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formerly **Militant**

NEW PARTY NEEDED TRADE UNIONS MUST TAKE THE LEAD

DAVE NELLIST

SOCIALIST FORMER LABOUR MP (1983–1992)

Stagnant wages, underfunded public services, the scandal of the housing crisis, Labour councils pursuing fire and rehire, cuts to pensioners' winter fuel allowance, reductions in disability benefits, and continued government support for Israel's murderous campaign in Gaza – all under a Labour government.

Keir Starmer's hints at mild reforms to eligibility for the winter fuel allowance or partial relaxation of the two-child cap on benefits stem from working-class anger shown by Labour's

crushing defeat in the May local council elections, and the continuing fall in the party's position in the opinion polls. Both are a consequence of Labour, like the Tories before them, cutting funding for our services.

But worse austerity and cuts to public services loom as the economy stagnates, and the government already plans to spend billions of pounds more on arms and armaments.

If, at the NATO summit later this month, Labour commits to the target of 3.5% of GDP for core defence spending by 2032, plus an extra 1.5% of GDP for military infrastructure and cybersecurity, that would entail tens of billions taken from essential services and hit the living standards of the working class.

The recent council elections showed that millions of working-class people don't trust the Establishment parties, and Reform UK is becoming a significant beneficiary of that anger at the ballot box.

The elections next May are much bigger, and for many areas, including all London boroughs and major cities such as Birmingham, all councillors are up for election and will stay in

office for four years, beyond the latest date for the next general election.

If Reform UK is not challenged by a new party, it could end up with thousands of councillors, failing to fight Labour austerity, exploiting the genuine grievances of working-class people, and sowing divisions among workers.

It is the organised working class in the trade union movement which has the numbers, coherence, reach and resources, that is the key to a new party of the working class which can cut across support for the millionaire-funded Reform UK.

Our movement will suffer if workers view us as a voice for pro-austerity Labour. That's why 25 senior trade unionists, supported by over 1,000 activists so far, have come together to call on the trade union movement to seriously discuss founding a new anti-austerity, anti-war party.

They are arguing for urgent discussions within our unions and across unions to organise a conference to establish that political voice for working people. Could you join them?

The Establishment has its parties – it's time the working class had its own.

WHAT WE THINK

ORGANISE TO FIGHT LABOUR AUSTERITY >>> p8-9

COME TO NATIONAL SHOP STEWARDS NETWORK
CONFERENCE 5 JULY

Add your name to the call for the trade union movement to discuss founding a new party

Scan here or go to change.org/TradeUnions-LaunchANewParty





Reinstate winter fuel payments

ERIC SEGAL
KENT SOCIALIST PARTY

The Labour government’s slashing of entitlement to winter fuel payment shocked millions of pensioners. In response, trade union Unite launched a national campaign to defend the winter fuel payment, including pursuing a judicial review to overturn the government’s decision to cut payments to all but the poorest pensioners. However, we are still waiting to hear when the judicial review is to be heard.

Unite’s research shows that 67% of pensioners have reduced their heating, and 63% felt the cold more often as a result of Labour’s cuts. A third are taking fewer baths or showers and 16% have cut back on hot meals due to the increased costs of trying to stay warm.

Around 100 Unite members from Unite Retired Members branches and various Unite Community branches across the country attended a winter fuel campaign Zoom meeting on the 29 May. We discussed the government’s potential U-turn on the winter fuel cut.

Unite general secretary Sharon Graham has said: "Whilst this announcement on winter fuel looks like a first step in the right direction, pensioners’ minds need to be put at rest now – rather than dangling a promise to make a move in the autumn. [...]" The winter fuel decision should

be fully reversed, and money should be found instead by implementing a wealth tax on the super-rich."

However there is a clear change in the mood towards the Labour Party with clear anger against it developing. A number of veteran retired trade unionists spoke, calling for Unite to lead the way by consulting the union’s membership on ending the link with the Labour Party and the formation of a new mass workers’ party. I was pleasantly surprised with the response from others supporting the call, the petition signed by trade unionists calling for discussions on a new party was posted in the chat (see front page).

