

Starmmer's disability cuts

WHY SHOULD WE PAY THE PRICE?

Take the wealth off the super-rich

ALEX SAMPSON
PLYMOUTH SOCIALIST PARTY

This Labour government has shown its true colours – slashing support for disabled people while pledging billions more to bomb the poor overseas, further enriching billionaire warmongers.

Chancellor Rachel Reeves announced £5 billion in welfare cuts, the bulk of which will fall on disabled people via Universal Credit health element cuts and

stricter criteria for Personal Independence Payment (PIP) packages.

Disabled people and their families already make up over 50% of the poorest in society and these brutal cuts will sink more than 400,000 more people, including 50,000 children, further into poverty. And this at a time, 'Awful April', when everybody's bills are going up.

We are told that there isn't the money to continue the current levels of government spending. We've already had 15 years of austerity supposed to 'balance the books' and now they want yet more? Austerity 1.0 resulted in deeper poverty for millions while a small minority got even richer. Austerity 2.0 is set to make it worse.

But austerity is not a necessity, it is a political choice to accept the diktat of the capitalist markets and billionaire profiteers.

Similarly, the decision to plough £2.2 billion into military spending is a political choice, in part to pander to Donald Trump's demands and bloating the already enormous arms manufacturers' profits. But more military spending won't keep us safe.

Keir Starmer's Labour government has shown its true colours, and it's blood red.

The best way to keep us safe from war and austerity is to get rid of all of the capitalist warmongers. We need a new mass party of the working class, one that fights for a socialist programme to prioritise the welfare of all over warfare.



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

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

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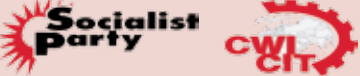
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"The philosophers have only
interpreted the world, in various ways;
the point is to change it."
Karl Marx

Stick it to Starmer's Labour at the ballot box on 1 May

Over 100 candidates agreed for TUSC stand



The TUSC steering committee has approved over 100 applications from candidates for the 1 May local elections. Hundreds of thousands will get the opportunity to vote for a working-class socialist alternative to Starmer's cuts, signposting towards the mass working-class political party needed.

- Find out more tusc.org.uk



Harnessing anger at Labour in Doncaster

"Reform predicted to take control of Doncaster Council in Labour wipe-out", ran the headline in the Doncaster Free Press after a poll forecast Reform to get 32 councillors to Labour's 13 in May.

Labour wipeout yes, due to the anger and hatred towards this Labour government, especially after its cuts to the winter fuel allowance, and now disability benefits. But whilst campaigning out in Doncaster town centre, Socialist Party members have not detected strong support for Reform either. It's been said that their support is 'a mile wide but only an inch deep'.

However, revulsion at Reform's anti-migrant, racist rhetoric is definitely politicising people, especially young people, who want to get active to counter them. Seven college students signed up to find out more info in two visits to the college last week, and five young people signed up on the last Saturday campaign stalls.

Stacy, who we met out campaigning four weeks ago, is now one of TUSC's 11 council election candidates, supporting Socialist Party member, trade unionist and 'benefits advice buddy' Andy Hiles, who is standing as TUSC candidate for mayor.

Many local activists, realising that it's not enough to just say "don't vote for Reform because they are racist" have rallied to TUSC's socialist stand. Needing 30 nominations for mayor, Andy got 40, including four former Care UK strikers. Significantly, two ex-Labour councillors, one of whom, Tosh McDonald, is former president of train drivers' union Aslef, resigned in disgust from Starmer's Labour in 2021 to finish their terms as independents, and are standing as "Independent Trade Unionist and Socialist candidates" in Town ward.

ALISTAIR TICE

Wrexham councillor resigns from Labour and joins TUSC

Anthony Wedlake, a Wrexham county borough councillor for Coedpoeth and formerly a Labour councillor, said: "I cannot in all conscience remain a member of a party that attacks the working class.

"I believe that we need a new party of the working class that will stand up for the rights of working people and fight the austerity policies of all the other parties: Labour, Tory, Plaid and of course Reform – all of whom would cut spending on services for working people while the richest 1% amass colossal wealth. That is why I will be sitting as a Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition councillor."

I'm standing for TUSC to give the working class a voice

I've never stood in any election before. A few years ago I would have thought the idea was crazy. But considering the state of the world we're living in, it's about time we stood up to the bosses and politicians that make life hell for working-class people.

Already in our campaigning we've seen firsthand the anger from the general public towards their lot. People are fed up with mealy-mouthed politicians; it's time for real change.

TUSC is a working-class alliance that is fighting against privatisation, tax rises, and job losses in local government and beyond. Its candidates stand in solidarity with all oppressed groups, and campaign to put the money generated by workers towards what we really want – protection and benefits for vulnerable people, rather than imperialist wars abroad.

County councils have power over many important aspects of our lives, and this should be put to good use. Take education for example: despite the UK having the sixth largest economy in the world, our teachers are having to pay for school supplies out of their own paycheques, and uni students are skipping meals in order to make rent. We need councillors who will fund and expand education services, not cut them.

Instead of catering to private housing contractors, we need to build eco-friendly, affordable council houses for all. We need to re-nationalise all forms of local transport, but not just to put these services in the hands of a capitalist government – nationalisation has to be paired with genuine democratic control, so these services can be planned to cater for our needs.

Under Starmer's Labour government our taxes are rising... and yet social services and benefits are being cut. So ask yourself: what is your tax money really going towards? Is it being put towards those who need the money most, or just lining the pockets of the richest 1%?

People are so used to their cries being ignored that many have given up entirely. But by standing we are showing that all hope is not lost and there is an alternative at the ballot box. By standing we hope to point the way forward towards a new workers' party that can fight for socialist change and give the working class a voice.

BILLY JONES
TUSC CANDIDATE FOR ST MARK'S & ST PETER'S, GLOUCESTERSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL



Billy Jones (centre) PHOTO: GLOUCESTER SOCIALIST PARTY

SPRING STATEMENT STARMER AND REEVES SERVE BOSSES' AUSTERITY ORTHODOXY



This is a government focused on serving its capitalist masters. That was one clear message from Labour's Spring Statement. The second is that the working class must organise to defy the expectation that it will accept that, including cruel cuts to the support needed by disabled people.

Chancellor Rachel Reeves announced welfare cuts of £4.8 billion. Including, for example, that the money paid to new claimants of the incapacity benefit element of Universal Credit will not only be halved but frozen on current levels until 2030. This news, alongside 'Awful April's' bill increases, spells misery for many.

The government also intends to tighten eligibility for Personal Independence Payment (PIP) including plans to raise the age at which young people transition from disability living allowance to PIP from 16 to 18. How people denied the means to be 'independent' are supposed to get work she didn't explain.

The result is at least another 250,000 more people thrown into poverty. Instead of measures to reduce from 4.5 million the number of children living in poverty, these measures are expected to mean 50,000 more child-hoods will be haunted by hunger, homelessness and cold in the sixth richest country on the planet.

Government departments will face a huge axe - with details in the coming months. But the cuts to the civil service of a whopping 15% are an indication of what they can expect.

£182 billion total wealth

For context, in 2024, the combined wealth of UK billionaires increased by £35 million per day, reaching a total of £182 billion, according to Ox-fam. The FTSE 100 biggest corporations pay out about £80 billion a year in dividends to shareholders.

But instead of identifying this source of revenue for funding public services and welfare, Rachel Reeves sought to show Labour's unwavering commitment to capitalist economic orthodoxy – in other words attempting to defend private profit by squeezing the working class.

The two fiscal rules that she set out at the October Budget were a 'Stability Rule' and an 'Investment Rule'. But even those who promote adherence to such capitalist rules have warned that Reeves's plans can't protect British capitalism. Its weakened state makes it especially vulnerable.

In the days before the Statement, the economic growth forecasts were halved to 1%. One week after Reeves's statement, Trump will pronounce further on his tariffs on what



PHOTO: UK GOVERNMENT/CC

he's called 'liberation day'. So far, and despite Starmer's begging, no exemptions have been announced for British car exports which now carry a 25% tariff. Forecasters warn that a 20-percentage point increase on tariffs on UK goods and services would cut the size of the British economy by 1% and force Reeves into tax rises this autumn.

The increasing cost of government borrowing is another factor. In early January 2025, interest rates for long-term borrowing rose to their highest levels this century. The Office for Budget Responsibility says that "In 2024-25 we expect debt interest spending to total £104.9 billion. That would represent 8.2% of total public spending and is equivalent to over 3.7% of national income." This is ultimately an expression of the lack of confidence in British capitalism. Fears of a Liz Truss moment haunt Downing Street – partly whipped up to threaten Reeves not to raise taxes on the super-rich.

Britain is second from bottom in the 38 countries of the OECD in terms of private investment levels. And the OECD average level of public sector investment is almost 50% more than the UK average.

The anger with the Starmer government is growing and expressed by those who have tried to defend it, such as the Guardian paper and right-wing trade union leaders.

Labour MP Richard Burgon said:

"If the government doesn't rethink this policy in relation to disability benefits, I think it would be the mother of all rebellions." He has since launched a petition demanding a wealth tax instead of benefit cuts.

The Socialist Party fights for the super-rich to be taxed to the hilt. But defending the interests of the working class includes the need to fight for nationalisation of the major companies and banks that dominate the economy as a key part of how to end rule of the billionaires and bankers and their austerity.

Urgently needed are steps towards building an independent political voice for the working class – which could involve the Labour MPs suspended for opposing austerity and the independent MPs and Jeremy Corbyn elected in opposition to Starmer's support for the Israeli state's genocidal slaughter of Palestinians. The key to this lies in the trade unions.

In the general election, 200 MPs received donations worth £2 million from the trade unions. How will those MPs vote in the next months as these attacks come before Parliament? The unions should not leave this to a matter of individual conscience but put the collective responsibility of the over six million-strong trade union movement on them. Those MPs should be called in to meet with the unions' lay leadership bodies and be

given instruction on how to fight for the interests of the working class in parliament.

The mighty trade union movement should lead in building the socialist opposition to Starmer. Important trade union elections will take place over the next months. While nothing is guaranteed, the campaign for new left leaderships or with the left strengthened in large public sector trade unions, such as Unison, PCS and NEU, is on. All leaderships will be tested in the coming battles.

Hundreds of disabled workers and young people protested outside parliament when Reeves was speaking. Trade union leaders have condemned the attacks. Unite general secretary Sharon Graham said: "If the government pushes down a path of austerity mark two, where yet again workers and communities pay the price, Unite will not stand by and watch it happen." But those hundreds could be multiplied by thousands if a the trade unions lead.

Unions must take lead

The trade union movement must not only condemn Labour attacks on the most vulnerable but build on this to take the lead on fighting all austerity measures and unite the working class in struggle. The Socialist Party is calling for the unions to use their huge authority, higher since the 2022-23 strike wave, to call a massive Saturday demo against austerity. That demo must not be a one-off expression of rage but preparation for fighting the attacks ahead.

