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the Socialist

Issue 1316

10-16 April 2025

formerly **Militant**

WE WON'T PAY



FOR THEIR CRISIS!

BUILD THE SOCIALIST OPPOSITION

‘A wful April’ has begun. It’s still a long time until payday and even less is left in the account than this time last month. Everything is going up.

Water, energy, food... the bosses are doing all they can to protect their own profits by raiding our pockets. And that’s exactly what they have planned again as stock markets tank and a new economic crisis looms on the horizon.

“The world has changed”, according to prime minister Keir Starmer. He and other world capitalist leaders despair at Donald Trump’s tariffs. They know just how volatile the world economy is – riddled with debt and insecurities left by speculators enriching themselves.

They will do everything they can to keep the wealth flowing into the bank accounts of the super-rich. Starmer and others will use Trump’s tariffs and the ‘changed world’ to

justify even harsher cuts and further privatisation. But they can’t and won’t be allowed to get away with it.

Millions of workers in Britain and around the world will ask: ‘Why should we pay the price?’

What the super-rich bosses and their political representatives fear most is the answer: ‘We shouldn’t and we won’t’, and with that, workers’ struggle, including importantly the working class developing its own mass political parties.

The capitalist system ruthlessly exploits workers internationally, it is also riddled with contradictions, conflict, competition and instability leading to wars and economic crisis. A socialist alternative is needed – a plan of production to meet the needs of humanity and the environment, based on public ownership of utilities, big business and the banks, controlled and run democratically by the working class.

If you refuse to pay the price for the bosses’ crisis, help us strengthen and build the working-class fightback, and fight to bring about socialist change.

Join the Socialist Party!

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

Nationalise steel to save jobs

Jingye, the Chinese owner of British Steel, is likely to announce soon the closure of its Scunthorpe plant, with the threat to 2,700 jobs. This follows on from the ending of steel making at Tata's Port Talbot plant last year.

Reports suggest that Jingye has cancelled shipments of coking coal for the blast furnaces and has not paid for iron ore due to arrive onsite. Without the raw materials, closure will be on the cards in weeks.

This further devastating news to the industry is on top of the swingeing tariffs on steel imported to the United States recently announced by Donald Trump.

The steel industry, which was privatised by the Tory Thatcher government in 1988, has been consistently run down under big business ownership. Scunthorpe is the last blast furnace in the UK, and the steel industry employs around 25,000 workers. This is a shadow of the position at privatisation, when there were still around 100,000 workers employed. Even that was a huge fall from its post-war peak of over 300,000.

Union response
The steel industry trade unions, Community, Unite and GMB, have been in negotiations with Jingye to save jobs, but the company recently rejected a government offer of £500

million of public money to invest in electric-arc furnaces.

The unions must fight to save the steel industry by leading a campaign of steelworkers, the local communities and the wider labour movement demanding nationalisation, with no compensation to the owners who have run down the industry over decades. The unions must also prepare industrial action to force this outcome.

Some union leaders have put forward nationalisation. GMB's national officer, Charlotte Brumpton-Childs, said that a union meeting with workers on Wednesday 2 April had shown that "Jingye has no intention of running the plant responsibly. Nationalisation is now the only option to save UK steelmaking."

But nationalisation on its own isn't enough. Conservative-run North Lincolnshire council, Tory MPs, and even Richard Tice, deputy leader of Reform, have recently supported this demand. Their idea of nationalisation would follow when the state-owned steel industry only served big business requirements, not what the working class needed.

Instead, unions must fight for workers' control and management of the industry as part of a socialist plan of production in which steel would play an essential part.
KEVIN PARSLOW



A part of Scunthorpe steelworks GARETH JAMES/CC



CBP/GETTY/CC

The brutal reality of Labour's disability benefit cuts

SUE POWELL
GLOUCESTERSHIRE SOCIALIST PARTY

A decade ago, Work Capability Assessments (WCAs) and a raft of other measures caused such despair among disabled people that a House of Commons committee investigated claims of an increased suicide rate. It was found to be true but nothing changed.

WCAs are brutal, arduous, harrowing and often flawed - a big proportion are subject to appeal, a high number of those successful. One Socialist Party member was assessed by someone who confessed she had never heard of her neurological condition before.

'Overhauling' the benefits system meant 70,000 claimants transferred to Employment and Support Allowance were underpaid between 2011 and 2014. 5,000 people whose benefits were cut in error died before receiving what they were owed. Shockingly, University of York researchers found 57,550 more deaths than normally expected in 2010-14 could be linked to cuts in public health and social care.

In 2019 nearly 7 million people living in poverty were either disabled or in a household with a disabled person. This had risen to 8.7 million by 2023. The share of welfare spending devoted to disability benefits has increased for a number of reasons: the increased state pension age, effects of the pandemic, long Covid, long waiting lists for NHS care and the crisis in mental health and lack of support.

We gained an idea of what this means at a recent Socialist Party campaign stall. One woman with impaired mobility told us she had forced herself to get out of her first-floor

two-room emergency accommodation that she shares with her husband and two sons - young disabled adults. They'd been made homeless because their landlord (a church) had registered personal need, where residents must have been officially recognised and receiving government support for their disabilities. She was terrified for her sons. Although stairs were hard for her, she had to get out because her mental health was suffering.

30 minutes later, a regular buyer of the Socialist told us of her neighbours' struggles accessing social care for their disabled son.
If it was bad before, these new cuts will make it worse. They will be announced with the customary hypocrisy about helping people, twinned with accusations of skiving and faking. The Resolution Foundation suggest the proposed cuts to Personal Independence Payments (PIP) will lead to between 800,000 and 1.2 million disabled people losing £4,200 - £6,300 a year by 2029-30. Labour wants to save £5 billion in benefits yet nearly £23 billion worth of social security and social tariffs goes unclaimed - partly because people don't know their entitlements, but also due to the tiresome hurdles and humiliation attached to making a claim.

A United Nations report in 2024 criticised the UK benefits system as a "pervasive framework and rhetoric that devalues disabled people's lives," which "tells disabled people that they're undeserving citizens" and makes "people feel like criminals". A government that bails out water companies, finances RAF missions over Gaza, wants to increase military spending while forcing the poorest further into poverty are the real criminals.

NHS: Labour and Reform sing from the same privatisation hymn sheet

RAE COX
NHS WORKER, OXFORD SOCIALIST PARTY

Nigel Farage would be "open to anything" for the NHS, the Reform UK leader told a LBC interviewer recently, specifically citing France "where you pay into effectively an insurance scheme" that the government contributes to. Those who can afford to top up with bonus insurance, those who can't are left with the basics.

To be clear, Farage is talking about a system that is not universal and free at the point of use, it would be a fundamental attack on workers.

Nigel disagrees with the vast majority of us who tell polls they agree with a publicly funded NHS. He thinks that it should be ordinary people who foot the bill, not big business bosses.

But while Farage has laid his cards firmly on the table, it's clear Labour's holding a similar hand. Since Labour introduced Private Finance Initiative (PFI) contracts under Tony Blair, the think tank IPPR discovered this has cost the NHS £80 billion, with only £13 billion

in investment to show for it. This is before the remaining £55 billion in looming unpaid debts is factored in.

Do you oppose outsourcing a million NHS appointments, scans and services to more profiteers? Labour health secretary Wes Streeting thinks you are more focused on "ideology" than "pragmatism".

Waiting lists need to come down, but not at the expense of workers. Further privatisation only deepens the costs involved in running the health service for a very simple reason: the shareholders who profit don't know a scalpel from a spatula, they give nothing back. The only way to deliver a healthcare system that is sustainable and that truly benefits workers is by kicking out the profiteers, insourcing what has been sold off, and renationalising the pharmaceutical industry.

To save our NHS we need a workers' political alternative, one that is the political voice of the trade unions and the working class, that fights for a fully funded, fully public NHS to meet all our needs.



Nigel Farage speaking at right-wing CPAC conference in America GAGE SKIDMORE/CC

Israeli state ratchets up conflict in the Middle East

OSCAR PARRY
CAMDEN AND HARINGEY SOCIALIST PARTY

The Israeli military has again stepped up its barbarous assault on Gaza after breaking a fragile two-month ceasefire. Israeli ground forces are now occupying much of Gaza, two-thirds of the strip is under Israeli displacement orders or in 'no-go' zones. All crossings are completely closed for incoming supplies, and hundreds of thousands face the daily threat of starvation.

The Israeli state's multi-front conflict with Iran-backed militias is escalating after a period of calm earlier in the year. As well as the truce in Gaza breaking down, the ceasefire with Hezbollah is under strain, with Israeli forces striking Lebanon's capital of Beirut twice in the past week. The Houthis, based in Yemen, have been facing daily US attacks against their positions since mid-March. Donald Trump gleefully shared a video of one air strike which killed at least 31 people, including children.

International outrage erupted as a video emerged of Israeli forces shooting 15 paramedics and first responders in clearly marked vehicles near the southern Gazan city of Rafah. And two Labour MPs were denied entry into the country, accused of travelling to "document the security forces" and "spread hate speech", sparking condemnation.

These actions by Netanyahu's government don't come from a position of strength. Netanyahu is attempting to ratchet up the conflict to try and shore up his political base as he comes under increasing pressure from protests within Israel. Israeli financial assets have been hit by a combination of the worsening conflict and rising tensions within the country - characterised by large protests over the government's attempt to fire officials such as the attorney general and the head of the domestic intelligence service.



