aid, recognising the value of its 'soft power' in furthering the interests of British imperialism. Two weeks ago, that was also the government's position but as soon as Trump demanded Starmer jump, he only asked how high.

Starmer also gushed about the brutal austerity being planned by Trump in the US. In the days before his visit, the Republican-controlled House of Representatives had agreed a budget framework which, if implemented, would mean \$4.5 trillion in tax cuts for the rich paid for by huge cuts to public spending, including Medicaid – the only means via which millions of Americans can get any health care. How did Starmer respond? By 'joking' about how, while a chainsaw

“”
Trump's crude ripping off of the mask of diplomacy to reveal the horrible reality of capitalism will lead many to draw socialist and therefore internationalist conclusions

wasn't quite his style, New Labour too were cutting "red tape and bureaucracy" and were "open for business". Make no mistake, this was not just measly words to satisfy Trump; Britain's government is also planning a new wave of cuts to public services, on the grounds that there is 'no money' – except of course for weaponry.

Puny Britain no bridge

But while millions of working-class people were disgusted by Starmer's love-in with Trump, the New Labour government was ecstatic with the result – for 24 hours at least! They clutched at Trump's reference to a possible US-UK trade deal, desperately hoping that his fondness for Britain's Royal Family was going to mean Britain would get a speedy deal and escape the US tariffs currently being threatened against a swathe of other countries. This was always a pipe dream. In his first term, Trump promised the then UK prime minister Boris Johnson a trade deal, but nothing came of it. And the fact that vice president Vance is, according to Trump, going to head up the negotiations on such a deal does not bode well! Britain's biggest trading partner is the EU, and its second is the US. There is, for example, no deal Britain could do on food with the US which would not hugely increase difficulties for trade with the EU.

The buoyant mood in Downing Street didn't last, however. The reality of British capitalism's growing and insoluble dilemmas – as a weaker power outside any of the major blocs – was resoundingly brought home by Trump's public row with Zelensky. Starmer claims Britain can be a bridge between Trump and Europe, but that is clearly utterly utopian. True, he hosted a summit of European leaders to try and come up with a 'peace plan' for Ukraine that Trump would accept, but there was not even

...AND OUR TASKS

agreement between the participants on what to put forward, and it is clear that what Trump will or won't accept is going to have nothing to do with the pleading of Britain's government.

Trumpism is both a reflection and an accelerator of the ruling elites worldwide increasingly beating the nationalist drum. While the productive forces have long since outgrown the barriers of the nation state, capitalism has never been able to fully surmount them, even in the age of US-dominated globalisation. Now, however, in a sign of the growing sickness of capitalism worldwide, the nation state has come roaring back as the different national capitalist classes struggle to defend their own interests in a multipolar world.

Workers of the world unite

Trump's crude ripping off of the mask of diplomacy to reveal the horrible reality of capitalism will lead many to draw socialist and therefore internationalist conclusions. From its earliest days, the best traditions of the workers' movement have been built on international solidarity. Karl Marx called for 'workers of the world' to unite if they wanted to lose their chains. In Britain many of today's biggest trade unions came out of the huge strikes of previously unorganised workers at the end of the nineteenth century. But they did not fight alone. For example, the five-week-long London dockers' strike in 1889 was saved from being starved back to work by donations from trade unions on the other side of the world in Australia.

Today, more than in the past, global travel and communication mean that there are strong internationalist instincts among the working class in Britain and other countries. The strength of the movement against the horror in Gaza is one indication of that. But at the same time, of course, capitalist nation states have created deep-rooted national consciousnesses, which the ruling elites are prepared to stoke up whenever it suits them.

Currently, the capitalist classes in EU countries and Britain, realising that they can no longer rely on the military strength of US imperialism to protect their profits and interests, are banging the drum for increased military spending. Horrified by Trump, some on the left have succumbed to this. Writing in the Guardian, for example, George Monbiot declared that he had "reluctantly" drawn the conclusion that the "UK needs to rearm". But what does this mean? Does Monbiot think that Britain's capitalist class has the same interests as the working-class majority? Has he forgotten the army generals who made clear that military tops don't defend the interests of the majority, but the elite, when they indicated they would not obey orders from a democratically elected Jeremy Corbyn-led government?

The current government and its Tory predecessor backed the Israeli government's slaughter of Gazans, regardless of a large majority opposing it doing so. That has not made the world a safer place! Britain may today be a second-rate imperialist power,



WHITE HOUSE/PUBLIC DOMAIN



When Trump visited Britain during his first term, Socialist Party members organised protests and walkouts alongside Socialist Students PAUL MATTSSON

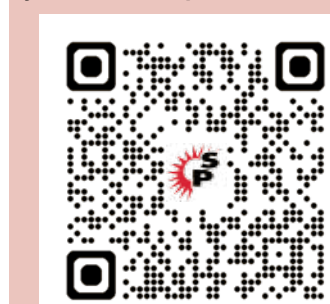


The creation of a mass workers' party armed with a socialist programme – in Britain or any country – would strengthen the confidence of the working class and oppressed worldwide to build parties that struggle for the ending of this rotten capitalist system

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but Britain's capitalist class still plays its part in adding to the danger and violence in the world. Taking part in the occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan not only created a nightmare in those countries, but it massively fuelled the growth of Islamist terrorism in Britain and elsewhere.

Unfortunately, the leaders of a number of unions that organise workers in the defence industry have rushed to welcome the pledged increase in military spending, including Sharon Graham, general secretary of Unite. Under her leadership, Unite has stepped up action in defence of jobs and conditions, and it is absolutely correct for fighting trade unions to defend every member's job, including of workers in the defence industry. This, however, should be done on the basis of arguing for a switch to socially useful production, rather than giving even a hint of support to the capitalist warmongers.

Capitalism today is a system in crisis. Wars and conflicts are on the rise, but rather than banging the drum to arm one capitalist class against another, the workers' movement needs to urgently fight to build its own independent strength. Just six weeks in, the hopes of some US workers that Trump's presidency would bring increased living standards for them are beginning to pall a little, as inflation rises and cuts to social programmes loom. At a certain stage he will face mass opposition from the US working class. Putin too will get his comeuppance from below at some point. And while right now Zelensky has probably had a temporary popularity boost at home, as he

has internationally, for being seen to stand up to Trump, his is also a pro-capitalist government that is intertwined with the oligarchs and has attacked workers' rights.

For the working class in any of these countries, the most important assistance they could see from the working class in Britain would be for us to build a mass movement against Starmer, Badenoch, Farage, and all of the capitalist politicians. Central would be the creation of a workers' party – giving a political voice to the trade unions, independent of all the rotten capitalist elites and fighting for a socialist programme: for power to be taken out of the hands of the major corporations and banks that dominate the economy, so society can be run democratically in the interests of the majority, based on planning and cooperation, instead of capitalism's ruthless pursuit of profit which leads to poverty, environmental destruction, and war.

We should not underestimate the effect that the creation of such a party – in Britain or any country – would have on strengthening the confidence of the working class and oppressed worldwide to build parties that struggle for the ending of this rotten capitalist system.

Possibly the only concrete thing to come out of Starmer's attempt to charm Trump will be his second state visit at some point this year. We will fight to make sure that the scale of opposition to Trump among workers and young people is demonstrated on the streets, for the world's working class and poor to see, as a further impetus to building the mass workers' parties that we need.

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theSocialist

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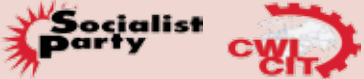
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"The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it."
Karl Marx



Doctors on strike in 2023 PAUL MATTISSON

Killed by cuts and capitalism – healthy life expectancy falls

DAVID ELLIS

BIRMINGHAM SOCIALIST PARTY

The estimated number of years of healthy life someone can expect to live in England has fallen for the fifth year in a row. New figures from the Office for National Statistics indicate that healthy life expectancy has fallen by nine months for men and fourteen months for women compared to before the Covid-19 pandemic. This means that more of us can expect to live more of our life in poor health.

The pandemic and growing waiting lists are expected to have contributed to this fall. However, the fall in healthy life expectancy pre-dates the pandemic, and stopped

improving as early as 2012. Over a decade of austerity since then has resulted in declining living standards and an NHS without the funding needed to manage the pressures of a growing and ageing population.

An unequal fall

The deterioration in health is also not equal across society. Women living in the least deprived areas can expect to live until 70 without significant health issues. Meanwhile, women in the most deprived areas can expect less than 52 years – an 18-year gap!

Infant mortality – which was falling until around ten years ago – has also increased in the period from 2021 to 2023. But again, it's the poorest that

suffer most, with infants in the most deprived areas dying at more than twice the rate of those in the least deprived areas.

While a privileged minority claws up ever larger proportions of the country's wealth, the working class is left to get poorer and sicker. Improving the health of all requires a complete end to the privatisation of the NHS and the resources needed to meet rising demands. It requires a nationalised social care system to care for the most vulnerable in our society and allow them to live in dignity with a high quality of life. But most of all, it requires a socialist democratically planned economy to end poverty and a system of capitalist exploitation.

