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# the Socialist

Issue 1320

8-14 May 2025

formerly **Militant**



PHOTOS: GAGE SKIDMORE, CONSERVATIVE PARTY AND NO.10/CC

# WE CAN'T TRUST ANY OF THEM!

## The working class needs our own party

### Fight for socialist change

AFTER THE LOCAL  
ELECTIONS: READ  
WHAT WE THINK  
OVERLEAF



the**Socialist**  
*formerly* **Militant**

Issue 1320  
8-14 May 2025

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

# Derbyshire socialists challenge Labour, Tories, and Reform

**JON DALE**  
TUSC CANDIDATE IN BOLSOVER

For the first time, the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) stood in all six divisions in the Bolsover district. Two generations after pit closures destroyed mining jobs in these small towns and villages, large warehouses and care work are now major employers – mostly non-union, insecure, and minimum wage.

The pleasant countryside between our communities is rapidly being concreted over. This causes more resentment. Many of the new houses are too expensive for local people. Schools and GP services can't keep up with demand.

Resident action groups have sprung up. They oppose the Labour district council's planning decisions, and the Tory county council's cuts.

In this situation, Reform jumped on the bandwagon, claiming new housing is needed because of immigration.

Speaking to people on the doorstep and on our campaign stalls, we found many more agreed with us than in previous elections. Nobody argued they had to vote Labour to get the Tories out of county hall. Many said: "This isn't a Labour government" – often in stronger language.

Our 'no cuts – make big business and the super-rich pay' programme was widely supported. But, in this election, most saw Reform as the way to protest against Labour and the Tories. We estimate Reform spent about 200 times more than we did, posting up to three letters to each elector.

People stopped at our campaign stall, signed our petition for energy renationalisation, agreed we need a new workers' party, bought a Socialist paper, but still planned to vote Reform.

How long before splits appear among newly elected Reform councillors? At a hustings we took part in, a question on Derbyshire's shocking record on children with special education needs and disabilities (SEND), prompted the Reform candidate to describe his family's struggle. He seemed unaware three days earlier Nigel Farage claimed getting an autism diagnosis was too easy, signalling Reform would cut SEND services.

Elsewhere in Derbyshire, Ruth George, former Corbyn-supporting Labour MP and county councillor, was blocked from standing as a Labour candidate. In a kick in the teeth for Labour, she won 57% of the vote as an independent. Reform got 15%, Labour just 4%!



**TUSC AGAINST CUTS**  
**TRADE UNIONIST AND SOCIALIST COALITION**  
Alienation from establishment politics just got deeper.  
See analysis and the full results at [tusc.org.uk](https://tusc.org.uk)

## Herts fed up with Labour and Tory council tax rises and cuts

**AARON SMITH**  
ENFIELD AND LEA VALLEY SOCIALIST PARTY

We stood six Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) candidates in Broxbourne borough, 19 across Hertfordshire for the county council elections – a TUSC candidate in every Broxbourne seat for the first time – giving local residents the opportunity to back an anti-cuts, anti-austerity alternative.

The Socialist Party increased our campaign activity to at least three stalls per week, knocking on houses in the local area, and more.

We campaigned against council tax increases and cuts to public services. This was met with a positive and friendly response from the public, who are fed up with cuts from both the

Tory council and Labour government.

Our weekly Socialist Party meetings were geared towards election issues – disability cuts, the Greens, the Supreme Court ruling curtailing rights of trans people, and finishing with a special public meeting on the building the socialist opposition to Starmer's Labour.

It was a fantastic opportunity for us to spread a positive socialist message. We met hundreds of people campaigning.

People were very willing and open to talk to us when they realised we weren't Labour. Over 100 people bought the Socialist paper.

Our consistent and regular campaign activity is leaving a positive impact on the local area, and the Socialist Party here is growing.

## Lambeth by-election – anger at Labour government and council

**ADAM GILLMAN**  
SOUTH EAST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

We spoke to many working-class people angry about many issues. Socialist Party member Marco Tesei had stood for the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) in the Herne Hill and Loughborough by-election in Lambeth in south London on 1 May.

Many people were angry at the record of this Labour government. After only being elected less than a year ago, it has attacked many sections of the working class, from pensioners to students to families and young people.

Lambeth Labour council is making £99 million cuts to all sorts of services – libraries, youth services, children's services.

Labour has 56 of 63 Lambeth councillors. But this time they lost to the Greens. This shows the anger of working-class people at the Labour council and government.

What is the Greens' strategy to fight cuts? What are they going to do on the council?

Recently, Lambeth Unison union organised an anti-cuts conference to discuss how we can build the fightback. The local Unison branch should put pressure on, and raise a people's budget to fight the cuts to the newly elected Green, and all other councillors.

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## Peter Taaffe's last meeting

**Peter Taaffe's funeral will be held on Tuesday 13 May, 2025. All who want to remember him and celebrate his life are welcome.**

Sir James Hawkey Hall, Broomhill Road, Woodford, Woodford Green IG8 0BG.  
Please be there for 11.30am. Zoom meeting ID: 811 0865 3367

The family request that black is worn, but a splash of red is very welcome.

The wake will be in the same venue from 2–5.30 pm. Drinks and savoury food will be available after the service, and participants are encouraged to 'bring a cake for the wake'.

No flowers, but donations in Peter's memory can be made online: [socialistparty.org.uk/peter-taaffe-memorial-fund](https://socialistparty.org.uk/peter-taaffe-memorial-fund)

**Read Peter's obituary 'Peter Taaffe - International Trotskyist theoretician and fighter for socialism' at [socialistparty.org.uk](https://socialistparty.org.uk)**

# Tory and Labour duopoly crumbles, and Reform cashes in

## We need a new mass workers' party

### Socialist Party WHAT WE THINK

The results of the May 2025 elections show a deepening of the profound alienation from the two main establishment parties of British capitalism, the Tories and Labour, and of the need for the working class to build a political voice that defends our interests. The success of Reform UK needs a working-class answer.

On 1 May, the first scheduled votes since the general election took place with 1,641 seats across 23 county council and unitary authorities contested, as well as the borough of Doncaster, six mayoral elections and the Runcorn and Helsby parliamentary by-election.

Yet again the Tories were smashed but this time, ten months since Labour formed a government, voters were also punishing them. Only just over a third of the electorate voted. The average winner's vote share was just 40.7%, so three in five people who voted did not vote for the party who won. Ten of the new administrations elected have no party in overall control, up from three.

The Tories' losses were described as "apocalyptic" by the now former Tory leader of Kent County Council. When these seats were last up in 2021, Boris Johnson was riding high on vaccine roll-out. They lost 676 seats and control of all 19 councils and unitary authorities they led. Labour lost 187 seats including control of Doncaster, the only Labour-led administration with a vote this year. Labour's losses were limited by the fact they held fewer seats going into this election.

#### Reform UK

This time the main beneficiary of the protest against the establishment parties was Farage's current electoral vehicle, Reform UK. Reform won 677 seats across every council, taking them up to 805 councillors, and control of ten councils and authorities. For the people of Derbyshire, Kent, Lancashire, Lincolnshire, Nottinghamshire, Staffordshire, Doncaster, County Durham, North Northamptonshire, and West Northamptonshire, Reform control will not mean the change from austerity they hope for. Farage has made his anti-working class stance clear when he announced his plans to unleash his own 'DOGE' modelled on his erstwhile pal Elon Musk's attempts to slash public spending and jobs under Trump's second presidency.

County councils have broad powers covering a wide range of services, including education, social care, transport, waste disposal, and more. Council workers and service users are forced to fight cuts in these areas in the context of the council funding crisis. In Reform, workers now have



PHOTOS: OWAIN DAVIES/CC AND NO.10/CC

another party to fight, not an ally in challenging Labour austerity.

Reform's divisive rhetoric on immigration will not stop desperate people fleeing war, climate change and poverty, but it will embolden racists and needs to be countered. Labour's candidate in the Runcorn and Helsby by-election launched a petition to close a local hotel used for asylum seekers. Reform's approach is given legitimacy by Starmer whipping up nationalism in an attempt to direct anger over jobs, homes and services towards immigrants instead of his continuation of Tory austerity. Some voices within Labour demand more of this to counter Reform – which will strengthen not weaken it.

It is therefore very welcome that Usdaw, the shopworkers' union, has just passed unanimously at its conference a motion initiated by Socialist Party members saying that "trade unions should take the lead in combating the divisive policies of the far right along the lines of the 'Jobs and Homes, not racism' campaign agreed by the TUC Congress in 2018" and "that where the far right call protests in localities, trade unions

should take the lead in organising counter-protests linking up with any targeted communities [...] including insuring that such demonstrations are well stewarded by trade union representatives."

#### Trade unions

Trade unions are key to defending working-class interests which must include challenging all attempts to divide us, weakening our collective strength to defend our jobs, public services, rights, and living standards.

The trade union Unite has been to the fore in fighting Labour's Winter Fuel Payment cut hitting ten million pensioners. It has been identified as the best-known Labour policy – and the main reason for voters switching from Labour. But Unite had no voice in these elections. That allowed Reform UK to make an appeal to many of those angry with the winter fuel cut and all the other vicious attacks on working-class people by Labour and the Tories, without offering the united working-class struggle needed to oppose fuel poverty, such as public ownership of the energy companies.

In some areas, Reform was not the means of protest that voters reached for this time. The Lib Dems won 163 seats and control of Cambridgeshire, Oxfordshire and Shropshire. The Lib Dems are still the same capitalist party that betrayed students in 2010 by pledging to not raise student fees and then trebling them to £9,000.

The Greens won 45 seats. They now have 55 more councillors than Reform across 181 councils. But the Greens have not used their position to mobilise a mass struggle against Labour and Tory council cuts. In Bristol where they run the council they have actually proposed £50 million of cuts – in other words accepting the capitalist logic that the working class must pay while the billionaires pile up wealth.

Much of the commentary on the results has focused on the end of the 'duopoly', the historic dominance of the Tories and Labour. The estimated combined national equivalent vote share of Labour and the Conservatives was just 37%, the previous lowest being 55% in 2013. So, while it is not a new phenomenon, this election expresses a dramatic deepening of the process under a Labour government. It arises from the profound crisis of the capitalist system, expressed in the 2007-08 world economic crash, the years of austerity since, and the political turmoil with governments being thrown out of office across the world only to be replaced by another unstable unpopular party or coalition of unpopular parties who have no alternative to attempting to defend rotten capitalism on the backs of the working class.

#### No political voice

Last year the combined wealth of all UK billionaires soared by £11 billion alongside austerity's hungry children, cold pensioners, and rising poverty and homelessness. Labour has carried on where the Tories left off, defending the former and maintaining the latter. There is no political voice, for example, for the big majority who support nationalisation of the energy companies, including 75% of Reform voters, according to polling last July.