Reeves and Starmer have also demonstrated their capitalist orthodoxy with a commitment to raising defence spending by £2.2 billion. This is also an attempt to woo Trump. Unfortunately, Sharon Graham also said: "The government is right to invest in our defence in an uncertain global world. Increased defence investment must not come at the expense of our public services and investment in British industry and our industrial infrastructure."

But this is a mistaken approach. As with fossil fuel industries, the working class must demand a 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.

The attacks on benefits and the defence nationalism are attempts to whip up division among our class, echoing the Tories' focus on so-called benefit scroungers. YouGov polling last November found that around half of Britons think that people with a disability (48%) receive too little support, against just 6-7% believing such groups receive too much support from the benefit system. Without a united working-class socialist response, these attacks represent a threat. Starmer and Reeves give legitimacy to Reform and its hate. The organised workers' movement must take the initiative.

Labour's betrayal of disabled people

MELANIE DENT

READING SOCIALIST PARTY

Cuts and brutal reforms of disability benefits are what working-class people expect from a Tory government. Thousands of people died due to benefit sanctions under the Tory-LibDem coalition and successive Tory governments. People were pronounced 'fit to work' and promptly died. Many people will have voted for Keir Starmer's Labour hoping for a change, but as Labour plan to proceed with cuts to Personal Independence Payments (PIP) it is clear they are continuing the Tories' dirty work.

People are understandably afraid. Work and Pensions Secretary, Liz Kendal, seems convinced that many claiming to have a disability are actually faking it. In actual fact the fraud connected to PIP is very small.

People do not choose disability. Living with any disability places emotional strain on people – just the

activity of getting through a day when they already have to try ten times as hard to get half as far as people without disabilities. This is without the often insulting and degrading way in which claimants are treated at both initial application and at reviews.

PIP is far from easy to get and this is set to get even tougher. Some disabled people are able to work with reasonable adjustments, but others simply can't. Health secretary Wes Streeting's recent comments about mental health issues being overdiagnosed have provoked understandable anger among disabled people and campaigners.

People are angry and frightened. Labour has lit an explosive touch paper. From here it remains to be seen how things will escalate but the anger in society is there.

We need to fight to defend disabled people, with the organised working class taking the lead. If we do not, quite simply, people will die in poverty.



Birmingham Socialist Party campaign stall at protest

Motability scheme – answering misinformation

JOHN GILLMAN

READING SOCIALIST PARTY

Alongside the government's drive to slash benefits for disabled people, there has been a media campaign of misinformation about fraud in the Motability scheme. This scheme allows individuals who receive the higher rate of the mobility component of Personal Independence Payment (PIP) to apply for a vehicle.

Similar to past attempts to restrict the issuance of blue badges – where the media ran numerous stories about supposed misuse – there is now a push to make it harder for even highly qualified disabled people to access the Motability scheme. The application process is already rigorous, requiring a form of approximately 40 pages and validation from health experts.

Misinformation about the scheme includes claims that people can obtain a car for a mild affliction, that luxury cars are available through the scheme, and that the cars are free. None of this is true. The eligibility criteria are strict, and payments – often around half of a recipient's PIP – are deducted from their monthly benefit. Additionally, modifications such as ramps and aids come at an extra cost, and if a person wants a car beyond their allocated price range, they must pay a deposit from their existing benefits. The privately run scheme also prohibits 'luxury' cars due to their low resale value.

Despite media narratives about fraud, actual cases of fraudulent PIP claims were minimal last year, whereas £1.7 billion in benefits went unclaimed.



Protest against Reeves's Spring Statement ROB WILLIAMS

The Socialist Party fights for:

- No benefit cuts. Replace Universal Credit and the punitive benefit system with living benefits for all who need them

- A massive expansion of public services, including free, flexible childcare and social care. Reverse all cuts, kick out the privateers and bring services back into public ownership under democratic workers' and community control

- A new mass workers' party to provide an alternative to Labour austerity. Take the wealth off the super-rich and make the bosses pay. Fight for socialist change

Socialist Party members are encouraging trade union branches to pass a motion that includes the demand for the trade unions and 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.

- See 'Fight back against Labour's attack on disabled people' at socialistparty.org.uk for the motion

Swansea fightback against disability cuts grows

SWANSEA SOCIALIST PARTY AND DISABLED PEOPLE AGAINST THE CUTS (DPAC) MEMBER

A month ago, DPAC Swansea was one seriously impressive and determined organiser. Then Labour's disability cuts green paper dropped. DPAC Swansea became two, and through our efforts, a few days later 15 came to a protest planning meeting. A few days later again, 100 people, most of them disabled people, turned up to protest.

We opened the megaphone to the disabled people and carers in the crowd who have been completely ignored by our MPs and to the trade unionists who had provided support and solidarity.

The crowd yelled agreement with speakers and hung on every word. I often don't really listen to speakers at protests, except when a good trade unionist speaks. Usually I can't even hear the politician who is droning on. But on this protest, if the sound dipped too quiet, the crowd demanded we turn the sound system up! Socialist Party members were among the speakers.

The disability benefit cuts green paper consultation lasts 12 weeks. If we did what we did in two days, what will disabled people, carers, and the organised working class achieve in 84 days? Loads of new people are coming forward to take on important organising roles in our DPAC group.

Torsten Bell, one of Swansea's two MPs, is a focus for our plans for further protests – he is ridiculed for his disastrous attempts to defend the cuts on TV.

These Labour MPs and councillors, and others backing the cuts should have the courage to publicly debate with us. I am confident that any of the people we met on our protest could wipe the floor with them politically in a calm, friendly and safe debate. DPAC Swansea is going to discuss how we organise exactly that.

On the protest and among activists there is big support for the idea of a new workers' party. That was one of the many issues discussed at the Socialist Party public meeting that we organised to discuss with those we met on the protest.



Swansea protest SWANSEA DPAC

Leicester Labour double-down on disability cuts to council tax relief

STEVE SCORE

LEICESTER SOCIALIST PARTY

"Does the Labour Party hate disabled people?" This was a question asked by one young person.

As part of a double whammy hitting disabled people, Leicester City Council is now cutting the council tax support for people on low incomes. It is now treating Personal Independence Payments (PIP), meant to support those who need it for mobility for care and the extra cost of trying to live independently, as income!

This has meant a huge hike in council tax for many people. Yet again, a heartless Labour Party penalises the most vulnerable. This is of course on top of announcing the ending of travel support for 16-plus-year-olds with special needs to get to school.

Leicester's Labour council says that since 2011, as result of government cuts and the rise in the cost of social care, now privatised of course, (which is a legal duty), spending on all other services has halved. This has resulted in the loss of a huge number of services: youth services, adventure playgrounds, family centres, community centres, welfare advice... etc. 2,000 jobs have been lost so far.

No-cuts needs budgets

The Socialist Party has consistently argued that the Labour council should have fought government cuts. It could have used the hundreds of millions it had in the bank held as reserves to set no-cuts budgets, then gone to the workforce, the trade unions and the people of Leicester who need these services, to build a massive campaign to force the government to come up with the cash needed. Of course, using reserves can only last so long and would be a temporary step to buy time to build that campaign.

Instead, blaming the Tories, the Labour mayor and council passed on those cuts. Who are they going to blame now it's a Labour government?

Another £20 million in cuts are now being made after the most recent council budget. Ironically, all the things they told us were impossible – using reserves, transferring capital budget surplus over to current spending, borrowing etc – are now being done by the city council, not to build a campaign against cuts, but to balance the budget while still making cuts.

They say they want to "buy time" (they must have read that much in our material!) in the hope the government may decide from the goodness of its heart to give them more cash later. Good luck with that!

WHAT'S YOUR VIEW?

• editors@socialistparty.org.uk

Labour says no extra funding for 'crumbling schools'

DAN WARRINGTON

ALDERSHOT SOCIALIST PARTY AND NEU EXECUTIVE CANDIDATE (PERSONAL CAPACITY)

Schools across England and Wales are bracing themselves for the worst round of education cuts since the coalition government, following Rachel Reeves's 26 March Spring Statement. Although Reeves was keen to blame 14 years of Tory rule for the state of "crumbling" classroom roofs, her statement failed to deliver any extra funding that would reverse more than a decade of Tory cuts.

With school costs expected to rise by 3.6% next academic year, the expectation that schools will be able to absorb increasing costs through 'efficiency savings' just doesn't reflect the reality of an education system already cut to the bone. As a result, school leaders will be forced to choose between running deficit budgets or making cuts to staffing.

The intensification of Tory austerity policies is a far cry from what many Labour voters expected from Starmer's government and it is hard to see how Labour's manifesto commitment to recruit 6,500 additional teachers will be possible when schools are forced into hiring freezes. The crisis in recruitment and retention will only be exacerbated by further increases to workload, as schools try to balance budgets. Meanwhile, a further 50,000 children face being pushed into poverty due to welfare cuts.

Unions must take the lead

Local authorities and academy CEOs will bemoan the lack of education funding, but that is where their resistance will end. It will be up to education workers, through



PAUL MATTHEWSON

the education unions, to mount an effective challenge to the government. The National Education Union (NEU) is currently running an indicative ballot of teacher members on the issue of funding and pay. As the largest education union, workers will be looking to the NEU's national conference on 14-17 April for leadership. NEU should not only move towards a formal ballot of teachers, but build a campaign that includes school support staff, nursery workers, sixth form lecturers and school leaders. Education workers in other unions such as NASUWT, Unison and GMB should demand the same. The 2022-23 strike wave showed the power of mobilised workers to affect government policy. A united front of public sector workers will have the best

chance of forcing Starmer to fund public services rather than pander to the super-rich.

The NEU needs to elect a fighting leadership that gives a consistent and bold national lead. NEU National Executive elections open on 3 April.

Socialist Party members Sheila Caffrey and Louise Cuffaro have been re-elected unopposed to the National Executive of the National Education Union. Two other Socialist Party members are up for election, Sean McCauley in District 8 and Dan Warrington in District 11.

- To read their fighting programme, see 'NEU needs fighting leadership to defeat worst cuts in a generation' on socialistparty.org.uk

Nationalise British Steel

Privately owned British Steel has announced plans to close its two blast furnaces and steelmaking operations in Scunthorpe, putting up to 2,700 jobs at risk.

It would effectively bring an end to steelmaking in Scunthorpe after 160 years of production, devastating another steel town hot on the heels of Tata closing its two blast furnaces at Port Talbot in south Wales with the loss of 2,500 jobs. It would leave the UK without the ability to make steel from scratch.

British Steel is owned by Chinese

firm Jingye, which has launched a 'consultation'. In a joint statement, Community, Unite and GMB unions said: "All options must remain on the table for safeguarding this strategically crucial business". But so far the Labour government has only pledged to throw money at Jingye, and since its original announcement has even reduced that. With even bosses like Simon Boyd of supplier Reidsteel calling for public ownership, unions must boldly demand nationalisation to safeguard jobs and steelmaking in Scunthorpe.



Scunthorpe plant JONATHAN THACKER/CC

Socialist Students statement: Fight back against police repression of young protesters

Socialist Students condemns the barbaric police raids and arrests of Youth Demand activists, including those attending an open meeting at Quaker meeting house in London on 28 March. We call for all charges to be dropped, for their immediate release, and an end to all repression faced by political activists.