Doctor exhaustion makes us unsafe

One in three doctors are so tired it affects their ability to treat patients. Years of underfunding, understaffing and underpaying in our health service means our health is at risk. One in four doctors reported a patient had suffered harm or that there was a near miss because of the level of overworking. And it's getting worse, according to a survey by the Medical Defence Union and reported in the Guardian.

Doctors frequently miss breaks, leave work exhausted and come to work at their next shift still tired. Health workers took action during the recent strike wave over pay, cut in real terms over a decade. This low pay and long hours has led to the staffing crisis which leaves doctors too tired to safely treat patients.

We need the funding our NHS and health needs. We need to kick out private profit and the transfusion of cash into the coffers of big business. And, while health secretary Wes Streeting mulls bringing back the controversial and wasteful PFI contracts to fund NHS infrastructure spending, we need a mass workers' party that will fight for the NHS, not private health bosses.

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Trump and Netanyahu PUBLIC DOMAIN

Netanyahu blocks Gaza aid

The end of phase one of the Gaza ceasefire passed on 28 February. With cruel predictability, Benjamin Netanyahu's Israeli government days later imposed an immediate blockade on all aid entering the Strip. An attempt to starve Palestinians and compel Hamas to agree to a process by which all Israeli hostages are released and Israeli forces remain in Gaza. Israeli airstrikes and ground attacks continue to kill Palestinians in both Gaza and the West Bank.

The initial Gaza ceasefire agreement included a move to phase two from the beginning of March, including as part of it the full withdrawal of Israeli forces and a plan for a permanent end to the war. Netanyahu, apparently with US backing, is not prepared to withdraw. His government is no doubt considering how it can try to bring about 'facts on the ground' in line with Trump's goal of expelling Palestinians from Gaza. Egging him on are the far-right in his coalition, who are particularly keen to see Trump's plan realized. But Netanyahu's government is also faced with huge Israeli public pressure to secure the release of remaining hostages.

At the time of writing, it is not clear what the immediate next steps will be. But it includes the possibility of another major Israeli offensive, to

again drive Palestinians out of the north of Gaza, for example.

Anti-war protests and workers' actions here in Britain need to be continued and stepped up – demanding an immediate end to the war, a full withdrawal of the Israeli military from the occupied territories and a massive input of aid and reconstruction. Socialist election candidates standing in May's local elections, as well as urgently raising those demands during their campaigning, can put forward a socialist solution to the conflict:

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

BP axes green investment We need socialist change to end climate change

JACK HUGGINS

ESSEX SOCIALIST PARTY

Oil giant BP has announced plans to slash more than £3.9 billion from its 'green investment plan' and instead invest £7.9 billion a year more to increase oil and gas production.

In an article published by the Financial Times, it was noted that "...investor pressure is the primary trigger for [this] announcement. BP has been forced to recognise that efforts to cut oil and gas exposure and invest in renewables were chasing away cash flow, disappointing shareholders.... There is, then, a harsh, near-term market logic to the decision." BP, like all companies under the capitalist system, makes decisions based on what will make a profit. If there is no promise of immediate profit then there will be no investment, no matter the consequences for the environment. This is the reality of the capitalist system.

When challenged, Louise Kingham, BP's senior vice president for Europe and the UK, scandalously argued that BP's ambition to become a net-zero company had not changed: "We just have to do this transition more smartly and more efficiently and try to get those returns for our owners because they are helping us to do that. If we don't generate the returns, we can't invest and do more."

The announcement comes just weeks after BP announced 8,000 job cuts as part of 'cost-saving' measures, despite making over \$40 billion profits since the start of 2022. Clearly the resources are available, but only if profits can be made.

Ms Kingham went on to tacitly admit that capitalism is incapable of the coordinated action needed to prevent climate collapse when she stated: "It's going to take everybody to move in concert to make this happen. It's not just the decision of one company and what it chooses to do."

Companies compete with each other on the world stage for markets and profits. To take actions that disadvantage itself, or to allow other companies to swoop in and exploit fossil fuel extraction opportunities, would be a death sentence.

Capitalist climate catastrophe

2024 was the hottest year on record, with average global temperatures reaching 1.5°C warmer than pre-industrial times – the limit capitalist politicians set themselves at the 2015 Paris Agreement, "1.5 to stay alive". Even before this cut, BP's actions were not enough. For every £1 BP spent on low-carbon investments it invested £11 in fossil fuels and gave shareholders £9.

So long as the means of producing, distributing, and exchanging the goods and services we all need, are left in private hands, then the profits of a few will always come before the needs of the working class and the environment.



A ship floats in oil after the BP Deepwater Horizon oil spill, the largest marine oil spill in history KRIS KROG/CC

More young people are unemployed: we won't pay for bosses' crisis

JOE WATERS

GLOUCESTERSHIRE SOCIALIST PARTY

The number of unemployed young people reached an eleven-year high at the end of 2024. Almost one million 16 to 24-year-olds, around one in seven, are not in work, education or training. As the economy falters, bosses are talking about making more job cuts this year. And young people will face the brunt of these in hospitality and other sectors.

Young people also have to deal with the high cost of living, driven by corporate greed, and continued attacks on benefit claimants, driven by Labour's commitment to making the working class pay for capitalism's economic crisis.

But it's the economy which has

failed young people, not the other way around. There are endless uses for human creativity and labour. There's no shortage of houses which need building, infrastructure which needs improving, goods which need producing, or vital services which need delivering. There's also no shortage of money to pay for all these things. However it is sitting in the bank accounts of the ultra-wealthy, who are only interested in maximising their profits. Capitalists, lacking faith that their system has the stability needed to guarantee them return on investment, prioritise short-term gains over needed investment.

Starmer's Labour government serves the interests of the capitalist class and won't fight for young

people looking for jobs with decent pay and conditions. All they're willing to offer is a pitiful rise in the minimum wage and training schemes designed to force young people into exploitative working arrangements. Nationalisation of major industries and putting them in the hands of workers ourselves is considered totally off the table.

Capitalism offers young people no decent future. Our entire society runs on the labour of the working class and that is the basis of all the profits which the bosses claim as their own. We need to be able to democratically plan what is done with the wealth we create so we can plan production and create jobs based on what we need, not on what makes a profit for a few.

Donate to the Socialist Party Congress fighting fund appeal

ISAI MARJERLA

SOCIALIST PARTY TREASURER

The Socialist Party meets for its Congress 15-17 March, discussing and debating the explosive events unfolding internationally and in Britain, and agreeing on our tasks to take the struggle for socialism forward.

The news over the last few days and weeks highlights yet again why we can't trust world capitalist leaders with our lives and livelihoods. Their only interests lie in boosting their profits and their nation's power on the global stage.

In Britain, Starmer too is trying to represent the interests of Britain's capitalist class, regardless of what that means for working-class people.

An avalanche of price hikes is already upon us and, come April, we're going to witness further increases: a 6.4% rise in energy bills, alongside other rising costs such as council

tax, water, broadband, phone, TV licence, and car tax.

And yet rather than providing urgent funds for public services and to give a decent pay rise to NHS and workers, Starmer has just increased military spending – marking the largest rise since the Cold War.

Working-class and young people urgently need our own mass party – one which gives a voice to workers in struggle and which is fighting to fully fund services by taking the wealth off the super-rich bosses.

Capitalism offers no way forward. It is a system of crisis, and of exploitation, war and oppression. The Socialist Party is taking part in the struggles unfolding, with the socialist ideas needed to win those struggles and fight for more.

Our party is based on the working class. We rely on financial support from our members and supporters. What can you donate to help build the Socialist Party and strengthen us in the fight for socialist change?



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SCAN:



Schools strike against Labour policies

Stop forced academisation

NICK HART
BIRMINGHAM SOCIALIST PARTY

Teachers at George Dixon Primary School recently broke a National Education Union (NEU) Birmingham record for the most number of strike days taken in a single dispute. NEU members have clocked up their 32nd day of action since November, with more planned in March.

The reason? The looming conversion of the school into an academy.

The union says the strike could have been resolved a long time ago if it wasn't for the Department for Education sitting on a request to revoke the academisation order. Even though the law has changed making it harder to force academisation, Keir Starmer's government is still taking its cues from Tony Blair's Labour administration, which opened the floodgates to the privatisation of schools away from local authority accountability.

Stop performance-related pay

NEU members at three schools in the north-east London borough of Waltham Forest are taking six days of strike action, alongside several other schools in London.

Waltham Forest NEU demands the removal of performance-related pay (PRP), due to it being subjective and discriminatory, and contributing to increased workload.

Following the national strikes in 2023, a 'workload reduction taskforce' was set up by the Department for Education under the Tory government, which recommended the removal of PRP by the 2024-25 academic year. But despite the national NEU praising the new Labour government for "honouring this commitment", the Labour council in Waltham Forest retains PRP in its model pay policy.

A striker at Leytonstone School explained:

"It's possible for headteachers to subjectively decide when someone's pay goes up. If you do your job but you don't document the right things according to some arbitrary targets, you might not get your pay progression. Often schools will try to hold your pay back.