There will be a further campaign event on Monday 9 June in London to put more pressure on the government to step back, but our conclusion is that Labour no longer represents us. This should not be lost on the leadership of Unite.



Labour’s hypocrisy on the rise of young NEETs

JOE WOOLFALL
SOUTH LIVERPOOL SOCIALIST PARTY

Young people from disadvantaged backgrounds were 66% more likely to be not in education, employment or training (NEET) than average, a report from charity Impetus has found. The north of England and the Midlands held the highest rate of NEETs, but all regions in the country have areas defined as deprived and consequently have more NEETs. The worst outcomes were for young people who come from a disadvantaged background, while also having special educational needs and/or disabilities, and lacking GCSE-level qualifications.

Right-wing Labour employment minister Alison McGovern gave an interview in which she expressed ‘concern’ about the prospects of young working-class people. This sort of sentiment sums up Labour politicians – giving lip service to the plight of the working class, while continuing to push through

austerity, whether in parliament or the council chambers. McGovern said that the plans set out last year for a ‘youth guarantee’, intended to offer all young people access to a job, training, or apprenticeship, would allow community organisations to reach young people who missed out on the ‘support’ offered to benefits claimants through jobcentres.

Labour back the bosses

On the other hand, Labour plans to cut disability benefits and prevent young people from claiming the health component of Universal Credit. Labour politicians express concern for some of the most disadvantaged working-class people, including disabled people, while taking away their benefits. Along with rises in tuition fees and the effects attacks on pensioners’ winter fuel payments will have on entire families, Labour have shown whose interests they protect and who they expect to pay for it. They are protecting the capitalist class – the super-rich bosses that make their money through the exploitation of working-class people.

Labour MPs tell us that they are attacking our pay and living standards

987,000

people aged 16-24 not in education, employment or training

for the good of us all. But this is clearly not the case. Working-class people need our own party to fight for our interests. Labour isn’t Labour anymore – we know whose interests they’re serving, and they aren’t serving ours.

We need a socialist job creation programme to provide a decent job with decent pay for all those looking for work. The Socialist Party fights to reverse the cuts to disability benefits and every other attack on the working class. Currently, there lacks an effective mass political vehicle in which people can express these beliefs. That’s why the Socialist Party calls for a new mass workers’ party, backed by the trade unions, as a key step in the fight against austerity and for the socialist transformation of society.



Nationalise Thames Water! No money to the profiteering polluting bosses

With every passing month, Thames Water moves closer to the brink of collapse. Now it has announced its preferred buyer – US private equity firm KKR – has dropped out. Presumably KKR decided it wouldn’t be easy to squeeze much more out of the failing privatised company.

Nationalisation continues to appear to be inevitable, eventually. When push comes to shove, any government will be forced to step in to prevent total collapse of a company that supplies water to roughly a quarter of Britain. 69% of Britons believe the water companies should be brought back into public ownership. But the Labour government continues to refuse, claiming it would be ‘unaffordable’.



Earlier this year, Thames added another £3 billion to its existing £20 billion debt pile. Thames Water paid £37.5 million in dividends to shareholders in October 2023, and £131.3 million in March 2024. These barons have been hiking our bills, polluting our waterways and filling their own pockets.

We say nationalise, but don’t pay the debts racked up by the profit vultures. Compensation should only be paid where there is proven need – to safeguard workers’ pension investments, for example. That would not be unaffordable, but it would be unpalatable to the capitalist class whose interests this Labour government represents.

Reverse disability benefits cuts

Feeling the working-class anger against their proposed disability benefits reforms, it has been reported that prime minister and chancellor Keir Starmer and Rachel Reeves are looking to soften the blow. The government plans to limit the eligibility criteria for Personal Independence Payments (PIP) and the work capability assessment component of Universal Credit. These benefits are available to disabled and unwell people who are both in work and unable to work.