The extrapolations from Reform's vote to a victory in the next general election are a warning to the socialist and trade union movement – but are certainly not written in stone.

In the 2013 elections in the council seats contested this year, UKIP, one of Farage's previous vehicles, won 139 new seats, putting them on 147. But, when those seats were again up in 2017, UKIP lost every seat. In the general election that year, Corbyn's anti-austerity manifesto took a million votes, off UKIP.

The lessons must be drawn from the failure to fight the defenders of capitalism and transform Labour into a workers' party with a socialist programme. Transforming Labour is no longer an option but a new workers' party is a necessity.

It is urgent that the trade unions now discuss at every level the question of how the authority of its six million-strong membership and record of defending workers' interests can be turned to the task of building a new political voice for our class, armed with a socialist programme.



# Israel plans devastating new offensive in Gaza

SCOTT JONES

Israel's security cabinet has approved a plan to expand its military offensive against Gaza, with some officials suggesting it plans to capture and occupy the whole of the strip.

The Israeli military has called up tens of thousands of reservists in preparation, claiming it is "increasing the pressure" on Hamas to hasten the return of Israeli hostages. But the father of one of the hostages has even called on soldiers "not to report for reserve duty for moral and ethical reasons", while a hostage campaign group has accused the government of "sacrificing" them.

The immediate effect will also extremely worsen the already dire situation for Palestinians in Gaza as the plans are set to forcibly displace people by centralising aid. Even before this new offensive, the World Food Programme says it has already run out of food and the Red Cross has said the humanitarian response

in Gaza was on the verge of "total collapse". Israel even likely attacked a peace flotilla near Malta with drones which was attempting to deliver aid.

## Further devastation

The health ministry in Gaza said on 4 May that at least 2,436 people had been killed since Israel resumed its campaign in March, bringing the overall official death toll from the war to 52,535. A new offensive aimed at capturing the whole of Gaza would surely see this figure rise dramatically.

But the views of the hostages' families are reflected on the streets too, as Netanyahu's Israeli government has seen protests and strikes against his regime and its policies.

The cycles of war and slaughter seem endless. But, the solution lies in mass struggle globally and the building of working-class parties in both Israel and Palestine, forging links between them, and with both adopting a socialist programme for an end to the conflict.

## 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



# Youth unemployment: blame bosses not young people

TOM GIBSON

LEEDS AND WEST YORKSHIRE SOCIALIST PARTY

One million people aged 18-24 are not in active employment, training or education, and have to rely on benefits or family support to ensure they don't fall behind on rent, food and other costs.

Keir Starmer's Labour government's response to rising levels of unemployed young people – further attacks on the welfare state. This won't increase employment but will instead drive more young people into poverty, making it harder to find job opportunities, particularly for those with disabilities.

As someone who has finished their degree and is actively trying to find work, it has been tricky. Even finding part-time work has been a struggle. In addition, finding financial support outside of the disability benefits which I receive (under attack by this

wretched government) has been very tricky.

Young people are actively trying to find jobs or educational opportunities but, thanks to years of austerity, the decline of industry and the marketisation of universities, as well as rising housing prices and inflation, our living standards are rapidly plummeting. The capitalist system views young people as a resource to be super-exploited with low pay and bad conditions so pushes anti-welfare anti-education policies to "get them to work".

Being out of employment or education shouldn't mean being condemned but instead helped, both in regard to education and employment. There should be easier access to training programmes and an increase in well-paid public jobs. Unemployment and disability benefits should be increased and made easier to access. Being able to return to education, a luxury often only the richest can afford, should be accessible to all who want to learn a new subject or change their career path.

I am proud to be in the Socialist Party which stands up to the capitalist narratives around young people, and fights for a system that would enable us all to live a stable and happy life. It's not 'shame on young people' that so many are unemployed, it is a shame on our rotten capitalist system. While young people are stuck in low-paid jobs, substandard education or forced to rely on unemployment benefits, the richest in society are getting richer. The wealth and resources in society could provide decent jobs and decent living standards for all, if that

wealth was used to democratically plan society for all our benefit instead of the profits of a few.



# Supported housing at risk of collapse due to years of austerity

BEN GOLDSTONE

HOUSING WORKER AND SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBER

The supported housing sector is on the brink of a financial crisis that could leave tens of thousands of vulnerable people homeless, organisations including public bodies, charities, and housing associations, have warned.

In a letter delivered to the government, they called for swift action to save the sector, which houses 500,000 people with complex needs across England. Cuts to funding and increasing costs have meant that nearly one in five, or 70,000, of all supported homes are on the verge of closing. The National Housing Federation reported that a third of providers have said they may have to stop providing supported housing altogether due to the financial pressures. 32% have closed homes in the past 12 months.

Supported housing accommodates a range of vulnerable groups, including care leavers, older people, veterans, people with learning

disabilities, domestic abuse survivors, and those who had been previously homeless.

The demand for supported housing is rising, but England has seen a net loss of 3,000 homes in the past three years, with an estimated shortfall of 325,000. Lack of supported housing is now the biggest reason for delayed discharges from mental health hospitals in England. Without supported housing, the country would need 14,000 more inpatient psychiatric places, 2,500 residential care places, and 2,000 prison places.

## Impact of council cuts

Supported housing is commissioned by local councils based on need, but numbers have dropped since 2009, after their ring-fenced funding was taken away. Councillors faced with the massive cuts that came from successive Tory governments did not fight back and demand the money our communities need. As such, councils passed on the cuts, and supported housing was one of the many

places the axe fell. Supported housing funding was cut by 75% between 2010 and 2020, according to the National Audit Office.

Socialist Party members fought throughout this period for councils to act. Councils should set no-cuts budgets so that they can continue to run housing and other necessary services. Councils should base their budgets on need, not what is deemed acceptable by the capitalist class and their representatives in Parliament, and fight for necessary funding from central government.

Local councils should take over and bring in-house any supported housing placement by charities or private providers that can no longer operate, so that residents can continue to receive the support they need and workers keep their jobs. And if councillors refuse to do this, or the government declines to provide the funding, this shows clearly that we need a new mass workers' party that will fight for services and act in the interest of the working class!



# Labour's childcare reforms worsening coverage

A PARENT AND SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBER

Many parents voted Labour in the general election hoping the crisis in childcare would finally be addressed. After all, Labour pledged over 3,000 new nursery classes across England. Labour's manifesto pledged that "spare school classrooms will be converted into high-quality spaces for nurseries, paid for by ending the tax breaks private schools enjoy."

What has actually happened? Privately run well-established nurseries using school premises are being pushed out and replaced with school-based childcare, often with fewer hours and places offered.

## Childcare deserts

The government's plans aren't enough to resolve the issues of childcare deserts. In Doncaster, for example, there are just 17 placements for 100 children. Many childcare settings have closed, as the lack of proper funding, low pay and poor conditions have led to staff shortages. Services for children with special educational needs are facing further cuts and closures.

Despite government schemes,

many parents struggle to fund currently exorbitant childcare costs while working low-paid jobs or unable to claim support due to studying. Research by IPPR with Save the Children found that the childcare expansion is at risk of failing the families most in need.

The burden of arranging care and costs is enough to put some parents off entirely. As a parent juggling full-time work and childcare, I've forgotten to upload a payment and invoice to my Universal Credit journal and as a result lost out on £700 last month that I'll never see. My daughter starts school next year and I, along with thousands of other parents, will need to find childcare for her during school holidays.

This is a clear example of why we need public ownership and democratic planning of childcare provision, with both workers and the community making the decisions. Blanket proposals from the government often create more problems than they resolve. We need a fully funded childcare system, with the resources provided for staff to be paid what they deserve, facilities safe for children and for it to be free at the point of use.

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# Labour increases brutal attacks on Birmingham bin workers

## Step up wider union and community support

ROB WILLIAMS

SOCIALIST PARTY TRADE UNION AND WORKPLACE ORGANISER

The striking Birmingham bin workers in Unite are as determined as ever to win their dispute and fight off the brutal attack on their contracts by the Labour council.

After more than 50 days of strike action, the picket line I visited on 2 May was big and vocal, as the workers reacted to the latest move by the council to up the ante. The dispute was started by the council trying to downgrade senior loaders with safety and customer service responsibilities, claiming they would be able to retrain as drivers to maintain their pay. Now the council has announced its intention to slash drivers' pay by up to £8,000, a fifth of their income.

This has exposed the lies of Labour council leader John Cotton, that 'no workers need lose pay'. This move, just days before talks started at ACAS, has only made it clearer what's at stake, and if the council sticks to its plans, the dispute needs to be escalated.

The Labour council continues

to hide behind the commissioners brought in by the previous Tory government and maintained by Starmer.

## Strike-breaking measures

I saw for myself the dirty tactics of the council, trying to break a strike by workers fighting massive pay cuts.

There was a constant police presence, and workers showed me messages sent to agency staff warning them not to wind down their windows to talk to pickets about why they were on strike.

Outrageously, these strike-breaking measures and more are fully supported by Starmer's Labour government, with so-called union-friendly deputy leader and former Unison NEC member Angela Rayner very much central in this attack.

Correctly, Unite general secretary Sharon Graham responded to the threat to drivers' pay by stating: "It is no wonder Labour is increasingly not seen as the party of workers". The cuts and austerity agenda of Labour in Westminster and local councils is one of the prime reasons for the electoral gains of right-wing Reform.

This shows why unions such as Unite must discuss seriously the

need to launch a new workers' party to provide a real alternative for workers, not the poison of Farage. Standing union-supported candidates on a pro-worker, anti-cuts programme would be a start in that direction and a vital step to back up strike action against Labour austerity.

## Workers' solidarity

The bin workers are still very much up for the fight, and see the need to build pressure on the council. The 'mega picket' on Friday 9 May, called by Strike Map and supported by the National Shop Stewards Network, can be another step in mobilising the wider union movement and community in support of the strikers.

But there is no more powerful force than the unions themselves, particularly the other unions in Birmingham council, as their members face the same cuts coming down the line. A national and local call for mass action and support, including a Saturday demonstration in Birmingham and more mass solidarity pickets, could raise the sights of the strikers and the wider working class in the city that a victory can be won.



