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the Socialist

Issue 1313

13-26 March 2025

formerly **Militant**

RESIST LABOUR AUSTERITY

No benefit cuts

Build the socialist opposition

“Cuts to the welfare bill that out-Tory the Tories,” is how one Labour MP described attacks chancellor Rachel Reeves is planning. On 26 March, she will present her ‘spring forecast’. Up to £5 billion of cuts to disabled people’s benefits are being discussed, as well as swingeing cuts across public services.

There were 190,000 excess deaths from Tory austerity between 2010 and 2019, according to researchers at the London School of Economics. The causes: ‘deaths from despair’, health and benefit cuts, as well as the pervasive effects of economic hardship. Since, there has been a brutal cost-of-living crisis, and now further austerity.

As if people weren’t already angry enough. Keir Starmer is prepared to spend billions more on war while attacking pensioners and disabled people. He is scapegoating disabled people while cosyng up to Trump and the super-rich.

Those who act like Tories should expect to be treated like Tories.

The Tories were smashed in the general election after facing the biggest strike wave in a generation.

‘Stormy’ is our forecast for this Labour government.

But the socialist opposition has to be organised and built. Like it did during the strike wave, the trade union movement should lead from the front again – by organising a weekend demonstration against Labour austerity in its own name, as a start. And by leading in the development of a new mass party of the working class.

Where they are taking place, May’s local elections include the opportunity to put a socialist challenge to Starmer’s Labour, as well as Tories and Reform, at the ballot box. Socialist Party members will be standing as part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition.

Join us!



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The Socialist is written, read, sold and bought by ordinary workers, trade unionists, young people and Socialist Party members. We want you to write for the Socialist.

Send us reports of your workplace and community campaigns, short letters on working-class issues, or ideas for other articles.

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editors@socialistparty.org.uk
020 8988 8777 - ask for the editors

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OUR NEWSPAPER TEAM

Editor of the Socialist	Editorial staff
Josh Asker	Scott Jones
socialistparty.org.uk	Ian Pattison
Mark Best	Paula Mitchell
Circulation manager	Chris Newby
	Mark Best

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

Reform's millionaires spat

MARK BEST
NATIONAL COMMITTEE

A row has erupted among Reform UK's five MPs. Multimillionaire Rupert Lowe criticised fellow multimillionaire Nigel Farage for his "messianic" position of control over the party. The next day, a statement hit the press that Lowe was suspended pending an investigation into bullying in his parliamentary offices and threats to the party chair passed onto the police. Allegations which had been known to the Reform leadership before Christmas.

The establishment's anti-establishment party is already showing some of the splits, division and venom seen in the last Tory government, less than a year since entering Parliament. And with only five MPs! The crisis has, at root, a basis in the lack of a clear way forward for the capitalist system in Britain. Reports in the press say that Lowe and Farage have clashed over how much to blame migrants for the bosses' crisis.

A bosses' party

Despite their near-constant appearances in the media, none of the Reform MPs offer a working-class alternative to the main parties. With more company directorships than you can shake a stick at, in the same interview he gave Farage a

blasting. Lowe had the cheek to say MPs deserve to be paid £250,000 a year! Meanwhile, Farage earns over £1 million a year just from his appearances on GB News. Lowe, supported by other Reform MPs, also put forward a bill to Parliament by praising Argentina's right-wing President Milei and calling for public services funding, including the NHS, to be slashed.

While Starmer's Labour governs on behalf of the bosses, the need for a genuine working-class alternative is clear. This latest incident shows that Reform isn't a bastion of stability, necessarily on a clear upward trajectory in the polls up until a general election. But the risks of the rise of figures like Farage are real. Reform is planning to stand in the upcoming local elections, hoping to pick up disaffected Labour and Tory voters. The Socialist Party is also planning to stand in these elections as part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition. We will be standing on a programme to fight the cuts, for the jobs, homes and services for us all, and to point the blame at the real causes of austerity - the greedy bosses and the capitalist system itself.

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



Farage and Lowe in happier times! UK PARLIAMENT/CC



MARY FINCH

NHS privatisation: Streeting threatens more PFI

Public need not private greed!

MAX MCGEE
COVENTRY SOCIALIST PARTY

Health secretary Wes Streeting is reportedly considering reintroducing Private Finance Initiatives (PFIs) to fund infrastructure spending in the NHS. Scrapped by Tory chancellor Philip Hammond in 2018 because they are such a rip-off, bringing them back would enable big business to profit even more from our health service.

Brought in by Tory prime minister John Major, PFIs were part of a raft of privatisation measures introduced into the NHS, expanded upon massively by Tony Blair and his New Labour government. Private companies compete to fund hospital building projects, locking them into long-term debt and massive interest repayments, plus additional charges and fees to the NHS. NHS trusts in England with current PFI debt will have to pay back on average almost eight times the initial capital put into their trusts!

In my city, we know the impact of PFI well. The PFI scheme at University Hospital Coventry & Warwickshire - commonly referred to as Walsgrave runs until 2042. By then it will have 'hoovered up' all local health services in Warwickshire.

Hospital parking charges

PFI's most visible impact is with the parking charges. They cost staff over £10 a day in parking, if they aren't lucky enough to get a workplace pass. And patients and their visitors have to pay through the nose.

Walsgrave's NHS trust takes the most from car parking charges of anywhere in England; it's free in Scotland and Wales. Yet nurses and junior doctors were forced out on strike in 2022 because of being underpaid, with some being forced to rely on food banks.

Coventry Socialist Party members have been working towards the 15,000 signatures needed to force a debate in the Labour-led city council, currently on 12,000.

We need to kick out private profit from our NHS. Cancel the PFI deals and the debts - the vultures have had too much. And put the whole health industry - including the big pharmaceutical companies and suppliers - under democratic workers' control.

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Bush, Cameron, Corbyn, and a PCS socialist led me to Socialist Party

CLAIRE HICKSON
CARDIFF CENTRAL SOCIALIST PARTY

My father was from a working-class neighbourhood in Hartford, Connecticut, USA, and my mum is from a factory town 45 minutes away. I grew up in a political household, Democrats to the core.

I later moved to Washington, DC, and was involved in a number of large protests during the George Bush years. We called it "the dark times". Little did we know that sadly darker times would come.

I came to the UK and settled in Cardiff not long before David Cameron was elected Tory prime minister in 2010. I joined the Labour Party.

I slowly became disillusioned with Labour. I felt they politely disagreed with the Tories, and did not hold them to account.

Jeremy Corbyn was a real breath of fresh air. A Labour leader that said what he thought, and stood up for what he believed in.

Of course, Corbyn scared the hell out of Tory public-school fat-cat toffs,

and he had to be discredited and destroyed. I quit Labour.

I joined the PCS union when I started work. On a PCS training course, I met Socialist Party member Eilonwy Awen, who is instrumental in getting me here today. We had a few chats, and she invited me to a Socialist Party meeting.

I felt welcomed from the start. The topic for the evening and what people said chimed so much with my own ideas. I went home on cloud nine!

I joined a short time later. Not far off a year later, I help organise our Socialist Party campaign stalls and promote the Socialist paper.

Cardiff Central Socialist Party has gone from strength to strength. We have very active and inspiring members, multiple stalls a week, out there talking to the public about issues, working with the trade union council, standing on picket lines, and discussing what we stand for as socialists.

I urge you to find your local Socialist Party branch and get involved. I am so glad I did. Solidarity.



Join the fightback
JOIN THE SOCIALISTS
● Visit socialistparty.org.uk/join or call 020 8988 8777
● or text your name and postcode to 07958 032 071
to find out more about joining us today!

Day in the life of an apprentice chef

I mainly work evenings, I get up at about 10am to enjoy my day before work starts at 2pm.

When I get in, I get changed. I prep vegetables: steaming and blitzing, carrots and cauliflower. Then I do desserts: making the mix for a crumble or a pie. The head chef and management are having a go at me every ten minutes, swearing. Nothing's ever right.

You'll do something to the best of your abilities; nothing's ever good enough. And your best won't do.

Holiday is a luxury that needs to be prepared for well in advance. Even then it is an issue.

Working in hospitality sacrifices all forms of a social life, working every evening until everyone has gone home or it is too late to go out. Even

if you have the time, you're too exhausted to go out anyway.

During service, it's a fast-paced stressful environment where everyone snaps, swears and shouts at each other with no room for error or slowness, working as a team to ensure all dishes are sent out hot in a timely manner.

After service comes the close, which can take upwards of an hour and a half even in a small kitchen. We ensure everything is spotless: all fridges are clean, and any food required is properly disposed of or ready for tomorrow. When you get out you have no energy left to do anything in the evening.

In the event of sickness there is an expectation to work unless you physically can't. Even then you are still



GUAVATRAIN/CC

TESSA WARRINGTON
LEICESTER SOCIALIST PARTY

Just 36 fossil fuel companies extract fuel responsible for 50% of global carbon emissions, new data has shown. The Carbon Majors report revealed that fossil fuel giants produced fuel which pumped more than 20 billion tonnes of CO₂ into the atmosphere in 2023, the hottest year on record at the time. More worrying still; they're not slowing down. Of the 169 active producers included in the study, 93 increased production. In the same year, ExxonMobil, Chevron, Shell, and BP grossed profits of over \$100 billion.

Meanwhile, millions of lives are being destroyed around the world as a direct result of climate change. The LA wildfires, flooding in Valencia and across Eastern Europe, the worst hurricane season in the US since Katrina 20 years ago. Extreme weather events have claimed hundreds of lives and devastated many thousands more, just in the past year. More refugees have now been displaced by climate change than conflict and war.

Unless global emissions fall by 45% by 2030, rising temperatures are unlikely to halt at 1.5°C, the internationally agreed target set by the Paris Agreement in 2015. Yet investment

company BlackRock has sunk over \$1 billion into fossil fuel ventures from their 'sustainable' fund, and oil juggernaut BP just axed almost \$4 billion from green investments and announced 8,000 job cuts! There is no will from those profiting hand over fist to address the environmental crisis in any serious way and, no matter how many COP conferences are held, this will not change.

In Britain, Keir Starmer has already rowed back on Labour's £28 billion climate fund pledge and is allowing the drilling of new oil fields adjacent to existing fields. All while workers still struggle to cover fuel costs after the 54% price cap increase in 2022 added £40 billion to energy bills. Over 6.7 million households now experience fuel poverty in the UK.