The initial proposals would see over one million people lose their PIP, and 600,000 people would lose out from reforms to the work capability assessment. In many constituencies the number of people affected is more than the Labour MP’s parliamentary majority. Alongside removing universal winter fuel payments and keeping the two-child benefit cap, these attacks on working-class people contributed to the disastrous results for the pro-capitalist Labour Party in May’s local elections.

So it’s no wonder Starmer and Reeves are feeling the heat – rolling out the red carpet for big business while seeking to make working-class people pay with benefit cuts, new rounds of austerity and crumbling public services.

U-turn

To stave off a rumoured rebellion by over 100 Labour MPs, 11 June’s spending review may contain reforms that mean fewer people lose their PIP. 200,000 would be freed from having this vital lifeline snatched away, but the figures speak for themselves; it would still mean hundreds of thousands of people losing out.

Instead of being wedded to placating ‘the markets’ with fiscal rules that

mean working-class people have to pay while the profits of the super-rich go untouched, we need a socialist alternative to Starmer’s race to the bottom. We need a benefits system fit for purpose, based on support and what people need, not what the bosses can get away with. We need decent jobs with decent pay, share out the work with no loss of pay. The rotten capitalist system which Starmer and his ilk stand in the interests of won’t provide us with that. We need to take the wealth and resources in society out of the hands of the super-rich elite; nationalise the big firms and banks under democratic workers’ control and management to plan society to provide a decent standard of living for all.

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





Wales – Labour’s disability consultation farce

SWANSEA DISABLED PEOPLE AGAINST CUTS (DPAC) STATEMENT

Welsh disability cuts consultation cancelled

The Cardiff disability cuts consultation on 3 June was always going to be unfair, with half the proposals, the most important half, completely off the table for discussion.

The only face-to-face consultation for the whole of Wales has now been cancelled, after what we consider blatant and unlawful disability discrimination by the government’s Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) in arranging such an inaccessible venue at the last minute. We will still be protesting as planned at our meeting point.

Disabled people in Wales denied a voice

According to DWP email communications, there will now not be any

in-person consultation in Wales on the disability cuts at all. We demand that any House of Commons vote on the proposals must not go ahead until we have had a full and genuine public consultation in Wales.

Fighting for our demands

The DWP has shown itself to be incapable of organising a fair consultation. We will run our own.

We invite disabled people and carers concerned about the disability cuts to get in touch with us. We will put your demands on paper in front of the DWP and MPs, and insist that they take notice.

We salute Cardiff Trades Union Council in its initiative in writing a strong, fighting, motion opposing disability cuts. This was voted on at the Trades Council Conference, and selected as its one motion to take to the Trades Union Congress (TUC), which represents 5.5 million workers.

The motion was moved by Socialist Party member Katrine Williams. It calls on the TUC to call a national demo against disability benefit cuts.

The disability cuts proposals are fatally flawed, and the ‘pathways to work’ green paper must be retracted. The government must start again on welfare reform, listening to disabled people and carers in a genuine process of co-production.

Swansea DPAC supports calls for an urgent debate on the burning question of political representation, and supports discussions on the need for a new workers’ party, based on the trade unions, that cuts across division, stands up for communities, and puts disabled people at the heart of everything it does.

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



Fund services not war

The UK is moving towards ‘war fighting readiness’, according to Keir Starmer, with £15 billion earmarked for more nuclear weapons, among other purchases. In an attempt to sound all Churchillian, he spoke of the country’s ‘need’ to be a “battle-ready, armour-clad nation”.

If only this Labour government were prepared to move the UK towards ‘poverty fighting readiness’ and made the country ‘ill health ready’ by investing in the NHS, and made the country a ‘council house-clad nation’. Forget armour, we’re currently clad in thousands of food banks. When asked at a press conference, “What is your priority - reversing the winter fuel cut, getting rid of the two-child benefit cap, or getting defence spending up to 3% of GDP?” Starmer only talked about Nato.