# Driving test traffic jam: the impact of public sector cuts

THOMAS BUTLER

LIVERPOOL SOCIALIST PARTY

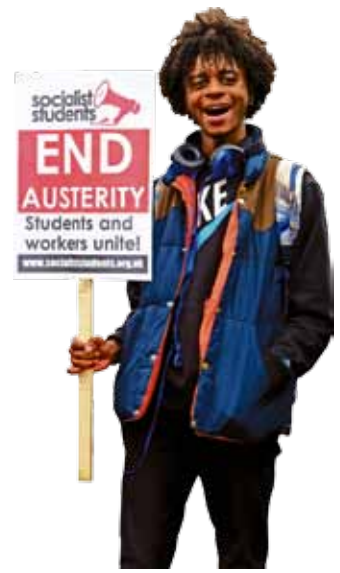
Learning to drive is known as a lengthy process, however in the past year the backlog for driving tests has increased so much that waiting times are the highest ever. The average waiting time for a test now stands at over a frustratingly long five months. Long waiting times began under the Conservative government, one impact of years of public-sector cuts, and continue to grow under Starmer's government. Starmer's refusal to adequately invest in public services has meant no improvement, and Heidi Alexander, the transport secretary, has been forced to admit that waiting times have become "unacceptable".

People struggling to book a test find themselves under assault on two fronts. Labour's austerity path has also thundered its way through public transport with the scrapping of the £2 bus ticket cap and train cancellations are up 13%. If there was adequate and affordable public transport the demand for driving tests would not be so high. The high cost of driving lessons and tests mean that fewer young people have been opting to learn to drive. But the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency, responsible for driving tests, still says demand is too high! And Starmer's Labour is launching new rounds of cuts to the civil service, so it's only going to get worse.

The capitalist system prioritises big business interests over what

working-class people need. An adequate transportation system can be provided by fully nationalising public transport under democratic workers' control. As part of a socialist plan of production it would truly be run in the public's interests – high-quality and free. With full funding for our public services, people would be free to choose if they wish to learn to drive or not, without having to worry about long waiting times or expensive public transport. Either way, transportation is a necessity and Starmer's Labour clearly does not treat it as one.

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





# Heated debates on Gaza reporting in journalists' union

NUJ SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBERS

At the National Union of Journalists (NUJ) national delegates' meeting (DM - a biennial conference), 25-27 April, the issues of Gaza and NUJ members' subscriptions saw the most heated debates.

A majority of the DM voted for a Dublin branch motion condemning the targeting and killing of journalists and media workers in Gaza, the occupied territories and Lebanon.

Motion 102 from the London Magazine branch noted a November 2024 letter from over 230 members of the media, including 101 BBC journalists, that criticised the BBC, Sky and ITV reporting of the Gaza horrors.

Some BBC delegates, with backing

from the right wing of the National Executive Council (NEC), successfully moved to bring the motion back to standing orders, claiming the motion broke NUJ rules. London Magazine members agreed to remove the contentious paragraph but BBC London branch still opposed the motion. They falsely claimed that the London Magazine motion was an attack on the integrity and work of BBC journalists.

Moving the motion, London Magazine branch chair and Socialist Party member Niall Mulholland emphasised that in fact the motion was an act of solidarity with BBC journalists trying to do their job and follow the NUJ's Code of Conduct, in the context of senior management

pressure and editorial decisions. Niall quoted from the open letter: "The BBC did not make clear when Israel is a perpetrator or relay the historical context of events before 7 October 2023." An oppositional amendment was passed but a significant minority supported 102.

## Building the union

The NUJ leadership suffered a blow when a motion calling for an increase in subs was defeated. Delegates spoke about how the subs levels (high in comparison to many unions) are a barrier to recruitment, especially for younger journalists. Despite rows at previous DMs and the holding of a special online conference on the issue, the leadership still insists on raising subs that hit less-well-paid members hardest.

Membership has fallen since the DM two years ago. A drive on workplace recruitment on the basis of a campaigning, democratic union is the way to resolve the union's financial problems.

Niall successfully moved a London Magazine motion condemning the Starmer government's ending of winter fuel payments for many pensioners, including retired NUJ members.

NEC member Anton McCabe spoke on continuing foot-dragging by the British state regarding an investigation into the killing of Belfast lawyer, Pat Finucane, by loyalist paramilitaries in 1989, with British state collusion. NUJ colleagues of Northern Ireland journalist Martin O'Hagan, killed in 2001 by loyalist paramilitaries with alleged police involvement, are still campaigning for a full investigation and justice.

A supporter of Militant Left (CWI in Ireland), Anton has been elected to the NEC for many years. Although 'retiring' from that body, he will continue to be a left voice in the union.



NUJ members were part of the 2022-23 strike wave LEEDS SOCIALIST PARTY

## Hundreds raised for striking phlebotomists in Gloucestershire

SUE POWELL AND BILLY JONES  
GLOUCESTERSHIRE SOCIALIST PARTY

Socialist Party members attending a May Day rally in Stroud helped striking phlebotomists (medical professionals who take blood samples) raise over £250. The team, who work across Cheltenham and Gloucester, are in their eighth week of strike action after their demand for a pay rise was rejected.

18 months ago most of the strikers were not even Union members, but following the overhaul of NHS pay grades, two workers asked why they were still on Band 2, just pence over the minimum wage.

Their work is important, difficult, and dangerous. Drawing blood puts you at risk of contracting HIV and hepatitis. It was only two years ago that NHS staff were praised by the Tories for their response to the pandemic. Fast-forward to 2025, and the strikers signs say: "Once an NHS hero, now my bank says zero".

Caroline Hayhurst, elected representative of the phlebotomy team, told The Socialist: "We're finding it harder and harder to make ends meet."

"A large proportion of staff being

drafted in to cover our strike are actually Band 4 nurses with venipuncture training – but patients have come out of the hospital saying the nurses had to make four or five attempts to draw their blood."

CEO Kevin McNamara makes £300,000 a year, but workers told us he is refusing to carry out a proper job evaluation for the phlebotomists, despite many of them having given decades to the NHS – and despite NHS guidance allowing for an up-grade after two years' experience.

Workers also told us about a whistleblowing complaint by somebody on the staff side of the job evaluation panel, saying that the panel was not conducted correctly and honestly, noting coercive behaviour and underhand tactics.

Many patients are upset with the lowered quality of the service, but no one has criticised the strikers. One Unite bus driver told the pickets: "I earn more than you – it's ridiculous. Good luck with your strike."

A number of phlebotomy teams have been closely watching this strike, and after members balloted for similar strike action their local trusts have promised to review their pay.



Phlebotomist Dawnie Elliot speaking at Stroud May Day rally CHRIS MOORE

## Doctors ballot over pay: 'We can do it again'

Resident doctors in the BMA (British Medical Association), formerly known as junior doctors, are to be balloted on pay.

Junior doctors were the first to take national strike action under the Labour government, putting pressure on Starmer in the run-up to the general election and then after. They secured a 22% pay rise over two years.

But the doctors' leaders were

clear at that stage: this should be the start of pay restoration back to pay levels of 2008. If that did not happen, the government needed to be "prepared for consequences".

The BMA says pay erosion is still at 22.3%. But Labour health minister Wes Streeting has only offered 2.8% for 2025-26.

As the BMA says: "We've done it before – we can do it again".

The ballot opens on 27 May.

## East London school strike against cuts



Louise Cuffaro speaking on the picket line SOCIALIST PARTY

NEWHAM AND EAST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

Striking workers at Avenue Primary School are fighting job cuts in Newham, east London. Student numbers have dropped but redundancies go beyond safe levels.

Management announced 21 support staff cuts without warning or consultation. The National Education Union (NEU) is demanding no compulsory redundancies and retaining sufficient posts.

Socialist Party member and Avenue teacher Louise Cuffaro, NEU district secretary and National Executive member, is leading vibrant, noisy picket lines of staff and parents. Strikers have taken eight days of action with at least two more upcoming, as we go to press.

Austerity and inflation have made London increasingly unaffordable for the whole working class. 'Falling rolls' in schools, as families move further out, mean less funding for those still here. Local authorities could fight to defend funding and improve the staff-to-student ratio. Instead, London boroughs have been slashing jobs and closing schools.

## Labour council

So where are Newham's Labour mayor and council? Avenue is still controlled by the local authority, after a bitter strike beat academy privatisation in 2018. The NEU is demanding they intervene to settle the dispute, supporting the union's position that workers and parents decide on staffing levels.

Newham Council is in financial crisis after accepting years of austerity without resistance, but has just won £67.2 million in 'exceptional financial support'. This was part of £2.68 billion across 30 councils the Labour government announced in February.

So the money is there if fought for! If local Labour politicians aren't prepared to stand up, they should face political challenge by trade unionists and community campaigners like those at Avenue.

All seats in London boroughs are up for election in May 2026. The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition, an electoral alliance including the Socialist Party, is open to all who want to stand against austerity and privatisation.



# Socialists win support for fighting strategy in National Education Union elections

## Third Socialist Party member elected to executive

DAN WARRINGTON

NEWLY ELECTED TO NEU EXECUTIVE

The performance of Socialist Party candidates in the recent National Education Union (NEU) National Executive elections shows the growing desire from NEU members for a bold, national lead on issues such as workload and education funding.

It is my privilege to be joining Sheila Caffrey and Lousie Cuffaro on the NEU executive after being elected by members in my area in the South East. Meanwhile, Sean McCauley narrowly missed being elected by only 41 votes in his area, against an established incumbent exec member.

Wherever Socialist Party candidates have stood, hundreds of the most active union members have backed them to pursue our programme.

As three members on an executive of 55, we shouldn't overstate our position, but neither will we underestimate the impact we can have. The pivot in the national pay and funding campaign towards a clearer narrative on school funding, shows that we can win the arguments within the union when they chime with pressure from members.

As the NEU moves towards a national ballot on pay and funding, the leadership must convince members that the lessons of the 2023 strikes have been learned. Many of the members I have spoken to who were active during those strikes want assurances that the leadership is serious about using strike action to win the best possible deal for the education sector. They know that Socialist Party candidates will push to maximize the momentum we gain through any future ballot.

## Funding

Winning a ballot for full funding of teacher pay is the most urgent matter in the coming months. Socialist Party members have argued consistently for national action, not just on pay but on the impact poor pay and inadequate funding has on workload and working conditions. To turn out a membership that has been repeatedly mobilised then demobilised, the ballot campaign should clearly link funding as the means to resolving longstanding issues of workload and recruitment, and to head off redundancies.

We should also look to unite the fight of as many education workers as possible. Support staff members should not be bystanders to the fight



NEU strike demo 2023 GLENN KELLY

# Udaw members debate taking on Labour

USDAW ADM DELEGATES

The shadow of the council elections loomed over retail and distribution workers' union Ushaw's Annual Delegate Meeting (ADM) in Blackpool 4-7 May. Several debates at the conference became, in effect, autopsies of the results.

One of the timetabled debates at the conference was on the growth of the right, put forward by the National Executive Council (NEC) in response to last summer's election of five Reform UK MPs and far-right riots.

Moving a motion on the riots that was passed unanimously, Socialist Party member Iain Dalton said that the far right bases itself on policies that "divide working-class people and deflect our anger from the super-rich and big business interests they defend."