Not only are fossil fuels not being replaced with green energy but emissions are on the rise and globally workers are paying the price - with our bills, jobs, homes and lives.

We need socialism

A socialist plan of production would see the energy companies brought into public ownership under democratic workers' control and management. There would be no need to compensate the fat-cat shareholders who have extorted enough; only small shareholders and pension funds.

In this way, jobs and wages could be guaranteed for workers in the energy industry, and at the same time those with the knowledge and skills could begin the wholesale retooling of production towards renewable energy. It could also see an immediate reduction in bills to customers by scrapping the extortionate subsidies currently paid out to the energy giants.

Workers' green transition

There already exists a huge appetite for such a plan with 66% of the UK public supporting renationalisation of the energy companies. It is a vital task of the trade unions in this sector to develop and use proposals for alternative green energy production as a tool to organise workers to fight. It is clear, however, that to be fully able to reorientate the resources of society towards the decarbonisation of the economy, a socialist plan of production would require democratic planning not just of energy but of all major industries.

As a global problem, climate change ultimately necessitates a global solution, impossible on the basis of profit-driven, competition-based capitalism. Only by fighting for socialist change and genuine workers' collaboration can the interests of humanity and the planet be given precedence over the destructive greed of private profit.



ALLAGASH BREWING/CC

LEAH, APPRENTICE CHEF

May elections: your chance to stick it to Starmer!

The May local elections will be the first major electoral challenge for Keir Starmer's Labour government. Already, there is huge anger at continued austerity and attacks on working-class people. The millions who go to the ballot box on 1 May – in dozens of county council elections – deserve the chance to vote for an anti-cuts, anti-war, socialist alternative.

The Socialist Party will be standing candidates as part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC). Anyone prepared to stand by TUSC's six core policies can use the banner, clearly identifying themselves as a trade unionist and socialist (see tusc.org.uk).



North London by-election challenge to cutting Labour council

DAVID KAPLAN
CAMDEN AND HARINGEY SOCIALIST PARTY

Haringey Labour council has agreed to hike council tax by 5%, and continues to cut services and attack its workers. Teachers are striking against class size increases and housing maintenance workers in Unite the Union are in a long-standing dispute with the council.

For years, the Labour council has been carrying out cuts demanded

by the previous Tory government – amounting to around £143 million a year since 2010. Now, facing financial crisis, it has applied for 'exceptional financial support', worth up to £37 million, from the Labour government. But this comes with strings attached: it allows for capitalisation of council assets, and for extra borrowing.

The projected cumulative funding gap by 2029-30 is set to reach £121 million. The council needs to

be fighting the government for more funding.

It should be setting a council budget based on need – one that maintains and restores vital services, and that can meet the demands of workers in the borough. For example, by paying the maintenance workers the estimated £6,000 they have lost through pay freezes over the last ten years.

That's what the Socialist Party will be campaigning for in the St Ann's ward by-election on 10 April. The by-election was called after the resignation of Labour councillor, Tammy Hymas, citing disagreements over cuts, green issues and the Labour council's stance on Palestine. She also said that she had faced abuse and threats for being a transgender woman in politics.

● **Socialist Party member David Kaplan will stand as part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition**



Nuneaton socialist election challenge to cut across support for the right

JOSH LOVERIDGE
NUNEATON SOCIALIST PARTY

Britain First reared their ugly heads in Nuneaton at the start of March, attempting to capitalise on growing working-class anger and frustration. Their vitriolic rhetoric was loudly dispelled by the presence of several hundred counter-protesters, including many trade union activists and other local people, making it clear that their far-right ideology is not welcome in our town.

With placards held high reading "Jobs, homes and services, not racism", we made clear that the issues

facing working-class communities are caused by austerity and capitalist politicians acting in the interests of the bosses.

To support our message, we arranged our megaphone as an open public platform, which had contributions from Socialist Party members, trade unionists and others.

Far-right groups like Britain First, as well as the right-populist Reform UK, offer no solution to the problems facing working-class people. Their policies divide the working class in the service of the super-rich bosses.

The history of ex-mining towns

like Nuneaton is proof that the working class is stronger together. The cycle of austerity and privatisation has left many in deindustrialised towns scared and angry, desperate to fight back. We need to organise that anger and discontent to fight for a working-class socialist alternative, cutting across support for the far right. That includes putting up a working-class alternative in elections.

Socialist Party members are standing in 12 wards in the Nuneaton and Bedworth area for the upcoming May council elections, as part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition.

HELP US STAND SOCIALIST ELECTION CANDIDATES TRADE UNIONIST AND SOCIALIST COALITION

TUSC AGAINST CUTS

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

Doncaster campaign for a socialist mayor kicks off



STEVE MERRIMAN
DONCASTER SOCIALIST PARTY

Doncaster's campaign for a socialist mayor was launched on 18 February at a public meeting addressed by Dave Nellist, the former workers' MP on a worker's wage, who is now chair of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC). As well as standing Socialist Party member Andy Hiles for mayor, TUSC will be standing several candidates in the May council elections too.

We have already spoken to hundreds of people out campaigning in the town centre. One Romanian man, who had mistakenly believed that a party called 'Labour' looked after the interests of the working class, was shocked by Labour's withdrawal of pensioners' winter fuel allowance and the withdrawal of foreign aid to fund wars, all while refusing to introduce a wealth tax that would raise £25 billion a year.

On one stall, 100% of those I met who had voted Labour last year grimaced and wholly agreed that Labour has betrayed the working class since coming to power. The Donny

working man and woman definitely feel Sir Keir and chancellor Rachel Reeves are making 'hard' decisions that protect the well-off minority at the expense of the hard-pressed majority. "They will pay for it in the ballot box", one said.

I also attended a Unite-organised protest outside Labour energy minister Ed Miliband's Doncaster North constituency office, campaigning for the restoration of winter fuel payments. Retired Unite members wore dressing gowns, woolly hats and scarves, and carried hot water bottles to emphasise the vulnerable pensioners' dilemma over heating or eating. Miliband declined to meet us. His office was locked with lights off.

We built a bonfire of energy bills and chanted about a disingenuous government, a cowardly MP, a privileged knight of the realm, and Rachel 'flexible with the facts on her CV' Reeves.

Socialist Party members will be supporting the TUSC stand, fighting to make sure the people of Doncaster have the choice at the ballot box to vote for jobs, homes and services, and against racism.

EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS BILL: UNIONS MUST FIGHT TO STRENGTHEN WORKERS' RIGHTS

ROB WILLIAMS
SOCIALIST PARTY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Trade union leaders have been lining up to extol Labour's Employment Rights Bill, as secretary of state for business and trade Jonathan Reynolds gave an update on its progress through Parliament.

But inherent in the responses of the right-wing union leaders is agreeing with Keir Starmer's mantra of partnership between unions and mythical 'better and responsible' employers, conniving in attempting to pull the wool over workers' eyes that Starmer's Labour will deliver for them.

TUC general secretary Paul Nowak said: "This Bill will deliver better pay, security and respect for millions of workers up and down the country... This is about creating a modern economy that works for workers and business alike – and stopping decent employers being undercut by the bad."

Unison general secretary Christina McAnea said: "This comprehensive package of measures is what working people and decent employers have been waiting for."

This at a time when it is being reported that Labour is being lobbied hard by big business and their representatives, including in Starmer's parliamentary Labour Party, to water down the very limited commitments given during the general election last year. That package of so-called improvements to workers' rights was originally called 'The New Deal for Workers' but had morphed into 'Labour's Plan to Make Work Pay' by the time of the election.

This was a far more accurate definition of Starmer's plans. But in any period, and particularly at this crisis-ridden time, workers and bosses will have very different ideas about how work can be made to pay, or actually 'who' will pay for it?

Workers pay the price

As we predicted, Starmer is clear that it is workers who will pay the price, as the economy stagnates, the cost-of-living squeeze endures and he tightens government budgets.

While there are some reforms granted in the Bill, which are of course welcome, the devil is very much in the detail. And a big thrust of it is to allow major sources of the exploitation of workers to continue.

There are some restrictions to zero-hour contracts but there are enough loopholes that bosses will exploit to continue the blight of precarious employment.

And also, there is no mention in the update of the banning of 'fire and rehire', which had already been given exemptions for companies in 'exceptional' circumstances, which they already claim in terms of falling profits or budget cuts. It is poignant that on the very day that this apparent omission became public, Devon County



Marching in support of sacked P&O workers in 2022 - but Labour have ditched plans to ban 'fire and rehire' PHOTO: PAUL MATTSSON

Council threatened 1,000 of its workers with fire and rehire. Also, at the same time, bin workers in Unite the Union in Birmingham are on all-out strike against the brutal Labour council, who are hiding behind the commissioners sent in by the Tories and remain under Starmer's Labour government.

Anti-union legislation

The Bill does appear to confirm the repeal of Rishi Sunak's minimum service levels (MSL) anti-union legislation. In reality, this was rendered inoperable by the actions of workers in train drivers' union Aslef on LNER at the beginning of last year, when they called five days of strikes in response to the only threatened use of the MSL.

The MSL should nevertheless have been repealed on day one of Starmer's government, with a 160-plus seat majority, as should also have been the case with Cameron's Trade Union Act 2016, with its undemocratic voting thresholds.

But Starmer consciously refused to do this, instead deliberately delaying

legislation so that this year's strike ballots, particularly those in the public sector on a national scale, would have to adhere to the existing 50% thresholds. Jonathan Reynolds's statement indicates that Labour is tying together electronic balloting with the removal of the thresholds through a process that will include the launch of "a working group with trade unions and businesses". This poses the clear danger of diluting the measure and the clear plan to further delay its implementation.

Reynolds has already watered down the repeal of the notice given by unions to employers for industrial action, which was doubled by David Cameron to 14 days from the 7 brought in by Thatcher. Instead it will be now 10 days.

The trade unions must demand that all the Tory anti-union laws – from Thatcher and Major to Cameron, Johnson and Sunak – must be repealed with immediate scrapping of the MSL and the Trade Union Act. The parliamentary means exist to take those steps immediately.

There are a whole series of existing amendments to the bill, including to restore prison officers' right to strike, tabled by John McDonnell. The trade unions should be instructing the MPs who form their parliamentary groups that they are expected to vote for this and any amendment to strengthen the bill, as well as seeking the support of the independent group of MPs headed by Jeremy Corbyn, and others including the three suspended Labour MPs.