It’s also laughable that this will achieve ‘growth’, as Labour claims. Starmer spoke of “the workers building the next generation of subs in Barrow”, “the brilliant workers and apprentices in Govan”, “our tech experts, our scientists, our engineers”.

Imagine what they could be doing to improve society if put to work developing much-needed infrastructure and technologies instead of weapons of death. And imagine what all that money being spent on nuclear weapons could be used for instead. Spending such sums on submarines at the same time as cutting benefits for disabled people is indefensible and leaves a sinking feeling.

It’s true the world is volatile, but it’s capitalist politicians and their system that is making it so. The way to peace is linked to the need for the building of independent mass socialist alternatives here and around the world, uniting working-class people across all national and ethnic lines against war, poverty, exploitation and capitalism.

12 new attack submarines ordered by Starmer

0 new hospitals planned since Labour’s election victory



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The Socialist is written, read, sold and bought by ordinary workers, trade unionists, young people and Socialist Party members. We want you to write for the Socialist.
Send us reports of your workplace and community campaigns, short letters on working-class issues, or ideas for other articles.

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

Poor housing a source of ‘simmering anger’

PAUL KERSHAW
ENFIELD AND LEA VALLEY SOCIALIST PARTY

The family of 15-week-old baby Akram Mohammed, who died after living in a damp, mould-ridden housing association flat, say they believe those conditions contributed to his death. Complaints about the flat, owned by Notting Hill Genesis (NHG) housing association, had been made to the housing ombudsman and to Camden Council. ITV news quotes Akram’s father saying, “We complained, and complained, but nothing happened.” His mother said, “We were crying out for help, but nobody hears.”

They are not alone. In the same week as news of baby Akram’s death made headlines, the Housing Ombudsman published a new report which investigated over 3,000 pieces of evidence and found a 474% increase in complaints concerning substandard living conditions between 2019-20 to 2024-25. Around two-thirds of the cases featured poor practice by social landlords, like councils and housing associations.

Notting Hill Genesis
NHG was created from a financially driven merger of two housing associations in the teeth of opposition from tenants and resident groups. Its CEO was recruited from estate agents Foxtons.

Responding to pressure from the Regulator of Social Housing, NHG recently appointed a new non-executive director, Leanne Hearne, who will apparently have responsibility for regulator compliance and strategy. If her role as CEO of Livv Housing is a guide, tenants and workers should take the appointment as a warning.

She told staff that Margaret Thatcher was her role model and used anti-union tactics in fighting a strike which began in October of last year. It concluded at the end of May with a victory for the Unite and Unison members who took action (See page 7). She announced that she would step down as the settlement was reached.

A recent meeting of NHG tenants and residents agreed to protest outside NHG’s head office to draw attention to the organisation’s multiple failings and to express solidarity with Livv strikers. They are organised in the Social Housing Action Campaign (SHAC), a campaigning network of housing association tenants and residents.

The ombudsman report warned of “simmering anger” amongst tenants and residents that risked “social disquiet” and called for the creation of a national body to give residents a voice. This would be a significant step but not enough in itself, and has rightly been met with scepticism by tenants.

SHAC has campaigned for a national tenants’ union based on and with links to the trade unions. The big housing associations should be held to account through democratic representation of their tenants. Rather than being a vehicle of global financial institutions to generate profit, social landlords should be publicly funded to provide decent homes.



Council housing crisis

In London, homelessness services are nowhere near meeting rocketing need. Councils supposedly ‘over-spending’ by £330 million on these services represent the “single biggest risk” to council finances, according to London Councils umbrella group.

Councils in London must also reduce their spending on council housing by £264 million to keep their budgets balanced, according to London Councils.

The union Unite points out that UK local authorities were £122 billion in debt as of 2024, with government lenders charging high rates of interest. Six councils have issued Section 114 notices, due to their deficits since 2021, with 43% of England’s 317 local authorities at risk, according to data from the National Audit Office. Unite is calling for an overhaul of how local authorities are funded. Unite is launching a campaign for ‘fair funding’ of local authorities. Tenants and housing campaigners should fight with Unite to ensure decent services and for safe, high-quality council housing.