PAUL MATTSSON

Israeli officials were shocked when Trump unveiled a 17% levy on the country's goods. That made Israel one of the hardest-hit nations in the Middle East, despite Netanyahu's closeness to Trump and it being the US's main ally in the region. The move also came after Israel had said, just a day earlier, it would cancel customs duties on American products.

The root of the wars and the death and destruction we have seen is the capitalist system and its dash for profits. This has brought protests to the streets of the world, as the brutal reality of the system politicians support has been made clear. The only way out of endless conflict and economic instability in the Middle East is independent working-class action against all the capitalist elites.

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The Socialist Party fights for:

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

Doctors say poverty kills

LAUREN SLAWSON
LIVERPOOL SOCIALIST PARTY

Cuts and privatisation have left our NHS hollowed out, overwhelmed, and struggling to cope. The inadequacy of the welfare system has meant greater health inequalities, as those in poverty are significantly more likely to suffer from health problems.

The Royal College of Physicians found 46% of doctors reported that half of their workload involved 'illnesses linked to social factors'.

There have also been shocking increases in rates of poverty-related illnesses and disease, including respiratory issues caused by damp and mould in poor housing, as well as conditions arising from poor nutrition due to poverty, even cases of hypothermia due to the costs of heating.

This Labour government offers no solutions to the crisis and has been all too willing to pick up where its predecessors left off, continuing the austerity agenda. Further cuts and privatisation measures are threatened. In fact they are beginning to take steps further than the Tories even dared to, as their sadistic attack on disability benefits targets the most vulnerable.

This does nothing to solve the crisis in the NHS, or plug the £22 billion 'black hole' in the Treasury. These cruel cuts, in addition to previous, including scrapping universal winter fuel payments and refusing to end the two-child benefit cap, have revealed Labour as being willing to inflict more austerity and misery onto the working class.

Confidence in Starmer's Labour government to create a hopeful or even slightly less dismal future has

plummeted in less than a year of being in power. The working class needs a new mass workers' party to fight all cuts to benefits and the NHS, reverse privatisation, tackle poverty, make the super-rich pay, and to fight for a socialist society.



TRUMP'S TARIFFS SET COURSE FOR WORLD DOWNTURN



WHAT WE THINK

The global stock markets have plunged in reaction to President Donald Trump's 2 April 'liberation day' announcements. Around \$5.4 trillion was wiped from the value of the US stock markets in the first two days. The 9.1% fall was the biggest in a week since the Covid pandemic lockdowns ground the world economy to a halt. Similar falls took place in the main finance markets internationally. As markets reopened on Monday 7 April they continued to tank. Even if some stability now returns, it is clear that the falls have been triggered by the conviction that Trump's tariffs will push the world economy into recession. The majority of the capitalist classes worldwide are looking on in horror at the consequences for their profits of Trump's tariffs. The horror is shared by many of Trump's rich backers. Billionaire investor and Trump fan Bill Ackman, for example, said that the measures risk plunging the US into a "self-induced, economic nuclear winter".

Alongside the horror, the serious capitalist press has been full of mockery of Trump's tariffs, pointing out the 'economic illiteracy' of his regime's way of working out what tariff to impose on each country. This seems to have been to simply take the US's goods trade deficit with any particular country, divide it by the total amount of goods imported from that country, and set a tariff which is half of that percentage regardless of other factors. Even the tiny Heard Island and McDonald Islands have therefore had a tariff of 50% imposed on them, presumably in case the penguins start trying to export to the US, as they have no human inhabitants! Few countries have been completely exempt, with even those the US has a trade surplus with getting the 'minimum rate' of across the board 10% tariffs, as has been imposed on Britain.

Trump's love of tariffs even led to him suggesting that it was their lifting that created the depth of the 1930s Great Depression, with, he claimed, tariffs increased too late to rescue the situation. This flies in the face of reality. In the aftermath of the 1929 Wall Street crash,

it was the 1930 Smoot-Hawley Tariff Act, which raised US tariffs on over 20,000 items, and triggered major global retaliation, which was central to the severity of the Great Depression. Now Trump has shoved tariffs up to an even higher level, not seen since 1909. No doubt his intentions included using the tariffs as a bargaining chip to 'do deals'. Regardless of that, this is a seismic shift in world economic relations. As Darren Jones, Starmer's Treasury minister, put it "globalisation, as we've known it for the last number of decades, has come to an end."

Globalisation's limits

Of course, globalisation has not been 'ended' solely by the act of one powerful individual. It reached its limits long ago. While the productive forces have long since outgrown the barriers of the nation state, capitalism has never been able to fully surmount them, even in the age of US-dominated globalisation. Nonetheless, it is a sign of the growing sickness of capitalism worldwide that the nation state has come roaring back – epitomised by Trump – as the different national capitalist classes struggle to defend their own interests in a multipolar world.

The current 'rules-based order', which Trump is attacking with impunity, was established by US imperialism in the aftermath of the second world war. At that stage, the US completely dominated the capitalist world. However, that was not the whole story. World relations in that period were underpinned by the clash of systems between the countries of the West and the non-capitalist Stalinist states of the East, which acted as a counterweight to the capitalist powers led by the US, while also increasing the tendency in the West to toe the US line, as a result of the pressure to unite against a common enemy. It also compelled the US to assist the post-war recovery in Europe, Japan and other countries, in order to try and prevent the further spread of 'communism'.

The era of 'globalisation' which Jones is referring to began when the Stalinist regimes collapsed. The US became a true hyperpower, able to set the framework for the world economy, with China acting as a cheap-labour assembly plant. World trade increased massively. In the decades up until the 2008 Great Recession, world trade increased from 39% as a percentage of GDP in 1990 to 61% by 2008, with two-thirds of the profits growth (to 2013) being



Trump announcing his sweeping tariffs WHITE HOUSE/PUBLIC DOMAIN



All wings of the capitalist class – both the 'globalisers' and the 'nationalists' – are united in their determination that it should be the working class which pays for their system's multiple crises

captured by Western companies. At the same time, Western capitalism, with US imperialism dominant, restored profits by driving down the working classes' share of national income. This was the real character of globalisation.

Multipolar world

But continuing on the path of globalisation is no longer in declining US imperialism's interests. In today's increasingly multipolar world, the US is compelled to try and protect its national markets against its rivals, above all China. In 2001, when China joined the World Trade Organisation, its economy at market exchange rates was barely one-tenth the size of the US. Now it has grown to almost

half. Rather than just an assembly plant for US imperialism, it is an increasingly powerful rival. Hence US Vice President JD Vance saying that globalisation had not worked as it was meant to where "rich countries would move further up the value chain, while the poor countries made the simpler things". That was what led to Trump's first-term tariffs, which were kept and added to by Joe Biden, and – along with Biden's large state subsidies for US-based industry – had already moved the US in a protectionist direction. Trump's second term measures are heading in the same direction – but far more decisively. They represent a crude attempt to assert the power of US capitalism and to reorder global values in its interests.

Trump probably hopes that the tariffs will raise funds for the US state, thereby creating space for further tax cuts for the super-rich, make it easier for US-based companies to compete against imports, and encourage manufacturing to relocate to the US in order to avoid the tariffs. He may also imagine that he can use US might to force through a repeat of the 1985 Plaza Accord, when Japan, France, Britain and West Germany agreed to depreciate their currencies relative to the dollar in an attempt to lower the US trade deficit. Today, however, the US has less power to call the shots than it did in

Trump's actions are intensifying the capitalist crisis, and look set to trigger a global recession. That adds urgency to the struggle for the overthrow of this rotten and increasingly chaotic capitalism system

the capitalist world at that point, and China – which has a unique character, where the state continues to play a central role in directing the economy and foreign capital is only allowed to operate within huge restrictions – is not about to dance to Trump's tune, as it has already shown with its fast announcement of reciprocal tariffs. Globally, including in China, Trump's tariffs will trigger a new period of economic crisis and social turmoil. But, far from re-establishing the US as the global hyperpower, they will also further increase the world's multipolarity.

Trump pipe dream

Nonetheless, they could lead to some more foreign manufacturing companies relocating to the US, a process which began as a result of Biden's Inflation Reduction Act. That hope is why some US workers may dream that this will lead to the return of 'good jobs and good wages' that Trump promised. This is a pipe dream. Shawn Fain, President of the United Auto Workers union, welcomed Trump's tariffs as a measure to "end the free trade disaster that has devastated working-class communities for decades". He went on: "But

ending the race to the bottom also means securing union rights for autoworkers everywhere with a strong National Labour Relations Board, a decent retirement with Social Security benefits protected, healthcare for all workers including through Medicare and Medicaid, and dignity on and off the job."

As Trump's attempts to destroy the National Labour Relations Board have clearly shown, his presidency will attempt further major attacks on the working class, including on health care, and on trade union rights. All wings of the capitalist class – both the 'globalisers' and the 'nationalists' – are united in their determination that it should be the working class which pays for their system's multiple crises. Only by independent working-class struggle, including on an international plane, will the United Auto Workers, and other unions, be able to win real improvements in their members' living conditions.