The Labour government is carrying out vicious attacks on young and working-class people, and is well aware of the huge anger it is causing. This crackdown on young left-wing activists is an attempt to intimidate all the other young people wanting to fight back. Socialist Students says: An injury to one is an injury to all!

This is why Socialist Students is organising on school, college and university campuses to fight back not only against the repression but also against all attacks on our rights and living standards. Young people face a rise in tuition fees, high rents, an out-of-control climate crisis, low pay and disability benefit attacks. We are organising young people and students to fight for a socialist alternative to this rotten capitalist system.

Join the student fightback: join...

socialist students

• Visit socialiststudents.org.uk/join
• or text your name and school, college or uni to **07749 379 010**

Unison Health conference must get ready to fight Starmer's government

EVE MILLER

DELEGATE TO UNISON HEALTH CONFERENCE,
PERSONAL CAPACITY

Under the Tories, 14 years of austerity shattered and bled our NHS dry through underfunding and privatisation. But now we have a Labour government, has anything changed?

The small increase in funding announced in last year's Budget is a drop in the ocean compared to what is needed to fully fund and staff our crumbling sector. Health Secretary Wes Streeting is opening the doors to further privatisation. Even more public money will be spent paying into private companies so they can profit from our healthcare needs.

Our pay has been cut by 40% in real terms over the last 15 years. Now we're being offered a measly below-inflation 2.8% 'rise' – in reality yet another pay cut. At the lowest bands, our vital porters, health care assistants, admin staff and more are only a few pence above the pittance minimum wage, leaving them to struggle in the cost-of-living crisis and feeling undervalued for the important work they do.

And now Labour has announced that up to 30,000 jobs could be cut through the abolition of NHS England and from the Integrated Care Boards. With many Trusts freezing recruitment in order to balance their

books, thousands of healthcare staff will be fearful for their future.

Labour chancellor Rachel Reeves admitted that last year's 5% pay offer was only given due to the potential "cost of further industrial action". This shows that Labour is afraid of trade union power and that striking gets results.

Coordinate

Unison should be coordinating with other unions for a strike ballot to fight for a fully funded inflation-busting pay rise and for pay restoration for all health and care staff, including those in privatised sectors.

We must fight to implement Unison's policy of a £15-an-hour minimum wage to boost staff retention and attract staff into the hundreds of thousands of vacant positions.

Student fees should be abolished and nursing bursaries restored to encourage nurses into the NHS.

We need a fight to oppose all job losses. If reorganisation is necessary to improve how things are run, workers should be transferred with union agreement to other useful roles with no attacks on terms and conditions.

And we must urgently fight any escalation in privatisation; for the reversal of those privatisations already carried out; for the scrapping of PFI schemes and the cancellation of the debts.

We have to fight for a fully publicly

funded NHS and care system free at the point of use, under democratic control. Nationalise the private health care sector, medical supply industry and the pharmaceutical companies.

We need a proper debate about political representation

Labour politicians locally are choosing to attack members' jobs rather than fight for the money we need for our services. Labour politicians in Westminster are choosing to attack the living standards of working-class people as they slash benefits and disability payments rather than take the money from the rich.

We don't need politicians who take our money, attack our members and won't fight for the wealth in society to be under democratic control to build our public services. We need a party that fights for our interests, not those of the super-rich and the bond markets!

We need a proper debate among members about what our union should do to achieve genuine political representation – not a debate confined to the minority of members who pay into the Labour Link fund.

Unison should only support candidates in elections that support us, and build up a group in parliament of MPs who will actually fight for our union's policies. We should begin to discuss with other unions how we can build the new workers' party we need.



Ambulance workers in Unison were part of the 2022-23 strike wave MARTIN REYNOLDS

TUC Young Worker delegates angrier than their leaders

ADAM HARMSWORTH

DELEGATE TO TUC YOUNG WORKERS' CONFERENCE,
PERSONAL CAPACITY

Around 150 delegates and visitors – among them young Socialist Party members – attended the 2025 TUC (Trades Union Congress) Young Workers' Conference on 22-23 March, to discuss major issues facing young workers today.

The conference came at a dramatic time to be a young trade unionist. The Tories have been thrown out for the first time in our entire adult lives, which should be a cause for celebration.

And yet, there are growing attacks on the working class from the Labour government and councils. Some speeches for the motions had to be rewritten when Reeves announced £2 billion being cut from the civil service on the Sunday.

Motions highlighted the horrific war in Gaza, the grim state of poverty pay especially for youth, a rising plague of harassment and bullying at work including sexual assault, mental health crises, and the far right.

The motions brought to the conference usually reflect the views of the trade union leaderships. They rarely call for radical change, even when many of the delegates want to see far more done for the working class.



This led to many modest motions celebrating the work of the Labour government so far and calling for the TUC Young Workers' Committee to campaign for more progress. But that contrasted with speakers for the motions attacking Labour for its horrendous failings and carrying out more austerity.

Young Socialist Party members were among the minority of speakers on the motions who used the platform to put forward the need to fight back against the Labour government, instead of hoping that Starmer will 'do the right thing'. We discussed with other attendees about the need to build a socialist alternative to Labour's agenda of cuts, war, and attacks on the working class, using the leaflet we were handing out as a route into discussion. We also sold our newspaper The Socialist at every opportunity outside Congress House.

Some speakers railed against the capitalist system itself, which is a welcome sign of the growing anger of youth and desire for real change, but that anger must be turned into action within the trade unions themselves.

Those delegates who want a real fightback need to help build combative and democratic trade unions to ensure the working class is able to fight these attacks and for socialist change. They should join or help

build broad left formations, and fight for their unions to begin building a new mass working-class party to draw the class together against the pro-capitalist parties.

The conference reflected the anger young trade unionists feel at the crisis-ridden system we are in today and a desire for a better future. The task for the youth in the unions now is to campaign within our unions to prepare to fight against attacks both from Labour and from employers emboldened by the government, argue for a political voice for the working class, and challenge the union leaderships with a socialist programme.

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

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Birmingham bin strike 'emergency'

- Appeal to workers and unions in region for support
- No cuts – demand emergency funding from Starmer's government

BIRMINGHAM SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBERS

The Birmingham bin strike is suddenly national headline news since Unite the Union members escalated their action to all-out strike.

In the face of growing pressure from residents, and press images of piles of rubbish and rats, the Labour council has declared a 'state of emergency'.

Well, there is an emergency – but it's not the fault of the bin workers! Birmingham City Council is making hundreds of millions of pounds of cuts and hiking council tax.

Why should workers pay for the failure of the Labour council to fight over a decade of Tory cuts? The council should stop the cuts and demand the necessary emergency funding from Starmer's Labour government!

The council's proposals could mean an increased police presence to try to stop effective pickets, along with using more agency staff and bin lorries from neighbouring councils to clear up fly-tipping.

If this is attempted, there should be an appeal to any such refuse workers and their respective unions to refuse to work and undermine their brothers and sisters on strike in Birmingham. This, coupled with a

call to bin workers elsewhere in the region, many of whom have recently been in dispute, could stop the council's strikebreaking plans.

Likewise, there needs to be a bold appeal to trade union branches in the region to come and join the pickets to provide strength in numbers.

In another low, the council has tried to hold a gun to striking bin workers' heads by threatening the remaining Grade 3s with redundancy.

Even if it's an empty threat, the fact that a Labour council could contemplate fire-and-rehire, or fire-and-replace, of these long-serving workers makes a mockery of all the claims ahead of the general election that they would bring in improvements to workers' rights.

Labour at both local and national level is presiding over a catastrophe in local services. It's time for all unions, starting with Unite, to have a serious discussion about how to use their political funds.

The dispute in Birmingham represents a serious attack on Unite and its militant industrial strategy by a Labour council on Starmer's watch. As we said in last week's edition of the Socialist, in our statement 'Unite Executive Council: Defend militant industrial strategy and step up fight against Starmer's austerity', the decision of the misnamed United Left group to boycott the recent Unite Executive Council is not only unprecedented but given Starmer's austerity offensive and the critical character of the Birmingham bin strike, it will rightly anger Unite members.



NEU must fight for its support staff members

SHEILA CAFFREY

NEU EXECUTIVE MEMBER, PERSONAL CAPACITY

At its March meeting, the National Executive of the National Education Union (NEU) voted to accept an agreement about support staff, signed with other unions that also have support staff members.

It reconfirms the agreement made with the TUC (Trades Union Congress) in 2017 when the NEU was formed, that the NEU "should take no action that could be regarded as organising activity on behalf of support staff without the explicit agreement of the NJC unions."

As a result of that historic agreement, the NEU does not have recognition with the employers for the purposes of national pay bargaining. The unions that do – Unison, GMB and Unite – are known as the NJC unions.

But the vote on the exec was close. Myself and fellow Socialist Party member Louise Cuffaro were part of a substantial minority on the exec that voted against. 20 voted for, 14 against and 12 abstained (many on the basis that they thought the issue should go to conference to be decided).

There is fury among many support staff members and an urgent motion is now going to NEU conference in April, backed by a growing number of NEU branches. A lot of exec members



had had emails from support staff in the run-up to the meeting.

The NEU has 60,000 support staff members. Many of these were already members of the Association of Teachers and Lecturers when it merged with the National Union of Teachers to form the NEU. Many more have joined the NEU subsequently, especially during Covid and then the strike wave, because they saw the NEU as a fighting union.

In 2023, NEU conference passed a resolution to campaign for

recognition for support staff. The NEU leadership could have gone into these talks with the other unions with that starting point, that all support staff need proper representation, and that the unions should all fight together. Yet they have signed an agreement that explicitly says "NEU will not pursue recognition".

The new agreement talks a lot about the NJC unions consulting the NEU, and about unions campaigning together. But the NJC unions "will retain the responsibility to formulate

the bargaining claim". So what if NEU members disagree?

The ban on the NEU organising on behalf of support staff remains in place unless there is prior agreement with the other unions. It even states that NEU's website and briefings have to be agreed with the other unions.

Of particular concern is a line in principle 7 that relates to local 'whole school issues'. While encouraging collaboration, it appears to say that the principles in the whole

document apply. Currently, the NEU organises and leads significant local battles of both teachers and support staff. What does this new agreement mean? Will the NEU nationally not sanction local action unless the other unions agree?

In the end, no agreement made at the tops of unions can dictate to workers how they fight back. But this agreement is an extra unnecessary hurdle, which support staff members of NEU are determined to fight against.

● How can council cuts be ended?

Conference to debate a people's budget for Birmingham

12 noon Saturday 26 April

Comfort Inn, Station Street, Birmingham B5 4DY

Organised by West Midlands Shop Stewards Network

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NSSN bulletin: shopstewards.net

Onay Kasab, Unite negotiator, told Channel 4 news:

"We expect the government to actually acknowledge what's going on here. We've got waste refuse workers looking at pay cuts of up to £8,000 a year.