The Socialist Party demands:

- **A mass council house building programme to provide good-quality, environmentally friendly and secure homes for all who need them**
- **Genuinely independent, democratic Tenants and Residents Associations. Genuine accountability and control, including over repairs. Nationalise construction companies under democratic workers’ control and management to plan the necessary repairs and housing improvements**
- **End the commercialisation of housing associations and registration of for-profit providers, run in the interests of big business and hedge funds. Take the housing associations into democratic public ownership. This could include the option to return to council ownership with independent tenant democratic control, or co-ops**
- **Council housing officers to enforce decent living standards and rent controls for all. For landlord registers to fight back against slum housing**
- **Councils should refuse to implement the cuts now and link up with other councils, building a mass working-class campaign to fight for the financial resources to reverse cuts, fund remedial works and for the public services. Use the wealth of the super-rich and big businesses for what we need not what makes a profit for a few**



Women’s right to choose End repression and cuts

HEATHER RAWLING
SOCIALIST PARTY NATIONAL COMMITTEE

There has been a growing tendency amongst some police forces to investigate women who have had miscarriages and abortions, causing much distress for those women at a vulnerable time in their lives.

In May, Nicola Packer was found not guilty of illegally terminating a pregnancy, after taking abortion pills beyond the legal limit of 12 weeks. Six women have been prosecuted for ‘illegally terminating a pregnancy’ since 2022 under the Offences Against the Person Act of 1861. An Act passed in Victorian times which had only been used in such cases three times before 2022!

Carla Foster was sentenced to 28 months in prison for terminating her pregnancy during the Covid lockdown. 58 years after the 1967 Abortion Act, women in the UK still do not have a legal right to abortion. In fact, there has been an acceleration in prosecutions being brought against women who have had abortions after the 24-week limit.

The impact on the women concerned is devastating. You could be denied access to your children. Arrests have been made in public places, impacting on women’s privacy.

In December, the National Police Chief’s Council issued new guidance for ‘Child death investigation.’ These guidelines allow phones, tablets and computers to be checked for period tracker apps, Google searches, and other invasive investigations.

Police are ramping up repression while the government cuts services.

Austerity’s impact
Women have been under attack in many ways, including from cuts to public services. Most jobs in the public sector are done by women; women, because of their caring role in the family, are the biggest users of public services and they will be expected to take on a bigger caring role as public services are cut further.

The Socialist Party fights for the right and resources to choose when and whether to have children. That means fully funding and expanding abortion, contraceptive and reproductive health services. End legal repression and fight for a socialist alternative. This includes fighting for the resources people need when deciding whether to have children – for free childcare, council housing, and decent pay and maternity and paternity rights.

We need a fully funded NHS, kick out the privateers and cancel the crippling interest rates paid on PFI loans. Cancel the two-child benefit cap, invest in a massive council house building programme and fully fund our schools. For a national minimum wage of at least £15 an hour.

SOCIALISM 2025

IDEAS FOR A BILLIONAIRE-FREE FUTURE

Saturday 15 and Sunday 16 November – put the date in your diary now

20% discount on tickets: www.socialism.org.uk

See ‘golden’ ticket option which includes a night in a hostel near the venue

Across the world billions of us desperately want an end to poverty, climate crisis and war. But the current leaders in our governments prioritise the interests of billionaires. Instead of planning how to organise society to guarantee a home, a job and public services for all, government policies across the planet have contributed to the emergence of the ‘super-billionaire’. Just 24 of them own ten times more wealth than the amount needed to end global poverty.

Those policies include austerity, privatisation of public services and utilities, and low pay.

Since 1990, the number of billionaires in the UK has risen more than ten times from 15 to 156 in 2025. In 1990, two of the UK’s billionaires drew wealth from property holdings. By 2025, it is 42. And we have the housing crisis to show for it – meaning misery for millions.

