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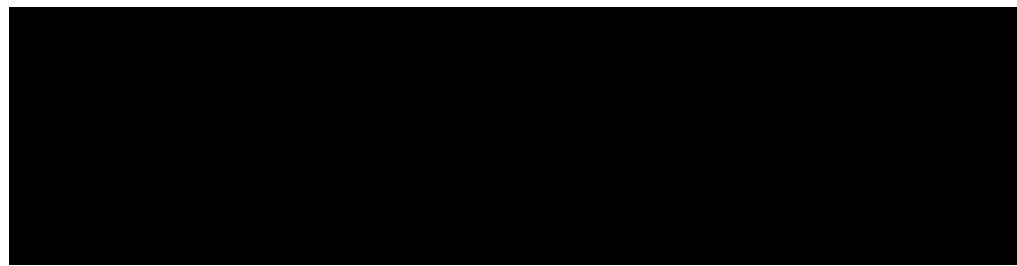
Issue 1314

27 March - 2 April 2025

formerly **Militant**



# FIGHT LABOUR CUTS



- The working class needs its own party
- Trade unions must lead

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the Socialist formerly Militant

Issue 1314 27 March - 2 April 2025

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

Streering abolishes NHS England: no job cuts! We need democratic workers' control of the NHS

STEVE SCORE SOCIALIST PARTY NATIONAL COMMITTEE

Keir Starmer's "project chain-saw" includes the closure of NHS England (NHSE) as well as cuts in the running of other NHS bodies - the Integrated Care Boards (ICBs) and the Trusts. These cuts threaten up to 30,000 jobs and follow a chaotic few weeks where cutbacks in NHS England were initially announced at around a 15% reduction, jumping to 50%, before the abolition was announced. Despite health minister Wes Streeting's description of this as getting rid of duplication and bureaucracy, the Socialist Party opposes all job losses.

We are not talking about top executives on inflated salaries here, nor are we talking about unnecessary 'pen-pusher' jobs. The ICBs for example say that jobs under threat include the organisation of vaccination programmes, children's dental health projects and other important tasks. Since a previous merger programme in 2023, NHS England is responsible for maintaining vital live services that are now key to NHS operations. Even when reorganisation is necessary to improve the way things run, workers should be transferred to other useful roles with no attacks on terms and conditions.

Labour has broken its promise not to carry out any major top-down reorganisation in the NHS. Over many years, governments of all stripes have pushed through reorganisation that has solved none of the NHS's problems, while distracting from the real solutions. Here we go again!

The Socialist Party opposed the 2012 bill that created the NHS England quango along with Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) in local areas. This continued the process of breaking up the NHS, developing the 'internal market', where different parts of the NHS buy and sell services with each other alongside increasing privatisation. This has escalated since CCGs were replaced with ICBs.

NHS England was meant to manage all of this in England: planning, setting targets, funnelling government money and other functions. It was

also an opportunity for governments to try to distance themselves from unpopular decisions. When I was part of the Save Glenfield Children's Heart Centre Campaign that successfully defeated a proposal to close the only congenital heart centre in the East Midlands, it was NHS England we were fighting. But we knew behind it was the government pushing for billions in 'efficiency savings'.

Labour says it is putting more money into the NHS, and savings from these measures that will go back into 'frontline services'. But it will not compensate for many years of underinvestment or solve the chronic staffing crisis or any other of the NHS's problems. Pitting 'frontline services' against 'back office functions' creates a false decision to make - the wealth in society should be used to fund the NHS and all its supporting services.

Making things worse

In fact, Labour's plans for greater private involvement in the NHS will make things worse. NHSE roles that currently are promoting privatisation will be replaced by government roles promoting privatisation.

Streeting also said that the abolition of NHSE would increase democratic accountability because it would bring direct control back to the Department of Health. This is not what Streeting and Starmer will deliver, and trade unions must expose this myth. Real democracy would mean control and management by elected committees at every level of all staff in the NHS along with the users of the NHS, i.e. all of us. It would also mean nationalising the private health companies and pharmaceutical companies and other associated industries to utilise their resources for the NHS and include them in a democratically run plan for health.

Many of the threatened workers could play useful roles in financial planning, software engineering etc, in assisting the running of that democratic control and management. Working together, trade unions must fight to save all jobs, and for workers to be redeployed with no loss of pay, terms and conditions in a fully funded democratic NHS.



PHOTOS: MARY FINCH

This is why the leadership elections in PCS and Unison are so important. Members have the chance to elect a fighting leadership that will stand against Labour austerity. Socialist Party members are standing alongside others in these elections. See page 7 and search 'Unison: fighting NEC leadership needed to take on Labour government' on socialistparty.org.uk

Private health shareholder Darzi advised privatising Labour

JAMIE SPEKA WEST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

Lord Ara Darzi's recommendation of NHS reforms, as laid out in his September report, conveniently omitted an "oversight" in not disclosing over \$1 million in shareholdings from US-based private healthcare companies. It could be interpreted as just an oversight, comparable to Labour's lack of transparency surrounding freebies which was, of course, also an oversight. Whichever way one slices it, a conflict of interest was involved

- either blatantly or mistakenly. The report's findings of the NHS crisis have been used by health secretary Wes Streeting to justify abolishing NHS England (see above), despite the report recommending no such top-down reorganisation.

More privatisation

Responding to Darzi's report, Labour said it would direct resources back to frontline workers and end bureaucracy. In fact, Labour plans more privatisation for profit. Lawyers for Lord Darzi told The

Guardian: "Before accepting the appointment...our client disclosed his personal interests to [Streeting] (by sharing his House of Lords register of interests) and took a leave of absence from his position at Flagship while he was undertaking the NHS investigation and was not paid during this time. This was entirely at our client's own behest and specifically to ensure that there could be no perceived conflict of interest."

If you're one of those opposed to Labour's private sector fawning, then Streeting has dubbed you a

"middle-class lefty". Labour's mission to mitigate bureaucracy, bring forth more funds to frontline workers, and optimise staff engagement won't be solved by redirecting more funds to the same private healthcare interests that have donated to Wes Streeting and that Lord Darzi is embroiled in. What is needed is a bottom-up reorganisation, prioritising the democratic involvement of workers and service users, removing the internal market and privatisation, and fully funding our NHS by making the super-rich pay.

BUILD THE SOCIALIST OPPOSITION - UNIONS MUST TAKE THE LEAD

Socialist Party WHAT WE THINK

By slashing benefits for disabled people - nakedly 'out-Torying the Tories', acting with the 'cold cruelty of the British capitalist class' - Keir Starmer has added yet more fuel to the burning hatred of his government.

Trade union leaders, many of whom months ago were heralding this Labour government as being 'ours', are now compelled to voice opposition, at least in words. On the issue of welfare reforms, as well as backsliding on workers' rights, among other things.

At the general election, Unite the Union made the decision to not centrally fund the Labour campaign and instead sponsored 109 individual candidates, with donations worth £646,000. The RMT transport union, not affiliated to Labour, donated to 24. Around 200 in total received over £2 million of trade union funding.

The unions should now be contacting those MPs to instruct them to vote against Starmer's welfare reforms. Bring them in to meet with the unions' lay leadership bodies and receive instruction as to how they are



PHOTO: PAUL MATTHEWSON

expected to fight on the side of the working class in parliament.

It should be the over six million-strong trade union movement - which gave a glimpse of its organisational and fighting capacity during the strike wave - that should lead in building the socialist opposition to Starmer. Starting by organising a weekend demonstration, in its own name, in opposition to Labour austerity.

With important trade union elections taking place, this summer could see large public sector trade unions such as Unison, PCS and NEU, with new left leaderships or with the left strengthened. At the same time, public sector pay deals and struggles against job losses are set to come to a head.

National trade union demo

A national trade union demo could play a role - similar to a pre-strike mass meeting - in beginning to unite struggles across the public sector, developing in the direction of future co-ordinated public sector strike action.

Labour politicians are clearly already under pressure. Left-wing Labour MP Richard Burgon posted on 'X', formerly Twitter, that he anticipates a "mother of all rebellions" from MPs over welfare cuts. There has been a whole rash of Labour councillor resignations over this issue and others. Not to mention the Independent Group of MPs which includes Jeremy Corbyn, elected in

opposition to Starmer's support for the Israeli state's genocidal slaughter of Palestinians.

All of this without working-class pressure, at this stage, being harnessed and organised. It is the trade unions that have the social weight and authority to do so, as the launch of Enough is Enough showed at the start of the strike wave, led by then-RMT general secretary Mick Lynch at that time heading up national strike action.

At that stage there was huge enthusiasm for the idea of Enough is Enough developing into a new political party fighting for the working class. Something which the trade union leaders at its head consciously avoided.

Enough is Enough, Peoples Assembly, the Peace and Justice Project, Owen Jones's We Deserve Better, the Collective, Assemble, Coalition of Resistance, various groups of independents... have all come into existence in the vacuum of mass working-class political representation. At the local elections on 1 May, the first major electoral challenge for Starmer's government, however, there will be no mass working-class political alternative on offer.

There will be around 100 candidates standing as part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC), which the Socialist Party participates in, still just a modest step towards the mass vehicle for political representation that the working class needs. It is nonetheless a clear working-class banner. Fighting trade unionists and socialists prepared to back TUSC's core pledges still have time to join the stand.

Experience of Starmer's Labour government is forcing the need for the working class to have its own mass party onto the agenda. The Socialist Party will continue to fight for the trade unions to take a lead and play a central role.

Fight back against rip-off service charges Fight for good-quality council homes for all

JACOB STEVENS SOUTH EAST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

Homeowners in some 'affordable' housing schemes are experiencing the reality of the capitalist housing crisis. Residents in some housing associations face service charges of over £8,000 a year, affordable only for the wealthiest in society.

Residents with shared-ownership schemes own a percentage of the property with a mortgage, and pay subsidised rent on top of that. In addition, owners of these properties usually pay between £250-£350 a month for service charges; these could be hiked up to £600 after being sold.