"PRP doesn't measure the quality of education, it measures the exterior appearance to management. Good teaching can't be measured by someone coming into a classroom maybe twice a year and seeing a few things. Teachers could still be accountable for their performance, but through the way the school collaborates and supports them. There's nothing better than experience. We know that good teachers are experienced teachers."

Joint NEU Waltham Forest secretary Mallinee Martin spoke to the Socialist on the Willowfield picket line and explained the wider issues.

"In Waltham Forest we get outer-London pay levels. But we are surrounded by boroughs that get higher inner-London pay. Improving policies and reducing workload is incredibly important for retaining teachers in the borough when there are opportunities so close to receive higher pay and possibly less workload."

"We face all the issues that inner-London schools face. In fact, pressures on kids like crime and other socioeconomic challenges are really high in this borough.

"Parents who attended the picket informed us about communication sent to parents [by the school management]. It is a shame that selectively quoting from the code of practice on picketing was used as an attempt to dissuade parents from attending and being able to get educator perspectives on why they were striking.

"Pay is only one of the issues that NEU members were balloted over. In this school, unacceptable management style was also on the ballot, and I personally believe that the communication to parents has provided insight on this issue."



Birmingham bins NICK HART



George Dixon BIRMINGHAM SOCIALIST PARTY



Leytonstone MARTIN REYNOLDS

Birmingham Labour council sends police in to bin strike

BIRMINGHAM SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBERS

At the end of February, the Birmingham bin strike against attacks on pay and safety stepped up. Frustrated at the council's use of agency staff to undermine the dispute, Unite pickets exercised their right to walk and stand in front of the entrances to the depots.

Managers reacted by calling the police on the strikers, who made it clear that they wouldn't be intimidated. In the end there was a complete shutdown of all three depots, with wagons parked up and agency staff stood down.

At the Perry Barr picket, the police reportedly turned up, wished the workers good luck, and left! However, the next day Unite members returned to find an increased police presence, which the strikers believe was paid for by the Labour-run council!

These provocations from the council were met with a defiant rally in town, where reps discussed next steps, which include plans to

go to continuous action from 11 March.

Socialist Party members discussed a political campaign with strikers, linking with others fighting service cuts, such as building for a Saturday protest and inviting local trade union branches, council workers, and community campaigners.

This could be used as a launchpad to organise a coordinated fightback against the council's citywide drastic cuts. It wasn't lost on the Unite strikers that these cuts were coming from a Labour-controlled council under a Labour government.

One striker said: "I'm retiring within the year, but this isn't just about me. We need to protect these jobs for future generations. Young people haven't got decent jobs to go into anymore. All of our industries have been sold off and privatised." Another added "It's a few greedy ****s at the top who've ruined this country! We're the ones who have the power. If we don't work, none of the rubbish gets cleared!"



Sheffield PHOTO: UNITE THE UNION

Sheffield bin bosses desperate in face of Unite members' determination

ALISTAIR TICE
SHEFFIELD SOCIALIST PARTY

Now into their eighth month of indefinite strike action, Unite members at Sheffield Veolia Lumley Street bin depot remain solid, fighting to gain recognition for their trade union of choice.

They have renewed their strike mandate three times, the last ballot recording a 96% 'yes' vote. It is this determination, combined with an international campaign by Unite against the French multinational company, that has made Veolia desperate. Questions have been raised in the French and Irish parliaments, French unions have protested at Veolia's Paris headquarters, and the global CEO was confronted in the US.

Now, after a Unite Community campaign on a Sheffield council estate led to over 120 residents putting supportive stickers on their bins, Veolia has issued a legal 'cease and desist' threat against the union for

damaging council property! Desperate indeed.

On 14 February, Veolia finally agreed to roundtable talks with the GMB union (currently the only recognised union at the depot) and Unite, initiated by the Labour council leader. But the GMB didn't turn up, saying it will only discuss a so-called 'courtesy agreement' but not Unite recognition, even though there is a smaller Veolia depot in Sheffield that does have joint union recognition.

Veolia has all along accused Unite strikers of intimidating those still working. Well, the strikers have exposed that lie by collecting 136 signatures of Lumley Street workers, the overwhelming majority, stating that they "have no objection to Unite being formally recognised".

Unite reports that Veolia made £11.7 million in profit from Sheffield in 2023. The Labour council's waste management contract is outsourced to Veolia for 37 years! Sheffield City Council should bin Veolia and take the waste contract back in-house.

Knowsley Livv housing strikers say: 'No need' for greed in social housing

KAREN GREER
LIVERPOOL AND DISTRICT SOCIALIST PARTY

Unison and Unite members at Livv Housing Group in Knowsley have been taking strike action since October over their pay claim for 10% or £3,000, whichever is greater. The employer thought that there was 'no need' to enter negotiations with the unions, simply making a first and final offer of 5%, which is significantly below what is needed to restore the 30% real-terms cuts in wages over the past decade.

Members have taken more than 60 days of strike action, with further action planned for the first two weeks in March. The employer was asked to

extend the statutory industrial action mandate by three months, but again decided that there was 'no need'! So both unions have balloted again, and returned high turnouts and large majorities for action.

After months of inaction by Livv bosses, the pressure led to a resumption of talks, with the union side putting forward measures to help resolve the dispute, such as better pensions, enhanced rates of pay for weekend working, and reducing the working week from 40 hours.

The pressure has also moved local MPs, the Liverpool City Region metro mayor, and the Knowsley council leader, to write to urge the CEO to return to negotiations.

Knowsley MP Anneliese Midgely exposed the employer's anti-union tactics in the House of Commons.

These included offering non-striking workers a 5% pay increase, provided they confirmed in writing that they were not union members! Solicitors acting on behalf of the unions are investigating potential claims in relation to this.

The latest attack by the employer is to bring in contractors to cover striking workers. This move has prompted a collective grievance and possible legal action by the unions. 'No need' to consider the law?

The strikers see 'no need' for Livv's top executives to have the pay rise they have received - the CEO is on £255,000 a year!

Get all the latest union news
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International Women's Day 2025

Britain: Build the fightback against women's oppression, resist Labour austerity

HELEN PATTISON

SOCIALIST PARTY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

There has been a litany of incidents of horrific violence against women and girls in Britain in recent years. The scale of misogyny in London's Metropolitan Police is on full view following the jailing of two police officers, one for murder and one for multiple rapes. In six months there were 268 new allegations against the Met police for being perpetrators of violence against women and girls (VAWG). Even before these latest figures came to light, there was underreporting of rape and sexual harassment, as women fear they will not be taken seriously. No doubt this will continue to get worse.

Those women who do choose to take action against their abusers face an uphill battle. The number of rape and sexual offence cases waiting in a backlog of trials is at an all-time high, according to research by Rape Crisis, and there are huge delays in trials which are dealing with these serious and traumatising crimes. Rape Crisis points to huge issues in the criminal justice sector including low pay, and high workloads of barristers as adding to the problems. Currently fewer than three in every 100 reported rapes result in a conviction.

According to one recent survey, 97% of young women say they have experienced sexual harassment. This can impact all areas of a young woman's life. Around two-thirds of girls quit doing sports by age 16. Between 22-28% of women are concerned they will experience sexual harassment or fear for their personal safety while doing sports.

University campuses face an epidemic of sexual harassment. But in the midst of a funding crisis, tackling sexual harassment won't be a priority for uni bosses, despite the huge impact it can have on students' ability to complete their education.

Unlike in the US and some other countries, it is clear that in Britain in 2025, none of the main pro-capitalist parties, including Reform UK, are confident to directly attack women's hard-won rights around abortion. For example, during the general election in 2024, none of the major parties mentioned any policy on reducing the legal limits on abortion. This isn't because they necessarily support women's access to reproductive health care, but because they know that such attacks would be unpopular. The chief executive of the British Pregnancy Advisory Service (BPAS) put it: "Despite what anti-abortion campaigns would have MPs think, rolling back women's hard-won rights is not what people at home are interested in."

That said, women's rights in the UK are under attack. Not by legal



PHOTO: NORTHAMPTON SOCIALIST PARTY

challenges, but through the pervasive impact of crumbling services and austerity. This is already having a horrendous impact on women's lives. According to BPAS, around half of women have faced barriers accessing abortion care. Women from Wales and Scotland are often forced to travel to England to access the correct services and, while the procedure is free, they have to pay for transport and accommodation, as well as feeling isolated from friends and family while receiving treatment. Wait times and restrictions, such as the two-doctors policy, also mean that women must make their decisions much earlier than the 24-week cut-off, and are then made to wait for weeks for the care they need.

These all hit the poorest women hardest, and those who already have children. At the same time, women looking for abortion care but living in violent relationships or in families where abortion is stigmatised find it extra hard to access such services.

The poorest women are also hit hardest by the impact of being forced to continue a pregnancy, unable to afford childcare and they can face the two-child benefit cap. A horrendous

Tory policy, which the new Labour government has refused to repeal.