"It's the politics of working-class unity and a common struggle to win the resources that we all need which is the only substantial alternative to these policies."

The motion called for "trade unions to take the lead in combating the divisive policies of the far right", including organising trade union stewarding of demonstrations.

Iain also moved a successful composite motion opposing the cuts to the winter fuel allowance, demanding the big six energy companies are

brought into public ownership under democratic workers' control.

He pointed out: "When people voted out the Tories at the general election and voted for change, they were not voting for these cuts to the winter fuel allowance, or for not compensating the WASPI women, or changing the eligibility for personal independence payments... We need a government that prioritises the interests of workers rather than protecting big business profits."

## Parliamentary group

Seeking to shield the government from criticism, the standing orders committee ruled out an emergency proposition on the benefit cuts announced in March, on the spurious grounds it also referenced how Labour had not reversed previous Tory cuts! But perhaps the real reason was that the motion also demanded the NEC meet with the Ushaw parliamentary group and call on them to vote against the cuts.

A weaker motion on the Ushaw parliamentary group was debated in the political session, but the speaker raised how at last year's ADM we passed a motion to scrap the two-child benefit cap, yet not a single member of the group voted to do so in parliament. (And the Labour leadership suspended 7 MPs for voting for that!)

The conference had Labour health

secretary Wes Streeting as a guest speaker, with a message of 'giving the government more time'. He personally thanked outgoing Ushaw general secretary Paddy Lillis for being "pivotal" in electing Keir Starmer as Labour leader and "changing" the Labour Party.

While Streeting received the obligatory standing ovation for guest speakers, a minority of delegates did not join it, and others purposefully wore stickers in support of trans rights in protest at Streeting's comments on the Supreme Court ruling. Streeting avoided fully answering both a question on this and on the PIP cuts.

## Socialist Party fringe

The elements of this debate that weren't able to be taken up on the conference floor featured heavily at the Socialist Party's largest 'Ushaw Activist' fringe meeting at ADM yet, with Socialist Party national committee and Ushaw member Ryan Aldred speaking.

Discussion on how steps could be taken to form a new workers' party included how to hold the Ushaw parliamentary group to account and to extend it to include MPs outside the Labour Party who support trade union policy, such as Jeremy Corbyn and the suspended MPs. That includes campaigning to open up the political fund to support MPs and candidates that support us.



Ryan Aldred and former Ushaw president Amy Murphy at the fringe meeting IAIN DALTON

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

Do you agree?

JOIN THE

SOCIALISTS

socialistparty.org.uk/join



to defend their jobs – they need to be balloted side-by-side with teachers. We should also be clear that any funding deal won for schools must be honoured across the state education sector, including sixth forms.

## Political voice

A national ballot for fully funded pay awards in the education sector is an immediate focus, but as socialists we recognise the broader political situation. There is no appetite for the continuation of Tory austerity. Voters want change and the refusal of the two main parties to implement it is driving some into the arms of Nigel Farage's Reform UK.

NEU general secretary Daniel Kebede has been outspoken in opposition to Farage and Reform, but who are workers to vote for when Labour has abandoned them? The need for a mass workers' party with the authority of the trade unions is clearer than ever. If NEU is serious about opposing Reform and holding the government to account, then it needs to be part of that project.

As the situation develops over the coming months, NEU members can be assured that Socialist Party members on the executive will continue to advocate consistently for bold and transparent leadership that places empowerment of education workers and defence of high-quality community education at the forefront of everything the union does.



40 years ago, in April 1985, school students went on strike, organised by the Labour Party Young Socialists, in which young Militant (the Socialist Party’s predecessor) supporters played the leading role. **Nancy Taaffe**, now a Socialist Party National Committee member, remembers the events. We also publish excerpts from the Rise of Militant by Peter Taaffe.

**IN APRIL 1985, SCHOOL STUDENTS WENT ON STRIKE, AND YOU TOOK PART. CAN YOU DESCRIBE WHAT IT WAS LIKE?**

The actual day of the school student strike of 1985 was, on a personal level, one of the most exciting days of my life. I’ve heard young people describe the 2010 student protests like this, like the ‘best rave they’ve ever been to’, a day when a different morality had the streets, and a sense of togetherness dominates.

Russian revolutionary Leon Trotsky describes in his writings how initial outpourings when the masses respond to an event, and strategic differences haven’t emerged in a movement, as having a carnival-like mood.

I went to Starcross School (now Elizabeth Garrett Anderson) in Islington, north London. The strikers from our school came out and met other school student strikers en route to Lincoln’s Inn Fields, the assembly point for the demo. I can’t remember where we marched to, or if we had a destination, there seemed to be lots of marches taking place, going off in all directions, like an outpouring.

One thing that sticks in my mind was the pace of the demo - we virtually ran from Islington to Lincoln’s Inn Fields. We ran, not only because we were young and so we could, but because we were also a bit worried that someone would catch us and make us go back to school!

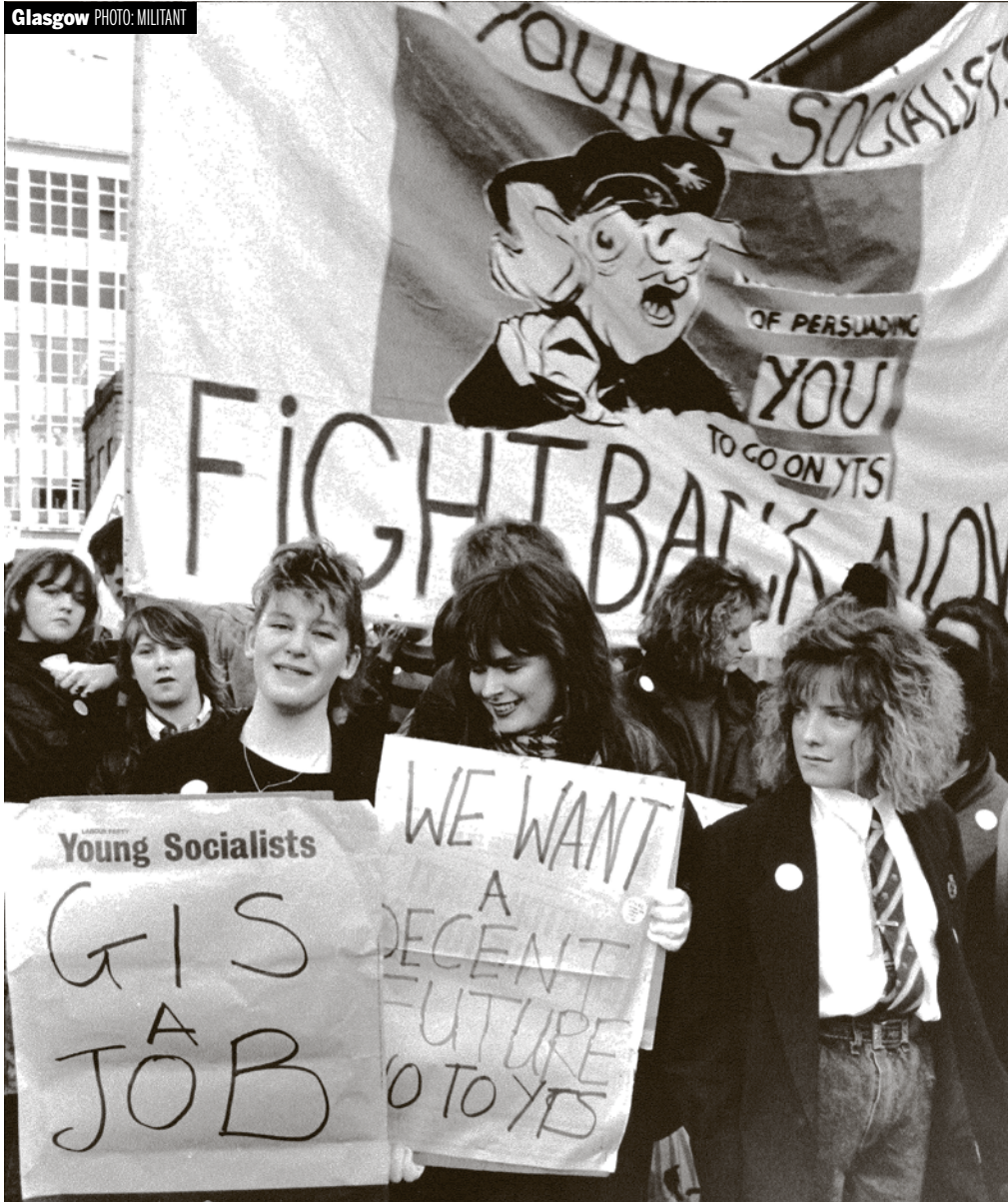
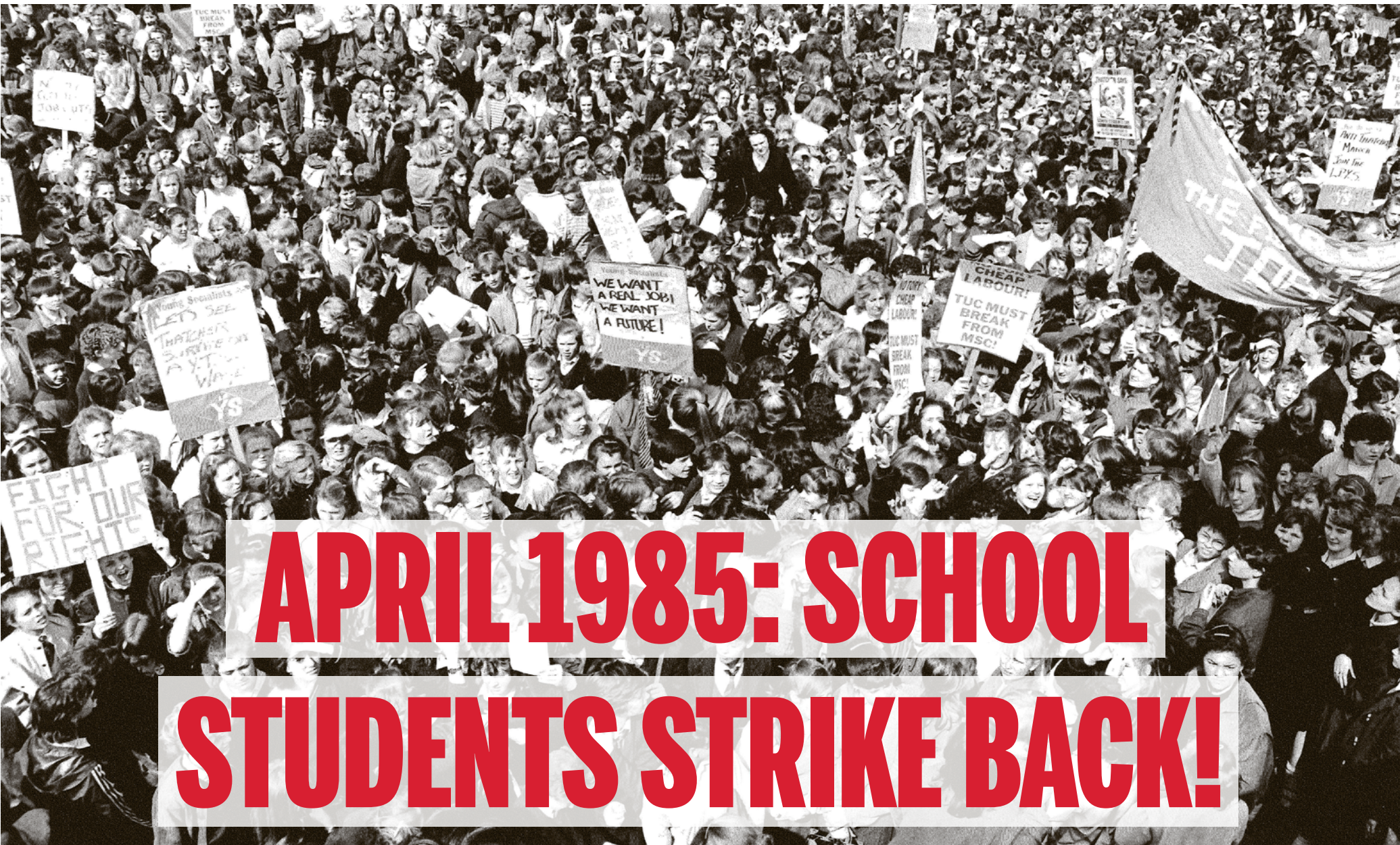
I also think international events had an effect too. Every night, images of Black youth in the townships of South Africa fighting back against the vicious apartheid regime were played in our front rooms. The youth rebellions out of the townships of South Africa were also fast; the young people, understandably, seemed to move quickly. Maybe these international events also played a role on some sub-conscious level too.