But Starmer is increasingly showing, both at home with his austerity plans and also abroad as he fawns over Trump and looks to increase military spending at the expense of welfare for the poorest, that his primary role is to represent the class interests of the capitalists.

Therefore, the unions must reject any attempt at rotten partnership with this Labour government and the bosses, who want to go on the offensive against workers. It is necessary to face up to this reality, and prepare for industrial struggle.

Strike wave

The strike wave of the last few years has shown that workers are prepared to fight. And that concerted action, the biggest for three decades, was a factor that Starmer and Reeves had to take into account when gaining office. But after the pay offers of last summer, nowhere near enough to recoup what has been lost over the last decades, only half that is now on offer accompanied by major cuts.

This also poses the need for the unions to supplement militant industrial action by also building a real fighting political vehicle for workers as an alternative to pro-business New Labour. One that consolidates what is won in workers' struggle and counterposes socialist ownership and planning to capitalist crisis.

MAY DAY GREETINGS 2025

Celebrate international workers' day. Send the Socialist solidarity greetings

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



UCU elections: Victory for socialist Marco Tesei

Left must organise to fight for members

BEA GARDNER
UCU MEMBER

Socialist Party member Marco Tesei has been elected by further education (FE) members across the UK to the National Executive Committee (NEC) of the University and College Union (UCU), joining Duncan Moore who was elected last year.

However, the two groupings most supportive of the general secretary, Jo Grady, won the most NEC seats and all the officer positions. Because NEC terms are two years, and last year left candidates won a large majority, the NEC is now split, with a one-seat majority in favour of those supportive of the general secretary.

Grady supporters now hold a majority of seats on the Further Education and Higher Education Committees (FEC and HEC).

These are important bodies responsible for determining strategy and action. The Grady supporters who now dominate them strongly endorse local action rather than national.

But it would be a mistake to conclude that this was a confidence vote for Grady or that it reflects a lack of willingness to fight.

UCU members in both higher and further education fought hard during the strike wave, but under Grady's leadership the action was paused and delayed. Many members felt more could have been won. There is also frustration among activists at the constant attempts by Grady and those around her to undermine the elected committees of the union and undo decisions.

This was expressed in the NEC and general secretary elections last year. Grady's vote halved and she only

held on by a whisker; meanwhile the NEC was won for the left.

However, a year on, the left on the NEC have not been able to successfully use that position to give a clear lead to members, and in both FE and HE attempts to put forward a fighting strategy have been overturned by the Grady officialdom.

Clear lead needed

Reflecting the ongoing lack of a clear lead, there was a much lower turnout in this year's elections, with 7,726 fewer votes in the vice president election for example. It was clear from the election addresses that the pro-Grady factions were working together to mobilise their vote.

But for a layer of members, the fighting programme of the Socialist Party was able to cut through.

There were also candidates from the UCU Left, which is dominated

by the SWP (Socialist Workers Party), and a growing number of non-aligned lefts.

For the two FE seats up for election this year, Marco called for a vote for sitting UCU Left NEC member Sean Vernell, and approached all left candidates to discuss how we could work together to maximise the left vote for the remaining contested seat. Unfortunately, no agreement was reached.

Grady and her supporters may be intent on holding back struggle, but they are not immune to the pressure from UCU members, that will only increase as the scale of the post-16 education funding crisis is more deeply felt. It is essential that the left NEC members now organise to help maximise that counter-pressure.

There is a clear need for a genuine, democratic broad left across all levels of the union, with a fighting programme.



Marco Tesei marching with UCU members against the slaughter in Gaza

Socialist to stand for Usdaw deputy general secretary

SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBERS IN USDAW

Following the announcement that the two senior elected officials in retail and distribution union Usdaw, general secretary Paddy Lillis and deputy general secretary Dave McCrossen, are both retiring in July, the Usdaw Broad Left met to discuss its approach to the elections.

The Broad Left has decided to write an open letter to both general secretary candidates to ask where they stand on the key issues (see below) and to stand Socialist Party member Scott Jones in the deputy general secretary election.

The campaign will enable us to put forward the fighting programme that members desperately need. With no incumbent candidates standing in these elections, the debate about the future of the union will be vital.

Scott is standing on the following Broad Left programme:

- Defend terms and conditions, as well as fighting for at least a £15-an-hour minimum wage, and to end lower youth rates of pay
- Fight store closures and job losses, up to and including campaigning for nationalisation to save jobs
- Organise the unorganised, build vibrant campaigns on pay and working conditions to organise workers in the discounters and gig economy
- No to 'partnership approaches' which only benefit the bosses - restore the right of members to vote on pay offers in Tesco retail
- For a democratic and accountable union - publish

regular comprehensive executive council reports accessible to all members

- For a DGS on a worker's wage
- For an anti-austerity political voice for workers. Fight for an anti-austerity strategy against the retreats of Starmer and the Blairites

Nominations are open now and end on 11 April. Scott's nomination details are: Name Scott Jones, membership number 01512958, branch C160.

- For more information search Usdaw Broad Left on social media.
- Read more at socialistparty.org.uk: 'Udaw elections: A chance to transform the union'



Scott at Tesco HQ fighting victimisation of union reps

Birmingham bin workers go all-out against Labour council

BIRMINGHAM SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBERS

As we go to press, bin worker members of Unite in Birmingham have escalated their battle to all-out action.

As Unite national lead Onay Kasab told the press, the threat to cut wages by up to £8,000 is "abominable".

Birmingham's Labour council has voted through a further £148 million of cuts to local services. To do this they walked past a mass demonstration of bin workers, families from Harborne Day Centre, and others.

This is the consequence of over a decade of Tory austerity - with Birmingham losing £1 billion since 2010 - and council mismanagement. The Labour-controlled council carried out the Tories' dirty work while saying it had no choice.

But now we have a Labour government and the savage cuts continue! Unelected Tory commissioners are still in the city and Birmingham

assets and land are being sold off like a cash cow.

Birmingham Socialist Party says:

- Bin workers lead the way - for coordinated strike action to defend jobs, pay and services. Bring together community campaign groups to protest with the workers on the picket lines
- Build for a Saturday protest, called by the local trade union branches to mobilise their members and council staff. Use it to launch a mass campaign for council funding from central government
- Starmer's Labour doesn't stand for us - organise for the 2026 Birmingham council elections. For trade unionists, socialists and community campaigners to stand their own anti-cuts worker candidates. We need a new mass workers' party!



PHOTO: BIRMINGHAM SOCIALIST PARTY

Marion Lloyd gets 71 nominations for PCS president

Stage set for battle for a fighting PCS union

PCS MEMBER IN DWP

Socialist Party member and Broad Left Network (BLN) chair Marion Lloyd has won 71 nominations from branches to stand for national president of the Public and Commercial Services Union (PCS).

Marion is neck and neck with her opponent, the outgoing president Martin Cavanagh. She is heading up a full list of campaigning National Executive Committee (NEC) candidates. This is the chance for PCS members to vote for a serious, fighting and democratic leadership.

On top of the threat to 10,000 jobs, now Starmer's Labour government threatens "radical reforms" to the civil service, including that it would be "smaller" (ie more job cuts), with staff moved to work outside London. Minister for the Cabinet Office Pat McFadden is likely to attempt to bring in performance-related pay for senior civil servants. We know this will trickle down to extra pressure on our members and is the thin end of the wedge.

All this further stresses the need for a fighting leadership of the PCS, that represents over 190,000 civil servants and outsourced government workers.

The position of president is key, as it is currently being used by the misnamed Left Unity grouping (which stands in PCS elections as part of the Democracy Alliance), to block the democratically elected majority of the union's National Executive Committee (NEC).

Socialist Party members are part of the BLN, which is working with a broad range of reps from across the union to push for a fighting campaign on pay, jobs and working conditions. This coalition of the BLN and others won a 19-16 majority on the NEC in the 2024 elections, when members ousted Left Unity/Democracy Alliance from their majority. But we have



Marion Lloyd (centre) on the outsourced workers' picket line

been blocked in implementing any major policies due to rulings of the national president Martin Cavanagh, who is a member of Left Unity.

Leadership needed

In the March NEC meeting, general secretary Fran Heathcote, also a Left Unity member, reported back on discussions with the Cabinet Office. There were no significant steps forward but she proposed no plans to build a serious campaign to combat not just future attacks on our members, but also the currently tabled job cuts in various government departments, including the Ministry of Defence, and the ongoing dispute between outsourced staff and their private employers (despite the promise by this government to be the most insourcing government in a generation).

Left Unity/Democracy Alliance will not provide the leadership we need. In the 2023 strike wave, when the Tories offered a paltry non-consolidated, taxed £1,500 payment, the Left Unity/Democracy Alliance leadership called off all strikes, cancelled reballots and cancelled

the strike levy that funded targeted action. This year, they have not taken a step forward to build the campaign needed. The BLN has pushed every step of the way to begin the fight on pay, pensions, jobs, hybrid working, and at each step they have been blocked by Cavanagh and Heathcote, with the support of the Left Unity/Democracy Alliance minority on the executive.

The choice in this election is between two groups: one that wants to mobilise the membership to win, and one that has shown it does not.

Vote Marion Lloyd for president, and vote for BLN-supported candidates in the NEC and group executive elections!

- PCS national elections take place 16 April - 9 May by postal ballot
- PCS group elections take place 24 April - 13 May by electronic ballot

to oppose all cuts and council tax rises and to mount a campaign to press Starmer's Labour government to restore the funding lost during austerity.

TUSC opposes the use of these tactics by employers. We will stand with the council workers at their lobby of the council on 12 March; and we will support their picket lines if they strike to defend their rights.

Devon Socialist Party has called a public meeting in Exeter and invites all affected council workers along with other workers in the city to come and discuss how we fight back against these attacks by Tories and Labour; including by campaigning for a new party to fight for our class.

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NSSN bulletin: shopstewards.net

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Fighting ideas got a response

MARCO TESEI
NEWLY ELECTED TO UCU NEC (PERSONAL CAPACITY)

That now makes two Socialist Party members on UCU's executive body - this time last year we had not even one!

These are alarming times for post-16 educators. With deeper and deeper crisis and the Labour government intensifying austerity, we anticipate more attacks on our livelihoods, working conditions and quality of life generally.

A determined political as well as industrial fightback against the bosses is now more urgent than ever.