Recession risk and impending struggle

In reality, manufacturing that relocates to the US will generally be so highly automated that it will create a limited number of jobs. And in the short term the main effect of the tariffs on US manufacturing will be increased crisis and job losses, because of its disruptive effect on highly complex international supply chains. Around half of US imports are intermediate goods used domestically to produce final ones. So, for example, for every one job in US steel production, there are 80 in companies that use steel in production and will now have to pay more for it.

More broadly, the short-term consequences in the US will be economic slowdown and increased inflation as the price of imported goods goes up. On the day before 'liberation day' a YouGov poll showed only 23% of Americans thought Trump was making them better off financially – down

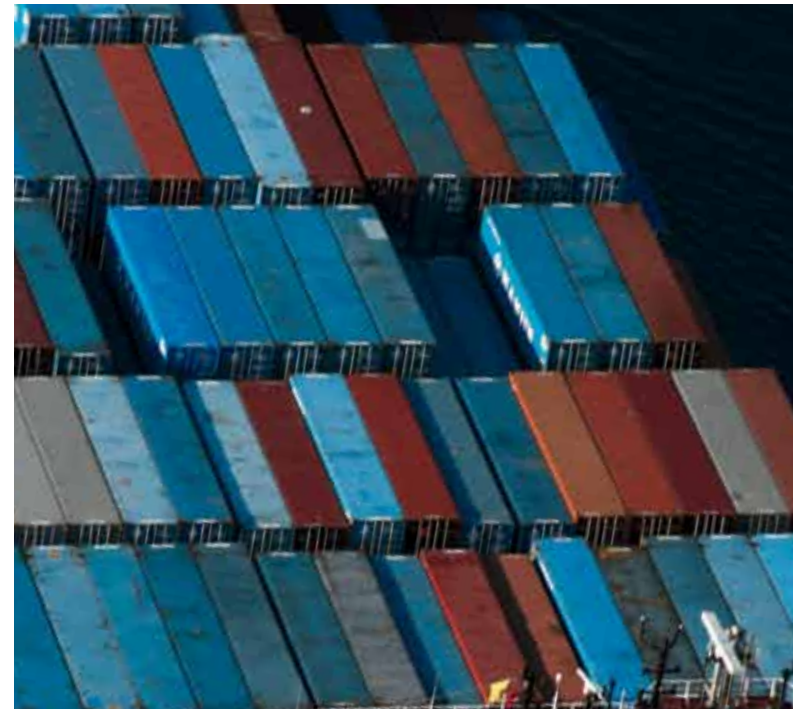
a massive 19% since January. That is only going to sink further now.

The ground is being prepared for massive class struggles in the US. The same is true here in Britain. Starmer and Reeves are set to continue relentless cosying up to Trump combined with blaming the international situation for their stepping up of savage austerity. Starmer will try to appeal to our allegedly common 'national interest' to demand that working-class people – yet again – tighten our belts. But the working class has no common interest with the billionaires who exploit us, regardless of their nationality. Our common interests, our solidarity, are with the working class worldwide.

Trump's actions are intensifying the capitalist crisis, and look set to trigger a global recession. That adds urgency to the struggle for the overthrow of this rotten and increasingly chaotic capitalism system, in order to lay the basis for worldwide democratic socialist planning.

Some capitalist commentators have hoped that Britain can escape the worst of the consequences of the turmoil instigated by Trump, ironically because of the weakness of its manufacturing base. However, in reality British capitalism, as a weaker power, outside of any major trading bloc, and highly reliant on foreign capital, is extremely vulnerable to global economic storms.

One of the central tasks facing the working class, in the US and Britain, is building independent workers' parties – giving a political voice to the trade unions, independent of all the rotten capitalist elites and fighting for a socialist programme: for power to be taken out of the hands of the major corporations and banks that dominate the economy, so society can be run democratically in the interests of the majority, based on planning and cooperation, instead of capitalism's ruthless pursuit of profit which leads to poverty, environmental destruction, and war.



Trump's "Liberation Day" – An international socialist response is needed!

For socialists, it is not a simple question of whether to support 'free trade' or 'protection'. In different ways, both have negative impacts on workers' living standards. The neo-liberal demands for free trade can destroy local jobs and livelihoods. Protectionism can boost the profits of local capitalists and corrupt officials but not significantly benefit the working class. The key issue is the capitalist system and the need to replace it.

• **Read the article in full at socialistworld.net**



JOHN MURPHY/CC

SOCIALISM TODAY

Monthly magazine of the Socialist Party

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- **Fascism: a Marxist analysis**
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NEU conference 2025: A fighting lead is needed against education crisis

SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBERS IN THE NEU

A mountain of crucial issues face the delegates gathering for the national conference of the National Education Union, the first under Starmer's Labour government.

"The worst cuts in a generation" from Starmer and Reeves; another below-inflation, unfunded pay rise; an education bill going through parliament which doesn't address the crucial issues of the cuts, recruitment and retention crises in schools, all of which are exacerbated by privatisation and academies.

A sign of the crisis in education is the whole number of local strikes taking place. The union has run a national indicative ballot of teachers on pay – which Socialist Party members have strenuously argued should be about funding as well.

Yet at the same time as all this, the leadership of the union has signed up to a 'partnership' agreement between the government, employers and unions, in the name of 'Improving Education Together'. And it has signed away its ability to organise and fight for recognition for its support staff members. Both of these mistakes must and will be challenged from the conference floor.

As economic crisis looms and Starmer's betrayals feed the rise of right populists like Farage and the far-right, delegates will also be debating the crucial issue of the role of trade unions in combating the right and fighting for a political voice that represents the interests of workers.

In the face of this storm of events, Socialist Party members who are delegates and National Executive members are putting forward clear demands and a fighting approach.

Funding, pay and workload

Local disputes are winning gains but to defeat Starmer's austerity will need a national fight. As we go to press, the result of the indicative ballot is not yet known. But most of the ballot took place before the latest cuts announcements – what members thought a few weeks ago won't be what they think now!

It is vital now that we build for a national statutory ballot – on funding, pay and workload, as Socialist Party members on the Exec have consistently argued for.

NEU needs a fighting leadership

Two Socialist Party members are standing for election to the National Executive, Sean McCauley in District 8 and Dan Warrington in District 11, to join Sheila Caffrey and Louise Cuffaro, already re-elected unopposed. Winning more socialists on the Exec will strengthen the fight for a leadership that stands up to Starmer's Labour government.

In the summer term, nominations will open for a new Deputy General Secretary (DGS). Sheila Caffrey won 5,500 votes when she stood for vice president last year – first runner-up. Socialist Party members in the NEU want to discuss with anyone who is serious about giving a fighting lead to members, to ensure there is one socialist candidate in the election for NEU DGS this summer.



Support staff, members of NEU, Unison and GMB, striking together in Tower Hamlets HUGO PIERRE

No to partnership

Socialist Party members on the Exec voted against the 'Improving Education Together' agreement in the November Exec meeting. This is not about negotiations with employers. This is an aim to muzzle union democracy and campaigns. We do not have 'consensus' with CEOs of academy chains or a government that is overseeing massive cuts. Instead of partnership, we must recognise the reality of this austerity Starmer government and get ready to fight for what our members need.

Fight the right with class politics

NEU members are rightly concerned about the rise in support for Farage's Reform UK, and the recent far-right riots and Tommy Robinson demos. In the Socialist Party we argue for trade unions to take the lead in mobilising against the right – including providing trade union-led stewarding to ensure safety of protesters.

The rise of Reform stems from the despair felt by many because of the betrayals by Starmer's Labour. The NEU should implement the position agreed at the 2018 TUC – Jobs and Homes, not Racism.

Our union donates large amounts to anti-racism campaigns and we believe it is essential our elected bodies have democratic oversight.

An essential part of fighting the far right is also to build a political alternative. The NEU should contact pro-worker MPs, including Jeremy Corbyn, the independents and suspended Labour MPs, to form a parliamentary group that champions the policies of our union and supports our members. And we should work with other unions to hold a trade union conference to debate political representation. We need a new workers' party!

NEU must fight for its support staff members

At its March meeting, the Exec voted to accept an agreement about support staff, signed with other unions that also have support staff members, 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 other unions.

Socialist Party members Sheila Caffrey and Louise Cuffaro were part of a substantial minority on the Exec that voted against. We support the support staff urgent motion to honour the 2023 conference resolution to campaign for recognition for support staff. All support staff need to be in a fighting union, and we want maximum unity between unions, not division.

Amend the Bill – bring academies back into local authority control

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

We urge all NEU districts to call on their MPs, especially the pro-worker MPs including the independents, to move an amendment to Labour's Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill to allow a route for academy schools to be returned to local authority control – or new legislation if necessary. The NEU nationally should do the same.

● Socialist Party member James Ellis, NEU lead rep, is the main speaker at the Anti-Privatisation fringe meeting called by Newham and Lewisham NEU districts: 6.15-7.30pm Wed 16 April, at Double Tree by Hilton Harrogate Majestic Hotel, Ripon Road HG1 2HU

Socialist Party NEU conference fringe meeting

National action to fight for funding, pay and workload! Oppose Starmer's austerity

Hear from:

Sheila Caffrey, Exec member;
Rob Williams, Socialist Party trade union organiser

12.45pm Wednesday 16 April
The Cairn, Ripon Road HG1 2JD

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PCS must fight Starmer's cuts Vote Marion Lloyd for PCS president and a fighting NEC

From 16 April, ballot papers will go out to Public and Commercial Service Union (PCS) members to vote for a new National Executive Committee (NEC) and president. PCS organises workers in the civil service, in government agencies and other public sector bodies, and on outsourced government contracts.