"The way to get the streets cleaned up is to resolve the dispute. That means acknowledging that you can't just cut the pay of essential public service workers by £8,000 a year."

In response to the suggestion that there's no money – the council is virtually 'bankrupt' and raising council tax by 21% – Onay said:

"We've got councillors who awarded themselves an increase in their allowances of 5.7%. We've got a council that spends over £6 million a year on agency staff in excess of the normal payroll. We've got commissioners – one commissioner managed to claim £18,000 for one month! And yet our members are expected to take a pay hit. We don't want this to continue one day longer but we've got members telling us they can't afford to pay their rent and mortgages.

"Our members are also residents of the city. They do not want to be out on strike. This could be over tomorrow if the council negotiates constructively and listens to our positive proposals."

CUTS AND CRISIS – LESSONS FROM THE SECOND LABOUR GOVERNMENT

Keir Starmer’s Labour government continues to demonstrate its determination to act in the interests of Britain’s capitalist bosses, attempting to appease the international ‘markets’ with yet more austerity attacks, including brutal cuts to disabled people’s benefits.

Economic crisis, a Labour government unwilling to challenge the capitalist class, benefit cuts, struggles of unemployed workers, ‘bread riots’ and a naval mutiny – all were features of the events surrounding the second Labour government which took office in 1929.

No two historical periods are exactly the same. Not least, for example, the fact that today the Labour Party has been transformed into an out-and-out capitalist party, in which the working class can no longer exercise its pressure through the party’s democratic structures. But the events nearly a century ago are rich with lessons for the workers’ movement today.

We publish extracts from an article written by **Hannah Sell**, now Socialist Party general secretary, first published in our sister publication Socialism Today in 2011.

In May 1929, the second Labour government in history came to power as a minority government, backed by the Liberals, with ‘moderate’ Labour politician Ramsay MacDonald as prime minister.

At that stage, the Labour Party was a capitalist workers’ party. While the leadership acted in the interests of the capitalists, the mass, working-class base of the party was able (unlike today) to influence it through the party’s democratic structures. This was to be graphically demonstrated by the events of 1931. Leon Trotsky anticipated what would develop in Where is Britain Going? “The masses will liberate themselves from the yoke of national conservatism, working out their own discipline of revolutionary action. Under this pressure from below the top layers of the Labour Party will quickly shed their skins. We do not in the least mean by this that MacDonald will change his spots into those of a revolutionary. No, he will be cast out”.

The Labour Party had come to power in a period in which capitalism could not afford to carry out reforms: “Without reforms there is no reformism, without prosperous capitalism no reforms”, Trotsky explained. “The right reformist wing becomes anti-reformist in the sense that it helps the bourgeoisie, directly or indirectly, to smash the old conquests of the working class”. (Once More on Centrism, 23 March 1934, Writings of Leon Trotsky 1933-34)

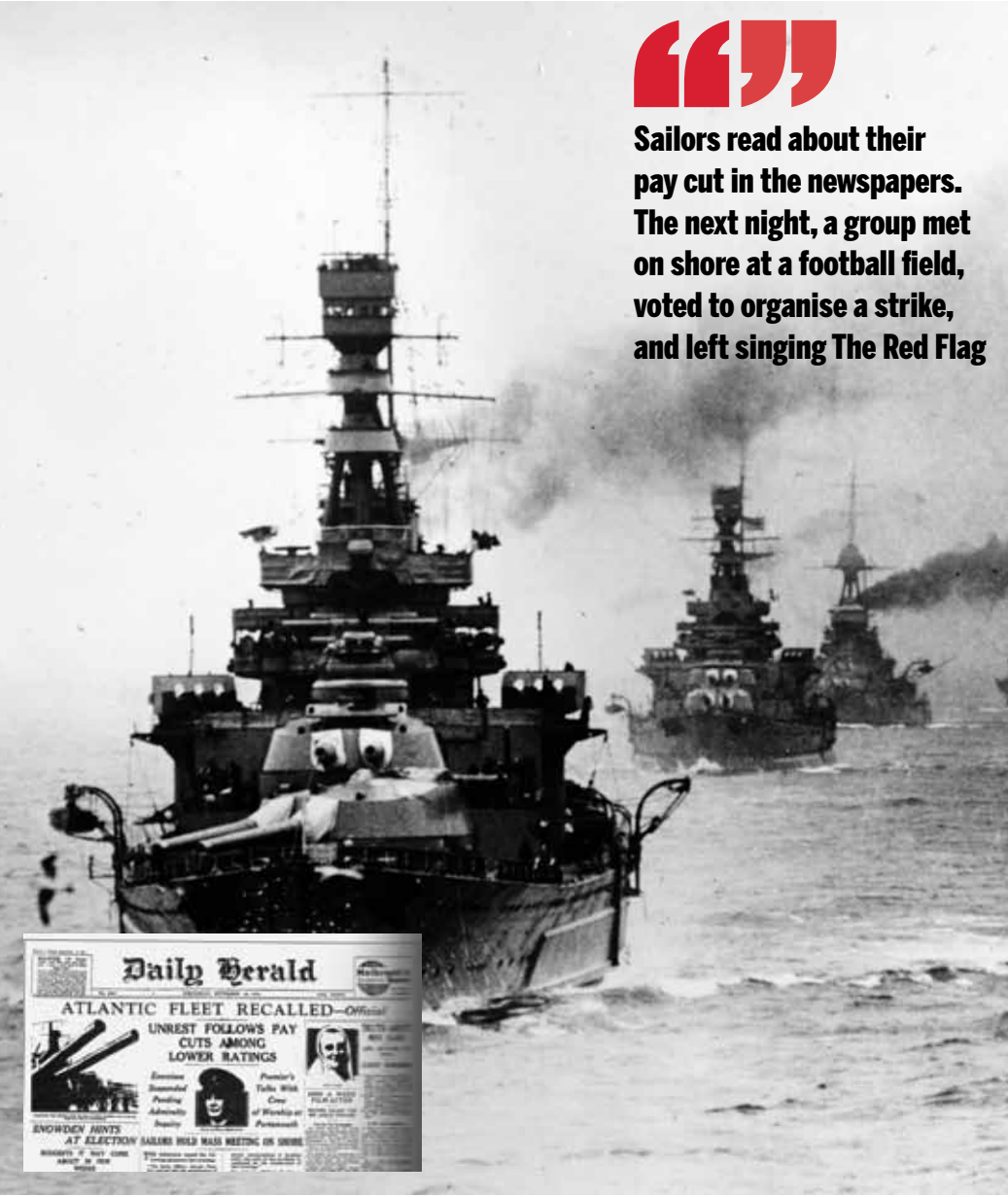
From the start, the MacDonald government disappointed the millions of workers who had voted for it, not least on the central issue of the day, unemployment. Even Hugh Gordon, a right-wing Labour MP, later admitted: “The government ran away from its programme [on unemployment] from the first day”. (Nick Smart, The National Government 1931-40) A bill introduced by the Minister of Labour, Margaret Bondfield, Britain’s first woman cabinet minister, did not deal with any of the central issues facing

the unemployed. Some of the most brutal aspects of the benefit system were left in place, such as the waiting period before benefits could be claimed and the onerous proofs of ‘genuinely seeking work’. Anger was such that, at the Labour Party conference in October 1929, an attempt to stage a protest against the Bondfield bill was only narrowly defeated.

In July 1931, as unemployment soared, the Labour government commissioned the May report into the public finances. This called for huge public sector cuts, including a 10% cut in unemployment benefits. As Henry Pelling puts it in his Short History of the Labour Party: “In August [1931] the government faced the alternatives of abandoning the gold standard or securing fresh loans in Paris or New York; but the New York bankers would only help if they were sure that the government was taking sufficient measures of retrenchment to restore confidence on orthodox lines. This meant, in fact, cuts in civil service pay and in the pay of the forces, and also in unemployment benefits”.

A narrow majority of the cabinet was in favour of implementing the May report, but senior figures who opposed it made it clear that they would resign if it was implemented. More to the point, the power of the organised working class, the trade unions, within the party made it impossible for the Labour government to go ahead and implement the report. Ernest Bevin, general secretary of the largest trade union, the Transport and General Workers’ Union and very far from being on the left, was among those who met the chancellor to report on behalf of the TUC that they could not accept the cuts.

In Britain, the so-called ‘cradle of capitalist democracy’, the capitalist class, when it could not use the Labour government as a reliable servant of its interests, did not hesitate to find another, more reliable, instrument in the form of a national government headed by MacDonald. On 23 August, MacDonald resigned. Early the next morning, he accepted the invitation of the king to form a new government with the Liberals and the



The British Atlantic Fleet on exercise in the late 1920s. The fleet was stationed in Invergordon when a mutiny took place. PHOTO: UNDERWOOD & UNDERWOOD - OFFICIAL U.S. NAVY PHOTO/PUBLIC DOMAIN

Conservatives. MacDonald and those Labour MPs who went with him were expelled from the Labour Party and gave themselves the name National Labour. This betrayal was burned into the consciousness of broad sections of the working class for decades.

At the end of August 1931, a national government was formed ‘to defend the gold standard’. Its slogan was ‘equality of sacrifice’. It immediately introduced an emergency budget, which demanded no sacrifice by the rich and meant starvation for the poor. Unemployment benefits were cut by 10% and the dreaded means test led to 193,542 men and 77,995 women immediately having all their benefits stopped. The means test meant that benefits were denied to the unemployed if anyone in the family – parents, grandparents, siblings – were judged able to keep them or if they had any goods, including basic furniture, which could be sold to buy food. At the same time, public sector workers were told their pay would also be cut by 10%.



Sailors read about their pay cut in the newspapers. The next night, a group met on shore at a football field, voted to organise a strike, and left singing The Red Flag

Even those capitalist academics who try to deny that the Invergordon mutiny was responsible for Britain coming off the gold standard actually accept that it was the sailors’ determination which was the trigger for what followed. Nick Smart, for example, says: “The political impact of the Invergordon ‘mutiny’ was considerable. It is doubtful, however, whether the event, in itself, caused... the suspension of the gold standard on the Monday. What is more likely is that foreign holders of sterling... interpreted ‘disobedience in the fleet’ as a symptom of government unpopularity”. Exactly! Compare the sailors’ spontaneous determination not to accept the misery being heaped on them with the pathetic servility of the right-wing Labour leaders, summed up by their Fabian guru, Sidney Webb, who when he heard Britain was off the gold standard whined: “No-one ever told us we could do that”. In 1931, the British ruling class came up against the inner resistivity of the working class in the form of the naval mutiny and was forced to abandon its long-held goal of sticking to the gold standard. Workers’ refusal to accept the scale of misery being demanded of them was bound to find an outlet, if not through the naval mutiny, by other means. The same will be true of the working class in Britain today, who will not be able to swallow the scale of cuts being demanded by the capitalist class.

The gold standard was a disastrous deflationary straitjacket for British capitalism. Coming off it, however, did not mean an end to the crisis or to deflationary policies. The capitalist class continued with its assault on workers’ living conditions. It was met with ferocious resistance. The left Labour MP, Nye Bevan, demanded in parliament to know if the unemployed would receive the same concessions as the sailors if they showed the same “rebellious tendencies”. Over the coming years it did.