With all its unfulfilled promises for workers and bamboozling talk of 'partnership' between government, employers and trade unions, Labour is frankly taking UCU members for a ride. And UCU's leadership is covering for that. With underfunding and cuts raining down, while the government backs the business elites to the hilt, there is no conceivable 'partnership' between workers and

the bosses and government. It is their against us. Simple!

I was an outsider of the six candidates contesting two UK-elected seats, unknown in the wider union. But the pro-working class, anti-bosses programme I stood on was clearly popular with UCU members.

Like other left candidates, we in the Socialist Party emphasised the need to build for national strike action to win the union's 'New Deal For FE', which includes the demand for a binding national bargaining framework for our sector.

But our programme also called for FE colleges to be brought back under public democratic ownership, and for the fat-cat CEOs and unelected corporate directors to be booted out.

It also linked the fight against the far right and racism to the fight, led by the trade unions, against the austerity fuelling them - in other words, to the demand for jobs, homes and public services for all.

Our programme called for UCU's leadership to approach the MPs in

parliament who might champion our interests, including Jeremy Corbyn, the Independent Alliance, and suspended Labour MPs - instead of just hoping for a crumb or two more from Starmer and Reeves. That approach, along with action, are the best ways to put pressure on these two austerity-mongers and start to build a new pro-worker political voice!

In my canvassing outside colleges, including my own West London College, all of these ideas got a response. Lecturers who were either not yet UCU members or only inactive members said our campaign seemed to suddenly 'give a meaning' to their union.

I'd like to thank everyone who supported and campaigned with me. This was a magnificent team effort.

As I wrote in my election address, we are serious about working with others for a fighting union - to strive to win a left majority on the NEC in order to become the truly combative union Starmer's Labour fears.



Scan here for the slate of fighting left candidates for the NEC

Join the fightback

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

JOIN THE SOCIALISTS

- Visit socialistparty.org.uk/join
 - or call 020 8988 8777
 - or text your name and postcode to 07958 032 071
- to find out more today!

HOW THE LABOUR PARTY WAS FORMED

DAVE NELLIST
SOCIALIST PARTY NATIONAL COMMITTEE

Keir Starmer is everyday revealing the extent to which he is determined to govern in the interests of the capitalist bosses. His party, the Labour Party, was founded by the trade unions 125 years ago, but it is today completely dominated by the pro-capitalist leadership of him and others.

Any democratic channels the working class had to apply its pressure on the leadership, through the trade unions and party structures, have been removed. For instance, despite the 2022 Labour conference supporting the motion from the Communication Workers Union to renationalise Royal Mail, in December 2024, Starmer's Labour agreed its sale to a Czech billionaire. Unite the Union convinced the 2024 Labour Conference to support the continuation of the pensioners' Winter Fuel Allowance – the Labour leadership has refused to do that and is preparing further welfare cuts.

Formed by unions

The Labour Party was formed by the trade union and working-class movement, attempting to build a force that would represent the interests of working people, against the capitalist class and its political parties.

125 years ago, on 27 February 1900, 129 delegates representing 570,000 members in 41 trade unions and seven trade councils came together in Memorial Hall, London, to form the Labour Representation Committee, which later became the Labour Party. The meeting also included representatives from three socialist organisations: the Independent Labour Party, representing 13,000 members; the Social Democratic Federation, 9000; and the Fabian Society, 861.

The 1900 founding was just one milestone on the course of the working class struggling for a political voice, independent of the established Liberal and Tory Parties.

Thirteen years earlier, the question of challenging the dominance in Parliament by parties representing the employers and landed aristocracy had spilled into the 1887 Trades

Union Congress (TUC) when James Keir Hardie, then a young delegate representing Scottish miners, proposed forming an independent workers' party. He faced fierce opposition from Liberal-affiliated delegates who argued such a move would split the 'progressive vote' and benefit the Tories. This 'lesser-evilism' argument continues to echo down the ages.

The preceding years, 1873 to 1896 had been ones of economic downturn, known as the Great Depression (before the 1930s redefined that term). It exposed the limitations of the then existing union-employer collaboration. Fredrich Engels wrote in 1885 that the English working class would lose its privileged position as Britain's industrial monopoly declined, predicting this would revive socialist politics.

Britain faced mounting competition from Germany and America in key industries like textiles and iron, while cheaper agricultural imports from North America and Australia devastated agricultural prices.

Strike wave

The years 1888-92 saw a spectacular wave of strikes by previously unorganised, unskilled and semi-skilled workers. 'New Unionism' emerged as a more militant, inclusive trade unionism prioritising direct action.

Gas workers led by Will Thorne won a victory in 1889, establishing the National Union of Gas Workers and General Labourers (which became today's GMB). Ben Tillet led the London dock strike later the same year. Both disputes brought previously unorganised workers into the movement under socialist leadership. Trade union membership doubled from 900,000 in 1889 to two million in 1890, with 60 new trade councils established nationwide.

The Eight-Hour League was formed in 1884 to fight for legislation of an eight-hour workday across all industries. Its first secretary was Tom Mann, who later became a leader of both the engineering and transport unions.

But while gas workers had won the eight-hour day in London, other strikes for shorter working hours were defeated, reinforcing the need for a political solution.



Labour leaders in 1906, including Keir Hardie (front second right)



Coventry bin workers on strike against a Labour council, 2022
COVENTRY SP

Chartism and the struggle for male suffrage

The late 19th century witnessed significant social and political upheaval in Britain. The Industrial Revolution that began in the mid-18th century had created a vast working class without any political influence in Parliament.

The dominant parliamentary political parties - Conservatives and Liberals - represented different segments of the ruling class. The Tories spoke for the landowning interests, the Liberals for the rising capitalist class.

The division manifested in their policies. The Tories supported protectionism, particularly for the landowners and for agriculture; the

Liberals advocated free trade to benefit the industrial capitalists. The Tories resisted electoral reform as the landed gentry and aristocracy they represented benefited from the existing system. The Liberals meanwhile supported extending the franchise to more men – though primarily as a strategy to prevent revolution from below.

The Chartist movement led the main nineteenth-century struggle for voting rights, though their aims extended beyond suffrage. They wanted political representatives who would fight for a 10-hour day, trade union rights and against the hated 'Poor Law' (that forced those in need into

workhouses, which the Chartists called 'prisons for the poor').

The "People's Charter" in 1838 had six key demands: the right to vote for all men over 21; equal-sized constituencies; secret ballots; annual parliamentary elections; removal of property qualifications for MPs; and payment for MPs to enable working-class representation.

These demands enjoyed massive popular support. Petitions with millions of signatures were submitted to Parliament in 1839 and 1842. However, the movement reached its zenith with the third petition in 1848, just as revolutionary movements swept across Europe and the same year that

Marx and Engels published the Communist Manifesto.

Marxists look at the conditions that create such social movements as rooted in objective conditions, particularly economic ones. However, their success or failure depends heavily on subjective conditions – the quality of leadership, the strength of organisations, and the clarity of ideas that guide them. The Communist Manifesto sought to address those problems.

British capitalism's global dominance was waning in the second half of the 19th century. In its heyday, substantial profits allowed for concessions on wages and working hours to maintain industrial peace. A layer of privileged trade union leaders, particularly among skilled workers, benefited more from defending the status quo than challenging it. Many

union officials held membership in the Liberal Party, promoting an early version of "partnership politics" – the misleading notion that capital and labour have fundamental common interests.

Despite the waning of the Chartists, demands for voting rights wouldn't go away. Tens of thousands were involved in demonstrations for the right to vote in the 1860s, which forced the Disraeli Tory Government in the 1867 Reform Act to make concessions in extending the vote to male workers who owned or rented property in the towns – fearing a growing mood that could echo the revolutions of 20 years earlier. Although that doubled the numbers with a vote, it still excluded women, agricultural workers, and many others from voting.

MED – LESSONS FOR TODAY



Above: Sixth-form teachers in National Education Union on strike, 2025

KEN MCCALL



1889 London dock strike

Hardie's motion for a legal eight-hour day at the 1889 TUC Congress was narrowly defeated, but later passed in 1890.

Strikes and political struggles led to various independent labour organisations forming that began fielding candidates in local and national elections, challenging the dominance of the established parties.

Workers' experience accelerated understanding of the need for workers' political independence, not least the actions of employers who were members of the Liberal Party.

At Manningham Mills in Bradford, just before Christmas 1890, the Liberal employers imposed a 33% wage cut. The mainly unorganised female workers went on strike for nearly six months. The workers were starved back to work, and the strike was defeated, but the workers went on to form the Bradford Labour Union.

In the General Election in 1892, dockers' leader Tillett stood for the Bradford Labour Union and came third on 30.2%, only 600 votes behind the winning Liberal candidate, a local mill owner!

That election saw nine independent workers' candidates with three

elected: Hardie in West Ham South, seamans' leader Havelock Wilson in Middlesbrough and John Burns in Battersea – but all these candidates went into the election promoted by separate organisations.

The Independent Labour Party (ILP) was formed in January 1893, bringing together the Bradford Labour Union, Hardie's Scottish Labour Party, trade unions and socialist organisations. Hardie was elected Chair.

Born from struggle

While not explicitly socialist, its platform included collective ownership of production, distribution and exchange. However, according to Engels, the key significance was not whether it had socialism in its name but 'that it had been born out of class struggle and was a political product of unionism.'

The 1891 TUC rejected Hardie's proposal for a penny levy on every trade union member to fund workers' candidates. It was defeated by 200 votes to 93. A year later, it was passed.

The 1893 and 1894 Congresses passed resolutions demanding unions only support candidates pledged to "the collective ownership

of production, distribution, and exchange."

Increased employer offensives and court rulings restricting union rights in the late 1890s led to the 1899 TUC motion for a special conference on workers' political representation. The motion's sponsors were the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants, today's RMT, and the National Union of Dock Labourers, today's Unite. That conference established the Labour Representation Committee (LRC) in February 1900, uniting a coalition of trade unions, socialist societies, and cooperatives.

While the LRC's leadership was initially dominated by reformist individuals who had not fully broken from the capitalist Liberal Party, its formation was nonetheless a significant step towards a class-conscious workers' party.

Socialists' role

The idea of an independent workers' party had been championed for decades by socialist thinkers and activists. Engels had argued in 1881 that workers must stop being the Liberal Party's "tail" and elect "men of their own order". He explained that the working class needed to prepare itself for taking economic and political power for a democratically run society. Forming an independent workers' party would be a crucial step in this preparation, allowing workers to use their collective power to advance their interests.