Cabinet Office Minister Pat McFadden's "radical reforms" and Rachel Reeves's Spring Statement promise "the worst cuts since austerity" – a £2 billion axe to the civil service.

This includes 15% cuts to departmental budgets, tens of thousands of jobs to go, the abolition of NHS England with the loss of half the workforce, below-inflation pay rises, unsafe pensions, office closures, increased workload, and attacks on the working environment, including hybrid working.

And this catalogue was all promised before the onset of economic chaos and potential downturn following Trump's tariffs.

Elections are taking place this spring in a number of unions – the first time under Starmer's government. They are all an opportunity for members to elect a fighting leadership that will stand up to Starmer and lead a serious campaign to defend members.

That is especially the case in the PCS union, where in last year's elections members threw out the misnamed 'Democracy Alliance/Left Unity' group from its majority on the NEC. It had badly let members down during the strike wave.

Members elected a new left majority on the NEC – a 'coalition of change', including the Broad Left Network of PCS members who want a more fighting democratic union, in which Socialist Party members play a key role.

But the left majority on the NEC

has been stymied all year by the actions of the union's president and general secretary, Martin Cavanagh and Fran Heathcote. They are members of Left Unity and have effectively refused to accept that they have lost the majority and have acted to block the NEC at every turn.

Because the left does not have a 2/3 majority, the president has been able to rule by decree – ruling out of order everything the majority proposes to build a national campaign to defend members.

This year's election is the chance to increase the left majority so that it can't just be blocked – and to elect a fighting president, Socialist Party member Marion Lloyd.

Marion Lloyd says:

Who wins these NEC elections is crucial. Starmer and Reeves have demonstrated, despite the hopes of many PCS members, that there is little difference in attitude towards civil servants and all PCS members than the one demonstrated by the Tories.

This was clear as soon as Starmer entered Number 10, with attacks on winter fuel payments and retention of the two-child benefit cap. And it continues in attacks against benefit claimants.

But public sector workers are in the firing line and yet again the first in line are civil servants and PCS members. The approach by Westminster impacts us all – no matter which part of the UK you work, no matter whether you are civil service, privatised or a partner organisation.

We must respond. The choice facing you is electing a leadership that acts as commentators and puts reports of these attacks down to 'rogue journalists', or a leadership who will build a serious campaign, capable of winning on the issues that matter most.

Vote for me and the team I stand with to build such a response.



Marion on the picket line ROB WILLIAMS

The Broad Left Network demands:

- Fight for every job - No to increases in workload, yes to properly staffed, high-quality public services
- Inflation-proof pay rises that win back what we have lost - For a 10% pay rise as a first step, and for £15ph minimum wage
- Flexible and hybrid working for all - No to quotas, no to office closures, yes to maximum flexibility for all
- Defend and improve pensions
- End privatisation - Bring outsourced work back inhouse. Facilities staff have fought valiantly for sick pay and fair treatment and are winning! No more privatisation
- Equality at Work - Ensure that the full force of the union is felt to stamp out inequality and discrimination
- Repeal Tory 50% turnout thresholds immediately, and all anti-trade union laws
- For PCS and the trade union movement to lead the fight against racism and war. Demand jobs and homes in our communities, not racism!
- No to climate injustice - A democratically run National Climate Service could lead decarbonisation with no worker left behind
- For a political voice that represents the interests of union members, and campaigns against attacks on public services, pensions and disability benefits

PCS national elections 16 April - 9 May
Please vote for:

National President
Lloyd, Marion (DSIT)

Vice Presidents
Clarke, Eleanor (Cabinet Office)
Laidlaw, Bev (DWP)
Semple, Dave (DfE)
Wesley, Hector (HMRC)

National Executive Committee members

Awen, Eilonwy (HMRC)
Brittle, Fiona (Scottish govt)
Carlsen, Bryan (HSE)
Chown, Josh (Home Office)
Clark, Abi (DWP)
Clarke, Eleanor (Cabinet Office)
Criddle, Gemma (HMRC)
Dale, Joe (MHCLG)
Davidson, John (HMRC)
Day, Chris (National Archives)
Dennis, Alan (DSG)
Foley Doyle, Ella (HMRC)
Hamer, Chip (Sport England)
Heemskerck, Rachel (DWP)
Jones, David (MHCLG)
Laidlaw, Bev (DWP)
Lawton, Reece (DWP)
Lloyd, Marion (DSIT)
Marks, Chris (DWP)
Menezes-Jackson, Vijay (DWP)
Norris, Liat (MOJ)
Ritchie, Rob (Met Police)
Rosser, Jon-Paul (HMRC)
Semple, Dave (DfE)
Smith, John (HMRC)
Spencer, Gary (MHCLG)
Tweedale, Saorsa-Amatheia (DWP)
Williams, Katrine (HMRC)
Wright, Annette (HMRC)
Young, Bobby (HMRC)

There are also slates of candidates in the DWP and HMRC group elections.

Birmingham bins – pressure mounts

NICK HART
BIRMINGHAM SOCIALIST PARTY

Birmingham City Council, with Starmer's Labour government's public backing, is pulling out all the stops to try and break the spirit of striking bin workers.

A few days after the council declared a 'state of emergency', Unite members arriving to picket their depots were greeted by up to 20 police officers and rows of fences. These were in place to stop bin workers using the successful 'go slow' tactics of delaying the wagons from leaving the yard for hours at a time.

Workers were threatened with arrest under Section 14 of the Public Order Act. This is clearly a sign of the council panicking at weeks of missed collections, with rubbish piling up in many areas and mile-long queues of residents at mobile tips.

Even if the council can get agency workers out to collect rubbish with help from their 'hired security' (aka

West Midlands Police), it will take more than a few days to clear the backlog, and at a great financial cost.

This is clearly a crunch point of the dispute. The Labour council, with Starmer behind it, is threatening to crush the strike and inflict a defeat on Unite by brutal strikebreaking measures, such as using wagons from neighbouring councils.

The whole union movement must now come to Unite's aid with support and solidarity.

It is welcome that the Fire Brigades Union has publicly pledged that none of its members will clear rubbish, rejecting the call to do so from a Lib Dem councillor.

It is essential that council unions Unison and the GMB make a similar commitment, explaining to their members that a defeat for Birmingham bin workers would open the door to the same attacks on them.

Unite should use this time to apply maximum pressure on the councillors responsible, and on

the government. It's welcome that the union's general secretary Sharon Graham has publicly called out the role of Angela Rayner and other ministers in allowing, or more likely encouraging, the council's strike-breaking tactics.

But the government needs to understand that, if it does not intervene to insist that the binworkers' demands are met, it will be taking on the might of Unite and the whole trade union movement.

At a rally on 8 April outside the council meeting, bin workers remained defiant. Workers can see that this is not just a fight to stop pay cuts to Grade 3 workers but to stop the council smashing the union and further downgrading the workforce.

If the council is going to try and stop effective picketing, then even more political pressure needs to be applied, including a suspension of Unite funding for Labour while a discussion is started about how to use the union's political fund.



Protesting at the council TOM PORTER BROWN

NICK CHAFFEY
SOCIALIST PARTY NATIONAL COMMITTEE

On March 23, 2020, Britain's first lockdown in response to the global Covid pandemic began. By the end of the year, death figures in Britain were the worst in Europe. By the end of the final lockdown in 2021, over 7 million had died globally and Britain had passed through an unprecedented period of political, economic and social convulsions. Boris Johnson and the Tories would pay the price.

Undoubtedly, a key factor in the crushing defeat of the Tories in the 2024 general election was a verdict on its Covid failings. Five years on, looking back at the huge historic events, what are the lessons of the Covid pandemic for the new period of struggle that lies ahead?

News of the pandemic began to surface from Wuhan in China at the end of 2019. Europe faced its first outbreak by January, in Italy. Cases appeared not long after in Britain. All governments, political parties and the workers' movement were confronted with the sharp question of what to do to protect life and manage the economic and social consequences of the pandemic.

Workers faced the immediate danger from the Covid virus, health workers faced a mass influx of patients into the NHS already devastated by a decade of austerity. Thousands of students were trapped on campuses. Enormous uncertainty grew about the economic impact of the pandemic and lockdowns.

From day one, the Socialist Party argued for an independent response from the working class and its mass organisations, the trade unions. For us there was no common interest with the bosses and their capitalist politicians who had carried out a decade of cuts to jobs, pay and funding for public services in response to the financial crisis of 2007-08. The working class could have no trust in Boris Johnson and the Tories.

The Socialist Party published its Workers' Charter in the first weeks of Covid lockdown, outlining socialist

measures to save lives and maintain the fabric of day-to-day life.

Writing in advance of the first Covid lockdown, 4 March 2020, the Socialist made the case that "nationalisation of big corporations, including the pharmaceutical industry; democratic planning by the working class, and international cooperation - in a word, socialism - could prevent new diseases like Covid-19 becoming disasters."