Communist Party

In the 1930s, the Communist Party (CP), despite its political failings, played a crucial role in organising the unemployed in the National Unemployed Workers’ Movement (NUWM). Two of its leading activists, Fred Copeman and Len Wincott, were first brought into activity and then membership of the CP after they helped to lead the Invergordon mutiny and were thrown out of the navy as a result. Today, it is the march of the unemployed from Jarrow to London in 1936 which is most remembered but, prior to this, the NUWM organised a whole series of marches of the unemployed. The first, in 1932, was greeted when it arrived in London by a brutal police assault, snatching the petition to parliament from the marchers, and subjecting them to a vicious beating.

In Birkenhead, in 1932, the labour movement, led by the CP, organised a magnificent struggle around clear demands: abolition of the means test; extension of work schemes, including building houses, schools and road repairs; a 25% rent reduction for corporation (council) houses and no evictions. They marched with clear slogans: ‘fight the means test’, ‘unemployed workers – struggle or starve’. The so-called ‘bread riots’, in fact a mass uprising of the Birkenhead working class, forced the council to make significant concessions, including an increase in unemployment benefits by two shillings a week (‘Struggle or Starve’ at socialistparty.org.uk).

In the aftermath of the Birkenhead victory, unemployed workers in many other towns and cities followed suit, including in Salford, Birmingham, Belfast and Glasgow. The 1934 reversal of the 10% cut in unemployment benefit, limited as it was, would not have taken place without these heroic struggles.

The workers’ political response to the experience of 1931 was multifaceted. Superficial historians report that Labour suffered a massive defeat in the general election of October 1931. In terms of MPs this was true, but Labour’s vote only fell from 8.3 million in 1929 to 6.6 million. This showed the loyalty of the majority of the working class to the Labour Party, seeing it as a party that, unlike the betrayers MacDonald and Philip Snowden, stood in their interests. In that election, all the capitalist parties stood as a bloc, including National Labour, and an avalanche of vitriol poured forth from the capitalist class against the Labour Party. Its former leader, MacDonald, gave an election broadcast describing the Labour Party’s programme as “Bolshevism run mad”.

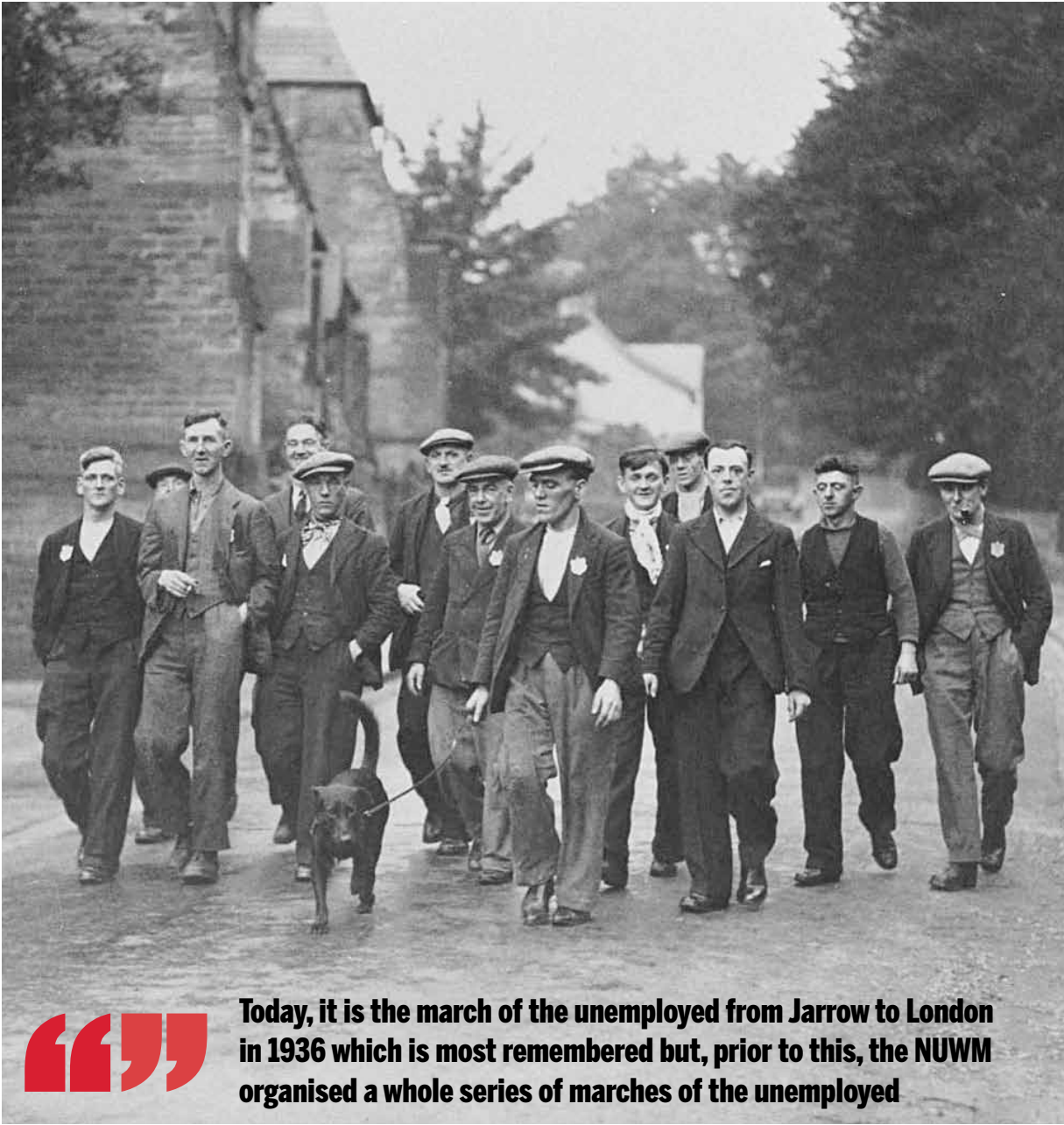
Trotsky had predicted in 1925 that, in the first instance, MacDonald would be replaced as leader of the Labour Party by “people of the ilk of [George] Lansbury...[who] will inevitably reveal that they are but a left variant of the same basic Fabian type”. This was exactly what happened. However, under the impact of the crisis of capitalism and the experience of the 1929-31 Labour government, the Independent Labour Party moved rapidly to the left. In 1931, it disaffiliated from the Labour Party

Jarrow marchers en route to London. PHOTO: PUBLIC DOMAIN

taking with it over 16,000 members. Although its failure to adopt a clear Marxist position meant that its membership dwindled over subsequent years, its rapid development in the immediate wake of the MacDonald betrayal gave an indication of the potential for a sizeable Marxist party to develop in Britain in the 1930s. The number of brave militants who were attracted to the CP despite its leadership also shows the revolutionary conclusions that were being drawn by the most advanced sections of the working class.

The weakness of the capitalist parties was shown by the fact that variations on a national government remained in power until the end of the second world war. The next government by a single party was the 1945 Labour government which, under the mass pressure of the working class – determined not to return to the misery of the 1930s – carried out a ‘quarter of a revolution’ by nationalising 20% of industry and creating the NHS. Successive governments, Tory and Labour, have systematically undermined the gains of 1945-50. However, Starmer’s Labour government will face mass opposition from the working class. All kinds of heroic struggles will develop against the cuts, just as they did in the 1930s. The potential for many tens of thousands of workers to be won to Marxism, and for a mass party of the working class to develop again, will arise from the mighty battles that are coming.

● To read the original article in full search ‘Coalition, cutbacks and crisis’ at socialismtoday.org



Today, it is the march of the unemployed from Jarrow to London in 1936 which is most remembered but, prior to this, the NUWM organised a whole series of marches of the unemployed

Pro footballer: why I’ve joined the Socialist Party



‘WILLIAM H’
NEW MEMBER OF THE SOCIALIST PARTY

As a professional footballer and also a member of the Socialist Party, the experience of going from my workplace to a totally different environment can feel contradictory.

One is filled with expensive cars, media attention, and wealthy individuals. The other is about supporting and fighting for the most exploited and oppressed, building a future that guarantees all of our society has a good, healthy, and respectable standard of living, free from poverty.

From an early age, I loved playing football, and became really talented. The exploitative and unjust distribution of wealth always bothered me. I could not live without actively engaging in a fight for a revolutionary change, once I realised the extent to which this system damages everyday people.

Exploitative industry

Achieving my childhood dream of becoming a pro footballer, is always something I will be proud of. But, early in my career, I realised that I cannot sugarcoat that I am a benefactor of an exploitative industry that is ridden with capitalism’s traits to its core.

Countless are the examples of clubs owned by wealthy oligarchs, simply using them to extend their monetary domination. It left me in a state of guilt and complicity.

The changes needed in our society are echoed very strongly with the ones needed within the football industry - filled with greed, a strong belief in meritocracy, and a severe lack of empathy for the most suffering individuals. Often my fight in both spheres ends up overlapping.

Since joining the Socialist Party, I began reading my Socialist newspaper at the club. It surprisingly sparked conversations amongst players, curious what I’m reading, and asking ‘what is socialism?’

I joined the Socialist Party because the system that we live under, capitalism, must be eradicated. A system

where the labour of the working class is consistently exploited at the benefit of an extremely wealthy minority, who hoard our society’s wealth, and leave millions in dire poverty, starvation, and homelessness across the world. If a footballer can come to this realisation and join the struggle, then I’m sure anyone can.

● First time attending Socialist Party congress was eye opening

We belong to a broader national and international movement. But that can be easily forgotten when we go about our day-to-day local campaigning, fighting within our own small spheres of influence, week after week, month after month, and not often connecting our own smaller fights with the broader struggle.

But congress enabled me to actually experience, see, and feel just how I am part of a much bigger and broader movement. Hearing from members up and down the country, and across the world – all aligned with myself in a fight for a socialist revolution – filled me with inspiration and motivation.

Hearing testaments of fellow socialists on their struggles and victories is uplifting. It enables us all to share and learn from our shared experiences, all discussing how best to improve our party, and how to use this key event to uplift each other, and our world-changing ambitions.

- Read ‘Socialist Party Congress: Building and strengthening the forces of Marxism in the new era’ at socialistparty.org.uk

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ROBBIE DAVIDSON
MANCHESTER SOCIALIST STUDENTS

Socialist Students members from three different universities met with trade unionists and activists to discuss the depth of the university funding crisis. The discussion was introduced by Manchester student union ‘city and community’ officer, raising the brutal attack on rents and housing, alongside a speaker from Socialist Students.

Cuts and more cuts

The story of job cuts, cost-of-living issues, and unfit, expensive housing, clearly resonated with a wide range of people. The meeting was attended by reps from civil service union PCS and doctors’ union BMA, as well as members of Unite and the bakers’ union.