This has caught the attention of the Social Housing Action Campaign (SHAC) which will challenge these exorbitant prices by filing a report to the National Audit Office (NAO), claiming incorrect billing and failing to provide suitable proof of charges.

In many developments, occupants in 'affordable homes' are segregated from owners of private flats by having

two separate entrances, one being the 'poor door' for those not privately renting. If the occupants of these 'affordable' properties fail to pay the up to 83% increase in service charges, they could be evicted from their homes, leaving many in a precarious situation, worried and stressed about how to pay. In some developments SHAC has organised tenants to begin withholding service charges to protest the hikes. This is emblematic of a degraded system that chastises and ostracises poor and working-class people.

We need action now to solve the housing crises. Councils could institute a cap on rents and service charges, and start building high-quality council houses for all. Housing Association homes should be moved back into council ownership with genuine democratic say for tenants, along with the thousands of empty properties, and the resources to maintain them provided by the government. Low-interest mortgages for potential homebuyers could be provided by



PHOTO: JORGE ROYAN/CC

nationalised banks under democratic workers' control and management. We could nationalise the large building companies which profit off the misery of the residents stuck in poor-quality homes they build. Finally, democratic, tenant-based bodies made up of workers and representatives of trade unions could make decisions and fight for the people they represent.

SHAC Housing Crisis Workplace Impact Survey

Housing campaign group SHAC is conducting a survey about the impact of the housing crisis in the workplace. The aim is to capture data that can help more easily target trade union resources towards the right support for members, as well as providing campaign data. The survey is completely anonymous. It asks about the impact of rising rents, as well as illness and injury triggered by bad housing which leads to workplace absence.

Please help by taking the survey and circulating within your network: https://shaction.org/housing-in-the-workplace-survey/

# FIGHT BACK AGAINST LABOUR'S ATTACK ON DISABLED PEOPLE

As the Socialist goes to press, Labour chancellor Rachel Reeves is preparing her Spring Statement which will slash disability benefits and prepare the ground for swingeing cuts in the public sector. Socialist Party members have already been campaigning against these cuts, in the trade unions and on campaign stalls. Below is the text of the leaflet that has been distributed.

## We need spending on welfare not warfare Make the super-rich pay not disabled people

Since taking office, Keir Starmer's Labour government have kept the Tory two-child benefit cap and reduced eligibility for pensioners' winter fuel allowance. WASPI women were denied pension compensation. Starmer says he wants to "redesign the state", this means massive cuts to public spending with the worst off in society facing the brunt. All while announcing his intention to increase spending on wars abroad, and the rich in Britain continue to rake in massive profits.

Now it is the turn of chronically ill and disabled people to be in the firing line. Liz Kendall, the Secretary of State for work and pensions, has announced savage cuts to disability benefits. How different have Liz Kendall's statements been compared to Tory Chancellor Jeremy Hunt's 2023 Autumn Statement which included a "renewed focus on getting disabled people into work"?

The main proposals are:

- An overhaul of disability benefits to make only the most severely disabled eligible
- Cuts to the health element of Universal Credit, including making people under 22 ineligible

### Come and discuss Come to a Socialist Party meeting near you

The Socialist Party has regular meetings in towns and cities across the country.

- If you would like to participate: [socialistparty.org.uk/events](https://socialistparty.org.uk/events)
- Or text 07958 032071 with your name and postcode.



- And more face-to-face assessments

Over a million could lose eligibility for Personal Independence Payments (PIP) and 900,000 for the disability element of Universal Credit. People may also lose eligibility for the disability premium of pension credit, council tax rebates and housing benefit disability premiums.

Socialist Party members are supporting protests organised by Disabled People Against Cuts, trades councils, Unite Community branches and other organisations. We want the maximum possible unity around a fighting programme. We are campaigning for the trade unions, which are the largest democratic organisations of disabled people, to use their authority and resources to campaign for rights and benefits for disabled people.

#### Trade unions must lead

A weekend demonstration organised by the TUC against this new round of vicious austerity could act as a launchpad for sustained trade union action against all the attacks in the pipeline from this government – including the below inflation pay offers in the public sector, the ramping up of local council administered cuts, massive job cuts in the civil service, and tuition fee rises for students.

Disabled workers are paid less than non-disabled workers and are more likely to be on zero-hours contracts. We call for a ban on zero-hours and insecure contracts. Existing legal protections and workplace initiatives used to identify and remove the workplace barriers disabled workers face are not effectively addressing the scale and seriousness of the issues disabled workers encounter. We call for trade union workplace reps to be backed by their unions to support disabled workers.

Mental health charity Mind then called for the establishment of a commission led by disabled people to redesign the benefit system from one based on sanctions which "doesn't get mental health". The Labour government has commissioned Sir Charlie Mayfield to investigate how "governments and businesses can work together to identify the scale, trends, obstacles and opportunities for companies

when recruiting and retaining ill and disabled people." But their starting point is maximising profit and they cannot be trusted to deal with these questions, as has been proven.

#### Capitalism makes us unwell

The health and social care secretary, Wes Streeting, has complained about the "overdiagnosis of mental health conditions".

Life for millions now is dominated by capitalist crisis. Young people have only known crisis – the world economic crisis of 2007-08, the pandemic and now the re-election of Trump. Alongside this, they have seen the tripling of university tuition fees under the coalition government and the further increase in tuition fees announced in the autumn. Most students now leave university with a mountain of debt to move into insecure housing and employment. It is not surprising that mental health has deteriorated.

There is no prospect of the general improvements in living conditions which older generations benefited from.

#### We need our own party

The Labour government is continuing the Tories' dirty work. They represent the interests of the same group in society – the bosses. And as Labour is backing the bosses, we need a party of our own to fight back – a new mass workers' party with a fighting socialist programme.

The Socialist Party fights for the trade union movement to take the steps now to convene such a political voice for workers and young people – including disabled people – that can fight against these attacks. This includes backing every step towards the building of such a party. Socialist Party members stand alongside trade unionists and campaigners in elections as part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition.

The Socialist Party fights for the socialist transformation of society. That means taking the wealth which exists out of private hands and placing it under the democratic control and management of the working-class majority, to put an end to this brutal assault of the rich on the lives of working class and young people once and for all.



PAUL MATSSON

## Exposing the benefit cut myths

#### DISABILITY BENEFIT CLAIMANTS IN THE SOUTH WEST

To justify Reeves's attacks on disability benefits, there has been a flurry of recent news reports on the supposed huge increases in welfare spending. These reports come despite evidence from the Office for Budget Responsibility that total spending on social security as a proportion of GDP is predicted not to increase at all next year, and then to stay the same level for the next four years. It is predicted to be lower this year than it was for every year between 2010 and 2015.

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) estimates a fraud rate of PIP claims at 0.48%. £23 billion of social support goes unclaimed each year.

#### Cuts to benefits

Cuts to PIP will also affect housing benefit disability premiums, council tax support disability premiums, carers' allowance and all other premiums and extra top-ups and discounts. The Resolution Foundation has estimated that as many as 1.2 million claimants are set to be worse off by £4,300 a year by 2029 – a total loss of over £10 billion.

Limited Capability for Work and Work-Related Activity, Statutory Sick Pay and other premiums for long-term sickness are set to be frozen then scrapped in the coming years.

These huge cuts to the disability top ups on Universal Credit will effect 900,000 people. Over the next few years this top-up will be cut by 16%, a further £4 billion of cuts.

#### Covid-19

Reports have shown that deteriorating health conditions after the Covid-19 pandemic has added to the rise in the number of people receiving disability and out of work due to long-term sickness benefits. Covid-19 has had an impact on the physical and mental health of the UK population. 2 million living with long covid, and with lots of support services cut to the bone and more cuts on the way.

#### Mental health

Poor mental health costs the economy approximately £118 billion per year according to research from the Mental Health Foundation. Benefit cuts are not the answer and will not lead to savings for the government in the long term.

You cannot punish members of the public who are ill because they cannot access appropriate health services which allow them to go back to work. The crisis in the NHS has led to massive waiting times and worsened many people's health conditions. Cuts to alcohol and drug addiction support, and social care mean many people do not have the support they need to be able to work.

## Model motion to be adapted for your trade union branch or trades council

## Oppose disability benefit cuts

This conference opposes all the cuts to the welfare system and recognises:

- The failings and unpopularity of Work Capability and Personal Independence Payment assessments
- The cuts to the Disability Employment Adviser role
- The failings of the private sector involvement in welfare delivery
- Backlogs and inadequate resources to deliver Access to Work
- The need to improve support for disabled claimants
- The biggest category for DWP losing tribunals is disability discrimination

This conference notes the new Labour government's intent to continue the Tory attacks on the social security system and their threats of attacks on the disability benefits in 2025. The Tory plans predicted nearly half million disabled claimants would face lower benefits or increased conditionality to save £3 billion by 2028-29.

This conference recognises that trade unions are the largest democratic organisations of disabled people and instructs the National Executive Committee to:

- Work with democratic disabled people's organisations and other trade unions to promote demands for a social security system that meets the needs of disabled people
- Campaign for assessments to be taken out of the hands of fat-cat providers and returned to public sector delivery in the DWP with a complete overhaul of the system to support claimants
- Oppose the Government plans to merge the PIP and working age assessments which are based on cost cutting, reducing benefits to individuals and a harsher benefit regime for disabled people
- Campaign for an end to the target driven regime within the DWP which damages the quality of services to the public
- Put the emphasis on getting a quality decision right at the outset to reduce the need for the public to go through the hardship and length of time to dispute and appeal decisions

Conference further instructs the National Executive Committee to call for the TUC Disabled Workers' Committee to organise a demonstration and lobby of Parliament in support of these demands, and for the TUC to organise a weekend demonstration against Labour austerity as a launchpad for sustained trade union action in defence of workers and young people.