We developed a programme of demands including emergency funding for services and safety measures, for nationalisation of big pharma and investment in vaccine production, for full pay from day one for any worker unable to attend work, including for benefit claimants, and workers' control of workplace safety including for the trade unions to organise coordinated national strike action if necessary. This was further developed and published in the workers' charter (see 'Coronavirus - a workers' charter 2020' at socialistparty.org.uk)

Sharp crisis

The capitalists in Britain and internationally faced a sharp crisis. How could governments keep the economy breathing to maintain the bosses' profits, and limit the number of deaths for fear of social upheaval?

British capitalism was already in crisis, entering into the pandemic on the back of nine years of cruel austerity undermining public services, and the NHS in particular which faced a severe test. Politically, the capitalists had had to weather the political upheavals of the Scottish independence and Brexit referendums - the consequences including the unprecedented demise of two Tory prime ministers, David Cameron and Teresa May - as well as the mass enthusiasm, particularly from young people, for Jeremy Corbyn's anti-austerity ideas in the leadership of the Labour Party. Entitled Etonian buffoon Johnson was tasked with defeating Corbyn, assisted by the treacherous Blairite right wing in Labour.

As prime minister, Johnson first argued for life to carry on as normal, for "herd immunity", developing natural immunity, to triumph. In truth,

CLASS FORCES EXPOSED

Looking back at the Covid pandemic five years on



Black Lives Matter
PHOTO: SA BLM/CC

he was reflecting his and the Tories' class interests to defend the profits of the capitalists and keep the economy running. But the brutal reality of hundreds of deaths in care homes forced Johnson into a series of sharp U-turns and lockdowns.

What happened next was an unprecedented abandonment of neo-liberal free market economics. Faced with the economic challenge of lockdown, who was going to pay the wages of workers who were kept at home? As big sections of the economy came to a halt, what would the consequences be and how would the government respond?

Undoubtedly, the capitalist class was fearful of the fury of the mass of the working class. Drawing on the lessons of past crises, they whipped up a mood of 'national unity', consciously drawing in the Labour Party and, unfortunately, trade unions too. In doing so they attempted to give all forces common responsibility for the measures that were taken, and to use the authority of the trade unions to gain support for their implementation. Ultimately, the steps taken by the capitalist class were done not with the primary objective to save lives but to save their system.

Recently elected Labour leader Sir Keir Starmer was keen to show his pro-capitalist credentials and break from Corbyn's anti-austerity programme. Unfortunately the leaders of

the trade unions also gave full support to the Tories' emergency bill, rather than taking an independent stance in the interests of the working class by leading a struggle to ensure necessary measures for safety and income.

However, the following months would reveal the real class relations and balance of forces in the battle to tackle the Covid pandemic.

The leaders of the Trades Union Congress (TUC) had given reassuring consent to Johnson's measures, calling for the government to "bring together a taskforce of unions and employers to help coordinate the national effort." Other trade union leaders held back struggle, including then general secretary of the PCS civil service union, previously on the left, Mark Serwotka who 'parked' the union's pay claim. But reality forced the best of the working class to fight back, literally for their lives.

The statistics show dramatically the dangers frontline workers faced, for example the higher incidence of deaths of BAME workers more likely to be frontline workers. Bus drivers and health workers were forced to take action, and pushed their leaders to reflect the issues at concern, especially the lack of PPE for health workers and insufficient protection with screens for bus drivers. Refuse, postal and construction workers staged walkouts demanding protection.

The war on Covid revealed the true

nature of the battle fought out heroically by health, transport, education and shop workers who kept society running. Meanwhile the masters of industry sat at home as spectators. Even Johnson was forced to eat some humble pie and join weekly claps from the steps of Number 10, in recognition of the role of frontline key workers from the beginning of April. Such a cynical display was to be magnified ever larger when it was revealed that while workers died, the prime minister had partied.

The Covid measures the government was forced to implement reflected the real balance of forces in society. Through the furlough scheme, however inadequate, the government paid 80% of the wages of over 9 million workers. However insufficiently, it was compelled to try to organise aspects of society to meet social needs. Emergency hospitals were built. The homeless were housed. As the economy shrank by 35% from April to June, 2 million applied for Universal Credit, £400 billion was pledged by the government to prop up business, with the Bank of England reducing interest rates to historic lows. What did this demonstrate in practice? That planning, not the marvels of the free market, was required to meet social need - and that this is entirely possible.

However, in the hands of the capitalists, this became a free for all for government contracts to deliver PPE

and other requirements. While many of these contracts failed to deliver, friends of the government pocketed the money, anger at the government grew and their failings revealed, as we argued at the time, that effective services could only be delivered by democratic planning through elected representatives of the working class in every aspect of society.

Workers' response

Throughout, the Socialist Party fought for a workers' response to the pandemic, putting forward a programme in the interests of the working class. From below, workers organised and fought for their safety and the effective delivery of services, especially in the NHS, education and transport. Where Socialist Party members had a presence we played a key role in advancing those struggles.

One of the most significant examples came as Johnson, under pressure from the capitalists to get the economy running, attempted to reopen schools. For schools, Covid was an unrelenting daily pressure to support children of key workers and others who came in, as well as supporting those who didn't.

Unsurprisingly, when Johnson's announcement was made in Winter 2020-21, there was real fear of the consequences. The National Education Union was pushed by its members to respond and an online meeting

attracted over 400,000 participants. It was Socialist Party activists in the union who intervened with proposals to refuse to return under their contractual rights, using safety legislation. Such a view was carried, and Johnson's assertion to reopen schools became another U-turn as the power of the working class bore down.

This was just one example of many where, with decisive leadership from the trade unions, the working class could have pushed back harder to secure greater measures to protect lives, jobs and incomes. If a mass workers' party had existed at this time, its role would have been critical in consolidating the radicalisation of the working class, and it could have grown massively during the pandemic, posing a way out of the capitalist crisis.

Despite all the restrictions society faced under the emergency powers of lockdown, class struggle continued. Not only in the shape of strikes against 'fire and rehire' by GMB gas workers and others, but also in social movements. School students forced another Tory U-turn on A-level exam grades. University students forced concessions through rent strikes on campuses. Significantly, the protests that followed a police officer's rape and murder of Sarah Everard, and the huge Black Lives Matter protests that spread from the US following the police murder of George Floyd showed all the underlying anger at injustice, discrimination and inequality under capitalism.

It was the brutal self-interest of the capitalist class - represented in government by the Tory party with docile allies in the leadership of the Labour Party and the TUC - that bears the blame for Britain's disastrous response to Covid. The pandemic exposed both the weaknesses of the capitalists and their political leaders. It also showed the enormous potential power of the working class to lead a movement not only for its immediate needs but to challenge the system and pose the question of a new socialist society where the huge resources of capitalism could be used to meet the needs of all.

Nurses fighting
for better pay
PHOTO: PAUL MATTHESSON



Campaigning socialists stand up to bullying Labour council

TESSA WARRINGTON
LEICESTER SOCIALIST PARTY

We were out campaigning against cuts to disability benefits when two council enforcement officers approached our stall. They told us of the council's incoming Public Space Protection Order (PSPO), whereby certain activities considered to cause harm or nuisance in public spaces are to be banned, unless they have special permission from the council.

We were informed that our collapsable stall table was deemed an 'unauthorised structure'. They said that from the beginning of May, the PSPO will be enforced with on-the-spot fixed penalty notices of £100, and fines of up to £1,000 if the case goes to court.

Undemocratic

The order is being presented as a response to a public consultation, appearing to be democratic. The reality is the opposite.

Being longstanding class fighters in the community, Socialist Party activists in Leicester have seen similar consultations from the Labour council. The council claimed to carry out a consultation over cuts to SEND (special educational needs and disability) transport for 16-year-olds and over.

But most of the parents were unaware of it. A campaign forced the council to postpone, and carry out another consultation.

Many people coming into the city centre are frustrated by the number of charity muggers, or 'chuggers', religious groups with loud sound



Tessa (second right) campaigning with the Socialist Party STEVE SCORE

systems, and electric bikes and scooters whizzing past.

But behind the facade of being in the public interest are more insidious motives - sweeping increasing poverty under the carpet after the council axed most of our homeless shelters, and slyly clamping down on the freedoms of those who politically oppose them.

The Socialist Party doesn't have rich backers. We are funded by our members and other workers who support what we do.

We cannot afford to pay for special permissions to use a stall table, that is if they would even allow us. You can bet that the sandwich boards and al fresco seating used in public spaces by businesses will not be considered 'unauthorised structures' under the PSPO. Once again, those with money

can do what they want, and those without it cannot.

The council are no fools. After cutting millions from local services, most recently attacking disabled benefits claimants, those in power are well aware of their unpopularity.

No longer can the Leicester Labour council use a Tory government as an excuse. A Labour government is no different.

The council should not underestimate us. Nothing will stop us fighting to get our socialist ideas out there to the workers who want to hear them.

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socialistparty.org.uk/subscribe

Birmingham outrage at Labour disability cuts

LIBBY QUINLAN
BIRMINGHAM SOCIALIST PARTY

Socialist Party members joined trade union activists and disabled campaigners at the Birmingham Crips Against Cuts protest to oppose Labour's proposed cuts to welfare. We were taking a stand against Rachel Reeves's attack on the most vulnerable in our society.

Labour plans to slash disability benefits, launching an attack on vulnerable workers, with £5 billion cuts proposed. This is just the start of further austerity and cuts to come.