97%

The number of young women who say they have experienced sexual harassment

It's estimated that in the last 12 months, as many as 4 million women have found themselves trapped in violent relationships because of financial abuse. Even those who aren't explicitly trapped by financial abuse can find they have nowhere to go. Women's Aid research shows that three-quarters of women who lived with or had financial links to an abuser found it harder to leave or were prevented from leaving because of the cost-of-living crisis.

Last year, the outgoing Tory government set up a scheme for one-off payments to help people fleeing violent relationships. The point of

the scheme was so people could put down a deposit and replace belongings they had been forced to leave behind, for example. But the scheme is worth a measly £2 million, which probably means it will help about 800 people. Far fewer than the nearly 17,000 women who left a violent relationship but couldn't access emergency accommodation.

One of Starmer's new Labour government pledges was to halve domestic violence. But from this government it is little more than words.

Women's organisations and charities were quick to point out after Starmer and Reeves's first budget in October that there was little about how the pledge will be met or about the chronic underfunding in the sector.

Socialist Party members have been campaigning alongside domestic abuse workers fighting to save their service, Solace, in Tower Hamlets, east London, which faces cuts and closure.

Labour ministers constantly talk of 'tough decisions' but the 'tough decision' to leave the sector in a funding crisis will mean that more women and girls are killed, attacked

and assaulted. Properly funding legal aid, the justice system, as well as projects to challenge violent behaviour against women are not part of their strict fiscal rules. It's even more proof that challenging misogyny and its impact on the lives of women and girls is just too expensive for capitalism.

An increase in council funding and a return to building council housing is needed to support women fleeing violence. Nearly half of Rape Crisis centres are expecting to close or reduce services this year because of underfunding. As many as half of councils have said they could potentially serve so-called 'bankruptcy' section 114 notices. In this situation, funding to all but statutory services faces cuts. This means a desperate situation for women's services, as much of what is provided is categorised as non-statutory. Even in councils not threatening section 114 notices, there have already been bonfires of services.

These are many of the practical measures that would give women chance of safety and real opportunities to decide about their futures, including the possibility to have children if they choose.

Yet at a time when capitalism, particularly British capitalism, is in profound crisis, it doesn't matter that chancellor Rachel Reeves is a woman. She represents the interests of the capitalist class, and challenging women's oppression is not their priority. If you're balancing the books with cuts to women's services then you're balancing it with a threat to women's lives.

A fight can be waged against this government. The strike wave was proof that in industries where women dominate - including in education, care and health - when we organise, we can force concessions, from the rotten Tories and now from the Labour government.

Since Starmer's Labour has taken office, the biggest act in defence of women's living standards was from those who voted against Starmer's government to scrap the two-child benefit cap.

As the bonfire of public services continues, we need politicians prepared to stand up to Starmer in parliament, backing up a movement led by the trade unions to stop further austerity. A bloc of MPs taking that approach could be an important step in the process of a new mass workers' party being developed.

A programme to end violence against women and women's oppression means challenging both women's living conditions, poverty pay and the housing crisis, while also challenging sexist ideas in society, which are fed by the undermining of women's services.

MORE ON PAGES 8-9 ►►

International Women’s Day 2025

END WOMEN’S OPPRESSION WORLDWIDE – FIGHT FOR SOCIALIST CHANGE

CWI STATEMENT

Looking around the world on International Women’s Day 2025 it would seem that women’s rights are under attack in almost every part of the globe.

Poverty, inequality, war and environmental destruction are the multiple consequences of a global capitalist system in profound crisis. These crises affect all working-class and poor people internationally. But because of pre-existing gender inequality, women suffer particular hardship and oppression.

The figures are horrific. Globally one in ten women are living in extreme poverty, at a time that the wealth of the world’s billionaires has grown by \$2 trillion in just one year. Around 300,000 women worldwide die in pregnancy and childbirth every year. At least one in three - 763 million women - will experience physical and/or sexual violence at least once in their lifetime.

The suffering is at its most extreme in the ‘Global South’. In the genocidal destruction of Gaza, women have been disproportionately the victims of Israeli bombs. While in the often ‘forgotten’ brutal conflicts in Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo, rape and sexual violence are deployed as a weapon of war on a mass scale. In Afghanistan, not only have the Taliban denied women the right to work and to have an education, even their voices have been silenced in public places.

In the more economically developed capitalist countries, the consequences of the 2007-08 ‘Great Recession’ are still being felt as governments of all persuasions continue with austerity policies - attempting to make the working class pay the price for the crisis of the capitalist system they defend. And because women still do the bulk of childcare and unpaid domestic work, in most cases alongside working for a wage, cuts to public services and benefits have a detrimental effect on the jobs they can do, the hours they can work, the wages they can earn, and their standard of living in retirement.

At the same time, economic crisis and the absence of a working-class political alternative have fuelled the rise of right-wing populism in many countries, in particular the recent return of Donald Trump to the presidency in the US, raising fears of a further backlash against women’s rights.

Yet this is only one side of what is happening around the world. International Women’s Day was launched on 8 March 1911 by socialist women as a day of protest and to celebrate

the struggles of working-class women against economic exploitation and oppression. And in the last few years, from Latin America to Bangladesh, from Spain to India, from Iran to Sri Lanka, there have been numerous examples internationally of women, youth, and working-class and poor people protesting, striking and rising up against poverty, inequality, oppression and corruption.

Election of Trump

Donald Trump’s second victory, and the increase in support for right-wing populism elsewhere, has understandably provoked fear amongst women, immigrants, LGBTQ+ people and minorities. Emboldened by victory, Trump and his cohorts have launched a right-wing offensive, and now there is an urgent need to organise resistance to attacks on all oppressed groups, as well as the attacks on workers’ rights and living standards that are already under way and are likely to increase.

However, it would be wrong to think that Trump’s election was primarily driven by a swing to the right in US society or a backsliding in social attitudes on women’s rights. While a minority of those who voted for Trump may hold misogynist ideas and be attracted by the rhetoric that men are losing out because women’s rights have ‘gone too far’, the reality is that 80% cited the economy as the main reason Trump got their vote.

The benefits of the much-vaunted economic growth in the US (actually weak by historical standards) have not ‘trickled down’ to working-class Americans whose wages are on average the same as they were fifty years ago. Rather it has stayed with the super-rich minority whose wealth has multiplied.

Joe Biden and the Democrats are associated with sky-high prices and a devastating cost-of-living crisis. The hope amongst most of the minority of the US electorate who voted for Trump, including women, is that he will put more money in their pockets and make them financially better off. With capitalism in crisis that is not going to happen. On the contrary, his economic policies could increase inflation and even provoke a global recession.

At the same time as the US presidential elections were taking place, people in ten states were voting in referendums on defending abortion rights. In eight of those referendums a majority voted in favour, including in Trump-voting states. Over 60% of the US population support abortion in some or most cases. This helps to explain why Trump has so far refused to back the demand from anti-abortionists for a national ban on abortion



Doctors strike and protest in India following the rape and murder of a colleague in 2024 PHOTO: PUBLIC DOMAIN

Women’s March in Washington DC, USA against Trump in 2017 PHOTO: MOBILUS IN MOBILI - WOMEN’S MARCH ON WASHINGTON/CC



Iranian protesters on the Keshavrz Boulevard in September 2022 as part of the Mahsa Amini protests PHOTO: DARAFAH/CC

rather than leaving the decision to individual states, as has been the case since the overturning of Roe v Wade by the Supreme Court in 2022.

Fighting back

The stormy events in South Korea have given a glimpse of what can happen if authoritarian populists attempt to overstep the mark. Suspended President Yoon Suk Yeol was elected in 2022 on a right-wing populist programme, which, in an attempt to win over a layer of discontented young Korean men, attacked feminism and women’s rights, and threatened to close down the gender equality ministry. When, in December 2024, Yoon declared martial law he was defeated by mass protests, in which young women and men were united - together with the trade unions who called a general strike - in opposition to Yoon’s authoritarian move.

It’s true that the demonstrations at the time of Trump’s inauguration this year were only a faint echo of those of 2017, when 200,000 took to the streets on the Women’s March - at the time the biggest protest in the US since the Vietnam war. However, the different response this time is not surprising. The self-appointed leaders of the movement failed to build on the collective strength of the protests, linking up with other oppressed groups and, most importantly, workers beginning to organise in the workplaces. Instead they mischannelled the energy and anger on the streets into electoral campaigning for the Democrats, who have manifestly failed women both economically and on the question of abortion rights, including when they held the presidency and had a majority in Congress.

Given the attacks that Trump has already begun against immigrants, oppressed groups and workers, and the inevitable dashing of the hopes that working-class living standards will rise, future struggles are inevitable on multiple fronts. The question of building a workers’ party, armed with a socialist programme, that can unite together those struggles and offer a political alternative to the two big-business parties will become a growing feature in the US, as it will in other countries where the populist right appears to be on the rise.