Torsten Bell MP made the rounds of the morning TV studios defending vociferously Labour's benefit cuts. Part of Labour's team drawing up the massive cuts which will have a huge impact on so many disabled people's lives, he went out to bat for the reforms. Asked if he could live on £70 a week by the BBC's Victoria Derbyshire, which the Labour government expect young people to live on he had one answer: "Absolutely not!" UNPARLIAMENT/CC

## Building the fightback

Socialist Party branches have organised campaign stalls and taken part in the demonstrations opposing Labour's disability benefit attacks.

### Plymouth campaign stall

People made a beeline for our stall to express their anger and disgust at the government once again penalising the most vulnerable members of our society rather than taking it from the super-rich. Labour were described as "worse than the Tories" by more than one person.

A lot of people voted Labour in Plymouth, not because they were popular, but because they wanted the Tories out and now feel betrayed by Sir Keir Starmer's government. The message that we are calling for a new workers' party that does represent us was welcomed, as the establishment parties won't stand up for the working class.

ALEX SAMPSON



Stall in Swansea

### Welfare not warfare: Rage in Bristol demonstration against benefit cuts

The mood at the demo was combative, with people wanting to get organised and fight back. This latest stab in the back for disabled people had enraged and motivated people. Many disabled speakers talked about how they are already being failed by the welfare system, the lack of accessible council housing, and all of the myriad of ways capitalism makes life unbearable. One speaker spoke of how her money will be cut to spend more on armaments which would kill and disable people.

The demonstration allowed local Green MP Carla Denyer to speak from the platform. She hypocritically spoke of her disgust at the cuts to welfare. However, heckles from the crowd asking "what about council cuts" forced her to defend the Green-led council's £51 million cuts to the city's services. Her defence was that the party was fighting for funding from central government. Presumably this fighting very hard is asking Keir Starmer 'please Sir can we have some more'.

A real fight would mean refusing to pass on cuts to local people (including £28 million from children in care) and moving a needs budget that doesn't make cuts. Combative Bristolians would rush to this fight if only the council had the political will to do it.

LINDSEY MORGAN



Protest in Plymouth

### Coventry Crips Against the Cuts protest

Coventry and Nuneaton Socialist Party members spoke alongside other trade union activists and disability campaigners, demanding the fightback against these cuts which, if passed, will result in the deaths of thousands of the most vulnerable in society. We spoke about the need to vote for trade unionists and socialists in the upcoming Warwickshire County Council elections, where twelve firmly anti-cuts candidates will be standing in nearby Nuneaton and Bedworth as

part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition.

We also raised the need to link up grassroots campaigns with the trade unions both nationally and locally, putting forward immediate steps to affiliate local trade union branches with the anti-cuts campaign, as well as questioning why Labour-affiliated trade unions are funding a party that attacks the rights and benefits of their disabled members.

EVE MILLER



Protest in Coventry

### Swindon

People came up to talk to us about our posters, "Starmer's Labour means austerity and war".

There are no local elections in Swindon this year, but every seat in the council will be up in 2026 and people were receptive to the idea of making an independent, anti-cuts stand next year.

We're building for a public meeting in Swindon on 7 April on the topic of 'Welfare, not warfare' for anyone under threat from Labour's cuts, trade unionists and anti-war campaigners to discuss how we can fight back against the escalating attacks from Westminster and fight for a socialist world.

SCOTT HUNTER

# NEU NEEDS A FIGHTING LEADERSHIP TO DEFEAT THE 'WORST CUTS IN A GENERATION'

**SEAN MCCAULEY**  
WORCESTERSHIRE NEU DISTRICT SECRETARY,  
PERSONAL CAPACITY AND CANDIDATE FOR  
NATIONAL EXECUTIVE

As National Education Union (NEU) members gear up for the elections to the National Executive, reports abound of "the worst squeeze in a generation", including in schools, in the Labour government's Spring Statement.

We need to get ready for a massive fight - and we need a leadership prepared to lead it!

Eight historic days of strike action in 2023 taken by NEU teachers won't just once but twice on pay: 6.5% in September 2023 and, through the mere threat of further strike action against the new Starmer-led and austerity-driven government, 5.5% in September 2024.

Most crucially for our members, we won some of the funding to go with it: £2 billion across the two years, in addition to the £1.2 billion the Tories gave in 2022. Not enough to cover the full cost, which now means that schools are restructuring and making redundancies, in particular amongst our lowest-paid support staff members.

Socialist Party NEU members warned at the time that the national fight on funding was not over, but the NEU leadership settled and refused to lead a further campaign.

### National campaign

Local disputes against redundancies and restructuring, as well as threats to pensions, terms and conditions and bullying management, are winning gains in more schools and colleges than ever before. The national leadership, though, would prefer to keep the fight on these issues to local disputes rather than leading a national fight, which would win for all our members. But Labour's potential cuts make it clear - a national fight-back is needed.

Currently NEU is running an indicative national ballot on the dismal 2.8% September 2025 pay offer, to be funded through 'efficiencies' i.e. further cuts. Winning the funding is the most important aspect of the fight for members, but they also want the issue to be widened out to

include demands on overall funding for education, not just for pay awards, in particular for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). For example, in Worcestershire the SEND budget is £42 million in deficit; if this debt were not bankrolled by the government the county council would have been forced to issue a Section 114 'bankruptcy' notice years ago.

### Workload

The funding crisis also has a massive impact on workload, as fewer teachers and support staff shoulder more responsibilities and class sizes rise. Members want a national fight on workload, a fight to win a new National Contract for all education workers, including supply staff, that sets firm limits on the hours we can be expected to work by management.

Workload and the funding crisis directly affect support staff too, and Socialist Party members are continuing to call for support staff to be included in this fight, which the current leadership is not prepared to do.

We need more people on the executive who will also push for a stronger and clearer message about the need to reverse academisation (see 'Fight for academies to return to local authority control' below).

Socialist Party NEU members also oppose the partnership deal which the leadership has signed with the government and employers. We are not partners with those who want to make massive cuts and privatise education!

### Bold lead

As was shown at times in 2023, when the NEU leadership is prepared to give a bold lead from the front whilst mobilising the full weight of the entire union - increasing membership and rep numbers, building the confidence of local officers, uniting teachers and support staff - we can win.

But this would not have happened without the active campaigning of Socialist Party members from 2021, who were instrumental in convincing the leadership we could win national ballots for action; the prevailing mood at the top of the union at the time was that the 2016 Trade Union Act ballot thresholds would prevent us ever winning one again.

## Socialists re-elected unopposed to NEU executive Vote Sean McCauley and Dan Warrington to join them

Socialist Party members Sheila Caffrey and Louise Cuffaro have been re-elected unopposed to the National Executive of the National Education Union.

Since 2021, Sheila and Louise have fought for national action, for the leadership of the union to stand up to Starmer's Labour government, and against 'partnership' with the government and employers.

In the elections that begin on 1 April, two other Socialist Party members are up for election, Sean McCauley in District 8 and Dan Warrington in District 11.



Left to right: Louise, Dan, Sean and Sheila in action  
SOCIALIST PARTY

## Fight for academies to return to local authority control



James speaking at the Hastings demo  
SOCIALIST PARTY

**JAMES ELLIS**  
NEU LEAD REP

The National Education Union (NEU) in Hastings organised a demonstration on Saturday 22 March calling for eight schools to be brought back under local authority control.

A campaign against cuts, including strike action, has succeeded in forcing out The University of Brighton Academies Trust (UBAT).

UBAT was taking an average of 14% of school budgets, and in some cases up to 25%, to pay for its central team. It was spending nearly £1 million on marketing.

But we don't want to just be shunted into another academy chain! The long-term solution for our schools does not lie with any specific academy trust. Academies lack local accountability, spend huge amounts of public money on their central teams and executive pay, and treat

education like a business. Our members are all too aware that there are many more 'UBATs' out there that haven't yet been exposed.

The NEU wants all schools to return to local authority control, and for the government to properly fund local councils to allow them to provide the kind of education services that our students deserve. We want the wider school community, including all unions, to be included in the discussions about the future direction of these schools.

The NEU in Hastings is calling on our MP to move an amendment to Labour's Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill currently going through parliament to allow a route for academy schools to be returned to local authority control.

We urge other NEU districts to write to their local MPs asking that they put forward such an amendment.

### 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

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# PCS MUST FIGHT STARMER AND REEVES'S £2bn AXE Vote Marion Lloyd for PCS president, and candidates prepared to stand up to Starmer's government for the NEC

**PCS MEMBERS**

£2bn cuts - a massive 15%. That is the scale of the axe being taken to the civil service by Rachel Reeves and Keir Starmer's Labour government.

A week before this announcement, "radical reforms" to the civil service were threatened by Labour minister Pat McFadden, along with a 50% cull of NHS England jobs. This followed previous Labour demands for 2% then 5% cuts in government departments.

But such is the determination of PCS civil service union general secretary Fran Heathcote to cover for Starmer's government, when news reports circulated of a threat to 10,000 jobs, she dismissed these as from a "rogue journalist".

When McFadden made his threats, Socialist Party member Marion Lloyd wrote to the PCS general secretary and president on behalf of the left majority of the National Executive Committee (NEC).

Marion is the Broad Left Network-supported candidate for president in the upcoming national PCS elections. She warned of the "enormity of the potential attacks" and called for an emergency meeting of the NEC to plan what to do.

### Complacent

In contrast, in a totally complacent public statement, Heathcote said she had been "assured" by 10 Downing Street that this was "not about slashing the state". In response to Marion's call, current president Martin Cavanagh said he saw "no need" for an emergency NEC.

But the next day, Heathcote put up a new totally different statement in response to Starmer's speech. The original statement disappeared from the 'news' page of the PCS website and can only be found hidden away under the vague title 'blogs'.

The tone is getting harder - because of the pressure from Marion and the BLN. Of course, stronger words are not the same as a fighting strategy to resist. Our call for an

emergency NEC remains, and is even more important in the light of the Spring Statement attacks.

Marion Lloyd and the BLN are the real fighters. If they can force a change of tone now, imagine the difference a fighting president will make!