Everyone agreed on the desperation of young people, but we also debated the way forward. Some felt that our action should be targeted at vice chancellors and donors.

Socialist Students members made the case for mobilising and organising both students and university workers, under the banner to end tuition fees, for fair rents, grants not loans, no redundancies, as well as divestment from war and genocide. This seemed to win over many students and workers in the room. Many were coming to their first meeting.

This resulted in the meeting planning a Funding Not Fees rally on 2 April, followed by a lobby of local left-wing Labour MP for Salford, Rebecca Long-Bailey. We demand that Long-Bailey raises our demands for free education and an end to uni cuts in Parliament as an amendment to

the Labour government’s spending review.

Turkey

Turkish members of Socialist Students were in the meeting. They have been at the heart of Manchester’s vibrant protests sending solidarity to those fighting Erdogan’s undemocratic attacks, and used the meeting to raise their campaign too (see page 15).

This resulted in a second letter, one calling for condemnation of the Turkish government’s actions and a meeting to discuss next steps, which will also be handed into Rebecca Long-Bailey’s office during our lobby.

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



Aris (left) campaigning with Socialist Students and Socialist Party against Cardiff uni job cuts DAVE REID

Socialist challenge to Cardiff uni cuts in student election

ARIS PREVOST
SOCIALIST STUDENTS CANDIDATE FOR CARDIFF STUDENT UNION PRESIDENT

Cardiff University has been rocked by cuts. This was the dominant issue for most students in the election.

Every single candidate ran in some way against the cuts. But many did not explain why this is happening, or give a socialist explanation with practical steps to both fight back against the cuts and improve students’ lives. Our manifesto linked the practical

policies students are fighting for with socialist demands.

As part of the campaign, I appeared on Xpress Cardiff radio for a 30-minute interview. This was a great chance to spread a socialist platform and get our voice heard. It was the first time I had done something like that.

While every candidate got grilled on our views, I think that I came out looking good. Even our current student union president complimented my performance. If that means anything!

I did not win. But I am not disheartened.

The people we did reach, either through coursemates or Instagram, resonated with the points we put forward. These ideas have traction, and do stick with people.

While we didn’t win the campaign for student union president, we have a broader movement in Cardiff University fighting back against the cuts. We can use this experience to fight for students and staff, and for a free education for all.

Victory – Solace domestic violence workers defeat cuts

SKYE MINCHER
TOWER HAMLETS SOCIALIST PARTY

The higher-ups at domestic violence charity Solace announced cuts to their service, enforcing 33% redundancies of independent domestic violence advisors in January. After months of campaigning, these cuts have been withdrawn.

The Socialist Party and many others, including service users, stood in solidarity with the workers and their union, United Voices of the World (UVW). This victory will save lives.

Hundreds of us

I was at the first protest with the Socialist Party on 6 February. Seeing the hundreds of supporters gather around and shout up for the jobs of these support workers, and therefore the care of domestic violence victims and survivors, was heartening.

We must not forget that the larger fight is far from over. With violence against women and girls still on the rise, preventing cuts to services like Solace should be the bare minimum.

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

Solace is a charity commissioned by the council. The council claims it had not made any cuts to warrant the charity bosses’ decision. But, the



Skye on the first protest against Solace cuts, with the Socialist Party and hundreds of others HUGO PIERRE

question should be, why hasn’t Aspire increased funding?

Keir Starmer has promised to halve violence against women and girls. But it is unclear exactly how he plans to do this.

It’s so dire that it’s considered a “national emergency”. Increasing funding to services such as Solace would be a great place to start. However, the Aspire-run council in Tower Hamlets has decided not to

increase funding in light of recent events.

The Home Office is due to release its new strategy to halve violence against women and girls. We would hope to see more social services in this sector. But with Starmer’s Labour implementing austerity, they’re doing the opposite.

This victory for Solace workers shows that when we stand together, we can catalyse change.

Haringey Labour cuts education and housing, while funding war - vote for the socialist alternative

LILY MAFFEI
CAMDEN AND HARINGEY SOCIALIST PARTY

We gathered outside Haringey Labour council, where our anti-cuts lobby united with protests over Palestine.

Gaza protesters were demanding that the council divest its pension fund from arms companies. During this lobby, I learnt that Haringey Council, amongst many others, are pumping money into companies that have links to the Israeli state. It is devastating to know that my council is funding a genocide, whilst letting the poorest go without.

Striking against austerity

We were demanding funding for housing repairs, as well as supporting school workers on strike to maintain agreements to cap class sizes and workload. Local teachers are on strike, classroom sizes are doubling, housing associations are underfunded, elderly people are unsupported.

I moved to London only very recently, and made it my mission to ensure I contribute to the community I’ve joined. I only recently joined the Socialist Party – a member of merely



Protesting against Haringey Labour housing and education cuts HELEN PATTISON

a month – but I have already learnt multitudes.

Haringey Council has been granted additional ‘exceptional’ funding of £37 million from the Labour government. But even with this, and after years of the Labour council passing on Tory cuts, it still has a projected funding gap of £121 million by 2029-30.

With a Labour councillor recently resigned, Socialist Party member Dave Kaplan has the opportunity to stand as a Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) candidate in the by-election in St Ann’s Ward on 10 April.

Dave is a candidate of the people. He will demand that Haringey Council moves a needs-based budget.



Leah, from Relay Taxis, supporting the campaign. Relay drove campaigners to the protest for free MARIAM KAMISH

‘We paid for this building’ Save Abertridwr library

MARIAM KAMISH
CAERPHILLY TRADES UNION COUNCIL SECRETARY

Men in council polo shirts appeared, as if by magic. “You can’t bring banners and placards in here”, the receptionist said. “And you can’t take pictures.”

“We paid for this building”, said Kenny Matthews, fresh from giving a speech outside. Many voices echoed: “That’s right.”

The massive Caerphilly Trades Union Council banner cast a shadow over the desk. All around the foyer, people were holding ‘Save Abertridwr Library’ posters.

Banned

The council communications officer came down to see us. We told him our campaign had been banned from meeting in the library. Our first objective was to overturn the ban.

He tried to offer us a single meeting. We said we needed the right to meet

whenever we wanted during opening hours. He cast a glance at Ben Patel, who was filming – and said he’d see what he could do.

Taxis

Outside, Leah, from Relay Taxis, had laid on free transport.

She said: “We will put up your posters in our windows, and publish on our page. Whenever you guys need transport, just give us a call. We’re happy to help by whatever means necessary. Without the community, Relay wouldn’t be where we are. Take advantage of us.”

Thank you to Relay, and to the Socialist paper for reporting our fight. We’re struggling to make the local press take notice.

The council has usable reserves to keep services running, while they band together with other councils to demand the funding they need. We intend to build this fight – and take it all the way to victory.

South West TUC

Are we talking about the same Labour Party?

ROB ROONEY
DELEGATE FROM CORNWALL TRADES UNION COUNCIL (PERSONAL CAPACITY)

No Labour MP was there, thankfully. But Labour’s malign influence was palpable at the South West Trades Union Congress (TUC). Ines Lang, South West TUC secretary, tried to set the tone reporting on July’s general election. She said: “We now have 23 MPs in the south west.” Despite the Gaza genocide, the two-child benefit cap, means-testing pensioner Winter Fuel Payment, fatuous “grow the economy” rhetoric, bailing out Thames Water, the Labour Party is still ‘our’ party, it seems! When I last met another of the TUC officers, Sadie Fulton, she was waxing lyrical about Labour’s Employment Rights Bill. Six months later, Ines clearly held the same high hopes. She listed the ‘benefits’ outlined by the Labour government. We’re promised “stronger union rights.” More detail is needed, she said.

“We’re holding the government’s feet to the fire.” Ines spoke of union members being on the frontline last August, when the far right mobilised. But, throughout the weekend, there was no recognition that Labour’s anti-working-class policies breed support for the far right. Motions were proposed and approved from RMT and Aslef transport unions. The wording of these motions betrayed a naive belief in Labour, which still infects part of our movement. Sian Elliott, TUC director of organising, led a discussion on ‘delivering for workers’. She said we’re at a ‘pivotal moment’. My ears pricked up. Were we about to hear a historic break in the union movement’s abusive relationship with the Labour Party? Sadly, no. The pivotal moment is apparently that, “For the first time, we have a government prepared to work with us on a transformative agenda on workers’ rights.” Without a trace of irony, Sian



spoke about the far right seeking to scapegoat the vulnerable. This was on the day the Labour government’s attacks on sick and disabled people were being heavily trailed. This was too much for me. I had been hesitant about ruining the love-in with the Labour Party, but felt I had to say something. I stuck up my hand. I am happy to report that I was beaten to it by someone from the Musicians’ Union. She said she was “troubled” by the constant approving references to this government, and wondered if the TUC had a fallback position for when a break has to be made. Sian thanked the delegate for a “brilliant question, it’s nice to be challenged, it keeps us on our toes.” She made the astonishing claim that “Labour exists to serve the public, not the other way round”. No government “is ever going to change people’s conditions, that is what we do for ourselves.” Cornwall TUC’s motion to conference, adopted from the National Shop Stewards Network (NSSN), calling on the TUC to recall its conference to discuss the Employment Rights Bill, was ruled out of order. Labour stopped serving the public decades ago, if it ever did. But sections of the trade union movement are stuck in the past. The working class needs its own new mass party.

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Review: Aisha - a story of asylum hardship and defiance

JOHN MERRELL
LEICESTER

The BBC film ‘Aisha’ is about a young Nigerian woman living in Lagos whose father borrows money to pay for her uni fees, but when he is unable to repay, the debt collectors kill him and his son and sexually assault Aisha. Before Aisha and her mother abandon their house to find a hiding place, they sell most of their possessions to pay traffickers for Aisha to reach Ireland. This story is only expressed by Aisha towards the film’s ending, such is the legacy of her trauma. At the beginning, Aisha is staying in a large, detached building converted into accommodation for asylum seekers. Her right to work enables Aisha to do part-time work in a hair and beauty salon, sending most of the money earned back to her

mother still hiding in Nigeria. When the family with whom she is sharing a room are arrested by the Garda (police), after five years of seeking asylum and removed to a detention centre, Aisha objects. Another occupant makes a well-meant cautionary comment to Aisha: “Be careful, the authorities can take away what little you have.” This is confirmed by her subsequent transfer to a trailer park in remote countryside, which effectively ends her right to work “unless you have a car”. Every occupant is struggling to obtain asylum and the stress arising from that struggle. For Aisha, the only person to lighten her load is a young Irish security guard, whose modest acts of kindness - unlocking the kitchen at night to enable Aisha to use the microwave to cook her halal meat - begins a supportive

relationship that endures, despite Aisha becoming increasingly isolated due to further setbacks. Those setbacks include personal loss, and the failure of her appeal against repatriation. Aisha’s life is now beset by great uncertainty. Her solicitor advises that the only course of action is an appeal to the High Court, which will take a long time to happen, and asked about its outcome, says “it could go either way.” The film is enhanced by the excellence of the leading actors Letitia Wright and Josh O’Connor, and writer and director Frank Berry, but above all, the narrative - defiance in the face of state oppression - is inspiring, particularly to socialists to redouble our efforts to rid humanity of its capitalist chains.