Defending women’s rights

The 2017 Women’s March in the US was part of a global wave of protests by women in many different countries in the wake of the Great Recession - a reaction against all forms of inequality and injustice, alongside the danger that right-wing populist ideas pose to women’s rights. These movements succeeded in raising awareness of gender violence, sexual harassment, sexism and misogyny as well as winning some important legal changes, especially on the question of abortion, most notably in Latin America and Ireland.

However, these protests also revealed the limitations of women’s movements which confine themselves to fighting for legal change and changing attitudes without a broader programme and strategy for fundamental economic, social and political change.

The hard-won legal right to abortion in Argentina is now under threat from the right-wing populist president Javier Milei. In other countries it is not right-wing populist ideology but austerity and cuts to health and other vital services that endanger reproductive rights and women’s safety. While social attitudes towards violence against women have progressed in many countries and legal reforms have been won, this is being undermined by lack of funding for sexual assault services, refuges, housing etc.

Gender violence and abuse, sexual harassment, sexism, misogyny, denial of reproductive rights, gender discrimination and inequality flow from outdated ideas of male control over women’s reproduction, sexuality, and behaviour that have their roots in the development of the first class-based societies thousands of years ago. But they are maintained and reproduced by capitalism, which as a system has exploited pre-existing gender inequality and the ideology and structures that underpin it, including the family, for its own economic interests - in the workplaces and in society more widely.

So any programme to defend and extend women’s rights and end oppression must go beyond campaigning to change behaviour, attitudes and the law, linking this to a struggle for the economic resources that are absolutely necessary to enable women, and working-class women in particular, to exercise their rights in practice, and for an end to a capitalist system that has inequalities of power and wealth sewn into its very fabric.

Centrality of the working class

As long as capitalism exists, the specific gender oppression that women face is likely to be a feature of future struggles, whatever form they take. It can even be a trigger for broader movements in society as we saw in Iran in 2022, after the killing of Mahsa Amini by the ‘morality police’ over ‘improper’ wearing of the veil.

However, the force which has the power to achieve the systemic change necessary to end all oppression and exploitation is the organised working class of all genders. Not only does the working class have an economic interest in doing so - because the profits of the capitalist class come from the exploitation of workers in the workplace - but, most importantly, it has the potential collective power to disrupt the creation of those profits and the capitalist profit system as a whole.

In several countries there has been a recent upturn in strikes and workplace struggles, triggered in particular by the cost-of-living crisis, such as the strike wave in Britain, but also, in the US, around the right to organise. As women’s participation in the workforce has increased over the last few decades in many parts of the globe, they have also been to the fore in many of the strikes that have taken place. And historically when working-class women have moved into struggle on economic issues that affect the working class as a whole, they have also campaigned for the trade unions and the workers’ movement to take up the issues that affect them specifically as women. The struggle to transform the trade unions into fighting, democratic

organisations is therefore an essential part of the struggle against women’s oppression.

The important role that the unions can play was highlighted recently in India. The horrific rape and murder of a trainee doctor at a hospital in West Bengal in September last year provoked widescale protests. Female and male doctors in the state took strike action which then spread throughout the country, demanding justice and better security in hospitals to keep female workers safe.

Socialist change

This is just one of the many global struggles by women and the working class as a whole that we are marking on International Women’s Day. Capitalist crisis and its accompanying poverty, inequality, wars and climate catastrophe are sowing the seeds for future struggles on a mass scale. But as the recent uprisings in Bangladesh, Syria, Chile and other countries have shown, it’s not enough to replace one capitalist regime with another. The entire capitalist system needs to be overthrown to cut off the root of the problems faced by workers, the poor and oppressed groups internationally.

This requires the building of mass parties, based on the organised working class, with a programme of demands that can unite the struggles of the working-class and oppressed groups, and point a way forward at every step of those struggles towards the fundamental systemic and structural change that is needed.

Six years after the first International Women’s Day was declared, working women in Russia sparked the revolution that, under the guidance of the Bolshevik party, was to overthrow capitalism and feudalism in that country.

The Stalinist counter-revolution, flowing from the economic underdevelopment of Russia and its isolation, prevented the building of a genuine socialist society, based on workers’ democracy and internationalism. Many of the gains that women had won in the early days of the revolution were rolled back. But their legacy lives on.

If in 1917 a workers’ government in a desperately poor, mainly peasant country could introduce equal pay, maternity rights and the legal right to abortion, legalise homosexuality, and provide public nurseries and restaurants, imagine what would be possible today if the huge wealth and resources internationally were taken out of the hands of the capitalist minority who control them and were publicly owned and democratically planned to meet need not profit. The lives of working-class people, and women in particular, would be dramatically transformed. And in a system in which all unequal power relations were ended and the profit motive removed, the way would be cleared for the elimination of women’s oppression, as well as all other forms of oppression, war and conflict.

This is what the Committee for a Workers’ International is fighting for in all the many countries around the world in which we are organised. Join us in that fight for a better world.



As long as capitalism exists, the specific gender oppression that women face is likely to be a feature of future struggles, whatever form they take. However, the force which has the power to achieve the systemic change necessary to end all oppression and exploitation is the organised working class of all genders

SOCIALISM TODAY

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Labour keep park closures secret fearing ‘uproar’

And pay consultants millions to make cuts in Southampton

SUE ATKINS
SOUTHAMPTON SOCIALIST PARTY

Socialist Party member Nick Chaffey made a deputation to oppose St Mary’s Leisure Centre being put out to the private sector, as the Labour council plans. Without numerous campaigns to keep it open since 2004, it would have closed long ago.

St Mary’s is the only sports facility serving the most deprived communities in Southampton. We have paid for these facilities over decades,

and we want them to stay in council hands, with well-paid, permanent staff, accountable and under democratic control.

As if this was not bad enough, the council also plans to sell off 16 buildings in the city centre, and 16 car parks across the city, but won’t say which until they are sold, citing “commercial sensitivity”. The details of this were discussed behind closed doors, with the visitors’ gallery cleared. One councillor said that there would be “uproar” from the public if the locations were revealed.

The council also plans to dispose of two water-activity centres that it owns. The council has a ‘transformation programme’ of £51 million cuts. A consultancy company is being paid £9 million to advise on achieving this “transformation”!

A further equivalent of 85 full-time jobs are to go this year, on top of 1,000 already cut. The Labour council has described this as an “extraordinary achievement and a success for the authority and the people who depend on those services”. This is the opposite of reality.

I have since spoken to a member of staff, whose job has been ‘deleted’. They say that remaining staff are terrified of being made redundant in the next round of cuts. With a Labour council and a Labour government, nothing is changing, and austerity continues.

It is even more important that we continue to stand socialist anti-cuts candidates in county council elections this year and in Southampton next year. The trade unions and our communities have the power to link up to mount a mass campaign to win the funding from the government for a budget based on our needs.

PHOTO: SOUTHAMPTON SOCIALIST PARTY



Coventry Labour carry on Tory cuts

DAVE NELLIST
COVENTRY SOCIALIST PARTY

Coventry has lost £100 million every year from 14 years of Tory austerity. This year, it should have been different, with the election of a Labour government.

The government’s funding allocation was said to demonstrate its commitment to “rebuild local government”. But the Labour government has not restored the billions of pounds stolen from local authorities. New demands by capitalist politicians for more cuts are already emerging.

Coventry received £10.5 million in additional funds. But its costs have risen by £8 million.

Coventry Labour council says no balanced budget is possible beyond this year. So, they’ll be searching again for new cuts soon.

Socialist Party member and

Coventry Trades Union Council president Jane Nellist said at the anti-cuts lobby on 25 February: “We urgently need the city council not just to pause existing cuts, but to reverse those made. For example, council tax support, reduced library, youth, and community services, essential voluntary services, such as the rape and sexual abuse centre.

“The council tax rise of 5%, and increases in charges for bereavement services, should be cancelled. Instead of more food banks, we need a fundamental restoration and rebuilding of social services.

“The city council should be campaigning with trade unions and working-class communities to draw up a budget that restores services to the level of need for those communities. And then fighting the national government to prioritise funding for services, not war.”

Newham – ‘Labour has money for weapons, but not public services’

NEWHAM AND EAST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBERS

Protesters gathered to oppose cuts, a council tax hike, and plans to sell off local assets. The Labour council aims to put up council tax by 10%, council rents by 2.7%, and cut council tax support by 10%.

A library worker addressed the lobby about big cuts planned. Palestine Solidarity Campaign demanded the council come clean about whether it invests in companies with links to the Israeli state.

Newham Labour council fears public scrutiny of their cuts-making meetings. This year, access to the public gallery was severely restricted. Last year, three protesters in the gallery were falsely maligned with

Bradford opposes highest council tax hike in country



IAIN DALTON
WEST YORKSHIRE SOCIALIST PARTY

For the second time in a fortnight, over 100 people gathered to oppose plans for the highest council tax increase in England – 9.99%. This time though, demonstrators were joined by representatives of the council’s independent group, who pledged to vote against the rise.

Many of the independents were elected in opposition to Keir Starmer’s support for the Israeli state’s assault on Gaza. Around half a dozen of these councillors gave speeches opposing the burden of this austerity being put on the backs of working people in Bradford.