In the national elections, vote Marion Lloyd for PCS president and for the BLN-supported list of fighting candidates for NEC

Scan here for the full slate of left candidates



PCS Met Police strike  
ROB WILLIAMS

## Sacked workers speak out over Burger bosses' attacks

**ISHAN COSTELLO**  
MANCHESTER AND SALFORD SOCIALIST PARTY

Dismissed workers gathered outside burger chain Super Awesome Deluxe (SAD)'s Manchester Northern Quarter branch on 8 March, alongside Unite the Union officials and supporting activists.

We spoke to three of the sacked workers about their awful treatment at the hands of SAD and its owners' other enterprise Almost Famous (AF). The liquidation of AF in January resulted in a failure to pay over 100 sacked employees £200,000 worth of tips, holidays, and notice pay.

Two workers we spoke to had worked at AF's Withington branch until being notified of its closure in October with just five days' notice. They were offered work for SAD; having been told they'd be working front of house for £13.50/hour, they were instead paid minimum wage and asked to do back-of-house work. To this end, the owners attempted to make them sign documents that falsely claimed they had been trained to work in kitchens.

"When we started working there, they hired a girl to do all their social media. They lied to her as well! She actually ended up not doing much social media - she did what we did. They're still using her content to promote the business, though."

Upset at how they had been misled and poorly treated, they left SAD, returning to work at two of AF's other branches, where they worked extremely taxing and lengthy overtime shifts through Christmas and January.

One morning, as they were getting ready for work, they received a message informing them of the business's liquidation, telling them not to come to work. Another worker said "I found out on social media [...] about half an hour before getting an official email saying I'd been sacked".

Because the workers had 'moved' following the closure of the branch, despite having over two years' service for AF, they were told they were entitled to no redundancy pay. They also discovered they had lost out on employer pensions contributions.

Workers pointed out that the owner lives in a multi-million pound house in Didsbury, whilst employees left penniless are forced to claim benefits: "We don't want money from the taxpayer, we want it from the owners".

At the suggestion of support in the form of 'review bombing' and solidarity boycotts, the workers asked that supporting activists continue to spread the word: "Don't give them any money until we've got ours!.. Even after the excitement of [a demo like] this happens, for everyone else, once it's over, it's over, and they can just get on with their lives. But remember that just because everyone won't be talking about this next week doesn't mean it isn't still happening to us."

## Birmingham bins - Labour council provocations



Discussing on the picket line  
SOCIALIST PARTY

**NICK HART**  
BIRMINGHAM SOCIALIST PARTY

"Why are Unite still funding the Labour Party when the Labour council is funding police to break a strike?" Bin workers in Birmingham have had enough of Labour, after a week in which the council's provocations against striking Unite members have only increased.

On 17 and 18 March, two bin workers were arrested at different depots for nothing more than walking in front of an agency-staffed lorry. This followed several instances of physical manhandling of pickets by police, with drinks and phones knocked out of hands - under the nose of the Labour police commissioner Simon Foster.

Later that same week, three agency workers were 'caught' by

management speaking to pickets while waiting to leave the depot and start their rounds. They were told later that day they were being dismissed due to a lack of work, despite the council offering weekend overtime at all three yards! At the time of writing, Unite is fighting for their reinstatement - on permanent contracts - at their original depot.

The all-out strike action and disciplined picketing to delay the lorries leaving the depots is having an effect and giving the bin workers every chance of forcing back cuts to pay and safety.

During the 2022 Coventry bin strike, Unite suspended Labour councillors who are members of the union from membership.

Unite should suspend funding to Labour while that party continues to attack its members in Birmingham

and elsewhere. This could buy time for a genuine debate at this year's policy conference on whether the union should open up its political fund to support candidates who back workers in struggle rather than trying to sack them. That would be a significant step towards the new working-class party we need.

### How can council cuts be ended?

Conference to debate a people's budget for Birmingham 12pm, Saturday 26 April Comfort Inn, Station Street, Birmingham B5 4DY Organised by West Midlands Shop Stewards Network

Get all the latest union news  
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NSSN bulletin: [shopstewards.net](http://shopstewards.net)

The elections for NEU National Executive run from 1-29 April.

The fight for a serious lead from the top of the union will be greatly strengthened if we get two additional Socialist Party members elected to join Sheila Caffrey and Louise Cuffaro.

- **Sean McCauley** District 8: Glos, Heref, Oxon, Sth Glos, Swindon, Warks, Wilts, Worcs
- **Dan Warrington** District 11: Bracknell Forest, IoW, NE Hants, Portsmouth, Reading, Slough, SE Hants, Southampton, Surrey, W Berks, W Hants, Windsor & Maidenhead, Wokingham

# BUILDING AND STRENGTHENING THE FORCES OF MARXISM IN THE 'NEW ERA'

JOSH ASKER  
EDITOR OF THE SOCIALIST

Taking place in a 'new era' of unprecedented political volatility and turmoil, epitomised by Trump's second presidency, 290 attended the Socialist Party's three-day congress in Coventry, 15-17 March 2025.

"The most important meeting of the year for the Socialist Party - the highest decision-making body of our party - bringing together delegates from our branches to discuss perspectives and the key tasks we face," Theo Sharieff, Socialist Party national campaigns organiser opened the congress.

In the weeks and months leading up to the event, Socialist Party branches discussed documents outlining our analysis of the political situation, our strategy and tasks. These documents were voted on throughout the weekend, and the National Committee elected as the party's leadership body between congresses.

Introducing the discussion on the developing world situation, Tony Saunio, secretary of the Committee for a Workers' International, explained how the congress was "taking place against the background of a new historic conjuncture internationally". The Trump regime representing a "sharp rupture with the previous eras of the last decades."

## Trashed by Trumpism

"Changes are taking place by the hour. The world is full of uncertainties as the old world order is being ripped apart." The global capitalist institutions - such as the UN, Nato, the IMF, and others - which, in the previous period of its unipolar dominance, US imperialism had adapted to pursue its own interests, are now being trashed by Trumpism.

By being forced to govern through right-populist figures like Trump, the 'mask' is being ripped from capitalism to reveal naked capitalist class and national interests, which can have a radicalising effect for important layers of workers and young people.

US capitalism is increasingly being challenged economically, above all by China's growth. Trump's protectionist policies and tariffs represent an acceleration of already developing trends. We are in a multipolar world, characterised by competition between the US and China, as well as with other competing capitalist nation states, with the smaller and regional powers trying to defend their own interests in an ever-shifting swirl of allegiances.

With that comes further economic instability and conflict, including in its sharpest expression of war, such as the horror that has been unfolding in Ukraine and the Middle East.

Objectively, socialism is more possible, and more necessary than ever. And yet, world events are "taking place in a situation where the working class at this stage does not have a mass political voice offering an alternative social system of socialism. The challenge to us is to resolve that

contradiction as rapidly as possible," Tony said.

Internationally, the working class is only just beginning to re-enter the scene of history. In the vast majority of countries, it does not have its own mass political organisations.

## Britain's inglorious decline

Introducing the discussion on Britain, Hannah Sell, Socialist Party general secretary, pointed to British capitalism's "Long, slow and inglorious decline... only highlighted by Keir Starmer's attempts to posture on the world stage."

Britain's economy is 22% smaller than if it had continued to grow at the pre-Great Recession trend, and the working class has been made to pay. The average worker is £200 a week worse off today than they would have been had the trend continued.

Starmer's Labour government intends to ensure that it is once again the working class that is made to pay through a new round of austerity. "They might be embarrassed at it being called 'operation chain-saw', but that is the reality... 'Less welfare, more warfare' really is the mantra of Starmer's government."

"They are proud about their plans to savage the benefits system. What more evidence is needed that this is a government acting in the interests of Britain's capitalist class, with all its traditional cold cruelty?"

"We can and should debate the timing and type of opposition this government will face. But we should be absolutely certain that it will face mass working-class opposition, and in more than one form."

"Capitalism is an ailing system. It is increasingly unable to meet the needs of the working class and the resulting anger gets both reactionary as well as positive expressions."

Hannah explained how there is no government policy that can overcome the specific crisis of British capitalism and lead to healthy growth. During the era of peak globalisation, Britain took neoliberalism to extremes, with no regard of the medium or long-term consequences for British capitalism. Britain has an open economy and is outside of any major trading bloc. That "the nation state has come roaring back" in an era of increasing protectionism and trade barriers is a "nightmare for British capitalism."

Starmer "crawling on his belly in front of Trump in an attempt to avoid tariffs" has already failed. In fact, with the EU as Britain's biggest trading partner, and US its second biggest, Britain won't "act as a bridge" but will instead find itself "falling down the hole in the middle. British capitalism can only lose in this multipolar world."

And so already existing working-class rage at worsening conditions will only rise. This rage took down the Tories to their worst-ever electoral result.

This Labour government came to

## SOCIALIST PARTY CONGRESS 2025



Socialist Party congress 2025, Tony Saunio, Hannah Sell, Theo Sharieff, Isai Marjerla (left to right) PHOTOS: LUISE ARTMANN AND JASPER CHAPLIN

power with the shallowest social base of any government since the introduction of universal suffrage in 1918. And the general election was its high point. It has become increasingly hated since!

Labour, like the Tories, faces being torn apart as a result of the pressures of acting in the interests of British capitalism in this era of even greater crises than those of the last 14 years.

There can even be pro-capitalist Labour politicians who decide they don't like what this government is doing, potentially provoking splits or leading to the false argument that what is needed is a different Labour leader. There can also be the argument that the workers' movement should 'ignore electoral politics and rely on industrial muscle alone'. Which can sound radical, but in reality means leaving the field open for capitalist politicians.

## Working-class authority

In the period during which the mass working-class organisations have not yet stamped their authority on the political scene, all sorts of forces can try to fill the space - including with plans to launch new political parties and so on. The Socialist Party takes part in those processes, working with others, including by standing in this May's local council elections as

part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition - at every stage pointing towards what can be done to fight for a real mass workers' party.

An important feature of the discussions throughout congress was how the Socialist Party can most skilfully and effectively use a united front approach, to work together with other forces in the workers' movement, maintaining our own political organisation and programme, demonstrating in practice our ideas and approach to those involved in struggle.