The LRC became the Labour Party in 1906, though you couldn't actually join it as an individual member until 1918 – for its first 18 years until then, it was a coalition of trade unions and socialist societies.

That coalition was broad and included socialists, Marxists and reformists, such as those in the Fabian Society. However, it became an arena within which political arguments for socialism and the different policies and tactics to achieve it could be debated.

In the first election it contested, in October 1900, the LRC supported 15 worker candidates, four of whom were general secretaries of trade unions. Only Keir Hardie in Merthyr Tydfil and Richard Bell (general secretary of the rail workers) in Derby were elected.

A turning point in the struggle for independent working-class representation came when, the following year, the Taff Vale Railway Company successfully sued the rail workers' union for alleged losses and damages during a strike. The House of Lords, then the highest court, held unions were liable for financial losses and damages caused by strikes. The union was ordered to pay £23,000 in damages plus costs. This decision made it nearly impossible for unions to strike without facing financial ruin.

The ruling galvanised the trade unions and led to increased support for the LRC, which was seen as the only viable vehicle for gaining parliamentary representation and defending workers' rights.

At the 1903 LRC conference, there were 65 trade unions affiliated; by 1904, this number had risen to 127.

The initial seven affiliated trade councils rose to 76.

The 1906 general election transformed a 74-seat Tory majority into a Liberal-Labour majority of 271, with 29 Labour MPs elected alongside 24 other trade union candidates elected as Liberals.

This parliamentary bloc of 29 independent workers' MPs forced significant Liberal reforms, including the Trade Disputes Act overturning the Taff Vale judgement and granting unions immunity from legal action in trade disputes. Other reforms included old age pensions, health and unemployment insurance, and free school meals.

The Labour Party's growing influence demonstrated the potential of independent working-class political representation – and while the reforms didn't go as far as unions and socialists would have wanted, they were nevertheless significant. The worried Liberal leader David Lloyd George gave his reasoning for agreeing to social reforms: to prevent a "real cry" for a new party.

Lessons for today

The process of the formation of the Labour Party offers crucial lessons for today's struggles for social and economic justice. Trade union victories, while possible, may be only sectoral and undoubtedly temporary in a capitalist system. Political change is necessary to consolidate general gains such as working hours, health and safety or social reforms such as pensions, health and education services. This consolidation needs an independent political voice for the working class, separate from capitalist parties.

Economic downturns and political struggles can act as catalysts for radicalisation and the development of class consciousness. The Great Depression and the Taff Vale judgment were both pivotal moments in the development of the Labour Party, demonstrating the potential for crises to spur working-class resistance.

The current economic crisis and the Labour Party's rightward shift under Keir Starmer are creating conditions ripe for a renewed push towards independent working-class political representation. As in the late 19th century, the process will likely be complex and uneven. An absence of a working-class alternative leaves a political vacuum that right-wing forces such as Reform UK will seek to fill.

Again, the working class is presented with the historic task of building its own alternative, independent of the establishment parties. And while mass struggle will arise from current crises, creating conditions for such a party to emerge, the role of organised socialists is vital: to assist in speeding up the process, and to fight for a programme for the socialist transformation of society.

● *Dave Nellist was Labour MP for Coventry South East from 1983 to 1992, and a Socialist Party councillor in Coventry from 1998-2012. Today he is the chair of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition*

Peckham takes to streets against gentrification

JAY COWARD
SOUTH EAST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

Local campaign groups Shape and Aylesham Community Action held a protest march of 500 people, the likes of which do not happen often in south London.

Unaffordable

We were opposing private housing firm Berkeley Homes building unaffordable houses and further gentrification of Peckham. Residents were poking their heads out of their flats, banging instruments, tooting horns, and cheering in agreement that their homes are not up for grabs by money-hungry fat cats.

The Socialist Party was out in force too. Interviewing people about why they were there, meeting people interested in our party, and selling our Socialist paper.

Southwark Council is run by Labour. Early into the demo, I had asked to get onto the speakers' running order to share the Socialist Party's view and support. But unfortunately I was told there was, apparently, "no time".

Instead, we watched a Labour councillor – the very people the protest is making demands of – come onto the mic proposing 50% affordable homes in Southwark. But his own Labour council agreed only 35% affordable with Berkeley, which Berkeley

has reduced to just 12%! Campaigners say it should be 100%.

What next?

Despite not being allowed onto their soapbox, we still talked amongst protesters, posing the same question – what next? What about the next private firm that wants to build in a working-class neighbourhood? How can we combat it?

This protest was a win in terms of empowering the working class of south London. But we also need a mass workers' party to fight to protect and restore tenants' rights, build council homes, and wrench the power out of the super-rich into working people. The response to that was unanimously positive.

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

Cruel Crawley Labour pile pressure on struggling families and exhausted workers

BASIL BOWDITCH
CRAWLEY SOCIALIST PARTY AND UNISON MEMBER
(PERSONAL CAPACITY)

Crawley Labour council has voted through another budget that once again shows its unwillingness to stand up to austerity.

Crawley is plagued with a rapidly growing need for temporary accommodation. Instead of publicly campaigning for a return of sufficient government support, Crawley council has decided to pass the cost onto its constituents.

Everything up

Labour is increasing council tax by the maximum 5%, and council rents by almost 4%. Both garage rents and allotment plot charges will increase. The council plans to make at least £400,000 from parking charges by increasing penalty costs.

All this, just for the council to also implement cuts to vital and beloved services, such as ending outreach play services that help many

struggling parents with childcare and provide a safe and educational outlet for many children in low-income households.

One former play bus worker spoke with us on our Socialist Party campaign stall, telling us how she fears for the wellbeing and mental health of many struggling families, who rely on this service.

There are plans to change the council department that I work in – 'neighbourhood services' – parks, green spaces, and street cleaning. There will be a reduction of staff by not filling vacancies. This will add only more pressure to a workforce that has had to pick the slack up after a reduction of seasonal staff during the austerity years.

We have been led to believe that these so difficult decisions to cut services are all unfortunately part of a necessary evil and that councils have a legal obligation to present a balanced budget.

The Socialist Party and the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition

(TUSC) have said how councils can avoid making devastating cutbacks to an already damaged sector. We said Labour councils should resist cuts, linking up with other local authorities to demand that central government bring back adequate funding.

They have a choice

Local residents, along with Socialist Party members from Crawley and Brighton, rallied outside the town hall, with placards and banners at hand – informing those inside that they have a choice, and whatever they decide, will be remembered in coming elections.

We didn't sway the cutting Labour councillors. However, this has not disheartened those in our movement.

We are fighting to bring back services, like the children's play bus. We will continue to encourage and inspire workers in trade unions to join the fight.

If these councillors are not willing to put the people first, then they are not fit to represent us.

Bradford won't forget Labour passing 9.99% council tax rise



IAN DALTON

EUAN THOMAS
BRADFORD SOCIALIST PARTY

Protesters gathered again to rally councillors to vote against the council tax hike. Protesters took up our Socialist Party placards, forming a crowd around the councillors' side entrance.

Socialist Party member Iain Dalton spoke about challenging councillors at the all-out council elections in 2026. But added: "We need to discuss how we can keep the pressure up on them in the meantime."

Greens 9.4% rise

Outrageously, the Green Party proposed its own 9.4% council tax hike. Shouts of "shame" rang out from the demonstrators, as councillors made their way into the chamber.

A group of Acorn housing protesters in the public balcony above interrupted the meeting, unfurling a banner and dropping leaflets over the councillors below. Security and police dispersed protesters.

The Labour tax-rise proposal was passed 46 to 39. Five councillors abstained, including a Green and three Conservatives.

The only Labour councillor to vote against the proposal was GMB union organiser, Joe Wheatley. After, he said he wanted the national Labour government to "do better".

Wheatley's opposition has not been the only case from within Labour. Bingley councillor Marcus Dearden resigned from Labour.

The vote comes after weeks of campaigning, which the Socialist Party has supported. We have organised lots of campaign stalls, and spoken at demonstrations.

Our successful petition was signed over 500 times. As a result, Socialist Party member Tom Gibson was able to speak at the council executive.

Give people a voice

Tom used his platform to give a voice to the hundreds who had signed, and thousands of others who will be forced to endure the financial consequences. "The proposals expect the hard-working people of Bradford to take on the burden of austerity. People will be paying more to get less."

The Socialist Party has been calling for a public meeting, hosted by the organisations that have called protests, to discuss next steps. It's certain that this horrendous attack by Labour politicians is not something these campaigners will forget.

- Bradford Socialist Party has a public meeting on the lessons of the 18-million-strong movement that beat the poll tax
- Tuesday 18 March, 7pm, Jacob's Well, BD1 5RL

Stop Cardiff uni job cuts Vote Aris Prevost for student president

ARIS PREVOST
CARDIFF SOCIALIST STUDENTS CANDIDATE FOR STUDENT UNION PRESIDENT

With the 400 job cuts announced at Cardiff university, I've decided to run for student union president. I am standing as a socialist and as an activist, campaigning to fight back against the cuts.

Uni fees

I'm focusing on issues that affect students directly, such as getting more money in students' pockets, and lobbying the university not to increase tuition fees.

What is the role of our student union? In recent years, motions that have been passed in our annual general meeting (AGM) have been ignored.

We narrowly passed a motion

calling for the end of police stalls in and around the university – 'cops off campus.' While it was passed, it immediately got swapped with a 'review' into the role of police stalls, instead of taking action. Two years on, the police still have stalls in our freshers fair. I'm campaigning to make the student union a proper union, instead of a business.

Outrage

Student elections are normally full of things which do not have a meaningful impact on student lives, like more VK vending machines. But with the backdrop of 400 job cuts, there is an air of outrage. Capturing this rage with a set of policies that resonate with students is key.

We need a socialist education system. We can be the start of something bigger.



Students challenge UCL racism and harassment

UCL SOCIALIST STUDENTS

2025 at University College London (UCL) began with scandal. Video evidence showed Richard Mole – who has since stepped down as director of the School of Slavonic and Eastern European Studies (SSEES) – harassing a student attending a demonstration.

In the video, Mole stated: "I don't wear a mask, because I'm not a

Socialist candidate in Liverpool student election

Hannah Ponting
speaking at Socialist Students conference



HANNAH PONTING
LIVERPOOL STUDENT PRESIDENT CANDIDATE

The upcoming student union elections provide a unique platform for socialist ideas. I am very proud to be standing as the socialist candidate at the University of Liverpool, on an anti-cuts, anti-war platform.