Socialist Party members have been campaigning in Bradford, Shipley, and Keighley against the proposals, as well as £40 million cuts being pushed through by the Labour council.

Instead, we call on the council to work with trade unions and community groups to build a mass campaign to demand back the hundreds of millions of pounds stolen from the city. We have also put forward motions in trade union branches raising this strategy.

Socialist Party member Tom Gibson announced at the demo that, as a result of the over 500 signatures on our petition, we will be presenting to

the executive board, where the council leadership will finalise its proposals to the full council.

Tom pointed out that just the week before the government gave the council permission to increase council tax by 9.99%, the Labour government also ‘softened’ its approach to non-dom tax-evaders. Socialist Party member and Unite Community branch secretary Peter Spillane outlined how even just a limited wealth tax, as Unite the Union has argued, would provide vital funds to preserve public services.

Campaigning is having an effect. The Labour council has just U-turned on its proposed school bus services cuts, after money was ‘found’ in the West Yorkshire Combined Authority to continue funding the service for another year. In reality, they’re feeling our pressure.

The day before the demonstration, a longstanding Labour councillor resigned to become an independent, cutting the Labour group majority to just two.

Even if the council tax increase is passed, the campaign won’t stop. With talk amongst people attending the demo and on our campaign stalls of organising non-payment of this increase, Socialist Party members are calling for an open meeting of organisations backing the protests to discuss how we continue the campaign.

council’s huge reserves and borrowing powers, so cuts are not necessary, while also demanding that the Labour government starts properly funding Newham, and all other local councils, after 14 years of Tory cuts.

“There’s government money for spending billions on weapons. So why is there no money for local services and social provisions?”

Last year, the Independent group on the council opposed Labour’s council tax hike, but mistakenly moved its own council tax rise below Labour’s figure, while local residents are struggling with the cost of living. This year, it is welcomed that the Independent group leader, Mehmood Mirza, called for a council tax freeze and more funding from Westminster to plug the deficit.

Speaking for the Socialist Party, Lois Austin called for trade unionists and campaigners to unite against the cuts, and to replace cuts-making Labour councillors with fighters: “We need a new party of the working class in Newham and across the country to represent our interests”

Southport Community Independents launch

HANNAH PONTING
LIVERPOOL SOCIALIST PARTY

The official launch of Southport Community Independents was supported and attended by Jeremy Corbyn. Socialist Party members from Southport and Liverpool attended too.

Over 30 attendees bought the Socialist paper. We got a very receptive and friendly response when leafletting those attending.

We support the Southport Community Independents’s call for “education, healthcare, and peace at home and abroad”. We hope to organise for such demands nationally in a new mass workers’ party, with the backing of the trade unions. Trade union membership is over six million, making them the largest grassroots organisations in the country, with a huge potential for political mobilisation under socialist ideas.

In response to a written question

regarding the need for a new mass workers’ party backed by the trade unions, Sean Halsall – the independent councillor who organised the event – echoed the importance of the trade unions in a new mass workers’ party, and emphasised the strength of trade union power.

When Jeremy Corbyn spoke, he rightfully condemned the far right’s scapegoating of marginalised communities, and expressed a clear anti-war stance, stating: “I don’t want conscripted soldiers from Ukraine killing conscripted soldiers from Russia.” We continue to encourage Corbyn to take steps towards helping to form a new mass workers’ party.

It is welcome that Jeremy Corbyn spoke. We now need now the trade unions and wider working class to have their own political voice. This is why Socialist Party members stand in elections as part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC), to provide a signpost to what is needed.

HELP US STAND SOCIALIST ELECTION CANDIDATES TRADE UNIONIST AND SOCIALIST COALITION



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

- Find out more visit: tusc.org.uk

Bristol Greens ‘proud’ to make cuts

CLINTON HATCHER
BRISTOL NORTH SOCIALIST PARTY

The Greens became the largest party on Bristol Council last year, promising change after years of service cuts under Labour. What has this bright new future meant for Bristol? £50 million more cuts!

Greens were beaming ear to ear, two of their leading councillors spoke of their “pride” in their council budget. That’s pride in slashing funding for services for domestic abuse, mental health, and children in care, and reducing bin collections to once every four weeks.

The change in council has meant very little for the people of Bristol. Yet again we have a party aligned with austerity, maintaining a political system which puts private profit first.

Labour’s attempt to pose as opposition was extremely hypocritical. They spent the last eight years

running the city, making cuts, and blaming the Tory government.

Now Labour sits in Westminster, and the Greens in Bristol. But austerity still continues. Labour even moved an amendment to reopen public toilets – toilets closed by a Labour mayor seven years ago!

Councillors repeatedly spoke of the collaboration between parties in the budget process, congratulating themselves for bridging a “broad church” of different ideologies. It’s hardly a wide array of opinions when they’re united in cuts and devastating the most vulnerable.

There wasn’t even a sniff of fight-back to the national Labour government, in order to protect the community from the defunding of public services.

The Socialist Party was out in force, joining the lobby outside the council building organised by the trades union council. We gave out Socialist

Brighton Labour vote through cuts But implementing them will be harder



DAVID MAPLES
BRIGHTON SOCIALIST PARTY

When Brighton Labour councillors voted for further cuts to public services, they may have thought that it was the end. They are in for a surprise.

Faced with £16 million cuts, there has been lobby after lobby of Brighton’s Labour council:

- Parents of special needs children faced with cuts, campaigning for improved out-of-school and respite provision
- Adult social care users campaigning for adequate funding
- Housing campaigners trying to stop homeless people being uprooted away from friends and family
- Union union council workers fighting for adequate staffing

Voting through a cuts budget is one thing. Implementing them, is another.

The cuts proposals include the

closure of three community libraries. Which three have not been specified, so all are under threat.

In 2023, Labour councillor Anne Pissaridou opposed the closure of Mile Oak library. Standing as an independent, she gained over 450 votes in the next election. When Labour decided to close St Peters school, Labour councillor Les Hamilton resigned.

What will Labour councillors do when the three library closures are announced? 14 Labour councillors represent wards with community libraries. Will they lead the defence of their communities?

Recent local campaigns have been successful. Teachers at the University of Brighton Academy Trust schools took strike action to secure better funding. This resulted in the academy trust relinquishing control of the schools.

Parents of Hove Learning Federation schools successfully opposed the transfer of their schools to an academy trust. They have instead

being retained under local authority control. Library campaigns can also be successful.

Community campaigns are significantly strengthened by the involvement of trade unions. Brighton Trades Union Council and Brighton Union have played a vital role in bringing campaigners together. The enormous pressure on members caused by continuing cuts, and the council’s deliberate policy of understaffing frontline services, may force them to take strike action.

There are no council elections in Brighton this year, and the scheduled elections in Sussex have been undemocratically cancelled. But, if they are under sufficient pressure, Labour councillors may ‘discover some principles’, and stand down.

We would support campaigners against cuts standing in these elections. The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) is a banner available to anti-cuts campaigners to stand. By-elections could become an unofficial referendum on cuts.

PHOTO: ROGER THOMAS





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

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 financial 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.

Review: How To Survive A Warzone

BANNED BY THE BBC



AMNON COHEN
CAMDEN AND HARINGEY SOCIALIST PARTY

Despite the extensive media coverage of the genocidal war in Gaza, very little has been shown about the daily lives of ordinary people enduring the relentless IDF bombardments. The documentary "How to Survive a Warzone" aimed to fill this gap, only to be taken off air and removed from BBC iPlayer just two days after its initial broadcast.

Narrated by 14-year-old Abdullah Al-Yazouri, the documentary presents the war from his perspective. Abdullah recounts the grim reality of life in a warzone with a deadpan, matter-of-fact tone. The film includes powerful footage of mass evacuations following IDF orders, where one woman is seen cursing Hamas and Yahya Al-Sinwar for suffering brought upon Gaza's people. It also portrays life in the so-called "safe zone" of al-Mawasi, where Gazans were ordered to relocate by the IDF.

The documentary follows several children trying to navigate life amid the devastation. Eleven-year-old Zakaria volunteers at the last functioning hospital in Gaza. Ten-year-old Renad Attallah, despite the horrors surrounding her, continues producing a YouTube cooking channel with her sister. The film juxtaposes their daily struggles with glimpses of resilience, such as children enjoying rare moments of relaxation at the beach.

The documentary was removed from the BBC and iPlayer due to claims of Abdullah's father being a deputy agriculture minister in Gaza's Hamas government. However, critics have not challenged the film's content, nor have they identified any factual inaccuracies. Several adult interviewees in the film express strong criticism of Hamas and its military wing, accusing them of bringing destruction upon Gaza while its leaders remain hidden in tunnels. The most sympathetic pro-Hamas statement comes from Rana, who voices her

opinion that Hamas leader Sinwar died an honourable death fighting the occupation. Yet, even she condemns the kidnapping of civilians, stating: "We don't want civilians to be hurt or die, from either side."