As an expression of anger, in the absence of the working class having its own mass party, sections of the working class can give electoral support to Reform or other right-populist formations.

At the same time, big sections of the working class, including importantly a majority of trade union activists, are horrified by the growth of Reform - correctly concerned about the threat of greater division and of racist attacks, for example. Reform leading a bidding war with Labour and the Tories about who can be the most anti-migrant will increase tensions.

In response to the racist riots in the summer, the mood in society was overwhelmingly one of horror and opposition to racist attacks - as seen

by the huge turnout on and support for counterprotests.

The Socialist Party points to the central role that the trade union movement can play in combating racism. Including by fighting for the Trades Union Congress policy of campaigning for 'Job, homes and services - not racism' to be properly executed. A real fight for jobs, homes and services against racism requires a struggle against this austerity Labour government.

## Reform threat

Trade union leaders and others will increasingly use the threat of Reform to argue for the need to support Labour. But the need for a working-class political alternative to Labour, Reform and the Tories is on the agenda. This will be further highlighted by the class battles that are coming.

Starmer's Labour offers no real concessions for the working class. Despite its promises to repeal some of the anti-strike laws, they will remain among the most repressive in the western world. Even then, the promise to remove the undemocratic strike ballot thresholds is being dragged out and the thresholds remain on the statute books.

Clearly they did not stop national strike action during the strike wave, and there is a real possibility of national coordinated public sector strike action over pay and against cuts. The

leadership of the public sector unions is to press for a fighting response to Labour austerity - defending jobs and pay. Alongside that, arguing to reject the false promise of so-called 'social partnership' between the employers, Labour government and unions - which aims to shackle the unions into a consensus with this austerity government. Socialist Party members who are existing members of the NEU Executive have been to the fore resisting such moves.

In retail workers' union Usdaw, a union where the right-wing leadership has a long history of 'partnership' with the capitalist bosses, Socialist Party member Scott Jones is seeking nominations to stand for Deputy General Secretary, a position opened up after both general secretary Paddy Lillis and the deputy general secretary announced their retirement.

As Hannah put it, for the trade union leaders: "The only option is to fight or give in to savage austerity. It's no coincidence that there has been a whole host of trade union general secretaries deciding instead to enjoy retirement."

There are not currently any national trade union leaders posing the question of the working class having its own mass party. But it is posed more sharply now than it has ever been, and that is why the Socialist Party fights for every possible step in that direction.

## A party of our own

"We call for a new mass workers' party because we are fighting for the working class to take power and overthrow capitalism. Having its own party is an essential step for our class to see itself as a potential governmental alternative."

"The working class having its own party is necessary, but we don't leave it there. At every stage we link it and the need for fighting unions to the socialist programme required. And to build our revolutionary party to speed up the development of working-class struggle."

Theo Sharieff introduced the discussion on 'Building our party in 2025', a discussion which grappled with the challenges and opportunities to build the Socialist Party, presented by the developing political situation. An important aspect being to develop a new layer of Socialist Party members as fighters for our ideas.

By voting to endorse the 'organisation resolution' the congress agreed to commit to step up work in key fields, at all stages striving to use the work as a means to recruit and develop new members. The key fields include campaigning among youth and students - an area which the Socialist Party has strengthened in the last year, as demonstrated in the discussion on 'building the fight for socialism on the campuses'.

The campaigning Socialist Students has been engaged in with the Funding not Fees campaign has been vital preparation to respond to attacks on students which are coming down

the track. These attacks are driven by the university funding crisis which is already seeing uni bosses carry out thousands of redundancies and course closures.

Discussions on the role of party media highlighted the central role the Socialist newspaper can play in building and strengthening the Socialist Party, as well as bringing ideas of how to further develop the party's social media.

Resources are essential to perform all of the tasks agreed. A discussion on finance pointed to the essential political task of increasing members' subs - monthly financial contributions towards the running of our party - as well as all aspects of fundraising.

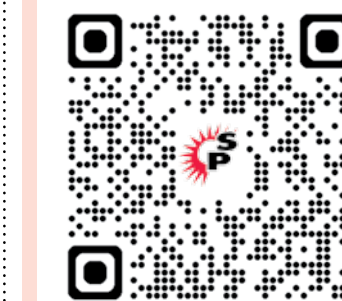
The fantastic £40,402 raised during the fighting fund appeal, delivered by former Coventry Labour MP and now Socialist Party National Committee member Dave Nellist, was an indication of the political confidence, enthusiasm and determination that ran through the congress.

In reporting on the work of the Committee for a Workers' International, Bob Labi highlighted the equally determined work of our socialist co-thinkers worldwide. Including those faced with brutal repression, like Michael Lenin facing charges of treason in Nigeria, and with the challenge of intervening into mass movements and uprisings. Bob launched the CWI financial appeal, helping to fund the 16th World Congress of the CWI taking place in Berlin in July.

The period of discussion preceding congress, the event itself, and the follow up in its aftermath are vital preparations for our party. With a clear political perspective, and agreement on our strategies and tasks that flow from that, we can be the most effective force fighting for Marxist ideas in 2025. Further developing our party to take part in the enormous class struggles that will unfold in Britain and internationally.

**Come and discuss**  
**Come to a**  
**Socialist Party**  
**meeting near you**

If you would like to participate:  
• [socialistparty.org.uk/events](https://socialistparty.org.uk/events)  
• Or text 07761 818206 with your name and postcode.





## 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 student 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.

- 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

- No to imperialist wars and occupations!

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

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

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

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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.

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## West Wales FBU stands up to bosses



Over 200 members of the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) and their families lobbied the Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Service HQ in Carmarthen. The imposition of new shift patterns will directly affect family lives and caring responsibilities. The FBU was also demanding management take concrete steps after a recently published damning cultural review.

The crowd encircled the building where talks were taking place, chanting 'Not on our watch - Nid ar ein!'

GARETH BROMHALL

SWANSEA AND WEST WALES SOCIALIST PARTY AND SWANSEA TRADES COUNCIL

## International Trans Day of Visibility Fighting for trans rights at work

EILONWY AWEN

PCS PROUD NATIONAL COMMITTEE TRANS REPRESENTATIVE (PERSONAL CAPACITY)

31 March marks International Trans Day of Visibility, held annually since 2009. It's a day to celebrate and normalise trans and gender non-conforming people in all the unique ways we exist.

This event is happening at a time where the fight for LGBTQ+ rights is increasingly urgent. Our rights are under relentless attack internationally by capitalist bosses and their governments, trying to divide working-class people.

The capitalist media narratives that dominate public perception often erase, distort, or commodify our realities.

We have been working within the PCS Wales LGBTQ+ Network to spearhead an event in Cardiff. We have

invited speakers from PCS, Unite, and Unison to speak, with more unions to follow.

Many individual speakers from the trans and broader LGBTQ+ community will be joining us. The event is supported and endorsed by Cardiff Trades Union Council and TUC Cymru, who will be in attendance, providing speakers and equipment.

The trade unions bring together millions of working-class people, who face different kinds of oppression. The hope is that our actions can help form the foundation for a trans trade union network in Wales, and perhaps even the UK.

In my workplace, we will be hosting a stall in the foyer, and I will be hosting an evening event as the trans representative for PCS Proud. I encourage everyone to run their own events for the day.

## NIGERIA SOLIDARITY

NIGERIASOLIDARITY.COM

END THE ATTACKS ON  
DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS!

END THE 'TREASON' TRIALS 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

# Unite Executive Council: Defend militant industrial strategy and step up fight against Starmer's austerity

SOCIALIST PARTY STATEMENT

Unite members are alarmed at reports from the latest meeting of the Executive Council (EC) which took place in the week beginning Monday 10 March in Cardiff.

A vote of no confidence was tabled against the chair of the Executive, Andy Green, by a group of EC members, based mainly in the United Left (UL) group. This motion won a narrow majority but didn't attain the required two-thirds majority. However, the response from the UL supporters was to boycott the rest of the EC meeting, scheduled to take place over five days, while still remaining in the hotel used for the EC.

Understandably, on hearing of the events, Unite members will be angry at the attempted disruption to the leading lay body of the union. This is particularly so at a time when massive industrial and political events are taking place. Starmer is moving onto the austerity offensive. Unite members are engaged in very important disputes like the Birmingham bin strike against the cutting Labour council, which is fully prepared to use the police to harass and even arrest striking workers.

To boycott the EC, unprecedented in the 18-year history of Unite, members would expect it to be clearly justified. But even in the UL supporters' own statements, this is not clear.

Andy Green was elected as the EC Chair at the first meeting of the Executive newly elected in 2023. The UL had a slim majority and Andy was their candidate. However, he then separated himself from UL, supporting the programme of general secretary Sharon Graham. This is the third time that the UL group has attempted a vote of no confidence. On the previous two occasions, the group accepted that a two-thirds majority was needed. This time, they claim that it can be done through a simple majority vote, and used that as an excuse for their boycott.

### United Left

The United Left was set up after Unite was formed and played an important role in the election of Len McCluskey as general secretary in the first leadership election of the newly merged union in 2010. At that stage, the Socialist Party was part of the UL. However, after Len's retirement and in the wake of the defeat of Corbynism within the structures of the Labour Party, the UL has developed into a conservative wing of Unite and opposes the industrially militant 'transformation' agenda of Len's successor as general secretary, Sharon Graham.

In the 2021 general secretary

election, the UL candidate, assistant general secretary Steve Turner, stood, in his words, on the basis that the union didn't need an 'attack dog' but someone who could work with Starmer and do deals 'behind the scenes.'

Under Sharon's leadership, Unite has taken a step change in its level of industrial action. Since she became general secretary, Unite has called over 1,000 disputes, winning 80%. Those disputes have won £450 million for members. It has also been arguably the foremost union in challenging Starmer's government, leading a national campaign on the Winter Fuel Allowance cut.