The day itself was as wild and exuberant as any teenager can be, at times a bit chaotic and at times focused on the issues. All day the authorities had condemned us, Neil Kinnock, the ineffective leader of Labour’s opposition to Thatcher, condemned us, calling us “dafties”. The use of that word was attempting to minimise the significance of the protest, but across the country it was estimated that 250,000 school students took to the streets that day... and won.

The day extracted concessions; we temporarily pushed back the Tories’ plans to make young people work for their dole money.

Out of that day we went on to form a national school student’s union, attempting to build branches and organising conferences.

Many of the young people involved in that strike went on to become activists in the Further Education (FE) sector, forming an organisation called FE Labour Students. We also became active in the National Union of Students



**“The school student strike of 1985 shines like a diamond at what very young people attempted to do to prevent the pauperisation that now exists among the working class**

and the National Organisation of Labour Students (NOLS), in which right-wing Labour careerists behaved like gangsters.

**WHAT WERE THE ISSUES THE STRIKE WAS ABOUT?**

The creation of the Youth Training Scheme (YTS), which was rightly characterised as a slave labour scheme that made young people essentially free labour for dole money. The Tories have since introduced similar schemes like workfare. In 1985, the memories of the post-war gains were still present, the idea of working for your benefits was an alien concept. The post-war generation had fought for apprenticeships. Additionally, the closed shop still existed in some workplaces and young people taking jobs that were subsidised by the state was effectively undercutting wages. There was therefore opposition from older trade union organised workers.

Thatcher was closing factories and the mines, good jobs were being lost, whole swathes of the country were facing her shock doctrine of mass unemployment. The proposal to make young people work for benefits was seen as part of the master plan of driving wages and conditions down, using the spectre of unemployment to do it.

Every night on the news they used to run this map of the British Isles, and a red light would flash up every night of how many jobs were lost at factories and workplaces that day. Whilst occasionally an anaemic green one would flash to indicate jobs being created, you didn’t need O-levels to tell you jobs were haemorrhaging!

The school student strike of 1985 shines like a diamond at what very young people attempted to do to prevent the pauperisation that now exists among the working class.

**CAN YOU EXPLAIN THE ROLE OF LPYS, AND WHAT ORGANISATION WENT ON IN ADVANCE?**

Labour Party Young Socialists (LPYS) in 1985 had recruited loads of young people who were politicised from the Miners’ Strike. Members of Militant in Scotland had already led a significant youth movement where the effects of the deindustrialisation by Thatcher meant that unemployment was ever-present in working-class communities. She was hated. In the aftermath of the Scottish events, we discussed whether we thought a similar mood existed down south.

I was at my second LPYS conference after joining during the Miners’ Strike in 1984. There were about 2,000 young people gathered in Blackpool. We had a fringe meeting where we discussed the Tories’ YTS conscription and decided to make the call and name the date for the school student strike on our return to school.

**1984-85 IS REMEMBERED FOR ONE BIG EVENT, THE MINERS’ STRIKE. HOW DID THAT AFFECT THE OUTLOOK OF YOUNG PEOPLE LIKE YOURSELVES?** The Miners’ Strike was the event that politicised a whole generation, and asked people to pick a side, to side with their class. Many workers instinctively knew, but others were taught crucial lessons about what Thatcher and her semi-militarised state forces were trying to do to the post-war gains: smash them! Young people were in families talking about the strike.

There was a lot of talk about the Miners’ Strike being about future generations, the image of Alan Hardman’s cartoon asking “Will there be a job for me when I grow up?” was everywhere.

In the summer of 1984, a whole generation had watched as the miners fought to stop a jobs slaughter in the coalfields... Militant supporters had been everywhere in the year of 1984, Alan’s infamous cartoon was posted on bus stops, on placards and even the image of the daily reporting on the strike. Against the jobs slaughter the miners were at least fighting. It wasn’t lost on us.

Militant supporters knew that the generations following on from this jobs slaughter, the students and

youth, would inherit worse conditions and pay and we needed to be organised, and fought, like the miners did, everywhere.

Just as the international struggles played a role in politicising a generation, so too did the Miners’ Strike.

**WHAT LESSONS ARE THERE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE TODAY LOOKING TO FIGHT BACK?**

Today’s times, in early 21st century decrepit capitalism, are much tougher for young people. There is less fat on the bones of the welfare state, making a stand can be criminalised easily. However, very young people can be fearless, can feel like they have no stake, and be prepared to struggle, like the young people in South Africa who inspired us.



**The strike in Liverpool (above and below)**  
PHOTO: DAVE SINCLAIR

# From The Rise of Militant

The first signs of a movement came in mid-March, with a number of student strikes and walkouts throughout the country. Of course, the press were quick to blame it on the industrial action by teachers that was taking place at the time.

They blew up small incidents, trying to present a picture of ‘rampaging children’ let loose by ‘irresponsible’ teachers. The real reasons for young people’s discontent lay in their frustration, with no prospect of a real job when they left school; the dole or conscription onto YTS was the only future for them. Faced with this movement of school students, the police were deployed.

In Middlesbrough mounted police patrolled daily. Militant detailed a series of strikes in the Portsmouth area. These strikes ‘Were initially a confused action against the teachers, because they feared a potential “threat to examination chances”. [But] the LPYS immediately took the initiative. At one of the schools involved there are eight LPYS members. In an emergency leaflet the teachers’ campaign for better pay was forcibly explained... The YS received support from the majority of students for opposing the mindless violence of a small minority. [The strike began to gain support and] later spread to the Bridgemary School in Gosport, from its outset the action was in support of the teachers.’ (from Militant)

But these were just small movements before the explosion which detonated in Glasgow one week later. Organised by the Labour Party Young Socialists, with Militant supporters in the lead, ‘a general strike swept through Clydeside schools, bringing 20,000 pupils out... They gave Thatcher a defiant message - “We’re not having YTS job conscription.”

More than 10,000 students poured into Glasgow city centre in what Glasgow’s Daily Record called the “biggest show of pupil power ever in Britain”. Speakers were amazed when schools with improvised banners marched to the rally to be greeted with thunderous applause and roars of “Here we go”. Many made homemade banners with slogans like “No Slave Labour” and “What About a Future? Red flags flew all around the indoor rally.

This new ‘Revolt on the Clyde’ led to an even bigger movement of school students throughout Britain two months later. The LPYS consciously prepared for and championed this movement.

They used their Easter conference attended by over 2,000 young people as a platform to launch a campaign for a national stoppage of youth. 200 gathered at a fringe meeting, chaired by Frances Curran, to hear Colin Baird from Glasgow and Nancy Taaffe from London, who set the turmoil in the schools against the background of the Miners’ Strike, Tory attacks on youth and past school strikes.

A School Students’ Action Committee was formed, a steering committee elected and a decision to call a national half-day school strike (except in Scotland because of earlier exams) on 25 April.

The success of the 25 April school student strike exceeded all expectations: ‘A quarter of a million school students have given a crushing answer to the Tories, the press and the cynics

in the labour movement... Thatcher condemned it. So did the Liberals. Unfortunately too the TUC and Labour leadership condemned it.’

Labour leader Neil Kinnock condemned the organisers as “dafties” but in Kinnock’s own constituency 500 joined the strike. We declared: ‘The Marxists in the labour movement make no apology for backing the school students to the hilt. It is essential that the despair, the frustration and anger of youth is channelled in a positive direction, linking up with the labour movement. The students themselves understand it - in Pontypridd the thousand-strong school student demonstration called on the leader of the South Wales miners to lead them into the town, which he proudly did.’

Every area of the country seemed to be touched by the strike. Even in Northern Ireland 3,000 had come out with only a week’s notice and completely cut across the sectarian divide. In London, ‘thousands joined the strike... in Brent school students sent out flying pickets to build the strike... in Southampton, prefects and teachers at one Catholic girl’s school linked arms across the gateway to prevent students leaving. Similarly at Portsmouth Grammar School, students were beaten back from the gates. In Plymouth four LPYS members have been threatened with expulsion from the Labour Party for supporting the strike.’

But all the threats came to nothing: ‘10,000 school students marched through Liverpool. The mood was electric.’

The government also learned from the events of 25 April. Recognising the angry mood amongst school students they made some concessions. They had reacted in a similar fashion in 1981 when the Labour Party Young Socialists had organised a massive campaign on the issue of rights, training, conditions and wages against the forerunner of the YTS, the Youth Opportunities Programme.

As soon as they saw this movement developing, the government increased the YOP allowance. Now they took note of the mood of youth, as shown by the 25 April strike. Tory spokespersons withdrew the idea of conscripting youth, by withdrawing unemployment or social security pay, for those who refused to go on YTS. The school student strike was a landmark. It served to underline the enormous impact which the Miners’ Strike had made on youth.

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# Industrial action threat forces Cardiff uni bosses back

## But war to save jobs continues

JACOB LLOYD  
CARDIFF GRADUATE TUTOR AND UCU MEMBER  
(PERSONAL CAPACITY)

Cardiff University and College Union (UCU) has resisted 400 cruel job cuts. Now, in a massive U-turn, the uni executive board has ruled out all compulsory redundancies for 2025.

This significant short-term victory is the result of hard-fought efforts and the threat of industrial action from union members. In return, UCU has agreed to suspend strike action and a coordinated marking and assessment boycott.

### Management worried

The uni board says it has made this offer because of the number of voluntary redundancies that have taken place. But, in reality, management were motivated by the prospect of a summer of chaos that the industrial action would have induced.

The mood in the branch remains vigilant, however, as over 1,200 staff remain ‘in scope’. In a special UCU meeting, we voted to accept

management’s offer in the short term, but also to start work on a new, stronger strike action mandate – ready to be rolled out from September.

This reflects the widespread mistrust in management. 973 of 1,022 staff recently expressed ‘no confidence’ in the uni vice-chancellor. The uni bosses claim they will work more constructively with campus unions and staff going forward.

### More cuts

But Cardiff uni is also trying to condense professional services into centralised hubs. This will mean job cuts for staff – Unite the Union members – and a reduction in important services for students.

It will require the threat of strong, rolling strike mandates to push them to no job cuts whatsoever, and to claim a more decisive victory in this ongoing battle to defend education.

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# Funding Not Fees campaign – fighting for staff and students

ADAM POWELL-DAVIES  
SOCIALIST STUDENTS NATIONAL ORGANISER

Socialist Students has stepped up our campaigning for a free, fully funded, and democratic education system.

We’ve protested against Labour’s rise in tuition fees on 25 university campuses. When sixth form teachers and university workers have been on strike, we’ve been on the picket lines.

Now we’re bringing our solidarity to education workers rallying against cuts at the ‘protect education now’ national demonstration, organised by the University and College Union (UCU) in London on 10 May.

The government is fuelling the crisis in education. Labour government ministers parrot their pro-austerity watchword of ‘efficiencies’ – cuts. That’s because the alternative – publicly funding education – is opposed by the big corporations and super-rich individuals that this government serves.

The best way to ‘protect education

now’ is to build a mass movement for a real alternative to what this Labour government is offering – for free, fully funded education, paid for by taking the wealth off big business and the super-rich.

Socialist Students has launched the Funding Not Fees campaign to raise the kind of demands a movement could fight for now. Socialist Student members on the UCU national demo will be talking to trade unionists about the campaign, to ask if they would like a representative from Funding Not Fees to speak at their upcoming union branch meeting.

We also think that our movement needs a voice in parliament. That’s why Funding Not Fees campaigners are contacting MPs over the next month. We’ll be requesting that MPs meet with us, and pledge to raise a pro-free education amendment in opposition to any further attacks on staff and students in the upcoming Labour government spending review on 11 June.



## ● Non-academic staff need our unions to fight too

MARY FINCH  
UNION MEMBER

Universities are facing a financial crisis. Tory and now Labour governments have slashed funding to higher education, and now the bosses at several universities are passing on these attacks to workers. Many jobs are at risk.

Union members – non-academic staff, from security to admissions – have been on strike several times after well-below-inflation pay offers. But it’s not just about pay. We were striking for better working conditions, reduced workloads, and closing pay gaps.

Members were balloted again earlier this year. Despite 75% voting to

reject the 2024-25 pay offer, only a small number of branches reached the 50% turnout required by Tory anti-union laws – so far disgracefully retained by Labour. Unison’s higher education (HE) leadership decided not to call these branches out on strike.

2022 was the first time many Unison members in HE had taken national strike action in around ten years. There are many active, organised branches around the country fighting for their members in the local workplace. But we urgently need to rebuild the momentum for a coordinated, national fightback. Taking strike action, even with only a small number of branches, would be an important step towards this.

Another step towards this would be coordinating action with the University and College Union (UCU). Standing on a picket line can be a huge confidence boost to workers because it proves who really keeps the workplace running. By striking together,

UCU and Unison members could shut down entire universities.

UCU action has already won concessions at Cardiff University, where 400 academic jobs were at risk. Determined joint action can firmly defeat these attacks and win the funding needed for a real pay rise for all.

## ● Birmingham City uni: Build the strike against redundancies

TOM PORTER-BROWN  
SOCIALIST STUDENTS ACTIVIST AT BIRMINGHAM CITY UNIVERSITY

The University and College Union (UCU) branch at Birmingham City University (BCU) has begun strike action in reaction to the attacks by the vice chancellor (VC). A planned ‘re-structure’ includes 36 academic staff redundancies.

The VC claims that his changes are to benefit students, but how is it in students’ interests when staff suffer job cuts, students are crammed into lecture rooms, and courses are at risk of closure?

It’s no coincidence that the VC chose to announce his plans at the end of February, because the time it took for the union to jump through all the hoops of the Tory anti-trade union laws means the strike has begun during exam season. Members think this is a deliberate move to try to cut across students supporting staff. He’s even gone as far as sending a mass email to students, telling us that “only 9% of staff have voted to go on strike and it should have a minimal impact on lectures”.

He’s got that figure by counting all BCU staff, including, for example, caterers and cleaners, but has neglected to mention that not every staff member is part of UCU! Although the VC’s bending of the truth could come back to haunt him when students don’t get their grades back in time, and no



# College students fight back - fully fund our education

ADAM GILLMAN  
SOCIALIST STUDENTS NATIONAL ORGANISER

Further education is in massive crisis. Teachers and staff leaving, courses cut, high class sizes – the list goes on. Students face a cost-of-living crisis, unable to afford high transport costs and expensive food.

Afterwards, there is the prospect of crisis-ridden university education with mountains of student debt, or low-paid insecure work. Adult college learners have to pay sometimes as much as thousands to study.

Facing what can feel like it’s going to be an increasingly bleak future, stressed from exams, many students face mental health crisis, not helped by the terrible state of mental health services.

Further education has been underfunded for decades. Between 2010 and 2020, per pupil funding fell by 14% in colleges, and 28% in school sixth forms.

Further education faces a shortfall

of £400 million. The Labour government has proposed a plan for £300 million, £100 million short, and way less than what’s actually needed for our education.

This is only the beginning. Unless we fight back and win, more attacks will come.

### Job cuts

We can’t rule out mass job cuts, like what’s taking place at universities, where uni bosses have already announced over 5,000 job cuts this year.

The University and College Union (UCU), which organises college staff, has launched the ‘New Deal for FE’ campaign, fighting for more funding for further education, and better pay and conditions for staff. UCU is also opposing uni cuts with the ‘Stop the cuts: Fund higher education now’ campaign.

Students and young people should fight alongside the trade unions for properly funded, free education.

FE colleges are typically managed

by education trusts, run as if they are businesses, with highly paid executives and board members. Students sit exams run by privatised exam boards too.

Socialist Students calls for colleges, as well as exam boards and all aspects of education, to be brought into democratic public ownership, with elected bodies of staff and students having control.

We fight for every step forward for students to get organised and fight back, including by developing and building student unions in colleges. Existing student unions typically have very limited democratic structures, shackled by college management. But every opportunity should be grasped to put forward what is needed.

The strike wave showed that by fighting back, we can win. When hundreds of thousands of teachers went on strike, they forced the government to give them a pay rise.

And students can fight back too.

# South Devon College announces mass redundancies

DUNCAN MOORE  
UCU REP AT THE COLLEGE AND NEC MEMBER,  
PERSONAL CAPACITY

In a Microsoft Teams video message on 29 April, South Devon College principal (salary £160,000) announced that 65 full-time staff would be made redundant.

“We need to take action to ... make sure that we bring the college ... into a long-term, stable, sustainable financial position and are able to continue to serve our community.”

This is despite “exceptionally strong reports from Ofsted, a TEF gold rating [for ‘teaching excellence’] and excellent student outcomes”.

Socialist Party member Lynn Gun-nigle, a family member of a student, said: “As a family we are very worried. My grandchild, a bright and academic student, was struggling in mainstream school and it manifested into unacceptable behaviour and expulsion.

“The brilliant educators at South Devon College saved their education, quite literally, by identifying strengths and weakness, and helped the child to thrive – resulting in a Student of the Year award. We need more of this not less.”

### Strike

The University and College Union (UCU) branch met to discuss a response, with the branch committee recommending a ballot for industrial action. I pointed out that the threat of strikes at other universities and colleges has succeeded in forcing the employers back. Members don’t want to impact students, but agreed that the long-term effect of cuts would be devastating. “The welfare of the

students is always used against us by management,” as one member put it, but the students can’t come first if the staff who teach them come last!

The redundancies come after the branch accepted a below-inflation non-backdated pay rise, which management had contended was necessary for the financial health of the college. However, it has become clear to members that the costs will always fall on them unless we are prepared to fight back.

Colleges around the country are attempting to lay off staff. At Truro and Penwith College in Cornwall, 100 jobs are threatened. Labour’s 6% cut to the adult skills budget is a major attack on our members’ jobs and students’ education.

Calling the cut “shockingly cruel”, UCU general secretary Jo Grady said: “Labour urgently needs to change course and provide the sector the funding needed.”

### Starmer’s Labour

It is clear, however, that Starmer’s Labour is not on the side of UCU members or our students. Our union should discuss with others about launching a new workers’ party that would stand for fully funded, free education. Socialist Party and incoming NEC member Marco Tesi proposed a motion at his UCU branch to go to UCU congress, to invite Jeremy Corbyn and the other Independent Alliance MPs to a meeting of our NEC to discuss how they can fight for post-16 education funding in parliament, and to encourage UCU members to stand in elections, linking with other trade unionists, to fight for our union’s policies.



Socialist Students is organising lobbies of our local MPs, to see where they stand on education funding, and whether they plan to actually represent us against this Labour government.

Will they join our movement for free, fully funded education, demand that big business foots the bill, not students and workers? Or will they stay silent, as this government destroys our lives and futures?



# VE DAY: WORKERS IN EUROPE RISE

Commemorations marking the 80th anniversary of ‘victory in Europe’ (VE) are taking place in Britain (and throughout the world) with establishment dignitaries saluting veteran service men and women who liberated Europe from the clutches of fascism. However, the official ceremonies didn’t refer to the prevalent mood of the working class at the end of World War Two, ie a desire not to return to the horrors of war, mass unemployment and poverty associated with capitalism. As **Dave Carr** explains in an article first published in 2005, the period 1945-47 was characterised by a resurgent working class fighting for socialism.



VE Day celebrations in London, 1945  
MRJSPENCE/CC

**V**E had come at an enormous cost. 40 million soldiers and civilians had been killed. 27.5 million in the Soviet Union alone. The German ruling class’s gamble with fascism had resulted in much of eastern Europe coming under the influence of the USSR, with capitalism and landlordism being swept away there.

In the West, capitalist industry was on its knees - crippled by the burden and destruction of the war. Throughout Europe the mass migrations of demobbed soldiers, workers and refugees were creating political instability. Everywhere there were food shortages, unemployment, homelessness and poverty.

But as the Allies advanced into Germany they frequently found factories and mines taken over by committees of workers who had driven out SS saboteurs. The first act of the Allies was to ban these anti-fascist organisations! Nonetheless, the power of the workers’ committees meant that the demand for nationalisation of the mines of Krupp and other war industries became widespread.

For example, in 1946 in Hesse, Western Germany, 71% approved of the socialisation of industry in a referendum. A shocked US commander Clay vetoed it.

However, the resurrected German Communists (KPD) and social-democrat (SPD) parties lagged behind workers’ demands by only calling for partial nationalisation of industries, while both called for a renewal of capitalism.

In 1947 a strike wave took place in the industrialised Ruhr area of Germany which included demands for nationalisation of industry. At its height 350,000 workers were on strike. The US occupiers in response threatened to cut food rations and to impose martial law.

The Allies’ situation was saved by the trade union leaders and KPD leaders who restrained the workers from taking action. Improved food supplies, an end to the dismantling

of industry, and the establishment by the occupying authorities of ‘works councils’ to address workers’ wages and conditions, gradually eased the conflict.

## Workers’ resistance

In France and Italy the dying days of the war saw massive strike waves by a working class growing in confidence of its power. This was to be a major problem for the Allied occupation.

In late 1943, after Italian fascist Mussolini’s removal from power, workers in the industrialised north, still under the control of the German army, organised strikes and a 15,000-strong armed resistance movement.

In March 1944, one million workers struck in the occupied north. In Milan, the bosses were forced to pay the workers for the days on strike!

Liberation in 1945 left communist and socialist workers dictating to the capitalists the terms and conditions of employment. Perhaps as many as two million workers joined the Communist Party.

Likewise in France, 50,000 Parisians - arms in hands - drove out the German occupiers, forcing the Allies to rush General Charles de Gaulle into the liberated city to head off a new Paris commune (1871 workers’ uprising).

The resistance movement published a charter demanding nationalisation of the capitalist monopolies. In many regions this demand was implemented with many companies being run by workers’ committees.

In the first elections in France in October 1945, the Communists won 26.1% of the vote and the socialists 24.8% - a majority. Moreover, for the first time a majority of workers were organised in trade unions.

The capitalists’ fears following the collapse of the Nazi regimes was summed up by the Economist (1 December 1945):

“The collapse of that New Order imparted a great revolutionary momentum to Europe. It stimulated all

the vague and confused but nevertheless radical and socialist impulses of the masses. Significantly every programme with which the various Resistance groups throughout Europe emerged from the underground contained demands for nationalisation of the banks and large-scale industries; and these programmes bore the signatures of Christian Democrats as well as of socialists and communists”.

In the victorious countries of Britain and the US the working class demanded its reward for defeating fascism. Above all, there was a widespread mood that there should be no return to the poverty and unemployment that characterised capitalism between the two wars.

In the US the trade unions embarked on a massive strike wave for better wages and conditions in 1946.

In Britain, the Clement Attlee Labour government was swept into office and established a welfare state and carried through the nationalisation of basic industries such as coal, energy production, railways, steel, etc. But, generally, it was only the investment-starved, near bankrupt companies that were taken over.

The most profitable parts of industry remained in private hands. The weakened capitalist class would not have been able to seriously resist widespread public ownership measures but the Labour and trade union leaders had no intention of challenging capitalism.

## Stalinism

With war-weary US, British and Commonwealth troops desperate to return home, a determined revolutionary workers’ movement could have successfully overthrown capitalism at this time. However, Soviet leader Joseph Stalin had agreed during 1944-45 with Britain and US leaders Churchill and Roosevelt to co-exist with imperialism and to divide conquered Europe into Western and Soviet ‘spheres of influence’.

In the 1920s, the newly established workers’ state the Soviet Union began to degenerate however. This was not inevitable but a consequence of failed revolutions elsewhere. This confined the revolution to a war-ravaged and economically devastated country. An exhausted revolutionary working class eventually lost control of the state apparatus to an emergent bureaucracy headed by Stalin. Workers’ democracy was extinguished and many gains of the revolution reversed, but the bureaucracy’s privileges depended upon maintaining the nationalised planned economy.

This counter-revolutionary arrangement was to last until the fall of Stalinism in the USSR and eastern Europe between 1989-91.

In France, despite the weakness of the capitalist class and the enormous strength of the Communist Party (PCF), no revolution took place. Instead, the PCF participated in a ‘government of national unity’ which ruthlessly pursued an imperialist policy in Vietnam (Indo-China), Algeria, Madagascar and elsewhere. Having held back strikes and workers’ movements, the PCF was dumped from government by the capitalists in 1947.

## Marshall Aid

In 1947, US imperialism, now a capitalist superpower, (British imperialism was bankrupt and faced colonial revolutions in its decaying empire) sought to undermine revolution in Western Europe by imposing stability through the Marshall Aid recovery programme. \$13 billion in grants and loans were pumped into Europe’s ravaged industries over four years.

Many of the capitalist institutions such as the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (forerunner of the World Trade Organisation) were established in the immediate post-war period to impose US imperialism’s power on the world economy and prevent restrictions to ‘free trade’ which had dogged the world economy before the war.

The right-wing leaders of the British and US labour movement were also mobilised in defence of capitalism in Europe. The British TUC persuaded the German trade union leaders to take measures to prevent communist influence.

Eventually, the revolutionary wave in Europe exhausted itself, blocked by the political leadership of the workers’ organisations who acted as transmission belts for the policies of either imperialism or Stalinism.

In Western Europe the ruling classes could not, following the collapse of the Nazi and fascist regimes, use force to ensure the continuation of capitalism. Instead they relied upon the pro-capitalist leaders of the workers’ movement, along with those who argued that socialism should be “postponed”, to resist the popular demands for socialism and gradually stabilise the capitalist system.

● See also ‘Marxists and the Second World War’ by Peter Taaffe online: [www.socialistparty.org.uk](http://www.socialistparty.org.uk). Written to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the start of World War Two, Peter discusses whether such a global catastrophe can be avoided in the modern era.

# Hundreds tell Leicester Labour: ‘Don’t make cuts’

STEVE SCORE  
LEICESTER SOCIALIST PARTY

**H**undreds of people protested against the Labour council’s threat to community centres, libraries, and museums. The council is currently consulting on proposals to close and ‘give up’ some centres and libraries from council control.

Leicester Labour council cuts to council tax support have already hit those on the lowest incomes. Personal Independence Payments (PIP) are intended to allow people with disabilities to have an independent life – paying for things like carers and mobility.

The council is now including PIP as income in assessing council tax support. Some disabled people face a quadrupling or more of their council tax bills. They are expected to spend their PIP on paying council tax instead.

These are on top of all the other cuts the Labour council has made and is making to a range of local services, such as ending school travel support to students with Special Educational Needs (SEND) who have reached the age of 16.

Labour councillors claim they are the ones who care about people, and that it’s all down to previous Tory governments. But we now have a Labour government pushing through even more cuts.

I spoke at the lobby and said that, instead of fighting local communities and workers, the council should be using reserves to set



no-cuts budgets, then getting our support to build a mass campaign to get the money required from the government.

We are building for a public meeting, which is backed by the local trades union council, with Socialist Party members playing a role in initiating, to bring together trade unions and community groups to launch a broad local anti-cuts campaign.

**No to cuts – no job losses**  
**How can we fight back?**

**Saturday 17 May, 2.30pm**

**Secular Hall, 75 Humberstone Gate, Leicester, LE1 1WB**

# Obituary: Karen Seymour (1965-2025)

## ‘She stepped up to fight injustice’

MANSFIELD SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBERS

Mansfield Socialist Party is shocked and saddened at the death of our comrade and friend, Karen Seymour, following a short illness. We will always remember her standing up for the most vulnerable in society – pensioners, disabled people, the homeless, and those on poverty-level benefits.

Karen joined the Socialist Party in 2010, furious at Labour’s massive bailout of bankers, soon followed by savage Tory/Lib-Dem coalition cuts to welfare and public services. That burning sense of injustice remained, and fuelled activity to the end of her life. Karen often said she’d wished she’d joined earlier.

Born and raised in Mansfield, her first experience of capitalist exploitation came through a dead-end Youth Training Scheme on leaving school. Several low-paid jobs followed, until she returned to education in her 40s, completing a degree.

Karen then taught IT skills to adults in the community, until funding

dried up under austerity cuts. Unable to find work herself, she volunteered for Derbyshire Unemployed Workers Centres (DUWC), giving welfare advice in the ex-mining community of Shirebrook, just outside Mansfield, eventually taken on as a paid welfare rights adviser – a job she loved.

People often approached Karen when she was on Socialist Party campaign stalls, to thank her for guiding them through tortuous DWP procedures. Nothing angered her more than hearing politicians claim it was easy to get benefits.

By nature shy and quietly spoken, with a stammer, Karen bravely stepped out of her comfort zone and stood as a Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) candidate at general elections in 2015 and 2024, the 2023 Mansfield mayoral election, and several council elections.

She was nominated to stand in the Nottinghamshire County Council election on 1 May. That election has had to be restarted from the beginning.

She did a TV interview, and got our core programme over in the short time allowed. She was also very proud to share a public platform with former National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) president Arthur Scargill, a few years ago.

As well as campaigning to build the Socialist Party, Karen volunteered at a centre for the homeless. For many years she sang in Mansfield Choral Society, music being her other great passion.

Despite her own health problems, she was involved in many local campaigns against cuts to local council and health services. She always argued hugely profitable big business and the super-rich could pay for decent living standards and public services for all, but that a socialist society was essential for this.

The outpouring of sadness alongside shock on social media from her friends and colleagues in DUWC, Unison union, and, of course, the Socialist Party, is testament to how she will be missed.



Bradford protest TOM GIBSON

## Bradford - anger at Labour and Starmer

TOM GIBSON  
BRADFORD SOCIALIST PARTY

There were over 100 people in Bradford. And other demonstrations in York and Leeds were even bigger. We gave out plenty of Socialist Party leaflets, outlining our position.

Some of the speakers brought up links between the fight for workers’ rights and trans rights. Labour and Keir Starmer were a constant focus of criticism, highlighting the anger felt by the LGBTQ+ people at both Starmer’s anti-trans policies, and his punitive approach to issues like welfare and disability benefits.