The documentary captures the reaction of Gazans on the night Iran launched a missile barrage toward Israel, with some expressing satisfaction that, for once, Israelis were experiencing what they endure daily. However, the greatest celebrations occur on day 466 of the war when an announcement of a ceasefire sparks mass jubilation.

Devastating

The real reason for the film's censorship is clear: it humanises the Palestinian people and presents the devastating effects of war in a deeply relatable way. Most opponents of the film avoid engaging with its content, choosing instead to vilify the narrator based on his parentage, as if that negates the brutal reality captured in the footage.

The documentary offers a rare glimpse into life under war in Gaza, highlighting the contradictions within its society. Abdullah concludes the film saying: "My greatest hope is that the ceasefire continues, and Gaza goes back to what it was before, or even better. But my biggest fear is that the war will return."

Under capitalism, there is no prospect of a decent, safe life or lasting peace in Gaza or the wider Middle East. Capitalism means endless war, with Gaza being one of its most brutal battlegrounds. The film critiques Hamas, but it what is needed is an alternative: the building of workers' parties in Gaza, the West Bank, Israel, and across the Middle East, fighting for socialist programmes. Only through such a movement can Abdullah, Zakaria, Rana, and the people of the region hope for a future free from poverty and war.

- View online: vimeo.com/1059233402

Looking back at the end of the Miners' Strike 40 years on

On 3 March 1985, striking miners went back to work after a year-long strike to save pits, jobs and communities. As part of how the Militant reported the end of the strike, **Dave Griffiths** described the scene at Littleton Colliery in Staffordshire:

Dave's report first appeared in issue 739 of the Militant, on 8 March 1985. Militant was renamed the Socialist in 1997

Leeds trade unionists press Richard Burgon MP on workers' representation

IAIN DALTON
LEEDS SOCIALIST PARTY

Left-wing Labour MP for Leeds East, Richard Burgon, was the guest speaker at Leeds Trades Union Council's annual general meeting.

The MP only had the Labour whip restored a month ago. He was suspended for six months for voting to scrap the two-child benefit cap, against Keir Starmer's Labour government.

He also voted against the cuts to winter fuel allowance, two issues where trade unions are clearly at odds with Starmer's Labour. He also said it's likely the government will attempt to water down the employment rights (and trade union) bill currently going through parliament, a process which he said he is resisting, working together with other left MPs.

Richard Burgon stated that he saw himself as an MP who is a voice of trade unionists in Leeds, and that he would raise issues that union branches brought to him in parliament. In the discussion, Socialist Party members raised how that could be formalised, with regular parliamentary

The news, half expected, still came as a shock. Midlands men have been in a minority for many months and felt at first that previously solid areas were panicking.

At Littleton, when it was proposed that they vote to return, no one was prepared to vote. It had to be proposed as: "Do we support our union?" Many felt deep down that without the solid areas giving the strike its strength there would have to be a return.

Both the Littleton and Lea Hall meetings were emotional, with anger, disappointment and defiance. Miners wanted to see the fight through and the thought of leaving men behind really stuck in their throats. Many expressed the feeling that the return was rushed. But the clear message was that the fight goes on. It was on before the strike, during it, and now it's a different form of battle for a while.

Sat in the Littleton meeting, I looked through the door, opened to let the thick fag smoke out, and I could see the fields behind the strike centre. Fields hard and white with frost, that covered you after 30 minutes picketing when we started 12 months ago. Fields that became brown, then green, then baked dry in the summer, then white for week upon week through winter. Now they were turning green again in the spring sun. But spring 1985 has seen

a much changed NUM, though with the same resolution to face the new problems.

Pride

Then at six o' clock Tuesday morning the men gathered then marched off to the pit. A few scab lorry drivers copped it as we marched down the road. We reached the pit singing, and chanting support for Arthur Scargill. The scabs were waiting to watch these proud men march in. With many supporters, wives and mothers clapping, cheering and wiping eyes. But on Monday and Tuesday there were no tears of defeat in this area, only tears of pride in our class and of our determination to win.

Support groups sang: "Cannock miners, we'll support you ever more." As the men queued, committee man Dave Preece arrived late: "I had to be the last one in."

But not quite. Because along behind him stood Johnnie McGann - a sacked miner - who had to stand at the gate as his mates went in. A symbol of what has to be won, and what strikers in this area intend to see is done.

- Read in full online at socialistparty.org.uk
- The Socialist has marked the 40th anniversary of the strike throughout the last year. For everything we have said, search 'miners' strike' at socialistparty.org.uk

Southampton sees off far-right again

FRANKIE COULTAS
SOUTHAMPTON SOCIALIST PARTY

On a sunny Sunday afternoon, a small grey cloud of anti-LGBTQ+, anti-migrant 'patriots' attempted to cast a shadow over Southampton city centre. Ostensibly, they were there to 'save the kids' but really their campaign was a vehicle for the divisive ideas of racism, homophobia, transphobia and Islamophobia. Southampton Socialist Party members joined people from across the city to say that the divisive tactics of

the super-rich capitalist class are not welcome in our city.

We spoke with people from across the city to discuss why we were there, fighting for a real alternative that benefits all people, not just the wealthy few. Some people we talked to picked up placards and joined us right there and then. The message that Southampton is a multicultural city with no place for hate was clearly felt.

People are struggling and looking for someone to blame. Unfortunately, some people are led to the wrong conclusions by the billionaire-owned

right-wing media - blaming trans people, Muslims and migrants for what is really the consequences of the capitalist system: low pay, unaffordable housing, crumbling public services.

We were there to counter that message, pointing towards united class struggle to 'jobs, homes and services for all!'

Our counter-protest, organised by the trades council and others, outnumbered the anti-LGBTQ+, anti-migrant protest by more than two to one.

A civil war without guns – the lessons of the 1984-85 miners' strike by Ken Smith, £7



- www.leftbooks.co.uk

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Germany: Election disaster for establishment parties

The Left ray of hope against cuts and racism

SASCHA STANIC
FEDERAL SPOKESPERSON, SOL - SOZIALISTISCHE ORGANISATION SOLIDARITÄT (CWI GERMANY)

The result of the federal election is a slap in the face of the established, pro-capitalist parties. The only parties that won were those that many do not consider to be part of this establishment. Polarisation and instability are reflected in the election result and are simultaneously reinforced by it. Above all, however, a Christian Democratic Union-Christian Social Union (CDU-CSU) led government, headed by CDU leader Friedrich Merz, will try to meet the capitalists' demands for improvements in their profit margins, something that means attacks on the working class. Trade unions and the resurgent Die Linke (The Left) must prepare to fight against this.

The most important thing about this election, despite the doubling of the far-right Alternative for Germany's (AfD) share of the vote, is the strong result of Die Linke, which successfully resisted the threat of parliamentary collapse and used its existential crisis as an opportunity for revival. Not only gaining more than two million more votes compared to

the last federal election in 2021, but, above all, many thousands of new members gives hope in view of the doubling of the AfD's percentage result, and are an opportunity to spark resistance and movement from the left.

Whoever governs, loses

Last year, governing parties were punished in almost all elections internationally. This reflects the fact that in today's era of multiple crises of capitalism, pro-capitalist governments - whether social democratic, liberal, conservative or right-wing populist - are not pursuing policies that improve the living conditions of the masses.

The reason? All of these forces are committed to capitalism and pursue policies in the interests of the capitalist class. This also applied to the outgoing German 'traffic light', or Ampel, coalition government - named after the colours of its constituent parties the Green Party (green), Free Democratic Party (orange) and Social-Democratic Party (red) - even though it fell apart over the question of how the interests of capitalism can best be represented.

The disaster is particularly great for the Social Democrats, as they

achieved their worst result in history, losing 3.7 million second votes. The Greens lost a good million votes and have fallen very low compared to their interim high in the opinion polls. And the FDP, the small party of big capital, did not make it back into the Bundestag (parliament), to the delight of all wage earners, losing 3.1 million votes. The former governing parties received almost eight million fewer votes than in 2021! The CDU-CSU was only able to gain just under 2.5 million of these but also achieved the second worst result in its history. For the pro-capitalist establishment, this federal election is a huge disaster!

Polarisation

Above all, the election shows the increasing polarisation and instability in society. Party loyalty is decreasing more and more. While the Greens and FDP had top ratings among young voters in the 2021 federal election, and this was the case with the AfD in the various elections last year, Die Linke is now ahead among young people, and especially young women. This process of fragmentation will continue and make it more difficult for the ruling class to find stable government constellations.

“The success of Die Linke confirms the thesis we support that we are in a situation of social polarisation and not a simple shift to the right



Die Linke celebrate PHOTO: MARTIN HEINLEIN, DIE LINKE/CC

Everything points to the formation of a government that used to be called a 'grand coalition', consisting of the CDU-CSU and SPD, but which for the first time has less than fifty percent of the vote. They only have a parliamentary majority because a good seven million voters who voted for the Sahra Wagenknecht Alliance (BSW), FDP and smaller parties will not be represented in parliament. Even if we are not bothered by the failure of the FDP and BSW, this is an expression of the undemocratic nature of the five percent hurdle to getting into the parliament.