In the first Unite Policy Conference under Sharon's leadership in 2021, just weeks after her election, a motion was passed committing the union to call on Labour councils to stop passing on the cuts and instead move no-cuts, needs budgets. The union has waged a whole number of disputes against Labour councils, including Coventry and Birmingham. At the 2023 Policy Conference, UL opposed the motion from Greenwich council branch, which reiterated Unite's policy supporting legal no-cuts budgets.

Therefore, it's clear that if the UL had won the general secretary election in 2021, this stand would not have been their starting point and it would have needed an organised struggle by rank-and-file members to bring it into being. During the general secretary election, Turner criticised Sharon's Organising Department for demanding action from Labour mayors in London and Greater Manchester regions in support of striking bus drivers.

Socialist Party members gave critical support to Sharon and her team in that election because her militant stance was seen by reps and members as pushing the union forward. We stood on the same EC election slate with these reps two years ago. Our members also played an important role in the formation of the new Unite Broad Left (UBL) to further organise and fight for the industrial and political programme that is needed in Unite.

### Programme

We fight for our distinct programme within the union, on occasions differing from Sharon's approach.

We believe that Unite should be to the fore in the movement against the brutal assault on Gaza and the Palestinian people. We have called for Unite to organise a meeting of reps in the defence and logistics sectors to discuss an independent workers' position, including defending any workers refusing to carry out work duties because of

opposition to the war from reprisals by management.

We also refuse to support Starmer's increased military spending. As with fossil fuel industries, we demand a just workers' transition to socially necessary production, and opposition to capitalist war across the world. Transition would involve the nationalisation of these companies, while guaranteeing workers' jobs and income. We also argue that Unite, Labour's biggest affiliate, should take the lead in establishing a new workers' party.

In Andy Green's statement to branches this week, he speculates that the timing of UL hostility at the EC may be motivated by the imminent publication of reports on alleged historic misconduct surrounding the reported overspend in the Unite hotel and conference centre in Birmingham, the affiliated

services, and officer collaboration in blacklisting practices.

All acts of alleged misconduct should be thoroughly and impartially investigated with lay member involvement and oversight – including Birmingham and the allegations about Unite officers colluding in the blacklisting of union reps and activists.

It is essential that United Left are opposed because of their political and industrial retreats. In our opinion, their ties to Labour and their effective support for Starmer's government and cutting Labour councils all underpin their desperate power grab at the executive.

Central in this, is to spell out the industrial and political programme necessary to defend the interests of Unite members and the wider working-class, especially with the Executive Council and general secretary elections next year.



Striking Sheffield Veolia bin workers were boosted by French CGT union members and striking Birmingham bin workers joining the Unite members at their Lumley Street depot. Workers then marched into the city centre for a rally outside the Town Hall. The Unite members are in their eighth month of indefinite strike action to win recognition of the union of their choice. They are demanding that the city council, which outsourced the refuse contract, force Veolia to recognise their union. After the rally, many of the Sheffield strikers said: "We should be more like the French or even the Brummies."

ALISTAIR TICE





## Caerphilly – save Abertridwr library from Labour cuts

MARIAM KAMISH

CAERPHILLY TRADES UNION COUNCIL SECRETARY

“Blackwood Miners’ Institute is staying open”, I told the meeting, “because people fought for it. Why not Aber Library? If we fight, we can win.”

Eagerness wiped frustration off the faces around the room. “Put down your details”, I said, writing my own and passing on the sheet. “You can’t do that here”, said the council official leading the meeting. “Oh, yes, we can”.

We’d been sparring with her for half an hour. Now, it was time for action. Ignoring her, we chatted as the sheet went around.

### Working-class history

This valley has history. We had a fighting anti-poll-tax union. Windsor Colliery. Universal Colliery, before that. Great-grandparents told stories about the 1926 General Strike.

In the next days, we organised. Our first meeting was in the car park. The council wouldn’t let us meet inside the library.

Lowri, Year 6, came on her

scooter. “I don’t want the library to close. I come every day.” “I’ll take a pile of posters up the school”, said Rhiannon.

“Both schools use the library”, a young father told us. “They bring the kids over a class at a time”.

The meeting had ended, when four 15-year-olds rushed up. “Have we missed the protest?”

### It means everything

The library means so much. People borrow books. Toddlers use the soft play area. ‘Knit and chat’ meets. Kids do their homework. People of all ages use the computers – meet their friends. It’s the only place we have.

Aber Library was once a shed. Now, it’s a beautiful building – and the Labour council wants to close it. We won’t let them!

The council has £187 million in reserves. They don’t need to close libraries, leisure centres, or anything else. They should dip into reserves as a temporary measure – while banding together with other councils to demand the Labour government provides the money we need.

## Oxford – Palestine protesters back workers’ action to end war

RAE COX

OXFORD SOCIALIST PARTY

As the ceasefire was breaking, 100 showed up to show solidarity with Palestine.

There was still clear anger, but a low mood, as many could not see a way forward.

However, when Socialist Party members put forward the examples of general strikes in South Korea and Israel, and the potential of that kind of action to end war, people began to listen closer.

We found an openness to the idea

that mass struggle of Palestinians, as well as mass movements of workers in Israel against Netanyahu, can together offer a way forward to bring an end to the war.

And that’s not the only part of our socialist programme that got a larger echo. There was a keen interest in the idea of a new mass workers’ party.

With Labour squeezing disabled people, the elderly, and other workers, all while increasing defence spending to kill yet more in Ukraine and Gaza, the need for a working-class alternative to war and austerity is more urgent than ever.

## UCU launches ‘stop the cuts’ campaign

ADAM POWELL-DAVIES

SOCIALIST STUDENTS NATIONAL ORGANISER

The University and College Union (UCU) held a parliamentary lobby and rally to launch its ‘Stop the cuts: fund higher education now’ campaign on 18 March.

### Shocking redundancies

This was the first national campaign initiative in the ‘stop the cuts’ campaign, less than a week after the shocking announcement of 632 planned redundancies at Dundee University. UCU estimates that up to 10,000 jobs could be cut this year alone – 5% of staff.

The event was attended by UCU branches from across the country, with rally speakers from as far afield as Lancaster and Bangor, reflecting the enthusiasm for a trade

union response to the cuts devastating higher education.

The rally showed that there’s a discussion taking place within the union over the best way forward in this fight, with a range of different opinions expressed. Several speakers called for coordinated, nationwide strike action, linked to the battle over staff pay and conditions.

I spoke to bring solidarity from Socialist Students to the rally, highlighting the need for students to link up with campus trade unions in the fight for full public funding for education, paid for by taking the wealth off the rich – not more fees, cuts and cost-of-living crisis.

Joining UCU activists was suspended Labour MP John McDonnell. He spoke of the need for “a parliamentary voice” to the struggles of university staff, saying the lobby was

an opportunity to “recruit MPs as allies of the UCU”.

### Funding Not Fees

Socialist Students groups are organising lobbies of local MPs, under the banner ‘Funding Not Fees’. This brings together students and staff, as well as trade unionists, anti-war activists, community campaigners, and more in the fight for political representatives who will give a voice to all the struggles of working-class and young people, under this pro-big business Keir Starmer government.

While Socialist Students continues to build Funding Not Fees on campuses, we hope to link up with the UCU ‘stop the cuts’ campaign – including mobilising the maximum student turnout to the UCU’s national demonstration in London on Saturday 10 May.



### Breaking news at Cardiff uni

A massive 83% of University and College Union (UCU) members have voted to strike. This is in response to 400 planned job losses.

86% voted for action short of strike, up to and including an assessment boycott. 64% voted in the ballot.

## Coventry’s fight for free education

FRANK HAMMOND

COVENTRY SOCIALIST STUDENTS

United against attempts to break down our educational infrastructure, workers at Coventry University protested on 15 March. Perfectly planned to clash with the uni’s open day, they were supported by students, other trade unionists, and attendees of the Socialist Party’s national congress taking place in the same city.

### Job cuts

John Latham, vice-chancellor and CEO of Coventry uni, has proposed job cuts of over 90 staff and plans to remove 200 others from the pension scheme (see ‘Students: Build the resistance to uni cuts!’ at socialistparty.org.uk).

And what a turnout for the protest. Over a hundred slowly passing by,

holding signs; trade unionists, workers and students pumping their fists, clutching their wooden sticks from placards we all built to tell the bosses we aren’t accepting these attacks lying down.

Our placards held our campaign slogan: “Funding not fees! No redundancies!” The Funding Not Fees campaign aims to build a resistance to the many attacks on uni students and workers – the university bosses’ motives being a symptom of the failing system.

Speaking at the protest, former Labour MP Dave Nellist said the ‘fire-and-rehire’ scheme was being used as psychological blackmail against the staff. 66% of UK universities face deficit budgets this year. If Coventry University succeeded, many other universities would use the same tactics, he said. Clause 22 of the Employment Rights

Bill declares ‘fire and rehire’ to be grounds for automatic unfair dismissal. But, with a 174-seat majority in the Commons, Labour, if they wanted to, could have immediately declared the practice illegal last July to protect workers from these attacks. But they didn’t.

### Students and workers

My much-loved lecturer and vice chair of Coventry’s University and College Union (UCU) branch Monika Koehler-Ridley was interviewed by BBC news. I was delighted that she has attended a Socialist Party branch meeting to talk about the campaign. Students and workers have a common enemy. We’ll fight for free education, fight to end privatisation, fight for a society where we feel secure in our futures and do our part in pursuing the liberation of the working class.

## Leeds students say: ‘Don’t raise our fees, or cut our courses’

FARONE KAHUYA

LEEDS SOCIALIST STUDENTS

Leeds Socialist Students organised a protest for the Funding Not Fees campaign against Labour’s plan to raise tuition fees to over £9,535.

We are targeting criticism to the University of Leeds vice chancellor too. Her wages increase alongside our tuition fees. But she has the power to choose not to comply with Labour’s fee hike.

We are adding pressure to the university bosses to respond, with campaign activity around the universities and sixth form colleges in Leeds – leading up to the protest in front of the Parkinson Steps.