● Aisha is available on BBC iPlayer



NIGERIA SOLIDARITY UK

The trial of Adaramoye Michael Lenin and ten other #Endbadgovernance protesters charged with treason by the Tinubu administration in Nigeria over their involvement in

the #Endbadgovernance protest which erupted last year August, has been postponed again. Socialists in Nigeria have condemned the continuous delay of the trial and the persistent absence of the judge. Socialist Party members supported Nigeria Solidarity outside the Nigerian High Commission in London (above), protesting against the treason trial on 26 March. See www.nigeriasolidarity.com for more info.

Liverpool trade unionist corrects Mirror’s Militant smears



Kevin Maguire’s article: ‘No Mercy For The Benefits Snatcher’ 27/03/25, tries to draw an equivalence between the Labour chancellor’s cruel cuts to disability benefits and the redundancy notices issued by the Militant-led council in Liverpool in the 1980s. I was one of the workers who received that notice. Me and the majority of my colleagues knew it was a tactic to put pressure on Thatcher’s government to reverse their cuts. Not a single person was made redundant by the Militant-led council. Those councillors continued their campaign against austerity until they were surcharged and undemocratically removed from office by an unelected judge. At that time, there were over 30,000 workers employed by Liverpool City Council, now there are fewer than

“**Not a single person was made redundant by Militant**

5,000, all a result of cuts and privatisation, with many of those jobs lost under Labour governments and councils. What the Labour chancellor Rachel Reeves is doing is the exact opposite to what the Militant-led council did. They fought to take people out of poverty, while this Labour government plunges them into poverty. **DAVE WALSH** CHAIR LIVERPOOL TRADES COUNCIL ● Dave sent the reply on 27 March, we are still waiting for the correction to be published

WHAT’S YOUR VIEW? ● editors@socialistparty.org.uk or, if you’re not online, write to the Socialist Inbox, PO Box 1398, Enfield EN1 9GT

The reality at the other end of the line

From a civil service union rep

It’s 07:30 on a Tuesday morning and I’m reading through ‘production’ stats. I’m a member of the PCS union, workplace rep and socialist, working in the Retirement Services Directorate (RSD). Management so kindly allows me to get the same stats as them, to prove they aren’t running a call-centre sweatshop, to prove the ones who come to their rep to complain about the awful work environment are the ‘slackers’ in the stats sheet. What do I see on that spreadsheet? I see the names of people who started the same day as me missing. Too many missing. I see the names of new hires only filling half of the ones who left RSD for another job, any job. Very few went to a different civil service department, and even less found a ‘promotion’ to a job that is above minimum wage. I see over half the list of names as people for whom I’ve fought for workplace adjustments to help them handle the workload and unrelenting stress. I see colleagues and friends who have used up all their paid sick days and most of their vacation days to prevent breaking down. I see the single parents that are, despite working a full-time job in the civil service, forced to apply for Universal Credit in order to feed, clothe and house their family. There are single adults who would love to move out of their parents’ loft except... they can’t afford rent. They are not accepted due to their income, specifically on rental applications. There are many people I know who cannot afford to get into the office the last week or so before payday. They can’t afford public transport, or petrol, or parking. One name, a fellow who is over

6 feet tall and burly, plays footie on weekends with buddies. He spent a good ten minutes in our union office, trying to not show tears and telling me he can’t take it any longer. He’s going to break and he can’t because his mother is sick and at home, and he’s her carer. I see all the people I could not make the work environment safer for, more caring, and my heart just aches. These are your civil servants helping thousands of pensioners a week, with a call volume of anywhere from 4,000 to 7,000. Some RSD employees handle 120-150 calls per day. Their voices are raw at the end of a shift. They croak, not speak. **Backlog** They took enough Pension Credit applications at the end of last year to cause a backlog in actually processing those applications to 62 working days. That’s due to the shocking Labour policy to cancel universal winter fuel allowance. Pensioners would need to qualify to receive it by having an active Pension Credit benefit. Labour just up and announced it, despite not having enough staff employed to handle the influx of calls that was almost immediate. The phone lines became so busy that a pensioner, wanting to ensure they could pay their bills, could spend four hours on hold, only to find themselves abruptly disconnected, and having to start again the next day. Is this how pensioners deserve to be treated? Is this how tax-paying, minimum wage civil servants deserve to be treated? This is what those stats sheets do not tell you. They don’t tell you how many pensioners couldn’t get through to make a Pension Credit

application before this winter’s 21 December cut-off. These are people who cannot heat their home, cannot turn on their cooker to make hot food, and probably have little in the larder. These are the many people who try to get to the grocery store that offers pensioners a hot meal for £1 and then sit there longer for the warmth. People get substantially less than working minimum wage from their pension. Those are the people my colleagues and members speak with every day. They take calls from people asking for their pension to be double-checked because they get so little. I’m not a government finance expert, but if a normal worker like myself can see that this policy would cause some of the most vulnerable people in society and some of the lowest-paid workers in the civil service such immense stress and chaos, surely our esteemed elected officials would have known this too. The Starmer government is failing in its duty of care to pensioners and staff alike. There is no excuse for the continuation and expansion of Tory policies and plans that betray pensioners, working-class and disabled people. Socialists need to be more active now than ever, reaching out to those they see in distress, in need and bringing some bit of hope that things can change, that there is a solution. Socialist trade union reps will be stepping up their recruitment efforts and bring people into the fold of both the trade unions and the Socialist Party. We need to organise those around us and agitate for the needed socialist change.

PCS 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





WHAT WE STAND FOR

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

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

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

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

WORK, PENSIONS AND BENEFITS

- A trade union struggle for the immediate implementation of the TUC demand of a £15-an-hour minimum wage for all as a step towards a real living wage, without exemptions. For the minimum wage to automatically increase linked to average earnings or inflation, whichever is higher.
- Share out the work. A maximum 32-hour working week with no loss of pay or worsening of conditions. The right to flexible working, under the control of workers not employers. An end to insecure working, for the right to full-time work for all who want it; ban zero-hour contracts.
- All workers to have trade union rates of pay, employment protection, and sickness, parental and holiday rights from day one of employment. End bosses using bogus 'self-employment' as a means to avoid giving workers rights.
- No to austerity through inflation. For all wage rates to be automatically increased at least in line with price rises.
- Open the books of all companies cutting jobs or claiming they can't afford to pay a real living wage. State subsidies, where genuinely needed, for socially-useful small businesses.
- For trade unions independent of the capitalist state, with members having democratic control over their own policies, constitutions and democratic procedures. For all trade union officials to be regularly elected, subject to recall by their members and paid a worker's wage.
- Reduce the state retirement and pension age to 55. For decent living pensions.
- Replace universal credit and the punitive benefit system with living benefits for all who need them.

PUBLIC SERVICES

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

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

- For local councillors who are committed to opposing austerity and all cuts to local services, jobs, pay and conditions.
- For a socialist NHS to provide for everyone's health needs, including dental and eye care – free at the point of use and under democratic control. Kick out the private companies! Nationalise the pharmaceutical industry under democratic workers' control and management.
- Renationalise privatised utilities – including rail, mail, water, telecoms and power – under democratic workers' control and management.
- Free, publicly funded and democratically run, good-quality education, available to all at any age. Abolish university tuition fees and write off student debt, end marketisation, and introduce a living grant. No to academisation. For all schools to be under the genuine democratic control of local education authorities, school staff, parents and student organisations.
- The right to a safe secure home for all. For the mass building of genuinely affordable, high-quality, carbon-neutral council housing. For rent controls that cap the level of rent. Fair rent decisions should be made by elected bodies of tenants, housing workers and representatives of trade unions. For cheap low-interest mortgages for home buyers. Nationalise the privately owned large building companies, land banks and estates.

ENVIRONMENT

- Prioritising major research and investment into replacing fossil fuels and nuclear power with renewable energy, and ending the problems of early obsolescence – where products are designed to 'wear out' and be replaced - and unrecycled waste.
- Nationalisation of the energy companies, under democratic workers' control and management, with compensation paid only on the basis of proven need, in order to carry out a major switch to clean, green energy, without any loss of jobs, pay or conditions.
- A democratically planned, massively expanded, free to use, publicly owned transport system, as part of an overall plan against environmental pollution.
- For a major, publicly funded, insulation and energy transition plan for existing housing stock.
- Agribusiness to be taken into democratic public ownership. For a food processing and retail industry under workers' control to ensure that standards

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

DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS

- For united working-class struggle to end discrimination on the grounds of race, gender, disability, sexuality, age, and all other forms of prejudice and oppression.
- Repeal the anti-trade union laws and all others that trample over civil liberties. For the right to protest and to strike! End police harassment. For the police to be accountable to local committees, made up of democratically elected representatives of trade unions, local community organisations and local authorities.
- For the right to choose when and whether to have children – for the right to access abortion, contraception and fertility treatment for all who need it.
- For the right to asylum – with democratic community control and oversight of emergency funding resources. No to racist immigration laws.
- Expand democracy. For the abolition of the monarchy and the House of Lords. For all MPs to be subject to the right of recall by their constituents at any time, and to only receive a worker's wage. For proportional representation and the right to vote at 16.
- For the right of nations to self-determination. For an independent socialist Scotland and for a socialist Wales, both part of a voluntary socialist confederation of Wales, England, Scotland and Ireland.
- Oppose the dictatorship of the billionaire owners of the media. For the nationalisation of newspaper printing facilities, radio, TV and social media platforms. Access to these facilities should be under democratic control, with political parties' coverage being allocated in proportion to the popular vote at elections.
- For a new mass workers' party, based on the trade unions, and drawing together workers, young people and activists from workplaces, and community, environmental, anti-racist and anti-cuts campaigns, to provide a fighting, socialist political alternative to the pro-big business parties.

SOCIALISM AND INTERNATIONALISM

- No to imperialist wars and occupations!
- Take the wealth off the super-rich! For a socialist government to take into public ownership the top 150 companies and the banking system that dominate the British economy, and run them under democratic working-class control and management. Compensation to be paid only on the basis of proven need, not to the fat cats.
- A democratic socialist plan of production based on the interests of the overwhelming majority of people, and in a way that safeguards the environment.
- No to the EU bosses' club. Organise a campaign with European socialists and workers' organisations to use the talks on post-Brexit relations to tear up the EU pro-capitalist rules. For a real collaboration of the peoples of Europe on a socialist basis as a step towards a socialist world.

Do you agree? Join the fightback!

JOIN THE SOCIALISTS

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Fighting fund smashed, £41,803 raised

Workers angry about war and austerity donate to the socialists

CHRIS NEWBY
NATIONAL FIGHTING FUND ORGANISER

Thanks to everyone who helped make sure that we smashed through our fighting fund target again, raising £41,803 this quarter. This helps make sure that we have the money to pay for our leaflets, posters, and placards, with our clear socialist message.