Labour's recent tuition fee hike has made financing university life even harder for students. Our campaign is building the fightback against these increases, and raising the idea that university education should be free for all.

Our campaign is fighting the ongoing cost-of-living crisis, expanding the University of Liverpool's night bus, and saying the university should open its finance books to students and staff. This is particularly important considering uni job cuts across the country, and Liverpool uni's 'voluntary redundancy' scheme.

These policies were decided collaboratively by a group of young socialists on campus. We believed it was

important to choose policies which are nationally relevant, such as building the fightback against tuition fees under a Labour government, as well as policies specific to Liverpool uni, such as expanding the night bus to ensure students have safe and reliable transport home, as well as reinstating the university food pantry, and making access to it much easier.

After the campaign's programme was chosen, we selected our candidate. I am very proud to be that candidate, and to have the opportunity and platform to speak publicly about the issues facing young people today, and raise socialist solutions to these issues.

I have already had the opportunity to speak alongside other candidates at society meetings, as well as being given an amplified social media voice, due to my candidacy. I look forward to further campaign activity to spread these ideas further.

I would encourage other young socialists to stand in their student elections. They provide a brilliant opportunity to spread our ideas on campus.

Join the student fightback
JOIN socialist students
socialiststudents.org.uk/join

Manchester students fighting fee and rent hikes

JUDE BAILEY
MANCHESTER SOCIALIST STUDENTS

The University of Manchester plans to demolish the most affordable and second-largest student accommodation in Fallowfield, and replace it with a prohibitively expensive facility. Universities are choosing to fill their coffers at the expense of students.

Manchester Socialist Students campaign against the plans has been gaining momentum. Many students have related even more to this than to Labour raising tuition fees.

Cost of living

Partly because it is a much greater increase. But, also, with the maintenance loan not being raised, this cost will now come directly from existing students immediately.

Over half of Manchester students juggle at least one job during their studies already. And many work two jobs.

When University of Manchester – one of the city's largest landlords – sets a precedent by doubling rents, it sends a dangerous signal. If it can get away with it, private companies and other student housing providers will feel they can too.



Our public meeting will connect the opposition to the Fallowfield redevelopment to the broader struggle for better university funding and Socialist Students Funding Not Fees campaign. We have extended invitations to local MPs.

We are joining forces with other

campus campaign groups, and trade unionists from UCU, PCS, and Unison. Prior to the meeting, an informal coffee meet-up, preceded by three hours of leafleting, has helped build momentum, drawing in three new students, who were eager to fight for tangible action.

Dudley leisure privatisation suffers knockout blow

DAVE REYNOLDS
BLACK COUNTRY SOCIALIST PARTY

Tory proposals to privatise Dudley leisure centres have been beaten.

Black Country Socialist Party activists attended the demonstration, alongside union members and councillors opposed to the plans. This followed a long-running campaign, supported by Unison union, the trades union council, and a petition of 5,000 signatures.

The clear message is that privatisation would inevitably erode public services in a drive for profit, and that

continued public control ensures provision based on need and benefits the community.

Public money for private profit

After over £25 million investment from public funds in the newly built Duncan Edwards Leisure Centre, along with regeneration of Halesowen Leisure Centre, the idea to hand over control of these public assets to a private company for private profit seems perverse. This type of public provision is the reason we have local councils in the first place.

Neighbouring Sandwell Council

– run by Labour – previously spun off leisure centres to a trust, leading to worse pay and conditions for staff, and is now proposing closure of two venues. It's clear that a party that consistently fights the corner of publicly run, fully funded services, is needed.

Congratulations to everyone who worked hard and contributed to the fight against this privatisation in this victory against the capitalist sharks that were encircling Dudley leisure centres. It seems that the shark repellent spray came in handy again.



WHAT WE STAND FOR

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

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

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

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

WORK, PENSIONS AND BENEFITS

- A trade union struggle for the immediate implementation of the TUC demand of a £15-an-hour minimum wage for all as a step towards a real living wage, without exemptions. For the minimum wage to automatically increase linked to average earnings or inflation, whichever is higher.

- Share out the work. A maximum 32-hour working week with no loss of pay or worsening of conditions. The right to flexible working, under the control of workers not employers. An end to insecure working, for the right to full-time work for all who want it; ban zero-hour contracts.
- All workers to have trade union rates of pay, employment protection, and sickness, parental and holiday rights from day one of employment. End bosses using bogus 'self-employment' as a means to avoid giving workers rights.

- No to austerity through inflation. For all wage rates to be automatically increased at least in line with price rises.
- Open the books of all companies cutting jobs or claiming they can't afford to pay a real living wage. State subsidies, where genuinely needed, for socially-useful small businesses.

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

- Reduce the state retirement and pension age to 55. For decent living pensions.
- Replace universal credit and the punitive benefit system with living benefits for all who need them.

PUBLIC SERVICES

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

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

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

- Renationalise privatised utilities – including rail, mail, water, telecoms and power – under democratic workers' control and management.
- Free, publicly funded and democratically run, good-quality education, available to all at any age. Abolish university tuition fees and write off student debt, end marketisation, and introduce a living grant. No to academisation. For all schools to be under the genuine democratic control of local education authorities, school staff, parents and student organisations.

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

ENVIRONMENT

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

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

- A democratically planned, massively expanded, free to use, publicly owned transport system, as part of an overall plan against environmental pollution.
- For a major, publicly funded, insulation and energy transition plan for existing housing stock.

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

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

DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS

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

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

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

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

- Expand democracy. For the abolition of the monarchy and the House of Lords. For all MPs to be subject to the right of recall by their constituents at any time, and to only receive a worker's wage. For proportional representation and the right to vote at 16.

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

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

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

SOCIALISM AND INTERNATIONALISM

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

- Compensation to be paid only on the basis of proven need, not to the fat cats.
- A democratic socialist plan of production based on the interests of the overwhelming majority of people, and in a way that safeguards the environment.

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

Do you agree? Join the fightback!

JOIN THE SOCIALISTS

- Visit socialistparty.org.uk/join
- or call **020 8988 8777**
- or text your name and postcode to **07958 032 071** to find out more today!

Help fund the fightback!

DONATE TODAY

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DO YOU HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY?

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

THE SOCIALIST INBOX

Unite asked to suspend Labour MPs

Recently I wrote the following letter to the general secretary of my union Unite, Sharon Graham:

Dear Sharon, I am a Unite retired member who, because of this Labour government, has lost my winter fuel allowance.

I am very grateful for your campaign to reinstate this payment. I'm disgusted that my Labour MP, Peter Lamb, a Unite member, voted along with nearly every Labour MP to take this payment away from pensioners who have contributed a lifetime of work and taxes to this country.

Pensioners face freezing or dying because of a Labour government that people believed was for working-class people.

What are the consequences for these Labour MPs' cruel actions? They keep warm at our expense. Workers' taxes pay MPs' energy bills. Unite sponsored MPs should not be allowed to get away with their contempt for pensioners.

I ask you to, at the next Unite Executive Committee, put a motion that says all Unite-sponsored MPs who voted to take away the winter fuel allowance from millions of poor pensioners will be suspended from the union.

I note that Coventry councillors who were Unite members were

suspended from Unite when they refused to support the striking bin workers and used scab labour to try and break the strike.

Labour MPs who are go against union policy should face the same disciplinary action.

Perhaps then, and only then, they might think twice before taking more anti-working class actions.

Please let me know what the EC decides in regard to my requested motion.

Robin Burnham, Crawley, Unite retired member

Robin was a Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition candidate for Crawley at the 2024 general election, fighting for a working-class socialist alternative to Keir Starmer's Labour. At the 2023 Unite rules conference, Socialist Party members supported a motion calling for Unite's political fund to be opened up to allow the union to support candidates outside Labour who support the union's policies. Unfortunately the motion fell. Less than two years on, and less than a year into Starmer's Labour government, how many Unite members would agree that Unite members, and the working class as a whole, need political representatives prepared to fight on our side against the bosses?

NIGERIA SOLIDARITY

NIGERASOLIDARITY.COM

END THE ATTACKS ON DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS!

END THE 'TREASON' TRIAL AND DROP ALL CHARGES AGAINST ADARAMOYE MICHAEL LENIN AND OTHER #ENDBADGOVERNANCE PROTESTERS

PROTEST AT THE NIGERIA HIGH COMMISSION LONDON, WC2N 5BX

WEDNESDAY 26TH MARCH 1PM



PHOTO: VABAWAY MEDIA

Redbridge anti-cuts councillors:

'Send Westminster the bill, not begging letters!'

JAMES IVENS
LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

A growing group of anti-cuts councillors in Redbridge is challenging the ruling Labour group's austerity measures. Labour's attempts to stifle debate also provoked disruption of the east London borough's 27 February budget-setting meeting by community campaigners.

The council could have cancelled £16 million of fresh austerity cuts and taxes with temporary use of reserves. It could have brought proposals to build council homes and compulsory-purchase empty properties, beginning that programme now with borrowing powers. To pay for it – a real fightback.

Redbridge's leadership makes hollow claims of "lobbying the government for a fairer funding system." Anti-austerity councillors are instead calling for the council to work with unions and other local authorities to end austerity now: send Westminster the bill, not begging letters!

CLr Shanell Johnson resigned from Labour in December 2023 in protest at the party's pro-war, pro-austerity politics. A second Labour councillor,

Rosa Gomez, followed suit in June 2024. They are now joined by CLr Kabir Mahmud, ex-Labour since 2022, to make a group of three anti-austerity, anti-war independents.

Shanell challenged the leadership's claim at the meeting that councillors had "ample time" to respond to this austerity budget. With documents presented at extremely short notice and only two hours with a finance officer to digest hundreds of pages, anti-austerity councillors were unable to present a motion with their alternative strategy.

It would have exposed £4.5 million in new cuts, mostly to adult social care and children's and families' services, as well as £1 million in new parking and traffic charges, and over £10 million in increased council tax and reduced council tax relief. And most importantly, it put a strategy to end austerity and fight for funding.

So petrified of democratic debate are the Labour councillors, they even refused to hear a deputation from local campaigners for extending free school meals and restoring bus services.