### Life is hard

We had fantastic speeches from Socialist Students. Capitalist profit makes student life harder and more unsustainable each year. One speaker reminisced about when university was free.

Another related this movement to powerful student movements in the past that we can take inspiration from, such as the 2010 protests

against the Conservative-Lib Dem coalition trebling tuition fees to £9,000.

### Still had to pay

This demo was backed by various student groups. Many, who could not make it, gave a speech to be read on their behalf. For example, Eden – Leeds student union wellbeing officer – expressed her grievances of having to go through a personal loss that prevented her from continuing higher education, yet still had to pay a hefty portion of the tuition fee, despite attending only one class.

Despite our small numbers, we were heard by many. We handed out many flyers, and our speakers were heard throughout the street.

As long as the accessibility and quality of higher education is threatened by capitalist greed, we will continue to fight for funding over fees, aiming to inspire more young people to push back against these changes.

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



HANNAH PONTING

SOCIALIST STUDENT CANDIDATE IN LIVERPOOL STUDENT ELECTION

Student union elections provide a great platform to voice socialist ideas on campuses. At Liverpool university, we collaboratively created a manifesto focusing on socialist policies, and subsequently selected a candidate who could put forward these policies, and represent socialist ideas in this election. I am very proud to have been that candidate.

The first of our main policies was fighting against Labour’s recent tuition fee hike, and for free education. The increasing cost of university should not be a barrier to young working-class people pursuing higher education. We based this policy around the Funding Not Fees campaign, launched by Socialist Students nationally.

The increasing cost of living is a significant concern to students. Funding life at university is becoming increasingly difficult. We

focused on fighting to expand burseries and reinstate the university’s food pantry, which was previously scrapped.

The university’s night bus is another service which was previously scrapped, although was reinstated due to campaigns led by Socialist Students. We said, expand the night bus to more areas in and around Liverpool, and to increase its frequency to every half an hour.

There has been a recent crisis of violence towards women and girls on campus. We believe that it is necessary to fight for all students to have a genuinely safe, reliable, and affordable way home.

### Refused

Cuts are occurring at universities around the country. Liverpool uni refused to be transparent with the University and College Union (UCU), when pressured about its own job cuts.

We said the university must open its books and have financial

transparency. This also extends to fighting for divestment from arms companies.

We held campaign stalls, and other leafletting and poster. We got a brilliant response from both students and workers on campus, with discussions about the cost of living and cuts to disability benefits.

We also held a public meeting. It provided a brilliant chance to explain our policies, and allow for any questions to be asked.

I spoke at endorsement meetings of other societies, such as Labour Students, to advocate socialist ideas to more students.

We achieved 151 first preference votes, rising to 192 when transferable votes were added. 9th place out of 24 candidates. The top four were elected.

There is an appetite for socialist ideas on campus. It’s our job to direct the frustration that young people are increasingly feeling – with the capitalist system and Labour government – into an organised movement.

## Workers and students are joining Manchester Socialist Party

ZAKK BROWN

MANCHESTER AND SALFORD SOCIALIST PARTY

Manchester and Salford Socialist Party has seen a recent uptake in new members, linking up our trade union campaigning with a new generation of student activists.

### Trade unions

Prior to the start of the September student term, our branch’s strength lied in our relentlessly active members in the trade unions, notably PCS and Unison. The flip side of our important trade union campaigning, however, was that we struggled with time following up new people interested in the Socialist Party, so attendance at branch meetings was a hurdle.

But from September, the branch began to grow with an active layer of students. First it was one, then two, and now five students agreeing to join the Socialist Party. More

regularly come to branch meetings, and could join the Socialist Party soon.

We were able to do this by combining the twin pillars of our branch – trade unions and students. We held two public meetings in March. One on the current battle in civil service union PCS, and the other on International Women’s Day.

Our new students were calling new people interesting in the Socialist Party, spreading the invitations. And

### Our message

Before, with relatively small meetings in the corner of a quiet pub, it was difficult for new people arriving after a campaign stall to think we are a serious. Now, with the attendance we are getting, and our members able to express how significant a force we are in the unions, the message is resoundingly clear – we are serious, and you should join.



# MASS PROTESTS SHAKE SERBIAN REGIME

MIRA GLAVARDANOV

The biggest protest in Serbian history happened on 15 March in the capital Belgrade. The upper estimate is 800,000 people; the entire population of Serbia is less than seven million. It was a culmination of four and a half months of protests. Student and farmers' marches and blockades and a teachers' strike took place following the collapsed roof at the train station in the city of Novi Sad, and widespread revulsion at the corruption that is believed to lie behind the country's poor infrastructure.

The protest on 15 March was regarded by many people as the 'D day'. People were saying: "This time we don't go home until it's done" and "Don't bring your children or pets with you". But the protest ended before the night came and the hated president Vucic is still standing. There was an attack on the peaceful demonstration, during the 15-minute silence (for 15 victims of the rail station disaster). A sonic cannon was used by the police, to spread horror among protesters, thus committing a terrorist act against their own people.

## March on Belgrade

For days before, thousands of students from all over Serbia marched to Belgrade on foot, with thousands of others by all means. But the regime cancelled coaches and trains, blocked roads with 'roadworks' and huge lines of cars were held at toll stations. Without the obstructions the protest would have been even bigger.

For days, Vucic had been warning of violence during the protest, instigated by the students, despite the fact that all previous protests had been peaceful. He had a few hundred of his 'loyalists' encamped in the central location in Belgrade, close to the parliament building.

Many people guessed that Vucic was 'predicting' his own violence, which he would then use as an excuse for enforcing martial law, as a way of staying in power. Vucic knows well that his regime is shaken.

There is a lot of speculation on the nature of Vucic's intentions for the day. It is thought that by using the sonic cannon he wanted to cause a stampede, which his thugs could use to attack the protesters. The police would intervene and extreme violence would take place.

But this did not happen. People ran for cover towards buildings rather than along the street. The student organisers also quickly called an end to the protest. The stewarding has been highly organised and important in defending against police violence, which is very likely to be increased in the next protests.

Vucic bragged of "defeating the colour revolution" - the name given to uprisings supported from the west, against rulers who do not act in western interests - implying that the whole protest movement was orchestrated by outside powers hostile to his regime.

The protests have not stopped. Students are organising another big protest for 4 April. But it feels like



Protest in Belgrade  
PHOTO: LUKA CRNOJMARKOVIC

something has changed and the mood is sharper.

Inspired by the success of student 'plenums' (assemblies), the students have called the general population to organise on a similar model. In the week since the 15th there have been numerous local assemblies developing their own demands.

Cracks in the state have started to open. In the city of Niš, several people were arrested and quickly released as the authorities refused to prosecute them. One former police officer has written an open letter to the police, asking them not to be afraid of the "very scared individual" who is making them protect criminals and at the same time beat up their own people.

Teachers have been on strike for months, surviving thanks to donations from working people. The teachers' union is calling for other unions to join. Students have also called on workers and unions to support them from the start. Unfortunately this has been painfully missing, most union leaders are wedded to the regime.

Significantly, in the aftermath of 15 March, five union centres have had a meeting with the students and come out in official support. The short statement says this is the first time unions will act together to change the anti-worker employment and strike laws. This development might be huge for the future of the movement, especially if it translates into active support of the teachers' strike.

The solidarity that the movement has received from the neighbouring countries, thirty years after a bitter war between them, is also significant. Students in Zagreb, Croatia, have also started organising assemblies,

as they are unhappy about tuition fees. Tragically, on the same evening as the Belgrade protest, a nightclub burned in North Macedonia, killing 59 young people. Solidarity from the whole of the Balkans poured into North Macedonia. The students and working people in North Macedonia immediately started organising assemblies, demanding resignations and prosecutions and an end to corruption.

Serbian students have not received support from any capitalist establishment and no wonder. The Serbian movement has no friends abroad other than working people. This is because, by rejecting the corrupt, comprador government at home, the mass protests also reject its dirty dealings with imperialist powers.

The protest movement in Serbia has grown significantly and more parts of the population are taking concrete action. The 'people's assemblies' could start to form parallel institutions, preparing for the 'day after'. They should call on workers to start organising in their workplaces in a similar way, forming 'workers' councils' or 'workers' action committees' that would by-pass the corrupt union leaders. 'Workers' councils' existed in the former Yugoslavia in all workplaces, so it's not an alien concept for many older workers, in particular. This time they need to be completely run from the bottom up and not stifled by bureaucracy.

Rank-and-file democratic control of workers' councils would ensure genuine representation of what workers want, with the right of immediate recall of elected representatives if needed. Such bodies linking up on a local, regional and national scale, and closely allying with the student organisations, would be the basis for a powerful alternative to the regime.

## General strike

Mass actions aimed at bringing society to a halt, including a general strike, could get a powerful echo at the moment. Student organisations, local assemblies and those unions prepared to take action, like the teachers, could lead the way, calling for strike action to fully isolate the government and for its resignation. This would pose the question of who should run society and on whose behalf. A government genuinely based on the sentiments of the mass movement and wider population would be anti-corruption, anti-privatisation, anti-imperialist, anti-poverty, and pro-worker, student and the poor.

The movement has already bypassed the constraints of capitalist parliamentary democracy. But students and workers' consciousness of their own power and ideas about the nature of a future society are inevitably lagging behind. Peoples' assemblies, workers' councils, and student protest bodies and networks can all offer both a precious experience and the building blocks of that society.

Settling for a capitalist parliamentary democracy would mean handing over the reins back to the foreign or domestic capitalists. To successfully make lasting and fundamental regime and system change requires an independent class approach and socialist ideas and programmes.

This means advocating policies in favour of working-class people and students and their needs for homes, good and secure jobs, free education for all, a free and accessible health system. This would require reversing all privatisations and implementing a socialist system that is based on the needs of ordinary people rather than profit.

The resilient mass demonstrations of the last months, with the newly formed truly democratic rank-and-file organisations that represent people's needs, give the opportunity of building a strong socialist political alternative to the corrupt pro-capitalist politics that only benefit the rich.