Fight back

Speakers echoed the concerns of many disabled people. The cuts would see over a million Personal Independent Payment (PIP) claimants impacted by 'tightened eligibility', forcing many into poverty. The mood remained elevated as many highlighted the need for an anti-capitalist approach in the fightback against the cuts.

During our discussions with members of the public, many expressed outrage in response to Labour's latest attack. While we were leafletting for the people's budget meeting



Birmingham Socialist Party at the protest

organised by West Midlands Shop Stewards Network, many members of the public questioned the affiliation of trade unions to the Labour Party. We call on trade unions to fight against cuts, with the involvement of disabled workers.

People's Budget

The Birmingham People's Budget meeting on 26 April, will allow an open dialogue with trade unionists and community campaigns, in order to create an organised approach to opposing the abhorrent cuts facing

the city. A local campaign to defend services and opposing austerity at the ballot box can also be used as a model on how to fight Labour government cuts, such as to welfare, on a national level.

- **How can council cuts be ended?**
- Conference to debate a people's budget for Birmingham
- Saturday 26 April, 12pm
- Comfort Inn, Station Street, B5 4DY
- Organised by West Midlands Shop Stewards Network



JOHN WILLIAMS

Universal anger at Labour at Cardiff trans rights protest

JOHN WILLIAMS
SOCIALIST PARTY WALES LGBTQ+ CONVENOR

The Cardiff trade union movement celebrated trans day of visibility, with a demo outside the HMRC building in Cardiff. The event had a fantastic broad range of speakers, all highlighting the different personal struggles of growing up trans, as well as the solidarity from the trade union movement.

What was evident through all the speeches was complete anger at Keir Starmer's Labour. Another PCS activist said: "Many young people have experienced 14 years of a Tory government... now it looks like we've got another Tory government for the next five years". Labour has now also reversed its previous support for trans rights, including the right to self-determination.

Fighting for liberation

And this is why Socialist Party members who spoke called for a new workers' party, where those fighting for LGBTQ+ liberation could participate. Quite frankly, we were pushing at an open door with our ideas at this demo.

Many speakers touched on how LGBTQ+phobia is pushed as an attempt to divide the working class and poor, instead of going after the real enemy - the capitalist class. It's them who are underfunding and causing a crisis in all the public services we need, due to profit and greed.

The Cardiff demo was initiated by members of PCS Proud - the LGBTQ+

group for members of civil service union PCS. Some are Socialist Party members. It was endorsed by Cardiff Trades Union Council, Cardiff County Union, and Unite Wales.

The demo was also supported by Disabled People Against the Cuts (DPAC), who've been very busy in the last few weeks campaigning against Labour's disability cuts. This will have an enormous negative impact on trans people who are disabled, who are already being targeted by the government and right-wing press.

Trade unions stand for all

Katrine Williams, from the PCS Wales executive, gave a passionate speech following on from the PCS Wales conference, which enshrined trans rights into its constitution. She said that the "trade union movement is crucial in fighting for equality rights, and against all cuts. Unity is strength."

One woman gave a moving speech on how she's supporting her trans son since coming out, pointing out the disgusting way the media targets and bullies a group of people that make up less than 1% of the population. She was also dismayed how the Welsh Labour government had postponed an education toolkit for teachers about these issues.

There are now discussions in the Cardiff trade union movement about a LGBTQ+ trade union network, linked to the need for a socialist society. Socialist Party members will be at the forefront of that work, as we struggle for a world free of oppression.

“They don’t understand our lives” Save Abertridwr library in Caerphilly



Campaigners have a protest meeting outside the library every week MARIAM KAMISH

MARIAM KAMISH, CAERPHILLY TRADES UNION COUNCIL SECRETARY, AND GERAINT THOMAS, CAERPHILLY SOCIALIST PARTY

"They don't understand our lives - the people who make these decisions. Without the library, my granddaughter would be trying to concentrate on her homework, sat in front of the telly."

Caerphilly Labour council is closing ten libraries and three leisure centres. People are fighting to save Abertridwr library.

'Use the hub library in Caerphilly', the Labour council says. But the bus fare to Caerphilly is £5.60. The Welsh Labour government hasn't capped fares.

Taking even one child, a couple of times a week, would be way too expensive. Not to mention - where would you find the time? Whereas now, Sue's granddaughter walks to

the library on her own, every day after school.

Plaid Cymru says it wants the library to stay open. But one of its councillors has been going around, telling people not to bother with our campaign - that the decision has already been made.

We have to save Abertridwr Library for the kids. But lots of adults need it, just as much.

Meeting banned

Angela says: "I don't have family. The library is where I see people."

"I take out ten books a week for my disabled friend", says a voice from the back. After being banned from meeting inside the library, we've been having a protest meeting every week outside.

Robert doesn't have a smart phone. "I can use Facebook in the library."

People in the valley have heard

about how Rhydyfelin Library - just over the mountain - stayed open when Rhondda Cynon Taf Labour council tried to close it in 2014.

We've won before

"Residents chained themselves to the bookcases", says Rhian. "The council did a U-turn, and it's still open today."

The Socialist Party was involved in that campaign, which was started by Karen McGrath, the librarian, herself. "We'll do whatever we need to do", says Esther.

The campaign has a plan to build and get press attention. We demand that the council does its job, and provides the services we need.

We're staging a fun day for the kids. We're paying a visit to the councillors' surgery, and challenging the lead councillor to a public debate.

We're confident and determined. We will save our library.



Carole campaigning with the Socialist Party MARTIN POWELL-DAVIES

Why I joined the Socialist Party, and why I’m standing for TUSC

CAROLE SASAKI
LANCASHIRE SOCIALIST PARTY AND TUSC CANDIDATE FOR CLAYTON WITH WHITTLE

I'm a retail worker and a mother. Someone who never imagined standing for election.

However, I found myself deeply disillusioned with the Labour Party's response to the situation in Gaza, and personally affected by the housing crisis. Then I attended a Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) public meeting ahead of the general election, where I heard the Socialist Party's ideas.

Capitalism doesn't work

The idea that we could build a society based on need, rather than profit, seemed strange to me at first. Hadn't that already been tried in the Soviet Union and failed?

But when I looked at the state of our economy and society - nationally and globally - can we really say that capitalism is working? It produces only failure, gross inequality, and horrendous poverty.

Perhaps socialism hasn't failed. Perhaps it has never truly been tried.

I've been learning more about socialism, and getting involved in my local Socialist Party branch. I've realised that staying in my own bubble, hoping for the best, is not a viable strategy.

When others who had stood as TUSC candidates before asked if I would stand, I hesitated. I didn't feel up to the task.

Standing up to Reform

But I am not doing this alone. There is a team of us standing for TUSC across several wards in Lancashire.

We have to offer an alternative to voters who are sick of Labour and Tories. We have to patiently explain why Reform is not an answer. We have to take advantage of the opportunities that an election brings to have conversations with many people, and explain our ideas to them.

Do you agree?
JOIN THE SOCIALISTS
socialistparty.org.uk/join

Yarborough and Birchwood shut – fight to save Lincoln leisure centres

Devastating news has emerged about the immediate closure of Yarborough and Birchwood leisure centres. This follows the collapse of Active Nation, the company which runs them.

Nick Parker, on behalf of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) in Lincolnshire, said: "These leisure centres are vital public services, as plenty of us can't afford to pay for private facilities. I have a membership at Yarborough, and swim three times a week, as well as regularly running and volunteering at the parkrun.

"TUSC calls on staff and leisure centre users to urgently come together and take to the streets to fight these closures. Lincoln's Labour council must immediately step in to take the leisure centres back under public control, to keep them open and protect

people's jobs and the facilities that so many of us use. If necessary, send the bill to Labour MPs in Westminster.

"The combination of funding cuts and outsourcing of public services by the Tories, Lib Dems, and Labour has been disastrous."

City of Lincoln Council is run by Labour. Lincolnshire County Council is run by the Tories.

Nick stood for TUSC in the 'Park' area, first in a city by-election on 3 April, and now in the county elections on 1 May.

Nick said: "Thousands of voters can send a message against cuts and privatisation by voting TUSC."

- Sign the petition at democratic.lincoln.gov.uk



WHAT WE STAND FOR

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

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

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

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

WORK, PENSIONS AND BENEFITS

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

PUBLIC SERVICES

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

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

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

ENVIRONMENT

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

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

DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS

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

SOCIALISM AND INTERNATIONALISM

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

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UCU: Demand funding for post-16 education now!

DUNCAN MOORE
UCU FURTHER EDUCATION COMMITTEE, PERSONAL CAPACITY

The University and College Union (UCU)'s National Executive. Further Education Subcommittee (FEC) met on 4 April. The FEC debated the cuts in adult education funding and a fighting strategy for the union's members against low pay and job losses.

Our sister union in Scotland, EIS, has agreed strike action over a sub-inflationary pay offer and compulsory redundancies. Meanwhile the UCU has not taken the same action in England over similar attacks on pay, conditions and job security.

The union's 'new deal for FE' campaign has so far lacked national coordination and leadership. Individual branches have been left to pursue local claims. There is widespread anger and a sense that local bargaining has not been successful.

At our last FEC, a motion was narrowly carried calling for nationwide industrial action to begin in the autumn and an indicative ballot to be organised.

A motion was brought to April's meeting by left FEC members to set a timetable for organising this ballot and commit the union's resources to call for national strike action. An amendment to a congress motion was also brought, strongly recommending that branches vote yes.