The Labour leadership faced immediate challenge. An emergency motion from the floor to suspend

Film review: No Other Land

JASPER CHAPLIN
WEST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

Released in 2023, Oscar-winning *No Other Land* is a vignette of the life of Basel Adra, a Palestinian journalist and activist living in Masafer Yatta, a collection of villages south of Hebron, in the West Bank.

The film follows how Adra and his family cope with the constant threat and reality of displacement by the Israeli military from 2019 to 2023. Yuval Abraham, an Israeli journalist and co-director of the documentary, spends time in the community, publishing articles about the displacement to increase visibility.

Starting in 2019, Adra films as the Israeli military displace one of his neighbouring villages, claiming that the Palestinian people have illegally built on military training ground. Masafer Yatta is located in Area C, which comprises the 61% of the West Bank under total Israeli control; Palestinian construction is prohibited in nearly three quarters of this area, with permits nearly impossible to obtain in the remaining land.

The footage of the four years that follow shows the brutality of the displacement: a Masafer Yatta resident is shot and paralysed from the

shoulders down while protecting a power generator, Israeli soldiers rip up water pipes and fill wells with concrete, protests are broken up with stun grenades, and buildings crumple like paper under the claws of heavy-duty excavators.

In the beginning, Adra seems hopeful that activism and documentation of the occupation will force the US to put pressure on Israel to withdraw from the territories. But, as the documentary continues, and Adra and Abraham's efforts gain international notice, nothing changes and the displacement continues.

Adra becomes visibly more demoralised, and the tentative alliance that Masafer Yatta residents have formed with Abraham deteriorates. Where before there was light-hearted ribbing about his country of origin, now there are heated debates with raised voices reflecting resentment that Palestinian Arabs in the occupied territories feel towards Israel.

The inequality is most evident when Abraham says he is going home. He can move freely between areas in the West Bank and return to Jerusalem easily, and is able to use all the roads. When he gets home, there will be no pervasive fear hanging over him that he might be forced to leave. Meanwhile, there is a palpable

feeling of dread and expectancy that follows the residents of Masafer Yatta. Adra is left in his settlement, which is illegal under Israeli occupation and at risk of demolition, with severe limits on his freedom of movement elsewhere in the territories. He cannot stay and he cannot go.

No Other Land is an emotional gut-punch and an authentic portrayal of life under occupation. It gives insight into one small part of a protracted social conflict that has been ongoing since the late 19th century.

However, because of its focus on the very human narratives within, which are absolutely vital to mitigate the dehumanisation of Palestinians, any in-depth political analysis is left out.

In the wake of the ceasefire announcement in January, all eyes are on Gaza. But in the West Bank, the occupation continues. Only independent working class action and organisation can offer a route forwards for the Palestinian masses and workers in Israel, to fight for socialist change across the Middle East and worldwide.

Like what you've read?

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Lobbying Redbridge Council PHOTO: SOCIALIST PARTY

Save our local bus services

LIZ MARTINS
SAVE OUR LOCAL BUS SERVICES CAMPAIGN GROUP

Campaigners in north east London are fighting to defend our bus services. Transport for London's (TfL) divisive and discriminatory imposed changes to services severely affect our daily lives. This includes scrapping the 549 bus running from South Woodford to Loughton every 90 minutes, as well as a redesign of the routes that includes a major reduction of frequency for the W14, and route changes for the W12 and W13, rendering the services unreliable.

We understand that TfL is making changes across London, focused on keeping the most profitable routes, disregarding people's ability to manage on reduced or withdrawn routes, especially the most vulnerable.

Unbelievably, despite TfL failing to listen to us, the government is citing it as an example of the government's promise "to allow every community to take back control of local bus services", included as part of its

Bus Services Bill, currently passing through parliament.

We say: give us a genuine democratic say over our bus services. Residents need buses that are frequent, reliable and regular!

Our aim is to get 10,000 signatures on our petition, as a first step towards 100,000 to get our plight raised in Parliament.

- Sign online: change.org/p/save-local-bus-routes-bus-for-local-residents
- Watch our campaign video search: *'A Bus Route Change DISASTER-Documentary'* on YouTube

Protest at Mayor's Question Time

• **Thursday 20 March - 9.30am protest, 10am-1pm questions, 1-2pm protest**

- **City Hall, Kamal Chunchie Way, E16 1ZE**



Turkey: Öcalan calls for the Kurdistan Workers Party to dissolve itself

For the building of mass workers' parties across the region

KENAN BATU

After four decades of brutal conflict, the imprisoned leader of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), Abdullah Öcalan, has called on the organisation to lay down its arms and dissolve.

His speech, delivered both in Kurdish and Turkish, was read out by a delegation from the pro-Kurdish Dem Party, formerly known as the People's Democratic Party, HDP. Giant screens were installed in Van and Diyarbakir to broadcast the historic message.

After decades of war, repression and terror, Öcalan's call has brought a glimmer of hope for the Kurds that the bloodshed that claimed over 40,000 lives might now finally come to an end.

But for many Kurds, this call could also be seen as an ideological capitulation and a betrayal to the Kurdish cause, especially if it doesn't extract any meaningful concessions for democratic rights.

The statement comes after a series of significant developments in Turkey, starting with remarks from Devlet Bahçeli, the leader of the far-right Nationalist Movement Party (MHP), which shocked his supporters.

Addressing his parliamentary group in a televised speech last October, he said that Öcalan could be freed and allowed to speak at the parliament to address the Dem Party group if he announced the PKK's dissolution.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan quickly backed his ally Bahçeli and said that he hoped this window of opportunity will not be missed, indicating the start of a renewed 'peace process'.

Both the Turkish state and the leadership of the Kurdish movement are trying to position themselves in order to defend their best interests in an increasingly volatile region.

So far, these talks between the Turkish government and Öcalan have been conducted in complete secrecy. But whatever the outcome will be, it is certain that Erdoğan's increasingly authoritarian regime will not guarantee any far-reaching democratic rights for the oppressed Kurds, and Turkey will continue with its aim to end Kurdish autonomy in Syria, which is seen as a threat to Turkey's interests.

Erdoğan's calculations

Incapable of offering anything to the working class in Turkey, Erdoğan's popularity has been dwindling due to increasing repression and poverty.

A recent poll showed that 55% of Turkish people have an unfavourable view of Erdoğan.

Struggling to maintain his social base amid the economic crisis, Erdoğan has resorted to even more



Protest in support of the PKK and Öcalan
PHOTO: LEIF JØRGENSEN

authoritarian measures, stepping up his crackdown on all opposition.

This is not just aimed at the Kurds, although the Kurds are certainly at the sharp end. All opposition politicians are threatened with arrests, including the mayors of the second biggest political party, Republican People's Party (CHP), and even the leader of a far-right political party who opposes the talks with Öcalan.

Like other leaders in the Middle East, Erdoğan is afraid of mass unrest challenging his rule. Given the increasingly chaotic and volatile world order - in particular with Trump as US president and heightened geopolitical tensions - Erdoğan's government is trying to reduce the threat posed by the Kurdish movement and potentially stave off mass movements.

He is also making calculations about how he could extend his rule by another term. According to the current constitution, which was actually written by his government, Erdoğan will not be able to stand in the next presidential elections unless there is a snap election or a new constitution. Currently, Erdoğan and his allies do not have enough seats in the Parliament to make these changes.

This has led some to comment that Erdoğan is trying to win support from the pro-Kurdish Dem Party. But for

him to secure support from the Dem Party he would need to offer something more concrete.

Without granting substantial democratic and national rights to Kurds, these so-called peace talks will be fragile and it won't fundamentally resolve any issues facing the Kurds.

Winning the support of the leadership of the Kurdish movement does not mean that Kurdish workers and the poor will give support to Erdoğan. Large sections of Kurdish workers suffer from racism and discrimination. But, like their Turkish brothers and sisters, they also work in awful conditions for pittance, living in poor, overcrowded houses, and see no future for themselves.

Despite Erdoğan's intention to stave off mass movements, his government has got no solution to the problems faced by the working class and he will eventually be met by a mass opposition of Turkish and Kurdish workers fighting together.

Öcalan's statement

Öcalan's statement explains that the denial of Kurds' democratic and national rights led to the foundation and development of the PKK in the late 1970s and 80s.

Initially basing themselves on the model of Stalinism-Maoism - which was a distortion of genuine socialist

ideas - Öcalan's organisation distanced itself from Stalinism in the 1990s.

Despite the ideological shift during that period, the PKK continued with armed struggle against the Turkish state. This included individual bombings, shootings and kidnappings affecting civilians. In reality, however, the wrong methods of 'individual terrorism' (which is a term used by Marxists) have only given the Turkish state the pretext to increase repression against Kurdish people, and driven Turkish workers into the hands of the state, sowing divisions in the working class, weakening the ability of the working class to fight back.

Öcalan recognises that the methods of individual terrorism will not bring any solution to the Kurdish question. But this is not because he now thinks there is a vital need for mass democratic workers' action of Kurdish workers and the poor against state repression and for democratic rights.

But rather it is an acknowledgement that the Kurdish movement is in a weakened position as a result of global and regional developments, and that an armed struggle against the Turkish state will not lead to any gains for the Kurdish struggle.

Öcalan's recent statement also abandons the historical goals of the PKK where he not only rejects nation states, but also federalism, autonomy or even cultural rights. He concludes that, "there is no alternative to democracy in the pursuit and realisation of a political system."

He argues that the alleged democratic steps taken by Erdoğan's government on Kurdish issues and the regional developments means that there is no reason to continue the armed struggle.

But far from taking any positive steps on the Kurdish issue, Erdoğan's government has stepped up its attacks on democratic rights and, in effect, denied the right to elect and to be elected for Kurdish people.

Any hope that the Kurdish question can be resolved within the 'democratic framework', or within the framework of capitalism, will be shattered quickly.

That does not mean, however, that Erdoğan won't be forced to make concessions under the pressure of mass democratic struggle of Kurdish workers and the poor.

US imperialism

Capitalism is increasingly unstable and conflict-ridden. Whereas in the past the leadership of the Kurdish movement looked towards US imperialism to pursue its goals, it seems like Öcalan recognises that they can no longer rely on US imperialism in this period, especially with Trump back in the White House.

But as Marxists warned before, US imperialism was never interested in securing democratic or national rights for the Kurds. US imperialism betrayed Kurdish people many times, including in 2019 when Trump gave the green light for the Turkish army to invade Kurdish-controlled areas in Syria.