Across Britain and internationally, people are looking for answers to the tumultuous events taking place around the world. How can the wars in Gaza and Ukraine be stopped? How can the austerity attacks from governments and the bosses be challenged?

The pages of the Socialist are full of examples of workers fighting back. The last issue of the Socialist had reports from Israel, Turkey, and Serbia of mass protest against their respective governments; and in Britain, Birmingham bin workers have shown they are prepared to fight back against their Labour council's attacks.

The Socialist Party puts forward a clear socialist programme of how movements can be built to end these wars and austerity attacks. A vital part of that programme is struggling

to build mass workers' parties, with socialist policies.

Socialist Party members are seeing an increase in support for our ideas and our campaigning work, with donations from the public that they give at our stalls, and interest in joining our party. Campaigning against cuts in benefits, particularly to disabled people, our members and supporters in Grays in Essex raised £19, in Birmingham £23.59, Swindon £14, and £57 in Swansea.

As anger against these attacks deepen, workers will increasingly look for ways to fight back. It's vital that Socialist Party members are out campaigning in their local areas to meet these people.

- This quarter, we also had the Socialist Party congress. There, an amazing fighting fund appeal raised £40,402. £21,142 has been paid in so far. So, pay your pledge as soon as you can.

AREA	£ RECEIVED	£ TARGET	Q1: JANUARY-MARCH 2025	FINAL CHART
Southern & SE	8,323	2,400		347%
North West	2,905	1,200		242%
Northern	1,760	800		220%
Eastern	1,772	1,300		136%
East Midlands	2,776	2,050		135%
Yorkshire	3,449	2,650		130%
Wales	3,063	2,400		128%
South West	2,650	2,100		126%
London	6,122	5,000		122%
West Midlands	2,926	2,700		108%
Other	6,058	2,400		252%
TOTAL	41,803	25,000		167%

Leicester fighting back against Labour austerity

SAM, TESSA AND JORDAN
LEICESTER SOCIALIST PARTY

Leicester West is the seat of Labour MP Liz Kendall. The mood of the working class in Leicester is particularly sour – an MP they voted in is now overseeing £5 billion cuts designed to attack disabled people.

Our Socialist Party branch has been involved in two local campaigns. The SEND campaign, which without the involvement of parents and activists could have seen school transport cut for Leicester students with special needs over the age of 16, has now been put on pause for a re-run consultation on the cuts.

Leicester Labour council also intended to cut funding for adventure playgrounds. But funding has now been secured for another year, after campaigning by parents and activists.

We decided we would hold an extra-long campaign stall to build for our public meeting. Our message – no to both government and council cuts – was a success. The following Saturday, calling for 'welfare, not warfare' really caught the mood.

At our public meeting, the speakers highlighted that the 350 richest individuals and families in Britain now have a combined wealth of £800 billion, while Starmer's Labour is looking to plunge the most vulnerable in our society into even deeper despair.

The meeting discussed building the socialist opposition to Labour's council cuts and attacks on disability benefits. Due to the establishment parties' refusal to stand up for the working class, our call for a new mass workers' party was well received.

Turkey: over a million attend anti-government protest in Istanbul

KENAN BATU

On Saturday 29 March, a massive demonstration in Maltepe, Istanbul, saw over a million people take to the streets after days of protests and mass arrests.

Even approaching the protest, determined anger was clear on the packed trains, with people chanting throughout the journey. The stations were so crowded that it took me half an hour just to exit the station!

People from all walks of life - students, young workers, and pensioners - participated in the protest. However, it was particularly striking how young the crowd was, reflecting the anger felt by youth about the state of their futures under Erdogan's regime.

One protester summed up the mood: "Everyone is hungry while one man sits in his palace."

The demonstration was called by the main opposition party, the Republican People's Party (CHP), in defence of Ekrem Imamoglu, the jailed mayor of Istanbul and Erdogan's main political rival.

This protest came after a week of protests on university campuses and in the streets, where tens of thousands of students have clashed with the police, facing brutal repression and mass arrests.

The initial spark for the mass protests was the arrest of Imamoglu. However, what brought people to the streets was the constant attacks on democratic rights and worsening living standards. Young people found an outlet to express their anger at a system that prioritises the rich and powerful over ordinary people struggling to get by.

The police response has been ruthless. Thousands of people, including student leaders, protesters, bystanders, journalists, trade unionists, and socialists, have been arrested. Around 2,000 arrests took place over just a few days, with reports of horrendous treatment, including torture, particularly aimed at students. Among those detained was a BBC journalist, who was arrested in a dawn raid and deported back to the UK.

People are angry about the arrest of Imamoglu, which they see as politically motivated. But more than that, they viewed it as an attack on their right to elect and be elected. The cost-of-living crisis is worsening, with brutal austerity policies, and people feel like they are paying the price for one man's ambitions.

A recent poll shows that 73% of people in Turkey support the protests. This is not surprising, given the attacks on democratic rights, while Erdogan and the ruling elite - alongside the rich - live in luxury.

The paradox of the movement

When Imamoglu was arrested – a day after Istanbul University revoked his



Manchester and London solidarity protests

How to get a crowd of 300 people to all start hopping through the streets? Go to a Turkey solidarity rally and shout: "Jump! Jump! Those who don't jump are Tayyip [Erdogan] supporters!"

In Manchester, Socialist Students has been involved in organised solidarity rallies. On 24 March, with just a day's notice, we helped to gather approximately 300 people for a lively and confident protest. Chants of "Rights! Law! Justice!" in Turkish were unceasing, as we marched (and jumped) towards the city centre.

Socialist Students was warmly welcomed and thanked for our organisation and promotion efforts, as well as for lending a megaphone. We ran out of Socialist Party leaflets to hand out, demonstrating the desire for fundamental change, beyond just Imamoglu's release.

IVAN PETKOV, MANCHESTER SOCIALIST STUDENTS

diploma – it was thousands of Istanbul University students who organised a protest on campus. Videos of students breaking through police barricades quickly went viral on social media.

The mass anger after the arrest, especially among students, and when it became clear that the protests would spread to other campuses, compelled the CHP leadership to organise an emergency rally outside Istanbul's city hall in Sarachane. The mass mobilisation against the undemocratic attacks also succeeded, at least for the time being, in stopping Erdogan from appointing a government trustee to replace Imamoglu.

The paradox of the movement is that even though the main driving force was the student movement, the CHP leadership took control. The students and youth put pressure on the CHP leadership and pushed them to take a more 'activist' stance than they had initially intended.

The CHP leadership knows that if they don't take a more combative stance to oppose the attacks, the movement could slip out of their control and potentially shake the very foundations of not just Erdogan's regime but also capitalism.

Erdogan's party the AKP and the CHP represent different sections of the capitalist class. The CHP can see the power of the movement and its potential to drive out Erdogan. However, they also defend the interests of Turkish capitalism and want to limit the scope of the movement.

Many students are critical of the CHP, expecting more than just parliamentary manoeuvres or legal routes. They have no trust in the institutions of the state to further their own interests.

Boycotts

One of the demands of the movement is boycotts.

University students have been organising academic boycotts, and in some universities, trade unions have supported this call. A workplace representative at Istanbul University was arrested for organising actions in support of students.

Calls for wider boycotts of companies with close ties to Erdogan's government are also gaining traction. The CHP leadership, feeling the pressure, has joined in the call for boycotts, targeting companies ranging from a coffee shop chain to TV channels that support the regime.

If sustained over time, such a mass boycott of companies could play an auxiliary role and potentially deepen

the splits within the Turkish ruling class.

However, they do not replace the need for independent, mass action by workers and youth.

On 28 March, the Revolutionary Workers' Unions Confederation (DISK) organised a day of action in workplaces. This was a positive step, as it framed the attacks on democratic rights as a workplace issue.

Under Erdogan's rule, workers have faced increasingly draconian anti-union laws, making it harder to organise and strike. Dismissals are frequent, and workers' rights are under constant attack.

Mass trade union action in defence of democratic rights and living standards, as a step towards a general strike, would revitalise the workers' movement and show who truly runs the country.

Even a national trade union demonstration at this stage, with an appeal to TURK-IS members (the largest trade union confederation in Turkey) and students, would be a step forward in uniting the working class and youth.

TIP

Workers and youth have no common interests with the bosses, who care only about their profits.

There is an urgent need for the trade union and student movements to have a political arm independent of the capitalist class.

The Workers' Party of Turkey (TIP), which currently has more than 40,000 members, had by far the largest contingent at Saturday's rally, particularly mobilising young people. They have quickly become a pole of attraction for a layer of youth and workers looking for a left alternative to the CHP.

However, the role of TIP cannot be simply just about getting a bigger turnout to these protests or offering uncritical support to the CHP for the sake of unity. It must raise transitional demands to take the movement further, linking the attacks on democratic rights to the need to fight the cost-of-living crisis and the demand for a socialist transformation of society. It should be calling for mass independent action by workers and youth in the fight against Erdogan's repressive and pro-big business policies.

This would also sharply raise the necessity for a movement independent of pro-capitalist forces and the need for a working-class socialist alternative to Erdogan's increasingly unpopular regime and the capitalist system itself.

London PHOTO: ROB WILLIAMS



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the Socialist

Issue 1315

3-9 April 2025

formerly **Militant**

Trade union action for a

£15/HR

minimum wage now



SAM WARD
LEICESTER SOCIALIST PARTY

Millions of workers are set to have a so-called 'cost of living increase' in pay this month. But wait before you crack open the champagne. The national living wage for those over the age of 21 is increasing to £12.21 per hour, £10 per hour for 18 to 20-year-olds and a measly £7.55 per hour for 16 to 17-year-olds!

Food, fuel, water, transport, rents, mortgages and other essentials have skyrocketed compared to our pay. How could this paltry increase ever be considered close to what's needed for a 'cost of living increase'?

This Labour government is supposed to be delivering 'a new deal for workers'. Why isn't it delivering £15 an hour now?!

Government ministers argue there will be a 'wage-price spiral' if workers demand pay increases. But apparently it doesn't cause a wage-price spiral when MPs give themselves a pay increase. This year MPs are set to give themselves a pay rise of 2.8%, making their salary a whopping £93,904. And that's not counting the expenses and freebies that they claim, along with the second jobs that many of them have.

The 'magic money tree' that ministers claim doesn't exist suddenly appears when it comes to military spending, but disappears when it comes to workers. While many bosses will be bemoaning the increase, they haven't been sad about bumper profits and burgeoning bonuses.

In 2021, the TUC (Trades Union Congress) adopted the policy for a £15-an-hour minimum wage to be implemented as quickly as possible. It's now been four years and there has been no national campaign linked to the industrial and political action needed to win this demand. Trade unions are crucial to fighting for and winning a decent living standard for workers. The trade unions have the ability to be able to build a mass campaign that can put pressure on the Labour government to act now. For a £15-an-hour minimum wage for all ages, and decent pay we can live on.

We need real pay rises, our energy bills cut, our transport costs cut, rents capped, our public services nationalised and fully funded. The pro-big business establishment parties won't give us these demands without a fight. So, alongside industrial action, we need a new mass workers' party that will fight.

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



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