Opposing this, FEC members affiliated with the 'UCU Commons' grouping, which supports general secretary Jo Grady, claimed to defend branch autonomy, and highlighted weaknesses in some branches as a reason to not push for national action.

Left members of the FEC, including myself, argued that the union's national leadership must take a position and lead the campaign from the front - pointing out that the national union's communications on the looming savage cuts were inadequate.



Unison health conference votes for consultative ballot on pay

SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBERS

Unison Health Conference has voted to launch the pay campaign for NHS workers, as Starmer's Labour government launches austerity after 14 years of Tory cuts to pay and services.

Socialist Party members gave critical support to the Service Group Executive motion, which agreed a national consultative ballot and then a vote for industrial action if the pay offer is inadequate.

But Socialist Party members Dave Byrom and Eve Miller criticised the view of the standing orders committee that the demand in the composite motion (that the union fights for a £15-an-hour minimum wage in the pay claim - which is Unison policy)

contradicted the main motion. In reality, it would have strengthened it.

Dave and Eve demanded a real fighting campaign of national strike action, coordinated with other health and public sector unions.

Eve ended her speech by condemning Starmer's Labour government for not repealing the 2016 Trade Union Act, meaning that yet again, any strike ballot would have to get over the Tories' undemocratic voting thresholds.

"Let's be honest, if MPs were subject to the same 50% turnout thresholds as us, none of them would be elected!"

- Full report of the conference next week

South west phlebotomists strike – fighting the real bloodsuckers



JAMES COLLETT AND SUE POWELL
GLOUCESTERSHIRE SOCIALIST PARTY

Phlebotomists - those who take blood - are striking in Cheltenham and Gloucester hospitals where the real bloodsucker seems to be the hospital trust's CEO on an annual £300,000+ salary. Fed up with being overworked, underpaid and unappreciated, Unison members in Gloucestershire balloted for strike action.

A placard sums up their grievance: "We've got the skills but we can't pay the bills". Several workers said their kids leave school to stack shelves in supermarkets for a higher hourly rate than they get, even after years doing work which requires skills beyond simply taking blood. "Our experience allows us to painlessly extract blood from elderly patients who would be left black and blue by doctors," explained one woman. "The work we do, now being done by managers, follows a complex protocol. Taking blood puts you at risk of HIV, Hep A, B and C".

Their case is simple: they are specialist health care workers, facing patients and at risk all day, and should at least be on Band 3 pay. Before the strike, nurses at the hospital assumed phlebotomists were Band 4, which is the case in many places.

"We're also at risk from many infectious diseases. If I get a needle injury and contract hepatitis, I won't be allowed to work and could lose my job. Patients can behave unpredictably, so there's no guarantee we won't get stuck with a needle".

"It's not just taking blood. We work with disabled people, children, patients terrified of needles, patients who are terminally ill or simply anxious".

Currently three phlebotomists share one room, which is so cramped they have to warn each other if 'Chair 2' is in use, as they can knock into each other. They used to have four rooms. There are no tea breaks.

Everyone said they love their job, and didn't take strike action lightly. One woman who's been doing the job for 18 years summed it up: "We're treated like we don't exist - we want recognition. Nobody goes into this job for the money, but we have to pay the bills and we can't do that now. We want to go back to work, but we won't go without justice".

Another woman added: "For years they've just shoved us in a corner". Now they've come out of their corner fighting.

- Send solidarity messages to a.rawat@unison.co.uk

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Review: Toxic Town

A courageous fight for justice against corrupt polluting council

KATIE SIMPSON
NORTHAMPTON SOCIALIST PARTY

Toxic Town is a four-part Netflix docuseries telling the true story of how Corby, a town in Northamptonshire, was contaminated with toxic fumes between 1985 and 1997. The compelling series details how multiple children were born with birth defects as a direct result of toxic waste from a former steelworks site.

We meet a group of mothers in their dogged pursuit of justice for their children born with physical differences. Jodie Whittaker plays the main character Susan McIntyre, a fiery and tenacious mother of two who ends up raising her sons alone due to the father's unwillingness to accept his youngest son having a defective hand. The show deals with discrimination bluntly, depicting how children with physical disabilities and differences were often bullied and their mothers blamed for their birth defects.

A particularly harrowing story in the series is that of Tracey Taylor, whose daughter Shelby Anne died just four days after she was born with internal defects including in her heart. Shelby Anne's case was not able to go to trial as she was seen as a statistical anomaly. In spite of this, Tracey, in solidarity with the other parents fighting for justice, took to the stand to give evidence in the trial.

We are also introduced to councillors and council workers coming into conflict over the actions of the company contracted to dispose of toxic waste. The first episode opens with a gritty picture of the lack of safety protocols in place at the old steelworks and the hazardous nature of disposal. A young council worker who tries to raise concerns about the risks is ignored with attempts of both threats and bribery. We learn that the council worker's father was also suffering the consequences of having worked in the steel industry. This appears to motivate the young council worker to save and leak documents showing corruption by the council before he's fired. There are other examples in the show of how people's own circumstances motivate them to take on Corby Borough Council.

'Working-class credentials'

We meet Roy Thomas, the deputy council leader, who is fictional but representative of a clique of councillors who, at the time, had financial incentives to turn a blind eye to the toxic waste polluting the community. One Labour councillor is pushed out of the party for trying to challenge corruption. He decides to run as an independent and in one scene describes how his former Labour colleagues are "using their working-class credentials slung across their middle like a belt but they've become the abusers." This quote rings true of Labour politicians today and goes a long way to explain why several ex-Labour councillors are running as independents, including in Northamptonshire.

What makes Toxic Town truly binge-watchable is the courage of council whistleblowers but even more so the courage of stigmatised mothers taking legal action with the help of a dedicated lawyer who ended up using his own money to fund the case as legal aid was shockingly denied by the council.

● Toxic Town is out now on Netflix

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



Turkish mass movement against Erdogan

Interview with a student in Istanbul

After the arrest of Istanbul’s popular mayor and President Erdogan’s main political rival, Ekrem Imamoglu from the Republican People’s Party (CHP), students have been organising mass protests and boycotts around the country, mainly in Istanbul and Ankara. We interviewed a Bogazici University student, LC, who has been actively participating in the protests against attacks on democratic rights.

COULD YOU GIVE AN OVERVIEW OF WHY YOURSELF AND OTHER STUDENTS HAVE BEEN TAKING PART IN THE PROTESTS AGAINST ERDOGAN? WHAT ARE THE MAIN DEMANDS?

As a generation which has only seen the rule of Erdogan and his Justice and Development Party (AKP), most students want to see Erdogan gone, no matter the cost. The main student community, like the majority of young people, are just completely fed up with Erdogan’s rule and are ready to do whatever it takes to get him gone. We just want him gone.

But we are also working for smaller scale victories too. Currently, one of our main demands is the freedom of our student friends who were jailed during the protests.

ARE THERE ECONOMIC DEMANDS TOO? DO YOUNG PEOPLE SEE A FUTURE FOR THEMSELVES?

Students don’t think they can manage living in the present, let alone thinking about the future. Right now, there is a housing crisis at universities, and there are so many students who are struggling so hard to find a place to live, to feed themselves. The economic crisis is definitely a big

part of the protests.

But even before the huge economic decline of the last years, the desire for Erdogan and his party to be gone were cemented in this generation. So the economic crisis is only accelerating this.

AFTER OPPOSITION LEADER IMAMOGLU WAS ARRESTED ON 19 MARCH, THE FIRST PROTEST HAPPENED AT ISTANBUL UNIVERSITY. BUT THOSE PROTESTS SPREAD VERY QUICKLY. HOW IS THE STUDENT MOVEMENT ORGANISED IN TURKEY? ARE THERE ACTION COMMITTEES?

In my university, Bogazici, we have been organising protests over the past decade on our campuses. So, we always had a working protest committee at our university to organise every protest on our campuses. We also had some kind of working system, and we have elected student representatives that try to make something work at the university through this system.

But the same cannot be said for other universities in Istanbul. They barely had any working elected representatives.

A lot of universities had to form a committee and develop their organisation skills in under a week, which obviously led to a huge chaos.



President Erdogan
PHOTO: GOVERNMENT OF SPAIN/CC



There is a universities coordination group that we have managed to establish, but we are not sure what they are supposed to do and how they operate.

Since we also have a lot of anxieties about undercover police officers among us and leaks of information, there’s also not enough information being shared with the rest. There’s a lot of people who are in the dark about how things are working right now.

At this point, most of the universities in Istanbul have some sort of protest committee where ideas get discussed and raised, and then proposals are made to the universities coordination group.

YOU SAID STUDENTS ARE WORRIED ABOUT UNDERCOVER POLICE OFFICERS. SINCE THE START OF THE PROTESTS, ERDOGAN HAS RESORTED TO EVEN MORE AUTHORITARIAN MEASURES SUCH AS MASS ARRESTS AND VICIOUS POLICE BRUTALITY. WHAT EFFECT DID THIS HAVE ON THE MOVEMENT?

I have to admit that their intimidation tactics were successful to a certain extent. I have observed that a lot of students who were not too afraid when the protests first started are now feeling very anxious about the possibility of going to jail.

But I don’t think there is enough fear to stop students. It only makes students more cautious and develop safer ways of communication and organisation.