Kurdish movement

It is unclear when and whether the PKK will dissolve itself. Days after Öcalan's call, the PKK declared a ceasefire in Turkey. But laying down arms and disbanding will not be a simple process. The PKK leadership would expect guarantees for

themselves and for their fighters. They would also likely expect more concrete concessions before they start disbanding.

Even though the PKK is greatly weakened militarily, it still has fighting capacity, and there will be sections who would want to continue fighting.

After Bahçeli's remarks in the parliament, there was a terror attack on Turkish Aerospace Industries headquarters in Ankara, which killed and injured staff, and a taxi driver. The PKK claimed responsibility for the attack. There's nothing stopping PKK-related groups or offshoots from continuing with these attacks, including with the intention of disrupting the talks.

Rather than talks behind closed doors, mass democratic meetings of Kurdish people discussing and debating the next steps would be a significant step forward.

There can be no trust in Erdoğan's government or any pro-capitalist forces. The building of a mass united workers' action against war, oppression and austerity could potentially create a powerful force challenging Erdoğan's regime and win concessions for democratic rights and more.

This is true for Syria too.

Kurds were glad to see the back of Assad. Nevertheless, there are worries about what the new regime in Damascus, with a friendly

relationship with the Turkish government, would mean for the de facto autonomous region.

Mazloum Abdi, the commander-in-chief of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) - a coalition dominated by Kurdish armed groups with links to the PKK - had said that, while he welcomes Öcalan's call, the decision to lay down arms is only relevant for the PKK and not for the Kurds in Rojava.

The HTS-led Damascus regime is trying to integrate the Kurdish forces into the Syrian army and is coming under pressure from the Turkish government.

Until recently, Kurdish forces were reluctant to do this as they see the HTS regime as a threat to their rule and they are worried about the possible consequences, including attacks on Kurds and the revival of the Islamic State.

But on 11 March, SDF and Syria's interim President Ahmed al-Sharaa signed an agreement bringing the SDF under the control of the Syrian state. In return, Kurds have been promised citizenship rights.

In any case, neither the HTS regime, US imperialism, Turkey, nor any other power would be able to solve the unresolved questions in Syria and in the Middle East.

The building of mass workers' action and mass workers' parties across

the region, standing on a fighting socialist programme to defend democratic rights and living standards, would begin to challenge these powers and offer a way out.

This would also challenge the leadership of the Kurdish movement and lead to questioning of the programme and strategy offered by the leadership. It would pose the question of the need for mass democratic organisations for Kurdish workers in defending democratic rights and national aspirations, as well as fighting for decent living standards.

Workers' unity needed

Öcalan's call for the PKK to lay down arms is a truly significant development. But even though it might formally end the war between the Turkish government and the PKK, the national aspirations of the Kurdish people will not be met as a result. It won't bring an end to the oppression faced by the Kurds in Turkey.

Certainly, Öcalan's statement abandons any goal for autonomy for Kurds in Turkey, let alone a separate Kurdish state. However authoritative Öcalan may be among Kurdish people, the fact that he has got no solutions to the aspirations of Kurdish people could weaken his standing amongst the Kurds.

Socialists support the full cultural, democratic and national rights for all

Kurds, including the right to secession if they wish. The only viable strategy to achieve this is through the mass democratic struggle of Kurds, as part of a united struggle for socialism in Kurdistan, Turkey and across the region.

As long as the leadership of the Kurdish movement limits itself to the confines of capitalism and fails to make a class appeal to Turkish, Arab and other workers in the region, any attempt to achieve autonomy or democratic rights would be crushed by the bigger powers.

An appeal from workers' organisations, with a socialist programme to defend national and democratic rights for all, for the democratic workers' control of the vast wealth and resources of the region, can help mobilise the potential power of the working class.

The need for mass democratic organisations for the working class, including the forging of a mass revolutionary party, is therefore sharply posed across the region.

A socialist confederation of the Middle East, on a voluntary and free basis, where the working class takes the economic levers into its own hands, can bring an end to the chaos, war and misery created by capitalism, enabling people to decide their own future and securing a complete transformation in living standards on a permanent basis.

International appeal launch: support the work of the CWI

SEAN FIGG

COMMITTEE FOR A WORKERS' INTERNATIONAL (CWI)

This year the CWI, the socialist international the Socialist Party is affiliated to, will hold its 14th World Congress in Berlin, Germany. Delegates will attend from Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and North America. This crucial meeting is tasked with grappling with a rapidly changing world. Donald Trump's return to the White House brings dramatic headlines every day as his administration turns the capitalist world order on its head. The crisis of the global profit system, of which Trump 2.0 is both a symptom and an accelerator, is deepening at an alarming speed.

The ground is being prepared for dramatic escalations in the class

struggle in the months and years ahead. Take, for example, how Forbes magazine's 'Billionaires List' has revealed the sickness of the profit system by introducing the new category of the 'superbillionaire'. Just 24 of these superbillionaires have a combined net worth of \$3.3 trillion. Concentrated in the US and mostly linked to 'big tech', the accumulation of phenomenal wealth has fuelled appetites for accumulating political power, as the spectacle of the chainsaw-wielding Elon Musk has made clear.

The Congress will debate and discuss the world situation and develop a political perspective for the unfolding of the class struggle. In this uncertain and rapidly changing world, the best workers and young people will strive to understand what is happening and what can be done to ensure

the future is not as bleak as the present can appear. The Congress will work to clarify the way forward for working-class struggle, enriched by CWI members' on-the-ground experiences in the class struggle on every continent, and the tasks this poses for the CWI, its sections and its members.

While politically crucial, the World Congress will add enormous pressure to the finances on the CWI in 2025. We are determined that delegates attend in person. But this will cost money. The Socialist Party, the CWI in England and Wales, is campaigning to raise £25,000 to ensure that the World Congress is a success and to support the political work of the CWI over the remainder of 2025.

Alongside the Congress, we need to continue the work of positioning the CWI as a reference point for all

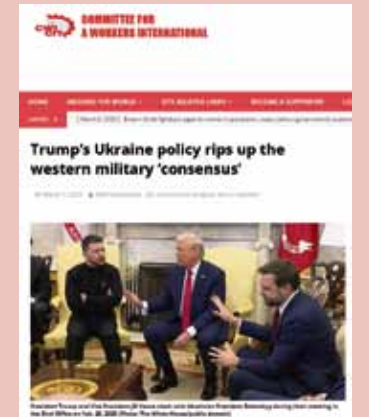
those questioning capitalism and looking for an alternative. Over the last months, the CWI has demonstrated that we continue to be a reference point. We are currently involved in discussions with socialists and working-class activists from Sweden, Romania, Israel-Palestine, Indonesia and Kazakhstan, exploring the principled political and programmatic agreement that, if achieved, could in time allow organisational unity. We have also had a number of people re-join the CWI in Austria, Ireland and Nigeria, after parting ways in 2019. Where others have succumbed to the hostile class pressures of this period and stepped away from Marxism and a revolutionary socialist programme, the CWI has remained resolute and this gets noticed. The numbers involved are small at this stage but anticipate what is possible in this period if we work correctly.

Alongside efforts to reach activists in new countries and expand the reach of the CWI, the important task of political support to the existing sections of the CWI must continue. This is the core of the day-to-day work of the International Centre based in London. We continue to defend the idea of a unified world party of socialist revolution and take the struggle to build it seriously. This includes important solidarity work supporting CWI members in Nigeria being prosecuted by the government for their political activity. This year's finance appeal is crucial to help us play our part in gathering the best class fighters around the banner of working class struggle and socialism and find their place in the ranks of the CWI.



On the website

Trump's Ukraine policy rips up the western military 'consensus'



If anyone had doubts about the second Donald Trump administration unravelling the so-called 'world order', they will have had a sobering experience over the last few weeks. Trump has ditched the normal niceties of international diplomacy. He has started talks with Putin regarding the fate of Ukrainians over the heads of the European leaders and the Ukrainian president, Volodymyr Zelensky.

Trump represents a part of the US ruling class that has concluded that the war in Ukraine is being lost to Russia, with no end in sight. The war is at a great cost to the US treasury, and the US needs to recalibrate its foreign policy. This entails bringing the war to an end as swiftly as possible. Russia would hold much of the territory it has conquered in Ukraine, with bartering taking place over the slice of Kursk in Russia that Ukraine forces are able to still occupy. The White House is also attempting to cultivate better relations with Moscow. It is moving to end sanctions against Russia, and providing opportunities for US big business to invest in the country.

Read more by Niall Mulholland at socialistworld.net



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End slaughter in Palestine

No trust in capitalist warmongers

FIGHT FOR A SOCIALIST ALTERNATIVE

HEATHER RAWLING
SOCIALIST PARTY NATIONAL COMMITTEE

The nightmare for people of Gaza continues. Their future, in the hands of capitalist politicians, is uncertain to say the least. There is a ceasefire and then there isn't. Aid is allowed through and then it isn't. And the suffering continues.

It's beyond cruel. But one thing is certain. The deaths, injuries, homelessness, hunger and disease endured by Palestinians are not the priority for capitalist leaders negotiating the future of Gaza. They don't care about any of that. Their negotiations revolve around their own ruthless strategic interests. So you can't trust any of them. Not Starmer, not Trump, not Netanyahu and unfortunately, none of the Arab leaders either.

But they do have to consider the moods of the masses in the Middle East and beyond. Their biggest fear is an uprising that would overshadow the Arab Spring mass movement which shook the region over a decade ago.

So what can be done?

How can the working masses in the UK defend the people of Gaza? How can we take the struggle beyond demonstrations and raising funds? The Socialist Party fights to mobilise the power of the organised working class. We can fight against the exploitation of our bosses here and for the involvement of the trade unions in support of workers' internationalism, including taking an active role fighting against the war on Gaza.

The working class establishing its own party in Britain, fighting for a socialist alternative to austerity, would strengthen the struggle of workers internationally. An internationalist party that supports the masses against war, instead of slavishly following Trump and Netanyahu's lead like Starmer's Labour.

War and destruction is inherent to the capitalist system, as competing blocs fight for profit and markets. We need a socialist alternative, with the working class in charge, to make links across the world and run society for our need not for greed.

We say:

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



PAUL MATTSSON

Do you agree?
JOIN THE SOCIALISTS
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WHAT WE STAND FOR: THE SOCIALIST PARTY'S MAIN DEMANDS ▶▶▶ see column on p12

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