It is important that the movement consciously orients itself in this direction, which would ensure that the effort and achievements so far gain a solid ground. It would offer a clear vision and would remove a danger that the mass movement becomes tired and disoriented, which the regime, or other capitalist forces, would use to gain the initiative.

• This is a shortened version of a longer article published on [socialistworld.net](http://socialistworld.net)



# Israel: Mass protests against Netanyahu

AMNON COHEN

Mass protests have erupted across Israel, with over 100,000 people demonstrating in Tel Aviv and other cities on 22 March. Protesters blocked highways, surrounded the Israeli parliament in a makeshift encampment and endured beatings by police. Society is in turmoil, with daily demonstrations.

This eruption follows Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu's unilateral ending of the 24 November Gaza ceasefire, with renewed brutal attacks on Gaza and a new ground incursion. Netanyahu threatens to annex sections of the tiny Gaza Strip, ethnically cleanse its inhabitants and forcibly deport them to east Africa and other locations.

A large majority of Israelis oppose this, viewing it as a death sentence for the Israeli hostages still being held in Gaza and as a political manoeuvre by Netanyahu to shore up his coalition by enticing the far-right Jewish Power party back into the government. The families of hostages have publicly opposed the new offensive and many military reservists are war weary and sceptical of Netanyahu's claim that it will force Hamas to return the remaining hostages.

Protesters are also reacting to a government cabinet vote to sack Ronen Bar, the head of the domestic intelligence service, followed days later by a vote to also sack Attorney General Gali Baharav-Miara. Ronen Bar has attempted to check Netanyahu's



power by arresting some of his aides and investigating their connections to Qatari money. Netanyahu's priorities were made clear when he postponed a government discussion on the hostages in favour of a cabinet meeting to sack Bar.

Like with the 2023 nine-month movement against actions by Netanyahu to curb the judiciary, these further moves by Netanyahu are seen by protesters as attacks on democracy, through reducing checks on the ultra-right government.

The protests are a cross-class

movement, mainly made up of the working and middle classes but with a leadership consisting of parts of the capitalist establishment, including CEOs, former generals and secret service chiefs. These leaders have made militant speeches, calling for civil disobedience and a nationwide shutdown. Former Shin Bet chief Ami Ayalon called on company directors, school administrators and university heads to pause the operation of their institutions. The Histadrut, Israel's main trade union federation, threatened to call

a general strike if Netanyahu ignores a court ruling against the immediate sacking of Bar, which would be the third general strike in three years.

The crucial question now is whether this movement can defeat Netanyahu and end the war in Gaza. The experience of the democracy movement shows that demonstrations alone are insufficient; a general strike with longer length than the previous two is necessary to bring down the government.

Netanyahu's rise is a symptom of the deep crisis of Israeli society,

including the capitalist class's failure to improve conditions for working Israelis. Having largely lost control of the situation, capitalist leaders are now attempting to leverage the working class's power to rescue their own interests. However, workers must not act as foot soldiers for the so-called 'liberal' wing of the Israeli capitalist class, which seeks to defend Israeli capitalism's secret service chiefs and judicial system. The capitalist system is the root of the crisis and cannot resolve it.

Yair Golan, head of the Democrats party (a merger of Meretz and Labour), has called for the main parliamentary opposition parties to unite against Netanyahu. However, these parties all serve capitalist interests and offer no future for Israeli workers.

Instead of fighting for sections of a failed capitalist class, Israeli workers must fight for their own class interests - through general strike action based on the working class, and through taking steps towards creating their own party, uniting workers across religious and secular lines, Jewish and Arab alike. Such a party should fight for working-class interests: stopping the soaring cost of living, raising wages, building homes, and ending the subjugation of the Palestinian people - the only way to achieve peace and security.

Capitalism means endless cycles of war and slaughter, so none of the capitalist parties have a credible plan to end the conflict. The solution lies in building working-class parties in both Israel and Palestine, forging links between them, and with both adopting a socialist programme for an end to the conflict based on shared class interests of Israeli and Palestinian workers.

# Turkey: Solidarity with protesters fighting Erdogan's regime

The following is the text of a leaflet distributed at a solidarity protest in London on 22 March 2025

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's main political rival Ekrem Imamoğlu, the mayor of Istanbul, was arrested on 19 March on alleged corruption charges. The arrest took place days before the biggest opposition party, Republican People's Party (CHP), was set to announce Imamoğlu as its candidate for the next presidential elections.

Defying the ban on demonstrations and other restrictions, students and young people have been organising, heroically battling against police brutality. The protests quickly spread to many cities across Turkey.

Members of the Revolutionary Workers' Union Confederation (DISK) and Confederation of Public Employees' Unions (KESK) also took part in the protests.

Young and working-class people - so far the driving force of the movement - have had enough of constant attacks on democratic rights, rampant corruption, repression and worsening living standards.

The recent attack on Imamoğlu follows a series of arrests. However, these attacks do not come from a position of strength, but weakness. The austerity programme implemented by the government, with brutal cuts to public spending, has added to

Erdogan's growing unpopularity.

Erdogan is trying to use intimidation against all opponents and using everything in his means, including the judiciary and the police, to stifle the opposition and end the mass protests. Hundreds have been arrested and many have been severely injured by pepper spray, rubber bullets and police batons.

Erdogan's biggest fear is the protests spreading to workplaces, pulling in wider sections of the working class, demanding an end to attacks on democratic rights and living standards.

Imamoğlu's popularity was already on the rise because he was seen as the main challenger to Erdogan's increasingly authoritarian regime. Some of the welfare policies he introduced in Istanbul, such as the 'city restaurants' for people on low incomes, have added to his growing popularity.

His party, CHP, is now organising rallies in his defence. But, as the youth attending those rallies have pointed out, the movement is not just about the arrest of Imamoğlu, it is about repression, worsening living standards and lack of future for young people.

In fact, there is mistrust towards the CHP leadership including concerns they will act as a brake on the movement. The youth are trying to force the CHP to take a more

combative stance.

The movement can go further and shake the core foundations of Erdogan's regime and capitalism itself if it can link the attacks on democratic rights to economic issues.

These protests have been the biggest since the Gezi Park movement in 2013, when millions of people took to the streets and saved the park from demolition. That heroic movement could have gone further had the working class been at the helm, with its own mass democratic organisations, including a mass workers' party.

But since the Gezi Park movement, the CHP has been portraying itself as the only hope to get rid of Erdogan. Clearly, that approach has not worked and Erdogan was able to get away with more attacks on democratic rights. Like Erdogan, the CHP has got no answer to the problems facing the working class and young people, as it too defends the interests of big business.

There is an urgent need for all trade unions, socialists and student organisations to build a united front, offering a working-class alternative with a clear programme.

A socialist programme for democratic rights, as well as for jobs, homes and services for all, could bring millions more workers onto the streets in a mass democratic struggle against Erdogan's regime.

would create an even more explosive situation and change the balance of forces in favour of the working class.

Such a united front of workers emerging from this struggle, armed with a political programme, could force Erdogan out and offer a socialist alternative - fighting to take the banks and other giant companies that dominate the economy, like textile and steel, into the democratic control of the working class, planning society in our interests and securing a decent future for all.

Socialist Party members on a solidarity protest in Manchester on 24 March  
PHOTO: MANCHESTER SOCIALIST STUDENTS



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# the Socialist

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formerly **Militant**

# END GAZA SLAUGHTER



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## Build a mass working-class alternative

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CAMDEN AND HARINGEY SOCIALIST PARTY

**R**esidents across Gaza were thrown into chaos and terror last week as the Israeli state launched a surprise bombing campaign that killed 400 people in one night, 200 of which were children, and wounding hundreds more. The death toll for the conflict is now at least 50,000. Even before the renewed attacks, Gaza was in ruins.

Netanyahu has shattered the fragile two-month 'ceasefire' that limited the worst of the attacks on Gaza. Even during this period all aid was blocked, Israeli airstrikes and ground attacks continued, and violent repression on Palestinians in the West Bank stepped up.

Trump says he fully supports Israel's renewed attacks, and Netanyahu is set to establish a government agency that would oversee the removal of Palestinians from Gaza. This follows Trump's monstrous proposal that the whole population of Gaza could be "cleaned

out" and Gaza turned into a US-owned "riverside" as a playground for the rich.

Various capitalist powers around the world have condemned the renewed attacks, but their moral outrage is only skin deep. It reflects a view of the capitalist ruling classes that Netanyahu and Trump are simply going 'too far' in trampling over the norms of 'international law' and capitalist relations, and are increasing the risk of new popular uprisings worldwide.

Britain's Labour foreign secretary David Lammy initially condemned Israel's blockade of Gaza as a "breach of international law," before being rebuked by Keir Starmer to say that Israel was only 'at risk' of breaching international law. Starmer is attempting to cosy up to the Trump regime to avoid tariffs and preserve the 'special relationship' between US and British capitalism.

This sickening jockeying for position while mass slaughter is being carried out, is in stark contrast to the genuine outrage felt by workers and the poor worldwide.

In Britain, thousands continue to attend

protests at short notice. The Socialist Party is calling for the trade unions to play a central role in the anti-war protests, including by linking the fight against more military funding to the fight against brutal attacks on disabled people and other austerity policies.

The working class in Britain developing its own new mass political force - fighting against the capitalist bosses and for a socialist alternative to war and austerity - would strengthen the struggle of the Palestinian masses and all struggles of the oppressed worldwide. The presence of five MPs in the UK parliament, elected in opposition to the war on Gaza, could be a potential step forward on the road towards such a new party.

The actions of Netanyahu and the Israeli state are fuelling a profound rage - the huge protests rocking the cities of Israel itself are an indicator (see page 14).

This rage of the masses in the region will, at a certain stage, erupt in volcanic lava flows, shaking the Israeli capitalists, the elites in neighbouring Arab states, and the imperialist powers across the world.

### Socialist Party fights for:

- 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

WHAT WE STAND FOR: THE SOCIALIST PARTY'S MAIN DEMANDS >>> see column on p10



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