This government, led by the former Black Rock manager and millionaire Merz, will have neither a comfortable majority in the Bundestag nor a strong social base. In its first phase, it may give the impression of greater stability than the permanently quarrelling Ampel coalition, but Merz, who has had very low approval ratings for years and can only rely on a majority of twelve MPs in parliament, will not be a strong chancellor. And even if the SPD is prepared to do almost anything to keep German capitalism going, it will have to look over its shoulder at its dwindling base among wage earners and trade unionists if Merz demands that they agree to his Agenda 2030 plans.

A look at Austria, however, shows that there can be compromises

between conservatives and social democrats if they are forced to do so. Merz can 'buy' approval for corporate tax cuts, attacks on citizens' income or more flexible working time regulations, for example, by agreeing to a reform of the 'debt brake', which he probably wants anyway, because it is clear that significant sections of the capitalist class (and also the CDU-CSU) are in favour of it in order to have more scope for investments in armaments and infrastructure, which are necessary from the capitalists' point of view.

The capitalist class has been calling for an 'economic turnaround' or Agenda 2030 for months, and a Chancellor Merz will certainly try to implement it. How far he can go and at what speed remains to be seen, and it is possible that major attacks on the social security systems and the rights of wage earners and unions will be postponed for a while. Nevertheless, unions and the left must prepare to resist this 'small grand coalition'. The fact that the SPD will most likely be back in government will mean that the union leadership will back the government. That is why pressure from the grassroots is needed to push through union mobilisations and struggles - also to push through an end to the acceptance of mass job cuts, as practiced by the IG Metall leadership at Volkswagen.

At the same time, this situation also offers a great opportunity for Die Linke, which will now be the only left-wing, social and anti-militarist opposition in the Bundestag. This is true even though the Greens will certainly try to present themselves as an opposition and will emphasise their ecological and social side more.

AfD

The AfD was able to almost double its percentage result and is the strongest force in East Germany, where it won almost all direct, constituency, mandates. It is profiting from the dissatisfaction and alienation of large sections of the population with the establishment and from the so-called migration debate, which was massively promoted by Merz, Sahra Wagenknecht, other capitalist politicians and the media, and which means wind in the sails of the right-wing populists. The idea of stealing votes from the AfD by using the harshest possible rhetoric against migrants and migration has not worked for either the CDU-CSU or the BSW. As we have always said, people are more likely to vote for the original than the copy.

The rise of the right-wing populists obscures the conflicts that exist within the AfD. After the election, Alice Weidel, co-leader of the AfD, emphasized that she was extending a hand

to the CDU-CSU for participation in the government, while Björn Höcke, AfD chairperson in Thuringia, and on the extreme right of the party, spoke out against becoming the junior partner of the CDU-CSU, and other party representatives emphasised that one does not have to join a government to vote on laws. How long this will remain so is an open question.

What is clear, however, is that the AfD can expand its social roots and is becoming an ever greater danger. The number of protest voters among those who vote for the AfD is decreasing. It is also clear that the so-called 'firewall' has developed significant cracks as a result of Merz's actions in connection with the Bundestag votes on the so-called 'Immigration Restriction Act', where he relied on AfD votes. These have not been repaired by all of Merz's assurances that he does not want to cooperate with the AfD.

The process of cooperation with the AfD is already in full swing at the local level. The increasingly unstable state governments in eastern Germany will sooner or later lead to AfD participation in government or even minority governments there. There is a great danger that the AfD will be the main beneficiary of the expected crisis and government policy in the next legislative period. In order to prevent this and to weaken the right-wing populists again, major class struggles and the creation of a convincing left-wing alternative are necessary.

BSW

The fact that the BSW narrowly missed the five percent threshold is certainly due, on the one hand, to the fact that a layer of left-leaning BSW voters could no longer follow the party due to Sahra Wagenknecht's anti-migrant rhetoric, which was also reflected in a few prominent party resignations. On the other hand, this new party has robbed itself of its anti-establishment status by joining the state governments of Brandenburg and Thuringia.

This certainly contributed to the fact that the high-flying party came to an abrupt end and Wagenknecht and Co. have now been thrown out of the Bundestag. The BSW has no strong social roots - neither in society nor in a large membership. This will now come back to haunt it. Whether the party will continue to play a role or disappear into insignificance is an open question and will certainly also depend on whether Wagenknecht herself withdraws or not. But it cannot be ruled out that the party can still sue its way into the Bundestag. And given the great instability, there is still potential for votes for the party and it would be premature to write it off now.

Die Linke

The success of Die Linke confirms the thesis we support that we are in a situation of social polarisation and not a simple shift to the right. This polarisation finally found political expression on the left in the election.

This is only partly due to what the leadership of Die Linke has done differently in recent months than before, and above all to the rise of the AfD, Friedrich Merz's approach

to the joint vote with the AfD in the Bundestag, and the fact that Die Linke was on the verge of parliamentary extinction.

New members, the door-to-door campaign, the party's new offers of help, the good performance of the top candidates and the consistent emphasis on social and distribution issues, and the cooperation of the CDU-CSU with the AfD in the Bundestag, have now triggered a dynamic that no one had expected. The amount of hope and enthusiasm that Die Linke's comeback can trigger among a section of young people, migrants and wage earners should not be underestimated. This is probably especially true in Berlin-Neukölln, where the campaign around Ferat Koçak not only managed to win Die Linke's first direct mandate in a western constituency (with 30%), but also to win hundreds of members for the party.

For the first time in a long time, it is proof that there can also be positive developments 'in politics'. It is good that the party leadership is emphasising that the protest must be taken to the streets, and it is to be hoped that the new members of the Bundestag who come from union struggles - such as the automobile worker Cem Ince (Volkswagen Salzgitter) or the nurse Stelle Merendino from Berlin-Mitte - will contribute to ensuring that the party and the Bundestag faction focus on supporting union struggles against job cuts, hospital closures and for better working conditions.

All of this now means a great opportunity to develop a political force from the millions of votes, the 64 Bundestag seats and thousands of new members. We have drawn up proposals and pointed out that a political change of course is necessary compared to the direction of the last few years. Because, bottom line, it was the adaptation to the SPD and the Greens, the perception of being part of the political establishment, that led Die Linke into crisis (after it had already achieved an election result of 11.9% in the 2009 Bundestag election).

If cuts and arms deliveries to Ukraine are supported in Bremen and Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania with the participation of Die Linke in the state governments, CDU state premiers are brought into office in Saxony and Thuringia and the only reason why Die Linke does not govern with pro-capitalist parties is because they do not want to or because there is no financial possibility, it is a self-fulfilling prophecy that the party will not emerge from its crisis in the long term. This must be prevented.

This requires broad debates, the involvement of members, and a focus on campaigns and class struggle. In these debates, Sol members will advocate for a clear socialist programme - for Die Linke to clearly formulate a systemic alternative to capitalism, to openly address the question of ownership (i.e. to demand the transfer of banks and corporations into democratic public ownership), to speak out against participation in government with pro-capitalist parties, and to focus on supporting class struggles and social protest movements.



CWI Germany protesting against the AfD PHOTO: SOL BERLIN



END SEXISM AND VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

International Women's Day 2025

Reports consistently show that around three-quarters of women students experience sexual violence while at university. The numbers are similar for colleges and sixth forms. Many victims are forced to take measures such as skipping lectures, changing course modules, or even dropping out of study to avoid their attacker.

The majority of sexual assaults take place on our campuses. On top of this, the rising cost of living and inadequate maintenance support force working-class students especially to take part-time jobs alongside their studies. Many have to work in the nighttime economy, forced to make their way home after work in the dark, alone. Sexist harassment is rife in industries like hospitality, where a big proportion of women students work.

Socialist Students says:

- Students' unions and trade unions must organise and campaign against sexual harassment in workplaces, including schools, colleges and universities
- Introduce democratically elected committees comprising students and staff to investigate all reports of sexual assault and sexist abuse

Fight back for funding and free education

As successive Labour and Tory governments have slashed direct government funding to universities, vice-chancellors have obediently carried out cuts – including to things like counselling services, campus lighting, transport, and student bursaries – all of which has left students further exposed to the effects of sexism and sexual violence.

Socialist Students says:

- Organise on campus to fight to provide adequate resources for women who have experienced sexual violence
- Fight to end university marketisation, by campaigning to abolish tuition fees
- Fully fund education, cancel student debt and replace student loans with living maintenance grants for all – take the wealth off the super-rich

A socialist alternative to sexism and capitalism

Socialist Students fights against all sexist ideas and behaviour, which exist not just on campus but all across society, perpetuated by capitalist institutions and corporations.

To seriously challenge sexist ideas means building a mass movement against capitalism – an inherently unequal system that benefits from sexism.

Socialist Students says:

- Build a movement that fights to take the wealth and power out of the hands of the super-rich and the elites
- For a socialist world in which the working class democratically runs society to meet the needs of all people, to lay the basis for ending sexism and all forms of oppression



Join

socialist students



Read more:
IWD 2025,
pages 7-9