So there is greater amount of fear, but it’s mostly helping us tighten our security. And in addition to that, even if they are afraid, there is a huge consensus that we have the responsibility to continue fighting for our friends who are in jail right now. Otherwise it would be for nothing.

WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS FOR THE STUDENT MOVEMENT?

The most concrete idea about the next step is keeping up with the economic boycott. We are trying to establish special days of boycott as a regular occurrence, just like the one we did on 2 April, when no one spent any money, a complete day of economic boycott.

We are trying to establish this as



Protests by university students in front of Beyazıt Square in Istanbul PHOTO: MELLONSAPKA/CC

a weekly occasion, and we want to keep this going as long as we can. But we do want to organise more protests.

We had to stop protests because of the extended holidays our president graciously gave us, so he could keep the big cities empty. But students have been very anxious sitting at home. They want to spill onto the streets again. They are very uncomfortable about the lack of protests.

There are huge concerns about the security of any possible planned protest now, since they are trying to scare us. Once they see that we are not scared, everyone is expecting more police brutality and harsher measures taken against us in the coming weeks or months.

So, there is huge fear around how we are going to proceed with the

protests. But there is not a question about if we should proceed. The huge majority of students want to. We won’t leave the streets empty.

And through this, we also hope that we can persuade more people and trade unions to join the protests. Because if there is one thing we saw in the Gezi protests a decade ago, once trade unions help and join together with the youth, then our force becomes much, much stronger.

And we are still talking about how we can continue the academic boycott, which is much harder to organise than the economic boycott, because not a lot of teachers are in favour of it.

And I do understand the anxiety of a lot of university students who do not want to fail their classes, because staying for one more year in

university is going to mean having to afford to live in this unaffordable city for one more year. So most of the students’ academic concerns are economically based. It’s more like, how am I going to afford studying even longer in university?

So our main idea right now is the continuation of street protests and economic boycotts and try to see which unions, which parties, we could get more direct help from, and try to get the more general public supporting the movement of the students and not leave us alone.

WHAT IS THE IDEOLOGICAL COMPOSITION OF THE PROTESTS LIKE?

In terms of the main organisers, about half of them are students who are not affiliated to any political

organisation and the other half are mostly members of left parties. And the organisers are mostly students who want to take initiatives and know enough people to get into that position.

The general protest crowd, however, is a huge melting pot. There are also ultranationalists on the protests too. Their major discomfort with Erdogan is that he is ‘selling our country to the Arabs’. Basically, it stems from the propaganda against refugees and how every problem stems from them, and they are angry with the AKP for letting refugees in.

So the most I can say is that protests are a huge mix of far left to far right and anywhere in between. What unites them is anti-Erdogan and anti-police feelings.

During the Gezi Park protests in 2013 it was a huge rhetoric of the protests that the government is trying to divide us between religious sects, ideologies and ethnicities. There have been slogans and placards that say: ‘When we are separated as Turks, Kurds, Alevis, Sunnis, leftists and rightists, we are not strong enough to handle the government’. They want to divide us because they are afraid of what we can do when we are together. I think we need to reignite this understanding from the Gezi protest and try to unite.

EARLIER YOU MENTIONED THERE ARE CALLS FOR MASS BOYCOTTS AND YOU ALSO REFERRED TO TRADE UNIONS. WHAT IS YOUR EXPECTATION FROM THE WORKERS’ MOVEMENT?

It’s the call for a general strike that we need the most. And that has been a growing demand of the movement.

Also we need trade unionists to be with us on the streets if possible, because we are also in desperate need of groups, whether they are trade unions or not, who are organised enough and have experience of protesting.

Because at this point, there are a lot of students who are on the frontlines against the police barricades, against any kind of danger, and trying to lead these protests without any previous knowledge of how to do it.

So we need the power of the trade unions to call for strikes, as well as their experience on the streets, to help us and guide us and organise us.

What I think is that help from trade unions would be more about practical support than ideological support in the eyes of the student movement.

We want to build and continue with economic boycotts. Already we are making impact and irritating enough AKP officials with our boycott of their brands and companies with close relationship with the government. But we need a bigger impact.

We don’t see a way [for the students] to persuade anyone into a strike, because everyone is scared. People are being taken into custody because they are supporting the boycotts.

And most of the problem is obviously the economic situation. Because even if there would be a lot of workers who would want to support us with a strike, without a call from their general union, these people are obviously afraid of a strike, because even without a strike, they are barely able to feed themselves. So without a proper organised call from trade unions, it is hard for any workers to join the cause on their own. It’s impossible in this economic situation.

THE STUDENT MOVEMENT HAS BEEN THE MAIN DRIVER OF THE EVENTS BUT FORMALLY SPEAKING, THE CHP HAS BEEN IN THE POLITICAL LEADERSHIP. IT IS SUPPORTING THE ECONOMIC BOYCOTTS AND THEY ARE CALLING FOR A SNAP ELECTION. WHAT ARE YOUR VIEWS TOWARDS THE CHP?

I think my opinion on this is shared widely among students, so I can speak for the majority here. Most of my generation are not impressed by what CHP has done in the past years.

There is a huge lack of trust in CHP among the younger protesters, because most of their rhetoric and calls have been on the lines of ‘we will win this fight in the ballots’, which is not an idea that most students believe in. We believe that whenever we try and win anything by electoral means, we are going to fail.

In the presidential elections in 2023, everyone argued that CHP’s candidate should not be Kemal Kilicdaroglu. But no one’s voice was heard, and the CHP pushed with their candidate, which caused a huge amount of anti-CHP feelings among the students. We already saw them as pretty useless, but they started to appear even more useless in everyone’s eyes.

We were expecting Ekrem Imamoglu to be the presidential candidate in 2023, but the CHP gave the excuse of a potential political ban for Imamoglu in not putting forward him as a candidate. And I must add that Imamoglu is greatly popular with young people, because of some of the welfare policies he has introduced in Istanbul and he is a charismatic figure too.

The fact that the CHP is focusing solely on elections, while students understand that elections on their own are not enough, is one of the big divide between the student movement and the CHP right now.

THE WORKERS PARTY OF TURKEY (TIP) IS GAINING ATTRACTION IN TURKEY AMONG SOME. WHAT DO YOU THINK THE ROLE OF THE TIP AND SOCIALISTS SHOULD BE IN TURKEY RIGHT NOW?

I really don’t know where the TIP stands and what they represent. And it’s not just me. Most people are unsure what they are planning to do and what kind of actions they will take to build the movement.

Compared to other parties, the TIP is seen as a less demanding organisation. They are able to gather students who are looking for a left alternative.

But that also means that their members don’t have unified ideas, they have quite a lot of different ideas in the party.

A huge question for us is what the TIP is intending to do.

THE CWI IS AN INTERNATIONAL SOCIALIST ORGANISATION WITH SECTIONS IN MANY COUNTRIES. DO YOU HAVE A MESSAGE FOR CWI MEMBERS?

The need for international solidarity is not just important for our success. My message for the rest of the world would be that if we don’t gather enough support for the mass protests in Turkey and in the Balkans, then we won’t be able to slow down or stop the international rise of the far-right and fascistic forces. What is happening in Turkey right now would happen in the more advanced capitalist countries too. We need to fight together!

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THE WORKING CLASS NEEDS A POLITICAL VOICE!



Why we're standing for TUSC on 1 May

The country has been left on its knees by 14 years of Tory rule. It is a time which will be remembered for cuts, hypocrisy and an increasing detachment from the lives of ordinary people.

Now that we have a Labour government, they have decided to balance the budget on the backs of some of the most vulnerable people in society. All this will do is create fear, poverty and worsening mental health. This has been tried before by the Tories. It had dire consequences then and so I am at a loss as to how Labour politicians can try to justify it again.

Working-class people in North Staffordshire know that we are not represented by any of the major parties, and without a real alternative, Reform seem to be gaining support. But they don't offer any way forward for working-class communities.

If we want to win the funding for services we need and prevent the rise of the right, then we need to fight for a working-class alternative that says the super-rich should be made to pay, not the working class.

I think there is a very real need for people to see a socialist candidate on their ballot paper. I feel it is more important now than at any time in my adult life.

BECKY CARTER

TUSC CANDIDATE FOR KIDSGROVE, STAFFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL



The Socialist Party is part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition. To see all 102 TUSC candidates visit tusc.org.uk

In 2024, Oxford was reported to have the highest rents of any city in England and Wales outside of London. At times, it feels like a struggle just to survive. Few employers are willing to pay even the living wage of £13.16 an hour; it is hardly surprising that the city has one of the highest numbers of rough sleepers relative to its population. The need for fully funded public services has never been greater.

Unfortunately, while certain Oxford county councillors have voiced their disapproval with central government for failing to provide adequate funding, none have taken steps to demand more. Not only that, but they have voted to increase council tax by 4.99% - the maximum allowed increase without a referendum - for the third year in a row!

Meanwhile there are planned cuts to adult social services. The council budget is plainly another attack on the working class whilst the wealth of the bosses is protected. The working class should not have to tolerate this, which is why I will be standing as one of seven Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition candidates in Oxfordshire. We fight all proposed cuts and demand that central government foots the bill. Demand fighting socialist councillors and vote TUSC!

HANNAH CHAPMAN

TUSC CANDIDATE FOR BARTLEMAS, OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL