

U-turns show LABOUR CAN BE BEATEN BACK

Build the socialist opposition



PHOTO: PAUL MATSSON

This Labour government knows it is hated. But signalling partial future U-turns on pensioners' winter fuel allowance and the two-child benefit cap won't help its popularity. The damage is done.

And yet more damage will be done by the further, grinding austerity planned. Health, education, social care, public transport... all ruined already by Tory cuts and privatisation, face more from Labour.

Trade unions taking action in the strike wave was part of what led to the Tories being smashed; now action needs to be taken against Keir Starmer's Labour too.

The Tories initially refused to even talk to public sector trade unions about a pay rise, but just a few months later - after nationwide strikes, including several days where unions took action together - more money was on the table.

As modest as they are relative to the rest of Labour's brutal austerity programme, the U-turns prove pressure works. They should give confidence to trade union members to demand decent fully funded pay rises, and for strike ballots to be organised now to fight for it (see page 5).

Elections on 1 May clearly added to the pressure on Starmer too; they were concrete evidence of just how unpopular his government is. For his next big electoral test due in the May 2026 elections, the trade union movement should make sure anti-Labour anger isn't sucked up by Nigel Farage's right-populist Reform, and instead stand its own candidates against Labour, fighting for a socialist opposition.

• Read what we think page 5

the Socialist

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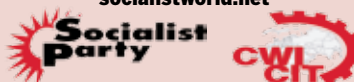
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"The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it."
Karl Marx

Pride is political

Socialists fight for LGBTQ+ liberation

ADAM HARMSWORTH
NAPO NATIONAL VICE-CHAIR (PERSONAL CAPACITY)
AND COVENTRY SOCIALIST PARTY

Pride began as a protest, a rebellion by LGBTQ+ people and their supporters against oppression. In recent years, bigger Prides have become increasingly corporate and depoliticised, focused more on music, celebs, booze, with more and more expensive tickets. As well as to celebrate and party, many LGBTQ+ people also attend Pride marches to demand their rights and discuss how to fight for them.

Socialist Party members have had welcome responses to our ideas at Pride marches for decades. Socialist Party members have fought for LGBTQ+ rights and the programme necessary to win resources in our local communities, and in the trade unions.

This year, five Pride organisations in the UK have announced bans of all political parties from participating in their events. Birmingham, Brighton, London, Manchester, and Edinburgh Prides all made the decision in response to establishment parties cheering for the harmful and flawed supreme court ruling.

The supreme court ruling proves yet again that minority rights are not secure in a society in which a capitalist elite relies on scapegoating to preserve their rule. Neither will it do anything to improve women's safety or access to services (see 'Supreme court ruling a blow to trans rights' at socialistparty.org.uk).

Labour, Tories, and Reform all celebrated the ruling and are rushing to act on it to roll back equality gains where they can. With such abysmal records on trans rights from the establishment parties, there is a lot of understandable anger at them.

However, these Prides' decisions

to ban all parties from their events is a damaging mistake and weakens the fight for LGBTQ+ rights.

End pinkwashing

Pride's corporate sponsors are not in the firing line for bans. Many big businesses and banks are utterly two-faced in their supposed support for LGBTQ+ rights. Barclays has already confirmed it will ban trans women from women's toilets and has been a sponsor of London Pride for years. HSBC is Birmingham Pride's main sponsor despite huge investments in Saudi Arabia where LGBTQ+ people face severe repression and violence.

Pride attendees also come face to face with corporate giants that perpetuate human misery. From Amazon, who threw 'Glamazon' t-shirts around Prides at the same time as attacking their unionised workers. Birmingham Pride's sponsor E.On have ramped up energy bills, which many Pride attendees will have struggled to pay.

What major bank or business hasn't got major investments in arms, in despotic regimes, and in climate destruction? Corporate 'pinkwashing' lets capitalist giants buy some credibility and appear friendly to LGBTQ+ people while maintaining a system which exploits and oppresses us all.

Banning political parties will not help LGBTQ+ people have the necessary debate on how to fight for real liberation. See page 11 for the report from Birmingham Pride, where many people wanted to discuss socialist ideas to fight for LGBTQ+ liberation, despite it being one of the events that has banned political parties.

Key to challenging the Labour Party on trans rights, LGBTQ+ liberation, ending women's oppression and austerity is to discuss how to



MARY FINCH

build a new mass workers' party that will represent all our interests against the bosses, the billionaires and the bankers.

Socialist Party members fight for this - and for the trade unions to be central to the fight for LGBTQ+ liberation. We stand for trades councils to be part of the democratic organising of Prides - campaigning for them to be inclusive events that focus on bringing together those who want to fight for all our rights.

The Socialist Party has a long and proud record of fighting for LGBTQ+ rights. At Pride events we put forward what is necessary to end all oppression against LGBTQ+ people and build a society where they and all the working class can live safe and happy

lives as themselves. That is building united mass working-class struggle for a socialist society, free from want and capitalist division which would enable us all to live freely.

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Labour cutting even more university funding

ROBBIE DAVIDSON
MANCHESTER SOCIALIST STUDENTS

As Starmer's Labour government continue to ramp up its austerity 2.0 cuts, students and university workers are bracing for new attacks. Funding in higher education reaches new crisis points every single month. 40% of institutions will enter deficit in 2026, according to the Financial Times. Students and workers will continue to pay the price through job losses, pay cuts, increased tuition fees and a brutal student cost-of-living crisis.

In-house accommodation is being used to plug the gap in funding too. The experience in Manchester gives an idea of how rents are ramping up. The Fallowfield redevelopment (University of Manchester) will see prices for housing double in 2028, with Manchester Metropolitan following suit in Ryebank Fields and Cambridge Halls.

Universities including Dundee, Newcastle, Sheffield and Liverpool Hope have all announced job losses and rounds of redundancies.

Unsurprisingly, this has engendered a new resolve from students and workers to unite and fight for jobs and education! Hundreds poured onto the streets and campuses in Liverpool last week in support of their lecturers (see page 11). In Cardiff, earlier this year four hundred redundancies were announced. Cardiff Students Against the Cuts, which includes Cardiff Socialist Students, linked up with their university's UCU (University and College Union) branch to campaign together, which ultimately saw their redundancies almost halved.

The UCU held a march attended by hundreds in London calling for more funding which should act as the launchpad for a united fightback! Socialist Students has taken part in days of action, rallies and meetings across the country since Labour's fee hike in November calling for Funding Not Fees! We will join forces with all those willing to fight for free education, caps on our rents, stopping job losses and an end to the race to the bottom in education.



MARY FINCH

No backdoor SEND cuts

The Labour government plans changes to the way children's entitlement to special educational needs and disability (SEND) support is assessed.

The current system is flawed: long processing times, inconsistent provision, and a lack of funding. A new system is being developed.

"Any system that the government looks at will have a full consultation process", according to a government advisor. Well, consult students and parents - a funding boost is needed, and is highly unlikely to be what this cutting government has planned! Any attempts to use reforms to make cuts through the back door must be fought.

The Socialist Party calls for schools and local authorities to fund services to meet needs, and demand money from the Labour government which claims to "back young people". Take the wealth off profiteering big business bosses to fund services for the benefit of all.

Labour's rail renationalisation won't bring down costs

The first of Labour's rail renationalisations, South Western Railway, had its maiden voyage on 25 May. But anyone getting their hopes up that this will mean an improved service and lower fares should think again. Not because the first trip had to be cut short with a rail replacement bus service for part of the way, but Labour transport minister Heidi Alexander made it clear that we won't see a reduction in fares.

For Socialist Party member Tom, who lives in Aldershot, its cheaper to drive to work in London than take the hour-long train.

Former RMT rail union NEC member **John Reid** says:

Western Railways will not improve the service, lower the fares or improve the working conditions of my fellow RMT members on so called Great British Railways.

I use South Western Railway every day when I travel into Waterloo from Guildford. The service is usually late, trains are overcrowded, and the fares are the highest in Europe. Staff are frustrated that they cannot offer a better service to passengers.

This form of nationalisation will not lift the threats of job losses and attacks on terms and conditions of staff, nor will it improve efficiency or lower the cost of travel. Full, democratic nationalisation as part of a socialist plan of production, with the wealth and resources of society put to use to provide for need not greed, would give us the public transport network we deserve.

The 'nationalisation' of South



A South Western Railway train THE BASINGSTOKER/CC

Labour's Gaza hypocrisy

JAMES COLLETT
GLOUCESTERSHIRE SOCIALIST PARTY

Recent criticism of Israel for the suffering inflicted on the people of Gaza, from Keir Starmer and foreign secretary David Lammy is pure hypocrisy, typical of the British ruling capitalist class they both represent.

Capitalist governments, including the Labour government in Britain, have been attempting to balance between their support for the imperialist interests represented by the Israeli state's geopolitical and military position in the Middle East on the one hand, and their fear of the instability and working-class anger provoked by Israel's barbaric onslaught on the other.

Many capitalist leaders recognise the destabilising affect that Israel's genocidal military strategy and continuing blockade will have, both internationally and at home, and are now (vocally) adopting a more critical tone towards Israel. Lammy has said that Israel's actions are "damaging the image of the state of Israel in the eyes of the world". The British, French and Canadian governments have signed a joint statement calling for a ceasefire, for humanitarian aid to be allowed to enter Gaza, and for the implementation of a "two-state solution" which, on a capitalist basis, would be doomed to failure.

Meanwhile, Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu claims that Starmer, French president Emmanuel Macron and Canada's Mark Carney are placing themselves "on the wrong side of justice", and equates any talk of a Palestinian state with legitimising neo-nazis. He twists words and concepts, with one of his aims being to keep himself in power and out of prison for the corruption charges he faces.

There is no limit to the lies these people will tell in order to save their own skins and to defend the capitalist system, which is the underlying cause of all the wars currently being pursued or backed by capitalist governments. We can't believe a word any of them say, especially when they make believe that their actions are guided by a moral conscience.

Now will condemn suffering

Starmer now says that the level of suffering in Gaza is "intolerable", yet at the beginning of the current war he refused to condemn Israel for cutting off the water and electricity supply to Gaza. What Starmer can 'tolerate' depends entirely on what he thinks is in the interests of British capitalism.

Labour's current rhetoric is also completely out of kilter with its actions. In September 2024, Labour suspended 29 arms export licences to Israel, claiming that the 200 export licences left in place did not cover goods for use by the Israeli military in Gaza. Trade data analysis now shows that, between September and December, the UK government approved licences for £127.6 million of military equipment to Israel - greater than the combined total for 2020-23 under the Tories!

What the recent change in tone does indicate is that the capitalist



PAUL MATTSOON

class is feeling the pressure of mass opinion and the anti-war movement, and is conscious of the threat that poses to the electoral prospects of their political representatives - particularly if the organised working class puts its stamp on events.

Fear of mass movements

They are also terrified of the instability that would be created in the Middle East if the Israeli regime goes ahead with its plans to wipe Palestine off the map: both in terms of the colossal exodus of Palestinian refugees into surrounding countries, and the rage of the masses across the region, which could trigger new uprisings and revolutionary waves.

The Arab Spring in 2011 toppled dictators in Egypt, Tunisia, Libya and Yemen, and mass protests spread across the region, including in Israel.

These events revealed the staggering power of the masses and the potential for the working class to take power and transform society, but were ultimately defeated.

Future mass movements in Palestine, Israel, and across the Middle East - including the development of new workers' parties with a programme for the socialist transformation of society - will be capable of bringing an end to the cycles of slaughter, and open up a democratic, socialist future.

Trade union action to stop the flow of arms, without loss of jobs, and an organised mass movement of protests, strikes and international solidarity, can assist the struggles in the Middle East. So too, the working class taking steps to develop its own mass party in Britain fighting for socialism and internationalism.

SOCIALISM TODAY

Monthly magazine of the Socialist Party

May's issue includes...

- **Lessons of Syriza**
Hannah Sell draws out the lessons from the election of the anti-austerity Syriza government in Greece ten years ago and its betrayal of the Greek working class
- **Cass report on trans healthcare**
Sarah Sachs-Eldridge looks at the report one year on and the tasks needed to fight for trans rights
- **Trump's tariffs**
The editorial looks at the trade war and how the workers' movement should respond to Trump's protectionist policies

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Only nationalising social care will deliver 'fair pay'

GLYNN DOHERTY
SOCIAL CARE TRADE UNION ORGANISER

Even before the 2024 general election there were widespread fears that Keir Starmer's Labour would backtrack on promises to overhaul social care in England. Social care is the responsibility of each devolved government in the UK.

The commitments previously given to invest in social care, while drastically lacking, had sought to tackle endemic low pay, without which there would be no chance of bridging the current huge vacancy gap. Since the general election... nothing, except for January's announcement of another 'commission'.

The British Association of Social Workers said: "We do not need another commission to tell us what we already know." The commission's first phase - the implementation of a national care service - now has a deadline of 2026, with the final report not due till 2028.

Unison general secretary Christina McAnea told a conference of union members in February that the government needs to move quicker. But the Independent newspaper in May reported:

"Unison, which describes itself as the largest union in the care sector, said solving problems in social care was 'never going to be a five-minute job' and said the national care service is 'something best introduced properly, not rushed through'".

Conservative views

Into this vacuum, the latest Fabian Society report *Seizing the Opportunity - The Fair Pay Agreement in Social Care*, has dropped. But those expecting radical answers will be disappointed. Unison is a supporter of the project and it would appear to be very much the conservative views of Unison's right wing that dominate its 40 pages.

It very much echoes a previous Fabian Society report *Support Guaranteed: The Roadmap to a National Care Service*. As I wrote in 'Labour says social care will stay privatised' in a previous issue of the Socialist:

£12.67

average hourly pay for a care worker in 2024



120,000

currently unfilled vacancies in social care

"Unless the issue of ownership is tackled, it will leave a situation where thousands of private providers protecting their profits will suppress fair wages."

The new report lists the statistics and emphasises some of the worst aspects of the social care crisis:

- 120,000 currently unfilled vacancies
- Three in ten care workers on zero-hour contracts (nine times more than workers across all sectors)
- Average care worker pay in 2024 of £12.67 an hour
- Taking into account the 'legal fiddles' of not paying for travelling time and sleep-ins, 15% of care workers don't get the national minimum wage
- This crisis will only worsen under Labour's new immigration rules which will limit overseas workers getting sponsorship to work in social care, potentially vastly increasing vacancies and turnover

But the key statistics are:

- In 1979, 64% of beds in residential and nursing homes were provided by local authorities and the NHS
- By 2023, just 4% of social care provision was public
- 85% of the total workforce is now employed by 'independent' care providers, with 8% employed by recipients of direct payments and just 7% by local authorities
- There are 40,000 separate workplaces and 18,500 employers

This needs to be fully recognised for what it is - a huge transfer of wealth from the public sector to big business. And it needs a commitment from the unions to fight to reverse the process by both pressuring the government but, more importantly, launching a major campaign amongst staff, users and the general public calling for nationalisation.

The money is available

The document claims funding the recommended measures over the course of this parliament would cost £2 billion. This would mean a modest (and to be honest, inadequate) pay rise to £13.17 an hour, occupational



KARL LANG

4%

of social care provision was public in 2023

sick pay covering at least 50% of pay, improved employer pension contributions and investment in training and development.

To do this, a number of proposals are mooted, most of which are levies of some kind on other workers. While many have larger incomes than care workers, it would still be 'robbing Peter to pay Paul'. Yet the answer is starting them in the face - in a separate section is the line: "The gross operating surplus of private and voluntary providers in social care was £2.9 billion in 2023." So the most modest proposals could be paid for one and a half times over in the same year with this profit!

If the big business profiteers were removed from the equation altogether, without compensation for the super-rich who exploit the sector, there would be enough money available for year-on-year improvements so workers could benefit from an immediate £15-an-hour minimum wage, full sick pay and decent pensions.

Organising within social care is currently hampered by the unions' past failures in fighting privatisation and outsourcing, leaving workforces open to endemic low pay, inadequate training, bullying and exploitative practices. I deal with approximately 350 social care providers. In only two of these is there a recognition agreement with the union and in one of these, pay levels are still so low the company has to implement pay rises just so as not to fall foul of minimum wage legislation!

Social care trade union leaders are belatedly beginning to organise more vigorously but from the wrong starting point. They seek employers' participation in 'partnership working' in the hope of getting them to sign recognition agreements. The quickest way of getting employers to recognise unions is for the workers to organise and propose action to win higher wages. This can have a 'domino effect' for social care workers, with victories raising confidence and leading to the likelihood of further breakthroughs, something which cannot be achieved by simply talking to employers.

Until the social care unions grasp the nettle and go on the offensive, the promised Fair Pay Agreement is doomed from inception and social care will not only remain in crisis but could soon reach the point of total collapse.

The Socialist Party demands:

- Renationalise social care and the health service. Bring all services back in-house with no compensation paid to the fatcats at the top
- Solve the vacancies crisis by paying care workers a wage they can live on. For an immediate increase in the minimum wage to £15 an hour without exemptions, as a step towards a real living wage
- Reverse the cuts to local government. Take the wealth off the super-rich to fund the services we need
- For a democratic socialist plan for health and social care, with workers, service users and the local community deciding what we need not what makes a profit for a few at the top

Labour on the backfoot TRADE UNIONS MUST STEP UP ACTION NOW



WHAT WE THINK

After repeatedly defending their unpopular policies of maintaining the two-child benefit cap and ending pensioners' universal winter fuel allowance, the Labour government appears to be U-turning.

The partial retreat comes after the humiliating defeat in the English local government elections, backlash from voters, rebellion from their own backbenches, and the ongoing falls in opinion polls.

But the damage is already done. Keir Starmer's government has already exposed itself as being on the side of big business and the super-rich, and the deeper austerity planned will only display that more starkly.

Recent surveys indicate that Starmer's personal favourability rating fell to -31 in May, representing a 38-point drop since the general election. This situation echoes the dilemma faced by politicians defending the capitalist bosses' interests, as former President of the European Commission Jean-Claude Juncker once put it: "We all know what to do, but we don't know how to get re-elected once we have done it."

The government has faced huge anger over its decision last July to axe £1.5 billion in winter fuel payments for about 10 million pensioners. But any hopes of its reinstatement will have been dimmed by Rachel Reeves's refusal to give a clear timeline or say how many will have it restored this winter.

The trade unions should be demanding it is restored immediately to all pensioners, linking this to the demand for nationalisation of the energy companies, to bring down bills for everyone.

The Labour government has been struggling to hold back rebellion on its backbenches, fuelled by public anger. Starmer hopes that these retreats will give him some time. In fact the U-turns should give confidence that the government can be forced to row back on disability benefit cuts and other anti-working class policies.

It is also not an accident that Starmer received some 'friendly' advice from former chancellor Gordon Brown to remove the two-child benefit cap. The government had already delayed publishing its child poverty strategy - because it would further fuel the anger. About 4.8 million children are forecast to be in poverty in 2029-30 with the two-child limit in place, including half of children in large families, according to the Resolution Foundation. Removing the cap would immediately reduce child poverty by approximately 360,000 children. This can't wait.

Splits within Labour

It's been less than a year, but Labour splits and factions are already emerging. For example, Deputy Prime Minister Angela Rayner's apparently 'leaked' memo to Reeves before the Spring Statement in March, calling for very modest tax increases on the rich.

Although Rayner has ruled out ever running to replace Starmer, the possibility of his replacement is not ruled out in the future as a way to try and steady the sinking ship of Labour. But Rayner, as local government minister, is responsible for the threatened savage cuts to



Keir Starmer and Angela Rayner NUMBER 10/CC

Birmingham bin workers' pay, as well as organising strikebreaking. She is another pro-capitalist politician.

Any government that defends the interests of British capitalism will attempt to force through austerity and thereby will be unstable.

The government bragged about 'ending strikes' in the public sector last summer, but national action is posed again. The government has made offers in line with the public sector pay review bodies' recommendations - 4% for doctors, teachers and prison guards, 4.5% for armed forces, 3.6% for NHS workers, 3.25% for civil servants, 3.2% for lower-paid school staff such as teaching assistants and caretakers. These are

without adequate funding - meaning

service cuts and job losses - and with RPI inflation at a 15-month high of 4.5% in April.

We can fight

But the U-turns prove the government can be forced to move under pressure. Now is the time for the unions to act. Socialist Party members are fighting for the unions to undertake ballots for national action, linking pay with funding, pointing to the possibility of future coordinated strike action.

Together with an industrial strategy to resist austerity, the unions should be leading the fight for a political alternative too. The Socialist Party welcomes the move by 25 current and former members of trade

union national executives in launching a petition, "Time for trade unions to take the lead in forming a new working-class party".

A working-class, anti-austerity, electoral challenge to this Labour government - with the authority of the trade unions - would represent a real threat to Starmer's Labour acting in the interests of the capitalist class.

SIGN THE PETITION

Time for trade unions to take the lead in forming a new working class party

- www.change.org/TradeUnions-LaunchANewParty

Public sector pay offers – not enough and not fully funded

We need to fight to save pay, jobs and services from increasing austerity

The government has made its pay offers for 2025-26 to NHS, teachers, the civil service, prisons and the armed forces, as have the Labour-dominated local authority employers.

With RPI inflation at 4.5% in April, not only do none of these pay offers go anywhere near to recouping the pay lost over more than a decade of pay freezes and restraint, they are in fact mainly effective pay cuts.

And none are fully funded by the government. Starmer's Labour only wanted to pay 2.8% and, in honouring the recommendations of pay review bodies, the government has ruled out any extra funding.

Civil servants 3.25%, to be funded 'within agreed spending settlements'

See page 7 to read about the raging debates in the PCS civil service union over the need for a serious fight on pay and against eye-watering cuts.

Local government 3.2%

All the local government unions are recommending rejection.

Junior doctors 4% plus a lump sum

The British Medical Association (BMA), representing doctors, said the increase is "derisory" and pay is still around a quarter less than it was

16 years ago. A strike ballot of BMA resident doctors (formerly junior doctors) started on 27 May.

Other NHS staff 3.6%

Unite has rejected this offer and is opening a consultative strike ballot. Unison health conference agreed to ballot selected branches for action and use this to "bring the government to the table for talks".

GMB has put the offer out to consultation without recommendation, but ambulance worker Gareth Bromhall reports: "Senior officers at GMB called us ambulance reps into a meeting recently to get us ballot ready. I don't think they were prepared for how angry reps are or the appetite for action."

WHAT'S YOUR VIEW?

- editors@socialistparty.org.uk

Teachers 4% - 1% unfunded

National Education Union (NEU) general secretary Daniel Kebede told the BBC the union would consult members, but he felt it would be "broadly acceptable" and that strike action was "very unlikely".

That is not the view of many members! Hastings and Rother NEU is one example of local districts putting out a fighting message to members: "£615 million is not enough. It means a funding shortfall of £1.185 billion. It means more than £55,000 slashed from every school budget. It means the loss of two support staff in every school."

Sheila Caffrey, NEU Exec member, says

"4% is not enough and it comes with a funding cut. I don't think there'll be any school that won't have to make cuts or redundancies in the next year with this offer. That will also impact the workload of those who still have a job. That is simply unsustainable in an education system already cut to the bone. So the options are: accept and give up, or fight!"

"If we had a leadership that clearly

showed they were going to fight - with meetings, reps speaking to members, local branches sharing what the real funding cut is - we could build a serious campaign."

Louise Cuffaro, NEU Exec member, says

"We are facing the annihilation of a functioning state education system. 40 out of 117 schools in Newham have been in 'restructure' since Christmas. Unscrupulous heads can cull union activists, older - more expensive - staff, and anyone with a record of sickness or time off for caring responsibilities."

"We cannot fight this this brutal wave of culling and closing schools just by 'lighting fires' school by school. Where there are falling rolls, that should mean smaller class sizes and resources for SEND children." (Sheila and Louise commented in a personal capacity)

- See 'NEU leadership delays potential action: Keep up the pressure for a serious fight' at socialistparty.org.uk

UCU Congress votes for national action in higher and further education

DUNCAN MOORE

UCU NEC MEMBER, PERSONAL CAPACITY

While Liverpool FC fans milled around the conference centre on the Albert Dock in Liverpool, inside the venue delegates to the University and College Union (UCU) annual congress debated the issues facing post-16 education.

A palpable shift in mood has taken place since the last conference. There was a sense of looming crisis for our sector, which required us to take bold action.

Half of universities are in debt, crippled by a chronic lack of funding and a broken tuition fee system heavily reliant on international students, now being targeted by a Labour government chasing Reform UK with its immigration policy. Cuts, closures, and redundancies are spreading in higher education (HE). In further education (FE), half of all college lecturers quit within three years, due to low pay and overwork.

Shift in mood of members

Activists on the left of the union, including Socialist Party members, have argued for a fighting industrial strategy. Crucially, we have fought for national action in our sectors, as it has become clearer and clearer that the crisis cannot be fought at a local level alone.

The general secretary of the union, Jo Grady, and the team around her, however, are desperately trying to avoid confrontation with Keir Starmer's government.

At the special sector conference for FE in 2024, delegates from the right of the union argued that most members were not willing to take strike action, that the branches were not strong enough, and that the Labour government would fix things with its new deal promising sectoral collective bargaining. At the time, these arguments won out.

But no longer. In both the HE and FE sector conferences, motion after motion was carried by large majorities resolving the union to ballot for nationwide industrial action in the autumn. Motions agreed to coordinate with other education unions.

Political strategy debated for first time

Important debates took place on the union's political strategy too, for the first time.

At the fringe meeting of the 'UCU Left' faction, Socialist Party members argued for the urgent coming together of trade unions to discuss founding a new mass working-class party as an alternative to the pro-capitalist Labour government.

Members of the SWP (Socialist Workers Party), which is the main organisation in UCU Left, while agreeing with the need for a 'new political alternative', muddled the waters, arguing that a new party would have to come from a 'mass movement', with no reference to the working class or the unions.

What else are the trade unions but



PHOTO: PAUL MATTSOON



Socialist Party members at UCU congress SOCIALIST PARTY

mass organisations, with 6.5 million members! It is not enough to wait until a new party 'organically' emerges. Somebody has to take a lead, and even one union taking steps in this direction would be a crucial development.

Motion for political alternative passed

This debate played out on the conference floor on the third day. Socialist Party member Marco Teseli, a delegate from Ealing, Hammersmith and West London college, moved a motion from his branch, which called for the union to take steps towards "an alternative political voice to Labour".

Delegates who supported this motion argued that the rise of Reform

made this an urgent task. Against, were those who said that it was too soon to judge the Starmer government, that we have to give them time. The newly elected vice president argued against the motion. Even so, it was passed by a large majority.

I brought a motion from my UCU branch, South Devon College, calling for the union to demand that Labour immediately repeals the Tory 2016 Trade Union Act and its undemocratic turnout thresholds for strike ballots. This was passed with only one vote against.

Important discussions also took place between activists over the weekend on the need for a new genuinely democratic broad left, to bring together members who want to organise for a fighting union.

Exciting steps for the union - and the Socialist Party

It was my second UCU congress this year and I was less dazzled by the novelty of it all. While the number of Socialist Party delegates to congress was fairly small, we certainly punched well above our weight! In the mornings we gave out our bulletin and sold the Socialist. Absurdly, all the organisations leafleting outside were expected to be penned in together behind a small metal fence! It was indicative of increasing political pressure the leadership of the union is under.

I also had the honour of meeting with student Socialist Party members studying and building Socialist Students at University of Liverpool, Hannah and Thomas, at our party fringe event on Sunday. They both spoke eloquently, and their actions in supporting the Liverpool Hope University dispute were an inspiration (see page 11). A leader of the Hope dispute attended our meeting.

I can't forget the brilliant speech given by Steeven, a Birmingham bin striker, fighting the Labour council attempting to impose huge pay cuts. Their struggle is an inspiration. We also cannot forget the Unite dispute of UCU staff, facing harrowing treatment by the senior leadership team.

This congress saw exciting political steps forward. The leadership is trying to paper over all the contradictions. But their ideology can only stretch over the cracks so far until it renders at the seams. This congress has shown that now these contradictions cannot be covered over any longer. Now is the time for action!

JAMES KIRKUP, DELEGATE FROM GUILDFORD, PERSONAL CAPACITY

Suspense as conference debates working-class political alternative

A highlight of congress was the passing of motion 63, carried by a comfortable majority. It called for UCU to invite Jeremy Corbyn, the Independents and other pro-worker MPs to our national executive to discuss how they can support our union's fight for post-16 education funding. It also called for us to encourage UCU members to themselves stand in elections, linking up with other trade unionists, to fight for our union's policies.

Our sector is in profound crisis and we heard many criticisms of Labour from other delegates. But this motion was unique because it was the only one with a clear political call. As we are all in agreement Labour is attacking, not supporting us, why don't we, the trade unions, take the lead in starting to build a political alternative!

One UCU member came up to us to say she was not a delegate but had come all the way from Bristol as an observer simply to hear the debate around this motion. There was a palpable sense of attention in the hall as this idea was proposed, and of suspense while we waited for the result. And when the result came, the applause clearly expressed how widespread the appetite is for change, for a political alternative!

MARCO TESELI, NEWLY ELECTED TO THE NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE, PERSONAL CAPACITY

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PCS conference saddles up for battle against Labour austerity

SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBERS IN PCS

The Annual Delegate Conference of the Public and Commercial Services (PCS) union, the largest civil service trade union, closed on Thursday 22 May. Despite the efforts of the leadership, delegates across all of the employer-specific conferences and at the national conference defiantly declared their determination to fight against cuts to jobs and pay, closures of offices, and restrictions to flexible and hybrid working.

Westminster departments face 15% cuts, and these have already begun to land. In the Cabinet Office, 1,200 job cuts have been announced. The government has announced a renewal of efforts to cut London jobs by 12,000. A 'review' of arm's-length bodies means cuts are also likely there.

Delegates vote for fighting strategy

Despite efforts by the general secretary, Fran Heathcote, to talk down a "shopping basket of demands", conference passed motion A383 that laid out most clearly the actions on civil servants, and the consequences for devolved government workers and privatised members working on facilities management contracts. Of central importance, the motion set a deadline of mid-September for the commencement of a ballot for strike action.

A fight on these questions is of paramount importance. Socialist Party members on the union's National Executive Committee (NEC), in concert with left allies, have been making this point for a year. Flattered by personal discussions with ministers and unwilling to stand up to Starmer, the general secretary has done nothing to prepare the union for a fight, despite motions calling for this being agreed by the NEC in July 2024 and January 2025.

Civil service pay remit

Barely an hour after PCS conference closed, the Labour government announced a civil service pay remit for 2025-26 of 3.25%, with leeway up to 3.75% for the low paid. This provides a percentage figure by which each department can increase its total pay bill.

PCS president Martin Cavanagh and Heathcote, on behalf of the ruling misnamed 'Left Unity' group, have leapt to claim that this is a success, even though it falls short of RPI inflation, and there is no new money - pay rises must be found within existing budgets.

This announcement was not made without discussion with representatives from the trade unions. Yet the union's NEC was not informed of any such discussions, and nor was PCS conference.

In the elections to the union's NEC that took place just before conference convened, a reduced turnout saw all votes fall, but particularly for the left candidates (see 'PCS: Socialists gear up for battle despite elections defeat'



Facilities management staff on strike, May 2025 ROB WILLIAMS

at socialistparty.org.uk). The majority won in 2024 by the Broad Left Network (in which the Socialist Party participates) and its allies, which was blocked all year by Cavanagh ruling by presidential decree, was lost.

The opposite happened in the 'block vote' elections for other important committees; the left vote count went up.

Democracy

Importantly, the left won two seats on the National Standing Orders Committee (NSOC), which is a vital step in re-opening PCS to democratic debate in future. This year, undemocratic measures by the leadership-dominated NSOC were in full swing.

To avoid giving the floor to the left opposition, conference broke with usual practice and motions passed by the outgoing NEC to conference were not moved by outgoing NEC members.

The 'guillotine' section of the agenda, which permits any motion missed due to time to be put back on the agenda, was abolished this year. Having the guillotine section limits the effectiveness of the NSOC putting motions they don't like low down the agenda, and of the chair calling in lots of speakers on other motions to deliberately run out of time.

Cavanagh and the leadership's conduct at conference has given

delegates a taste of how they ran the NEC over the previous year.

Battle ahead

The last year has been disorientating for many activists across PCS. The left NEC that was elected in May 2024 quickly found that, without the post of president or two-thirds of the seats (we won 19 out of 35), it could be ignored by the president and general secretary. The communications of the union, including branch briefings, were used by the president and general secretary to try to discredit the NEC.

PCS activists were left waiting for a serious campaign to defend jobs and pay, while on the surface of it, it looked like the union's leadership was arguing among themselves.

But now a deluge of cuts is coming, and the re-elected Democracy Alliance/Left Unity majority and its unwillingness to fight will be rapidly put to the test. PCS must be ready with a national campaign, or more will come. Inextricably linked to this is the battle to render the leadership accountable to the members and to their elected reps - the battle for a fighting, democratic PCS.

To all PCS reps and members fighting the cuts and fighting for equality at work and in the community, we urge you to join the Broad Left Network in PCS, and to get involved with the Socialist Party to unite working-class struggle across all of the trade unions.

Trans rights: fight for working-class unity

Given the continuous attacks against workers, including most recently on trans rights as a result of the Supreme Court ruling, many would think that a union conference would support and fight for the rights of all members.

Instead, PCS general secretary Fran Heathcote and national president Martin Cavanagh, on the eve of conference, issued offensive and inflammatory 'statements' to all delegates about the use of toilet facilities, and a premature, biased interpretation of what the law requires.

Doing this under cover of legal advice that wasn't produced, they also refused to print at least 25 motions including those that reaffirmed support for trans rights. These motions set out a clear response to the Supreme Court ruling, which, if carried, would unite all members across the union.

Delegates refused to adopt standing orders (conference rules), instead attempting to get the motions back on the agenda. Each attempt ('reference back') would have won a majority vote from the conference floor. The president, Martin Cavanagh, said he was unable to take a reference back on the motion as it has been removed under legal advice.

Again and again, conference refused to adopt standing orders, therefore the conference could not open and proceed to the agenda. After over two hours of votes, a majority agreed to adopt standing orders via a card vote (where each branch has a voting strength equivalent to its membership).

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

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TOM BALDWIN
SOCIALIST PARTY NATIONAL COMMITTEE

We've all seen pictures of peers dozing on the red benches of the House of Lords. The unelected 'vermin in ermine' can claim £361 per day, plus expenses, just for turning up to parliament. The impression that many of them spend their time there sleeping off an afternoon brandy contributes to the overwhelming public desire for abolition of this feudal relic.

The Labour government has introduced a bill to remove the remaining hereditary peers from the Lords. But it has stopped short of wider reform, let alone abolition and replacement by elected representatives, which it promised before the election. So, what do Labour's plans entail and why has there been such hesitancy to wind up an institution that appears to be hundreds of years past its sell-by date?

In 1999, Blair's New Labour government ended most hereditary peerages. This is where seats in the Lords were passed down through generations of 'noble' families, along with their titles. Hundreds of these hereditary peers were removed from the Lords, cutting its size almost in half. However, promises to remove all hereditary seats were watered down. 92 were kept, mostly elected from amongst themselves with quotas for different parties, a majority being Tories.

Archaic

Only now is Labour finally ending this archaic practice altogether. The idea that Lords and Ladies should hold any political power because of a distant ancestor is widely opposed. It should be a gimme, but the legislation itself has spent several months held up in debates in the House of Lords itself!

Yet the public mood for change goes far further. A YouGov poll last year showed 59% of people favoured abolishing the House of Lords and replacing it with an elected second chamber, with just 13% opposed. Majority support for abolition existed across voters of all major parties. Most establishment parties themselves also claim to want greater reform but, as usual, their words aren't matched by deeds.

Way back in 1649 the Parliamentarians of Oliver Cromwell did away with the monarchy. They also abolished

the House of Lords by an Act declaring it to be "useless and dangerous to the people of England." That remains evident to many, but no government has dared to be so bold since the monarchy was restored in 1660.

The 'Mother of Parliaments' is not the paragon of democracy it is portrayed as. It wasn't until the Reform Act of 1832 that the supremacy of the House of Commons over the unelected Lords was established in law. Even then the Commons was highly undemocratic, a far cry from the equal constituencies and universal male suffrage that the working-class mass movement of the Chartists fought for. The latter wasn't given up until 1918 and the vote was only extended to all women in 1928.



The idea that Lords and Ladies should hold any political power because of a distant ancestor is widely opposed

In 1911 the Lords was finally stopped from being able to block legislation passed in the Commons. But, even after further tweaks to its powers, the unelected Lords can still delay and frustrate the passing of new laws.

The Lords is a historical hangover from the days of feudalism; it was originally the organ of power of the landed gentry, who have long since been supplanted as the ruling class by the capitalist big business owners. But it's not just an anachronism or a quaint British tradition. Like many pre-existing institutions and attitudes, it has been appropriated by the capitalists to help strengthen their domination over society.

In this case, it's as a potential restraint on the elected government. The Lords can delay legislation by up to a year and can propose many amendments to try and water down new laws.

Today's Labour government is a naked representative of the bosses. Far from bringing forward positive reforms, it is attacking the working class, as have successive governments before it.

But, if the capitalist class was faced with a future workers' party enacting

radical reforms, the Lords would be a useful tool of the capitalist class to frustrate and disrupt its agenda.

There might be those who argue that the Lords needs to exist as a check on governments of all types. There are instances where the Lords has curbed some government excesses. For example, the last Tory government's hugely anti-democratic Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill was returned to the Commons with numerous amendments tempering its attacks on the right to protest. This reflects the fact that different sections of the capitalist establishment have different views over how best to govern in the capitalists' interests.

The fact that the Lords occasionally puts up more opposition than MPs is a testament to the terrible state of the parliamentary parties in Britain. It isn't something that can be relied on and it doesn't justify a role in law-making for people who've never faced any kind of election.

It could also be argued that the Lords is a means of allowing experts in some fields to be able to scrutinise laws, not just leaving it to professional

politicians. These appointed 'experts' often come from the world of business and carry with them an agenda, even those that are nominally independent of any party.

In fact, a huge, largely untapped, reservoir of expertise exists amongst workers in any particular field. The Socialist Party argues for working-class democratic control of society, which would mean more oversight and scrutiny at all levels.

Typically, peers find their way into the Lords for reasons of political expediency rather than any expertise. Alongside the 92 hereditary peers sit 24 Church of England bishops; no other religion is represented in this way. But all the other members are appointed life peers, proposed by the Prime Minister and confirmed by the monarch.

Cronies

This system means the political make-up of the Lords is not very responsive to elections, especially in this febrile period when faith in capitalist politicians is at rock bottom and parties are without a stable basis of support. It also incentivises governments to pack

the Lords with new appointees, ensuring a role for key cronies. With the wave of a hand, political allies can be handed a cushy job and a seat at the table of power.

Starmer has raised 64 people to the Lords already, creating seats two-and-a-half-times faster than the average rate. Tory PM David Cameron appointed a massive 120 in his first year in power, buying a little more political stability for a coalition government beginning its brutal austerity assault on the working class. There is, in fact, no limit to the number of new peers that can be added each year. As a result, the House of Lords has swollen to 827 members, making it the largest parliament or assembly in the world, outside of China.

Democratic rights such as universal suffrage were not the gift of the capitalist class, they have been hard won by workers, and socialists have always participated in those struggles. But capitalist parliamentary 'democracy' has and will never give a true representation of the people. The institution of parliament is set up for rule on behalf of big business, not us.

Parliament being sworn in by the Queen in 2019 HOUSE OF COMMONS/CC

ABOLISH THE HOUSE OF LORDS



Labour government there. In 2019, the Tories turned to her power of 'prorogation' to suspend parliament to try to avoid scrutiny over Brexit.

Together, these form part of the capitalist state, the institutions that exist to protect the rule of the tiny minority of big business owners. Russian revolutionary leader Lenin wrote that "it is impossible to compel the greater part of society to work systematically for the other part of society without a permanent apparatus of coercion." At its sharpest point this means the hard power of the police and armed forces. These all swear their allegiance to the monarch and not the elected government, as do judges.



The real interests of the working class aren't just in phasing out the feudal relics of yesteryear but in ending the capitalist exploitation of today

We're still waiting for the Employment Rights Bill that Labour has promised to become law. In the meantime though, the government, Birmingham council and the West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner - all Labour - are combining to use existing anti-union laws and direct police to arrest and intimidate striking Birmingham bin workers. This is just a small taste of the state repression that the capitalists would deploy against the working class if they felt it necessary to defend their interests. There are countless examples of the capitalists, historically and internationally, discarding the velvet glove of parliamentary democracy and revealing the iron fist of dictatorship. A glove they let slip slightly when, as Labour leader, Jeremy Corbyn was met with veiled threats of a coup by serving senior military officers.

The officer classes are generally drawn from privileged layers, similar to senior civil servants and judges, but that is not true of the rank and file of the military. Class divisions in society are mirrored, in however a distorted form, within the institutions of the state themselves. These can be split

along class lines by effective appeals from the workers' movement to the rank and file, appealing to common interests. At the same time the working class must also organise to defend itself.

Capitalist state

The capitalist state ultimately plays the same role of defending capitalism regardless of the nature of governance - monarchy or republic, liberal or authoritarian. But that doesn't mean that socialists are unconcerned by those differences, we stand for the greatest possible freedom for the working class to fight for its interests.

The Socialist Party calls for the immediate abolition of the House of Lords and monarchy. Other important democratic demands include votes at 16, trade union freedom and the right to protest. We also call for a new mass working class party; the structure of parliament means little if our class has no means of making its voice heard there.

However, we can sow no illusions that reforms to the state will stop it being a tool of the capitalists. None of these democratic demands are ends in themselves.

To ensure, for the first time, the rule of the vast majority of society requires revolution; the working class taking power and replacing the institutions of capitalist rule with truly democratic ones. Ones in which the working class actively participates in decision making at all levels, and where representatives are regularly elected, able to be recalled, and only get the average wage of those they represent.

Capitalists try to equate their system with democracy but the opposite is true. Most decisions governing how the country is run aren't made in parliament at all but in the unelected boardrooms of big businesses. Taking big business and the banks into public ownership would mean they too can be run democratically and used to meet the needs of all, not to fill the pockets of fat cat shareholders.

Labour's Lords reforms are laughably limited. The real interests of the working class aren't just in phasing out the feudal relics of yesteryear but in ending the capitalist exploitation of today. This brutal system which brings with it poverty, war and environmental destruction must be consigned to the dustbin of history.

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York school strike over academy mismanagement

IAIN DALTON
YORKSHIRE SOCIALIST PARTY

National Education Union (NEU) members took to the picket lines for a second time on 23 May at St George's Primary School in York, as part of a dispute over the running of the school by the Nicholas Postgate Catholic Academy Trust (NPCAT).

The vibrant picket line was not just attended by school workers, but also numerous parents and children.

The school's headteacher, Dee Patton-Statham, was also on the picket line. She said: "The decision to take strike action is never made lightly. The action reflects broader challenges that are impacting staff, school resources and the support we can offer our children... We work hard to help our children grow into confident, compassionate leaders of the future. That means showing them that using your voice to bring about change is not only a right - but a responsibility."

A key issue is the top-slicing of

funding by NPCAT, which the NEU estimates could be as much as 25% of the school budget! This contributes to the £300,000 salary of the Trust CEO, and facilities such as AstroTurf football pitches which are over an hour away from York.

The strikers demand that decision-making over spending is brought back to the school and local communities.

There are four other schools in York which are also part of NPCAT, where NEU members are organising, one of which, All Saints secondary, has also taken strike action.

The Socialist Party campaigns for all schools be brought back into democratic local authority control. Many NEU branches are demanding that Labour's education bill is amended, or new legislation urgently brought forward, to allow academies to return to local authority control.

● See 'Academy funding scandal: return all schools to local authority control' at socialistparty.org.uk

NEU leadership debates the union's approach to trans rights

SHEILA CAFFREY
NEU EXEC MEMBER, PERSONAL CAPACITY

May's National Executive meeting of the National Education Union (NEU) discussed the supreme court's judgement on women and the attack on trans and non-binary rights.

There is a section within the NEU leadership that buys into the government's rhetoric, seeing the ruling as a way to move forward with women's rights. I spoke strongly against this idea, along with many others on the Exec, and it was defeated.

Socialist Party members put in our own amendment to the draft NEU statement, with further demands: for a union-organised demo against austerity and the attacks on equality; as well as to put pressure on independent MPs to put forward these policies in parliament on behalf of the NEU.

Unfortunately, the NEU Left (the grouping that leads the union

currently) and SWP (Socialist Workers Party - which is part of the NEU Left) spoke against this. They argued that smaller local demos were the way to win.

They also argued against our point that the union should make clear it would defend members who challenged policies in schools, as we would be 'encouraging members to get fired'. In fact, it would empower members to stand up to bosses collectively.

Unite the working class

This shows a lack of understanding of the role that unions should play in uniting the working class.

Unions could bring hundreds of thousands of members out on to the streets to demand the Labour government provides what we need - such as well-funded health and public services; decent housing for all, with immediate access for those fleeing violence; and well-paid jobs - challenging discrimination and division. Instead of fighting to unite the

working class, some groupings seem to prefer that the unions just stomp up the cash for the occasional demo that doesn't root these campaigns in our workplaces, communities and union branches.



PHOTO: IAN PATTISON

Trades Councils Conference shows role they can play in building resistance to Starmer's attacks

SOCIALIST PARTY REPORTERS

The Labour government's attacks on pensioners, disabled people, and other sections of the working class, the continuing deterioration of public services and creeping privatisation of the NHS, and Starmer's policy on Gaza all faced sharp rebuke at the 2025 Trades Councils Conference on 24-25 May. A Birmingham bin striker guest speaker at the conference described the appalling behaviour of the Labour-run council towards the refuse workers, attempting to slash £8,000 from their pay.

The Socialist Party had eight delegates from trades councils (which bring together trade unions at a local level) across England and Wales at the meeting and had a strong influence on proceedings.

Needs budgets

Our call for emergency needs budgets to be adopted by local councils, in solidarity with local unions, instead of Labour councils passing on endless cuts, won overwhelming support.

Maggie Fricker, from Southampton Trades Council (TC), got a strong response when she called for public ownership under democratic workers' control and management of the big energy companies.

An emergency motion on disability benefits cuts, including to PIP, was moved by Socialist Party member Katrine Williams on behalf of Cardiff TC. Katrine called for the TUC (Trades Union Congress, which brings unions together nationally) to

organise a demonstration against the cuts. The text was chosen by conference as the one motion it can bring to TUC conference.

Other Socialist Party members also moved motions overwhelmingly supported by the conference. Jane Nellist from Coventry TC spoke on the Birmingham bin workers' strike, condemning the Labour council and calling for trades councils to build support for the refuse workers.

Niall Mulholland, from Newham TC, moved an emergency motion on Gaza. The TUC's words condemning Israel are not enough, Niall said. The whole union movement needs to be mobilised against the genocidal policies of the Israeli state, including supporting workers in the arms industry taking action to stop supplies going to the IDF.

Fighting racism and the right

Combating racism and the right in Britain was a key feature of the conference. Socialist Party members agreed with other delegates that it is correct not to be dismissive of people who vote for Reform - a sign of desperation in times of austerity and broken local services, and also a protest at the main pro-capitalist parties. But pandering to divisive anti-immigrant rhetoric, as Starmer has done, also needs to be countered.

Sheila Caffrey from Bristol TC called for disciplined trade union stewarding of anti-far-right counter-protests and the promotion of class politics.

Brent Kennedy from Carlisle TC linked all campaigns for improving

workers' living standards to the struggle to build a mass workers' party with socialist policies.

Repeal turnout thresholds

Waltham Forest TC's motion on the severe limits of the Labour government's Employment Rights Bill was moved by Socialist Party member Kevin Parslow. The motion, which was endorsed by the conference, called for a TUC national campaign around a 'workers' manifesto'.

The discussion on building trades councils focused on getting more young workers involved. Where trades councils have a high profile as campaigning bodies and giving practical solidarity to workers in dispute, such as in Newham, this has already happened. Amy Sage, a young delegate from Bristol TC, who spoke on the right to protest and advocated democratic community control of policing, and Sjaan Heemskerck, from Southend TC, who spoke with passion on employment rights, are examples of the young workers getting active.

With a wider attendance of delegates at conference in comparison to recent years and twice as many motions this year compared to last year, trades union councils are in a good position to be the focus of organised workers' and community resistance.



Amy Sage (right), Jane Nellist (below) speaking at the conference
SOCIALIST PARTY



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Save Ealing Children's Centres!

TONY GILL
WEST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

On Wednesday 14 May, a significant number of parents, trade unionists and community activists gathered outside Ealing Council offices to protest plans by the Labour-led council to close 13 of the 25 children's centres across the borough. These centres provide midwifery, parenting and family support, and perinatal mental health support, among other vital services.

Leading activists for the campaign Save Ealing Children's Centres revealed that the council has 'failed to engage' with the group, and criticised the community consultation process, claiming it was 'fundamentally dishonest'. There is evidence that the council has already earmarked the savings from closing children's centres in its budgeting for the

next few years. The council can't hold an open and honest public consultation when it has effectively already banked the cash!

The consultation did show, though, that many families with children under five want services within walking distance. But with the planned closures, some service users will be more than a 45-minute walk away from their nearest centre.

Amidst the speakers were two West London Socialist Party members, Bill Reed and Tony Gill, who highlighted the following:

- The closure of the children's centres is a devastating blow to the most vulnerable families in Ealing, who see the centres as places of safety, support, and community for them and their young children
- During 14 years of Tory rule, Labour councils like Ealing said they had to pass on cuts because they weren't in government. What's

their excuse now? Ealing Labour councillors blindly accept the Starmer's austerity agenda

• It is Unison local government service group policy to call on councils to set legal no-cuts budgets as the first step in building the fightback against job cuts. With skeleton staff operating in many centres already, we need to build a united struggle of workers whose jobs are under threat from the planned closures

They went on to urge that all those present at the demo should consider standing against Labour in next year's local elections on an anti-austerity platform, fighting against cuts to council services and helping to push forward the building of a new mass workers' party.

• A further protest is planned for Tuesday 10 June, 6pm at Perceval House, ahead of the next full council meeting



Birmingham Pride: Anger at Supreme Court ruling

TOM PORTER-BROWN
BIRMINGHAM SOCIALIST PARTY

Thousands were in attendance at Birmingham Pride, and among them were plenty angry at both the Supreme Court ruling on trans rights and at the marketisation of Pride as a whole.

We spoke with dozens of attendees about what needs to happen if we are to fight back against these attacks on LGBTQ+ rights. For one, Pride cannot be separated from the broader working-class struggle. Despite the event having an apparent 'no political parties' rule, no-one objected to our presence. The struggle against the Supreme Court ruling needs to be linked to the fightback against

the erosion of workers' rights to cut across the division tactics of both Starmer's Labour and the far right.

But given that the current major parties are in a race to the bottom, we need a new mass workers' party, built and led by the trade unions, if we are to eliminate discrimination against LGBTQ+ people. Our services need to be run by the working class to ensure the unfair and inaccessible conditions of healthcare, education and housing, are reversed and run in the interests of all workers, including women and trans people.



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Liverpool Hope Uni students and staff demonstrate against jobs threat



THOMAS BUTLER
LIVERPOOL SOCIALIST STUDENTS

Staff at Liverpool Hope University are the most recent victims of the nationwide university funding crisis.

University management has confirmed that dozens of staff members will be made redundant across social sciences, humanities, education and creative arts. Not only this, but over a hundred staff members have been sent letters informing them that their job is at risk, meaning staff members will have to wait months with this threat dangling over their heads to even know if their job is secured or not.

In response to such a frontal attack on workers, two days after this announcement, over 200 students and staff protested at Hope University outside the vice-chancellor's office, whose salary reportedly stands at £264,723.

The message of this demonstration

couldn't have been more clear. Students are appalled at this treatment of lecturers and staff.

Every worker or student who spoke was rightfully completely against these attacks. How can the university cite financial shortcomings when it has individuals on a quarter of a million pounds a year? The university claims these draconian attacks are necessary. It should open the books for its own workers and students to see where the money is going.

Regardless of the financial situation, this is not an isolated case. There is a funding crisis among many universities with hundreds of jobs at stake elsewhere. Hope University isn't the first and it won't be the last to be struck with cuts, with many universities actively running deficit budgets.

The only policy Labour has offered is increasing the burden on students with increased tuition fees for the first time since 2012.

The real solution is simply funding, not more fees. The Labour government must provide education with the adequate funding it so desperately needs. Despite what the Labour government has repeatedly stated, there is an abundance of wealth in society. With private energy companies alone making £120 billion in profit in the past years - five times as much as Rachel Reeves's fiscal 'black hole' - the money workers need is clearly there. These companies should be nationalised under democratic workers' control and their wealth used to protect workers and students. If the Labour government won't do this then the trade unions should form a new party that will.

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Fund the fight for socialism



BEN GOLDSTONE
CROYDON AND SUTTON SOCIALIST PARTY

In 2024, political parties in the UK received £100 million in donations. Unsurprisingly, big-business backers provide the main capitalist parties with large contributions. They don't do this out of the kindness of their hearts or to better the world, at least not for us! They do this to carry favour with politicians and to sway legislation to favour their industry, profits, and shareholders. The mainstream parties then bend to their will. You just need to look at their backers to get a feel for this.

David Sainsbury, a former supermarket chairman, was Labour's biggest donor during their 2024 general election campaign, donating £2.5 million. Notably, he was a big donor during Blair and Brown's leaderships, stopped donating during Corbyn's tenure, but returned with Starmer. In 2023, Michael Evans, a retired real estate magnate, donated £200,000 to Reform. Sir Michael Davis, former chief executive of Xstrata, a multinational mining company and now CEO of a commodities trading company, is one of the Tories' largest donors, donating over £5 million in total. Sudhir Choudrie, a businessman with interests in healthcare,

aviation and hospitality, has been a generous donor to the Lib Dems.

Even the Greens, purporting to be the left alternative in the UK, have wealthy backers, including Mark Constantine, co-founder and CEO of Lush, the high street cosmetics company. Like these parties, we rely on donations, but given our socialist demands and Marxist programme, we don't have any capitalists bankrolling us. Our donations come from people like you, the working class, looking for much-needed socialist change.

The fighting fund is important as it helps us to pay for things like leaflets, placards, demo equipment, venue hire for Socialism 2025, rooms for meetings, bank fees, replacement technology, and to pay for our offices. It also funds our part in political struggle, such as helping to cover election deposits and materials, which, last year, came to £10,000.

Can you donate to help fund the fight for socialism?

We appreciate that a £5 donation from a student or someone unemployed is as much of a sacrifice as a £50 donation from a higher-paid worker, so please donate what you can today to help continue the fight for socialism.

Why I joined the Socialist Party 'Why do families like mine only get bare minimum?'

JACOB POPPLEWELL
MANCHESTER AND SALFORD SOCIALIST PARTY

Growing up, wealth and class inequality were difficult concepts for me to grasp. I saw how hard my parents worked, leaving the house at 6am to return at 6pm absolutely exhausted, just to be left with absolutely nothing at the end of the month.

Meanwhile, images of incredible luxury were plastered everywhere I looked. Why do many families like mine have to make do with the bare minimum, while others burn money for the fun of it, I asked.

My frustrations only grew when I was educated about UK politics. How our system is far from a true democracy. How corporations have the government at their beck and call, while we can control little more than the colour of the prime minister's tie.

I got a job for myself, and reached legal voting age. I no longer felt like

these were injustices against people like me, but that they were injustices against me as well.

This pushed me even further towards politics. I found it necessary to find a label for myself, to find like-minded individuals to, at the very least, discuss these frustrations. As Malcom X said: "A man who stands for nothing will fall for anything". This is where I met socialism.

I found it difficult to attend a meeting at first. I was worried that I would be leagues behind anyone else involved in an organised group.

However, other Socialist Party members welcomed me. There was discussion that we could all contribute to.

It's liberating to discuss pressing issues with like-minded individuals every week, as we sharpen each other's ideas by discussing different viewpoints.

The Socialist Party campaign stalls

are a great opportunity to take action against injustice by communicating an alternative. Selling the Socialist paper helps raise consciousness and funds for the party.

If you feel overwhelmed by the injustice and inequality in the world, the best remedy is to join the movement, no matter how small your contribution may feel. To join the Socialist Party is to do a service to nobody but yourself, it is a commitment to advocating for what is right.

Join the fightback
JOIN THE SOCIALISTS

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

Hackney residents demand decent safe homes



CLARE DOYLE
HACKNEY SOCIALIST PARTY

The Woodberry Down estate in Hackney was built in the 1950s as a refuge for working-class families whose East End homes had been destroyed in the war. With central heating, running water, baths and spectacular views, they were a dream come true. For a while it was renowned as the largest public-housing complex in Europe.

Now, neglected and run-down, with massive private apartment blocks looming alongside them, they have become veritable slums. The so-called regeneration has seen increases in rents and service charges for long-term residents and totally unacceptable conditions such as mould developing and sewage leaks going unrepaired.

Eden Laoutaris is a single parent

with one child and pregnant with her second. Promises to rehouse her have been continually broken and she fears for her health and that of her children.

A protest at Hackney Town Hall was held on the afternoon of 19 May under the slogan 'Justice for Eden'. Her mother, Katina, and sister Willow (babe in arms), along with local activists and passers-by, shouted slogans demanding immediate action. Several children took turns on the mic to ask "What do we want?" to get the crowd shouting back various demands for Hackney Council to do its job and house working-class people in decent and safe conditions.

Not only should Eden be rehoused, as a campaigning leaflet demands, in "a safe home within her Woodberry Down community", but a crash programme of building and

repairing homes should be launched by Hackney's Labour Council. If they say they do not have sufficient funds, then, instead of making local people pay by putting up council tax and rents, they should dig into their substantial reserves.

Up and down the country, Labour councils should be demanding that a Labour government provide massive funds for local authorities. They could do this by taking into public ownership the big banks, insurance companies and industrial monopolies that continue to make massive profits at the expense of working people. No compensation should even be considered for the bloated fat cats; representatives of workers should be the ones to make all major decisions (in industry and in society as a whole).

Justice for Eden and for all exploited and poor people!

Leicester defiance against cutting Labour council



SAM WARD
LEICESTER SOCIALIST PARTY

Activists from across the workers' movement in Leicester acted in defiance on 17 May, following Leicester Labour council's imposition of a Public Space Protection Order that would stop campaigners using a stall table in the city centre. It comes with the threat of a £100 on-the-spot fine.

On the day, dozens of campaigners took part. We were not met with any street wardens. On the contrary to the council's assessment that we are "causing a nuisance", we were not met with any resistance to our ideas. Working-class people in Leicester stopped by our stall to discuss the recent consultations on closures to libraries and leisure centres all around the city.

On hearing of the threatened fining regime, Leicester Socialist Party arranged a meeting with other groups to discuss a strategy. Our proposal for a 'mass stall' ahead of a trades council public meeting already arranged for the afternoon of 17 May was agreed, as was the idea for a joint letter to the city mayor and press, from trade unions, campaign groups, and political parties.

50 attended the trades council's public meeting against council cuts. A National Education Union member spoke of how the school they work at cannot afford glue sticks. One attendee spoke of cuts to higher education which could lead to a new round of mass redundancies. Another spoke of the ongoing threat of NHS privatisation. A trade unionist spoke of their anger towards the Labour Party and called for those trade

unions that are still affiliated to it, to disaffiliate and ensure members' money is not going towards a party which is carrying out these attacks.

The meeting agreed to relaunch 'Leicestershire Against the Cuts', to which trade union branches, campaign groups and political parties can affiliate, and to establish a steering committee. Socialist Party members raised how this could be linked to the process of the working class fighting to establish its own mass party. Increasingly, others are beginning to echo the demand for a new party. We made the case for the direct involvement of the working class through the trade unions.

We have avoided fines for now. If Leicester City Council succeeds in its ban, others may follow suit. We will pursue all avenues to defeat the ban and fight back against the cuts.

A 'Great British National Strike'? Mobilising against the far right and putting forward a socialist alternative

The 'Great British National Strike' on 24 May was organised by groups linked to the far right, but it also attracted people angry at Starmer, using as it did the language of the workers' movement. Our members attended the counter-protests.

Leicester
About 50 people gathered at the clock tower in Leicester holding union jacks and chanting nationalist songs in support of the purported 'Great British National Strike'.

The initial chants appeared deceitful in an attempt to blur the lines between the far right and genuine working-class people disillusioned

with Starmer's government. They started by chanting "we want Starmer out", something that will quickly resonate with the loathing of many working-class people let down by Labour's austerity.

Socialist Party members responded by saying we need working-class unity to get Starmer out and fight Labour's austerity.

A woman standing with the far-right protesters came up to us to have a discussion and was friendly, because she had attended a Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition public meeting before and knew what we stand for. This confirms our correct approach of calling for working-class unity in fighting austerity and against racism and division.

ODUN

A day in the life of a chef Physically and mentally crushing and dangerous, just for minimum wage

VINCENT MOON

I'm writing this in response to Leah's article, 'the day in the life of an apprentice chef' in issue 1313. (see socialistparty.org.uk)

I started working in a kitchen during my first year of A-Levels at the age of 16, studying during the day and spending evenings and weekends washing dishes and being taught how to cook the odd dish at a family friend's pub. I enjoyed it and being part of a team, so much that I went to college for two years to study being a chef.

Upon leaving college I started work at a restaurant full time, initially still as a kitchen porter but eventually rising through the ranks to kitchen manager through the 18 years of my life that I spent in restaurants, hotels and pubs.

A standard shift for me would start at 8am, still tired from the shift before, finishing at 11pm and then a couple of pints - without which the adrenaline from that service would keep you up well into the early hours. I would wait until the head chef or manager turned up to open the kitchen and then bring in the produce on my own. Previously there would be three chefs to bring in produce but head office said we don't have the hours for that many chefs anymore.

Once the produce is put away I would prepare my section, juggling five tasks such as cooking five litres of fresh soup from scratch, washing salad or making 2kg of fresh mayonnaise. The slightest mistake or delay would be met with vile slurs about any weakness the head chef could see, and how you were letting down your team.

Serving hours would end at 9pm when clean down would start. Then finally, the clock strikes 11 and the day is over. Some readers might notice I didn't mention any lunch break. It doesn't exist in this industry, only the occasional cigarette break.

This pattern, day in and day out, does significant harm to your physical and mental health, for which there is no support. During my time as a chef I lost three colleagues and friends to suicide, and still hold it against the industry that I lost them.

Health and safety were just words during my time in the kitchen. As you can imagine, injuries were very frequent in the kitchen. Cuts and burns or sometimes something more serious.

You would think from all the above this would be well-paid job but even after 18 years, I was barely paid above minimum wage. I was made redundant due to ill health as my body couldn't take the beating anymore.

Since leaving I have seen the strength of unions and the differences they make in working-class people's lives and jobs. Hospitality is crying out for unions and for workers to get organised to stand up to bullying bosses.

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



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or make cheques payable to Socialist Party,
PO Box 1398, Enfield EN1 9GT

SOCIALIST PARTY FIGHTING FUND

AREA	£ RECEIVED	£ TARGET	Q2: APRIL-JUNE 2025	30 JUNE 2025
North West	1,609	1,200		134%
South West	1,837	2,100		87%
Wales	1,715	2,400		71%
East Midlands	1,412	2,050		69%
London	2,419	5,000	48%	
Southern & SE	961	2,400	40%	
West Midlands	1,022	2,700	38%	
Yorkshire	993	2,650	37%	
Northern	236	800	30%	
Eastern	320	1,300	25%	
Other	1,072	2,400	45%	
TOTAL	13,597	25,000	54%	

SPECIAL INTERNATIONAL APPEAL Support the fight for world socialism

Please donate to support the crucial work of the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI), the socialist international to which the Socialist Party is affiliated.

This year the CWI will hold its 14th World Congress in Berlin, Germany. Delegates will attend from Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and North America.

This year's finance appeal is crucial to help us play our part in gathering the best class fighters around the banner of working-class struggle and socialism.

• socialistparty.org.uk/donations/cwi-appeal-2025



- We say:**
- **Fight for jobs, homes and services for all not racism and division**
- **Build a new mass workers' party**
- **For democratic stewarding of anti-racist events including by trade unions**
- **Join the Socialist Party**

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.

- 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.

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.

- 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.

SOCIALISM AND INTERNATIONALISM

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

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Documentary review: Hostile

A damning portrait of British immigration policy

BILLY JONES
GLOUCESTERSHIRE SOCIALIST PARTY

Sonita Gale's brilliant 2021 documentary *Hostile* lays out the reality of what life is like for the vast majority of migrants to the UK. It exposes the falsehood that it is 'the high life, claiming benefits and checking into swanky hotels.'

The film was made during the Covid-19 pandemic and follows various people as they try to survive. Farrukh came to the UK in 2003 on a student visa, and since then has settled with his family in Manchester. He has given over a decade to the NHS as an IT engineer – and yet is being hounded by the Home Office over his right to live in the UK.

The paperwork he is asked to fill out is not only complicated, but expensive; he has racked up thousands of pounds in debt trying to keep up with payments. This cruel treatment is not a coincidence, but part of the government's 'hostile environment policy', instituted under Theresa May, which is designed to make life for those under immigration control so miserable that they decide to voluntarily leave.

The film shows the effects of the pandemic. International students, for example, have no access to public funds and many need to find work to support themselves (limited to a measly 20 hours a week). When businesses shut down during lockdown, many were left stranded. With no money coming in, they were kicked

out by their landlords, locked out of their student accounts, and threatened with deportation.

Importantly, the film points out that being an 'illegal immigrant' is not a crime on the part of the individual, but is determined by changing government policies. Illustrating this, the film covers the Windrush scandal.

Post-World War Two, the government invited Caribbean immigrants to the country to address a shortage of labour. However, in 2017, policies changed and this aged 'Windrush generation' were classed as illegal migrants and told to 'go back to their own country' – despite having lived almost their entire lives in the UK. One interviewee takes the director to the detention centre he was held in due to this policy change.

It is made clear that both Labour and Conservative governments are responsible for the ramping up of anti-immigration policies, as well as that many coming to this country are fleeing crises which have been exacerbated by British military intervention. These policies are part of the divisive rhetoric used to try to sow divisions in workplaces and working-class communities, and can give confidence to the far right.

It is through genuine working-class solidarity against racist scapegoating, uniting in a fight for decent jobs, homes and services for all, that we can win a decent future for all.

- **Hostile is currently available for streaming on BFI Player.**



Hostile PHOTO: BRITISH FILM INSTITUTE

Kneecap rap group's Mo Chara faces 'terrorism' charges

Defend the right to protest slaughter in Gaza!



PHOTO: IOANNIS

OISIN DUNCAN
SOCIALIST PARTY SCOTLAND (CWI)

London's Metropolitan Police has charged Kneecap rap group member, Liam Óg Ó hAnnaidh, better known as Mo Chara, with terror offences after videos surfaced appearing to show him with a Hezbollah flag at a gig in London last November.

In their response on social media, the Kneecap trio, from Belfast, correctly calls this a "festival of distraction" amid the potential starvation of 14,000 infants unfolding in Gaza.

They also rightly criticise the highly undemocratic magistrates courts which will try Ó hAnnaidh and the political motivations behind this attack.

Yet this is not about the flying of a Hezbollah flag by a rapper. In Kneecap's home country, many flags of banned paramilitary groups are publicly displayed and often associated with local politicians, yet no charges are brought by the state.

The real motivation here is to

intimidate musicians, other artists and the working class at large into staying quiet about the unfolding genocide against the Palestinian people by the Netanyahu regime. It's also part of the criminalisation by capitalist governments internationally of Palestinian rights protesters.

Ruling class hypocrisy

The attempt to criminalise Kneecap by the British capitalist state follows the banning of the group from festivals and concerts in England and Germany, and a range of condemnations from Tory, Democratic Unionist and Labour politicians.

Scottish National Party (SNP) First Minister John Swinney hypocritically called for Kneecap to be banned from Trnsmt music festival due to take place in Glasgow this summer. Aren't the SNP supposed to be liberal and progressive? It was only last year that SNP politicians were exposed as having cosy secret chats with Israeli diplomats while publicly shedding tears about Gaza.

The trumped-up backlash is a clear reaction to Kneecap's decision to speak out about Israeli state terror in Gaza and beyond at the recent Coachella festival.

Following this, several videos have gone viral which feature controversial statements from the group, including an apparent call for violence against Tory MPs.

Some of Kneecap's comments are crude expressions of anger, aimed both at the previous Tory government and the ongoing genocide against Palestinians, as well as Israeli state violence towards Lebanese workers and youth.

While Marxists must understand and share the deep rage felt by the working class, our task is to channel those emotions into the class struggle, which includes defending democratic rights, free speech, and artistic expression.

The hypocrisy of the media and politicians which condemn Kneecap knows no limits.

Association with symbols of a proscribed group is grounds, it seems, for serious criminal charges, while Netanyahu and his cabinet commit crimes against humanity on a daily basis with impunity.

Socialist Party Scotland and Young Socialists Scotland support Palestinian liberation and an end to Israel's onslaught on Gaza and their attacks on Lebanon. We support the build-take place in Glasgow this summer. Aren't the SNP supposed to be liberal and progressive? It was only last year that SNP politicians were exposed as having cosy secret chats with Israeli diplomats while publicly shedding tears about Gaza.

The trumped-up backlash is a clear reaction to Kneecap's decision to speak out about Israeli state terror in Gaza and beyond at the recent Coachella festival. Following this, several videos have gone viral which feature controversial statements from the group, including an apparent call for violence against Tory MPs.

Kneecap and controversy

This is not Kneecap's first controversy; their mural on the Falls Road in West Belfast depicting a burning police van drew similar condemnations from politicians across the North of Ireland.

Yet Kneecap recently collaborated with Young Spence, a fellow rapper from a working-class Protestant background on the Shankill Road.

The group also won a legal case against the previous Tory government after current Tory Leader Kemi Badenoch blocked a grant awarded to them due to their 'anti-British' political views. They donated the entire settlement of £14,250 to two youth centres in Belfast, one of which supports the Irish language and another predominantly used by young Protestants.

Not only was this an open attack on free speech by the Tories, but it also reflects the lack of public funding for working-class artists, which must be campaigned for, and the pressure on them to 'toe the line' on political and social issues.

United working-class struggle to overcome sectarian division is the tradition that Socialist Party Scotland defends. This includes in Ireland where our co-thinkers, now organised in Militant Left, have a long history of advocating the unity of Catholic and Protestant workers in a common struggle against capitalism, state repression and sectarianism.

For example, in the 1990s, we helped organise in the North of Ireland the successful Youth Against Sectarianism campaign, which included gigs and work with musicians.

Hip hop as music of the oppressed

As explained in a scene from their film released last year, Kneecap consider their music an adaptation of Black American rap music, and the infusion of the Irish language into that genre has created a popular sound which has attracted young people not just from Ireland but internationally.

However, and in line with the history of hip hop, some view their music as also embracing drug use, violence and sexuality in ways which

undermine their more positive message.

This, in addition to their edgy humour, has run them afoul of the right-wing elements of Irish republicanism.

There's a parallel here to the controversy over Black rap groups in the early 1990s in the US, where groups like NWA and Public Enemy were censored and demonised for violent lyrics.

Conveniently for the ruling class, this process also drowned out the anti-establishment political ideas present in the rap genre, particularly the anger against poverty, police harassment, killings and oppression felt by Black American workers.

Once again, quotes and actions taken out of context are used to undermine a deeper political message in Kneecap's work. There are many examples of Kneecap lyrics which bluntly promote Irish republicanism in ways that we do not support, but there are also counterexamples where they call for working-class unity, and of course, more recently, an end to the slaughter of Palestinians.

Capitalism has always cracked down on art which points out the systemic exploitation it relies on, while the workers' movement has a proud history of defending the right to free speech and artistic expression.

There is an opportunity here not just to defend an Irish rapper from the British courts, but to mobilise a broader movement to oppose Israeli state terror and ultimately the capitalist world order which creates war and suffering.

Kneecap should appeal to the Musicians' Union and the wider trade union movement for support against the very serious charges they face that carry long jail sentences. The charges must be dropped immediately!

£1/£2 solidarity price

socialistparty.org.uk



the Socialist

Issue 1323

29 May - 4 June 2025

formerly **Militant**

YOUTH WALKOUT AGAINST TRUMP



PAUL MATTSOON

ADAM GILLMAN
SOCIALIST STUDENTS NATIONAL ORGANISER

Trump is coming to Britain and there is so much anger out there. People can see how he nakedly acts in the interests of the super-rich by attacking ordinary people, and by trying to sow division.

He has launched attacks on government workers, ramped up action deporting migrant workers, attacked women's rights to access abortions, threatened the rights of trans people, and backs the Israeli state's bombardment and onslaught on Gaza.

We are organising student walkouts against Trump on Day X - the day he visits parliament.

"Why would they let him visit? And Starmer, I hate him even more!" is what one student told us outside of Lewisham College in south London. Like Trump, Starmer is acting in the interests of the super-rich and using divide-and-rule tactics too.

We met lots of angry young people in Lewisham who want to organise a walkout, and lots signed up at a recent Gaza demo too. Socialist Students wants to help build in schools, colleges and universities up and down the country.

How can you protest Trump's visit?

Organise a meeting at your school, college or uni

- Discuss with your friends and classmates - invite them to a meeting, it could be in a classroom, cafeteria or even a local cafe
- Make a social media graphic to share, posters to put up, and leaflets to distribute to get people along

Organise a protest on Day X

- Once we know the date of Trump's visit to parliament, put out a time and place for the protest
- Bring a megaphone and banners, make up some chants, and invite some speakers to explain why they are protesting

Join Socialist Students

- Be part of an organisation fighting for socialist change at schools, colleges and unis all over the country

JOIN socialist students 

- Visit socialiststudents.org.uk/join
- or call **020 8988 8761**
- or text your name and school, college or uni to **07515 921699**



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