It stuck out that several speakers, including a young trans child, stated that this was their first time speaking at a public demonstration.

Sobering statistics around the issues trans people face were brought up, as were the murders and suicides of trans people. This shows the brutal reality.

While there was some anxiety, particularly among young speakers, about the potential loss of trans rights, there was also a positive mood of solidarity. The Socialist Party fights for the rights of trans people, both against discrimination and for access to healthcare, housing, and jobs.

## York - Labour has left us with one option... fight back!

LOUIE NARDINI  
YORK SOCIALIST PARTY

Last Saturday, we attended a protest in the city centre of York against the Supreme Court’s ruling attacking trans rights.

Labour’s choice to back the Supreme Court’s discrimination is not in line with a party that should be standing for workers’ rights.

To push forward, there needs to be

a struggle for socialist change. Our paper, the Socialist, which we sold at the protest, highlights this necessity. Many who bought it agreed that Labour’s stance isn’t very surprising, considering its simultaneous attacks on disabled people, unions, and migrants.

The Socialist Party flyer we handed out stated the option Labour has left us with: “Time to Organise! Fight for trans rights and socialist change!”



Karen standing as part of TUSC in the 2024 general election MANSFIELD SOCIALIST PARTY





## WHAT WE STAND FOR

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

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

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

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



### WORK, PENSIONS AND BENEFITS

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

### PUBLIC SERVICES

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

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

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

### ENVIRONMENT

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

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

### DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS

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

### SOCIALISM AND INTERNATIONALISM

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

Do you agree? Join the fightback!

## JOIN THE SOCIALISTS

- Visit [socialistparty.org.uk/join](https://socialistparty.org.uk/join)
- or call **020 8988 8777**
- or text your name and postcode to **07958 032 071**

to find out more today!

Help fund the fightback!

## DONATE TODAY

[socialistparty.org.uk/donate](https://socialistparty.org.uk/donate)



# May Day Swansea - time for new workers' party has come

### SWANSEA SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBERS

The annual May Day rally was hosted by trades council secretary, Socialist Party member, and GMB rep Gareth Bromhall. There were lots of trade union speakers, as well as the local Disabled People Against Cuts (DPAC), and a trans trade unionist and activist.

Anger from several speakers and the crowd towards the Labour Party was palpable. Several contributions highlighted the attacks on the most vulnerable in society, the insult that is the most recent public sector pay 'offer', and the rise of right populism

following Reform's performance in the English council elections, and their recent by-election victory in Bridgend.

Our call for the need for a new working-class alternative, a mass workers' party with a socialist programme, with the unions at its heart, was well received.

In Swansea, Labour MPs are refusing to meet with DPAC over disability cuts, making anti-trans remarks in parliament, and the party is offering an insulting pittance to trade unionists in the public sector. For many here, it's an idea whose time has come.



## London

Thousands marched through the streets of London on 1 May to mark International Workers' Day, including socialists and trade unionists.

Many paid tribute to Peter Taaffe, commemorated in last week's issue of the Socialist (see 'Peter Taaffe – International Trotskyist theoretician and fighter for socialism' at [socialist-party.org.uk](https://socialist-party.org.uk)), including political opponents who nonetheless recognised his immense contribution. This was expressed in high numbers paying solidarity price for the paper, as well

as buying his books on the history of our party.

The march concluded with a rally in Trafalgar Square. The ongoing slaughter in Palestine was a major theme, as well as the array of attacks on the working class in Britain.

The Socialist Party argues that these struggles and others must be linked, and for the trade unions to play a central role.

We fight to transform the trade unions into fighting, democratic organisations capable of leading such a struggle, and this must be linked to the need for the socialist transformation of society.

ALI MANSFIELD



# Istanbul May Day - mass action of workers and youth needed to defeat Erdogan

### KENAN BATU

Baving the rain - and despite all of the travel restrictions imposed in Istanbul - the May Day demonstration in Kadikoy, organised by trade union confederations DISK and KESK and professional associations, brought together tens of thousands.

Unionised workers from all sectors - construction, health, teachers, metal workers and many more - formed their own contingents and raised their own demands.

Thousands of university and school students, who have been the driving force behind the mass protests in Turkey, organised their own contingents in support of workers' struggle.

There were also two separate protests in Istanbul. One of them was organised by the biggest trade union confederation, Türk-İs, which has a right-wing leadership.

Another one was organised by students and some trade unions who wanted to reclaim the out-of-bounds Taksim Square.

These students believed that, given its historical importance, it would be far better to march towards Taksim Square, and that it was a capitulation to accept the government's undemocratic ban on protesting in and around it.

Outrageously, the police have resorted to very violent methods, including one officer putting their knee on a protester's neck, and detained over 400 students and trade unionists who wanted to march to Taksim Square.

All of those who have been detained by the police must be released immediately. The workers'



PHOTOS: KENAN BATU

movement must campaign to defend all democratic rights. Release all political prisoners now!

### Mass action of workers and youth needed

Unfortunately, no agreement was reached to organise a single demonstration in Istanbul that could bring together all trade union confederations and students, on a concrete set of class demands.

Such a united demonstration would have sent a powerful message to the government that the workers' movement, together with students who are fighting for their future, will fight the government's attacks on workers and young people.

Nevertheless, the May Day demonstrations across the country gave a glimpse of the power of the workers' movement and its ability to potentially mobilise hundreds of thousands of workers.

### Anti-democratic attacks

Despite the government's vicious anti-democratic attacks on the right to protest and organise, including the right to join a union and to go on strike, and the attempts of the rotten trade union bureaucracy trying to stifle workers' action, mass pressure can be exerted for the trade unions to organise another mass demonstration.

Such a demonstration should raise concrete demands, such as defending trade union rights and calling for inflation-busting pay rises, as well as raising the need for nationalisation with no compensation to fat cats. If successful, it could also boost the confidence of the working class.

Such demands on trade union leaderships, together with rank-and-file pressure, would serve to expose the



# Serbia: Workers and students protest together on May Day

### MIRA GLAVARDANOV

Tens of thousands of students and workers gathered on 1 May in the Serbian capital Belgrade to mark International Workers' Day. It was the biggest such rally since the restoration of capitalism and the collapse of the former Yugoslavia. The rally was organised jointly by the five biggest trade unions and the students who have been protesting for six months against government corruption.

This is a big step forward for the movement that started after the collapse of the roof at the Novi Sad railway station in November 2024. The students who initiated the protests have been calling on the workers to join them by walking out in strike action. So far only the teachers have done.

In March the students called union leaders to a joint meeting, showing a remarkable awareness of the importance of the organised working class in the struggle for a better society. In that meeting the unions agreed

to campaign together to change the anti-worker labour and strike laws. The strike law, which has been in force since 1996 (during the 'shock doctrine', i.e. implementation of quick ruthless measures in the restoration of capitalism), is heavily in favour of employers, making strikes almost impossible. Unions have already formed joint working groups to campaign to change the labour and strike laws.

In his speech at the rally, the leader of the Sloga union thanked the students for getting the five unions to act together, which has never happened before. He said that when students enter the workplace, they will not tolerate the despicable conditions that workers in Serbia suffer, and that unions will help them in that. He added that the students have shown that struggle is possible and that workers can rise up too.

The significance of this joint rally is potentially huge. Students know that their movement needs help from workers. They also know that

workers' rights are at the heart of a just society - it is their parents who suffer the terrible conditions after all. Workers have been very demoralised for a long time, with only an occasional strike, but not achieving any significant victory that would give them the taste of their own power. They have suffered betrayals by union leaders.

That the students, whose movement is very popular, have emphasised the importance of unions can have strong results, both to force the union leaders to act, and to re-establish trust in the unions among workers.

The student movement has already succeeded in moving some unions to act more than they have done in decades. This might prove to be the student movement's biggest achievement. The orientation to the working class and unions is also the right and necessary direction their movement needs to take in order to achieve the fundamental changes in society that are desperately needed.



PHOTO: SRĐAN RADOSAVLJEVIĆ



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# the Socialist

Issue 1320

8-14 May 2025

formerly **Militant**

# SAVE POST-16 EDUCATION FROM LABOUR AUSTERITY

MARCO TESEI

NEWLY ELECTED UCU NEC MEMBER, PERSONAL CAPACITY

**W**ith one in two universities cutting jobs and courses, and Further Education (FE) colleges facing unsustainable levels of underfunding, the University and College Union (UCU) has launched a national 'Stop the Cuts' campaign.

A national rally against cuts in post-16 education is taking place on Saturday 10 May in London. Workers from universities, colleges and prisons will march up to the doors of parliament to demand proper funding. The mood in higher and further education is growing: Starmer, you promised 'change'; instead, you're

delivering austerity even worse than the Tories!

In truth, the decision to call a national demonstration was taken at UCU's congress in May 2024. But the union's head office and general secretary, Jo Grady, dragged their feet, hoping to avoid a confrontation with Keir Starmer's Labour government. But now Starmer's full-frontal austerity assault means the leadership is under pressure from members, including the demand for a demonstration.

## Step up

A serious campaign by the leadership to build it would have made 10 May the huge event it had the potential to be. But it still represents a call to action from workers across the education sectors. With strikes

currently taking place in several universities and escalating in number, and indicative ballots in many local FE branches showing an appetite for strike action in the autumn, 10 May must be a step towards building a concerted fightback, including national action.

Our sister education unions, including the National Education Union, will be represented on 10 May. A key part of building the fight must be to coordinate mass demonstrations and strike action with other education unions.

Students will be represented too. Socialist Students members have campaigned to build for this demonstration, and have raised with the National Union of Students the need to mobilise together with education workers. Socialist Students has also

approached UCU for discussion – including requesting to speak on 10 May – about how the 'Funding not Fees' campaign could link up with UCU's 'Stop the Cuts'.

## Coordinated action

Students – as well as education workers in schools, colleges and universities nationally – are increasingly aware that if we really want to save public education from total destruction, it will take a massive coordinated effort in the coming year on the part of the whole sector.

The mounting mood of rebellion against austerity now needs to be built on by further active campaigning in local workplaces and a clear national lead. A major confrontation with Starmer and chancellor

Reeves is clearly on its way. That requires fighting for a political voice that champions our demands too.

Socialist Party members in UCU want to work with all those who are serious about building a fighting union, which would be most effective if organised in a new, genuinely democratic united left that could bring together people who want a fighting UCU at all levels in the union.

## See pages 10-11 for:

- reports of the fight against cuts in universities and FE colleges in Cardiff, Birmingham and Devon
- demands of university and FE students and the Funding not Fees campaign
- the voice of non-academic staff in Unison

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



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