Similarly the NHS crisis is a billionaire crisis. Between January 2012 and May 2024, £10 million a week has left the NHS’s budget in the form of profits from private contracts. Labour health minister Wes Streeting has received £58,000 from sources connected to the private health sector since July 2024. He is part of a government that rules for the billionaires.

What does all this tell us about the way society is organised? That the interests of the billionaires are put first. That is now widely accepted – and people want change.

In the US, hundreds of thousands have flocked to rallies under the headline ‘fighting the oligarchy’. A majority there think billionaires “are becoming more like dictators.” Trump and Elon Musk have

provided some convincing support for this viewpoint.

Trump’s tariffs are designed to maximise profits for US corporations but threaten to bring the next world economic crisis even closer. The capitalist system is riven with contradictions that mean crises are inherent – but Trump’s attempts to disrupt in the interest of US capitalism are accelerating the looming crash.

In 2007-08 it was working-class people who paid the price. Our incomes have never recovered and public services have been underfunded where they haven’t been completely lost.

And in the face of fires, floods and rising sea levels that threaten human lives, we get Trump’s “Drill, baby, drill”. The profits of US oil companies are prioritised.

This system does not offer a future for humanity.

Socialism is the alternative we need, a system based on planning society in the interests of the billions and the environment, not the billionaires. That means fighting for the working class to organise to be able to end the power of the billionaires – and replace them.

How can a political voice for the working class be built? How can we strengthen our trade unions to defend our class? How can young people fight for a future?

The Socialism weekend is a small but vital opportunity to step back from all the campaigning, from the mundane tasks of life and the accompanying stress, to discuss and think about how we fight for the socialist change we need.

PCS must fight on pay and against massive potential job losses

But new leadership already backtracking

FIONA BRITTLÉ

PCS NEC, PERSONAL CAPACITY

The first meeting of the newly elected PCS National Executive Committee (NEC) took place on Thursday 29 May to discuss the union's response to the Labour government's pay remit of 3.25% (plus 0.5% to 'tackle low pay'). This was announced as the PCS Annual Delegate Conference (ADC) closed. It goes nowhere near the union's pay claim of 10%, and does nothing to address chronic levels of low pay, or the impact of years of pay freezes and caps.

The NEC meeting should have agreed details to implement the fighting strategy carried overwhelmingly at the ADC only days previously. Instead, a paper from the general secretary Fran Heathcote was put, which rejected the pay remit but did not put forward plans to build a campaign to defend members against the onslaught of attacks by the government. The union needs to fight on funding as well as pay. There are reports of anything between 50,000 to 80,000 potential job losses!

A lot at stake

PCS members have a lot at stake. But already the newly dominant (and misnamed) 'Left Unity' leadership grouping are showing they are not up for the fight. The proposals set out by the leadership will disarm members in the face of Starmer and Reeves's attacks.

Proposals suggested a 'ballot-ready strategy', but precisely what this means has been deferred to the



PHOTO: SOUTH LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

NEC 'Organising and Education' sub-committee, which hasn't even been established yet, and won't be until the end of June!

The general secretary calls for immediate engagement in delegated pay talks (ie employer by employer) "to secure the maximum monies available" – but without demanding national talks. Experience already tells us that delegated talks in the context of an overall 3.25% remit will mean average pay rises – apart from very exceptional occasions – of 3.25%.

Agreed demands being described as "aspirations", and a failure to set out the campaign required to rebuild confidence and trust after the botched 2023 experience, are a recipe for confusing members.

But it will be all too clear to Starmer and senior civil service management that this is a leadership that doesn't want to fight.

Left motion detailed campaign

In contrast, NEC members from the left coalition (including the Broad Left Network, in which Socialist Party members participate) put forward a motion which set out in precise detail the type of campaign required.

It called for an immediate rejection of 3.25%, linking up with members employed by Scottish Government, whose remit is 3% every year for three years. It called for urgent demands to be placed on government to protect jobs, pay and conditions, including attacks on hybrid working and the threatened removal of 12,000 jobs out of London. Crucially, it set out the steps required to build the

confidence of members and prepare for a likely strike ballot in September.

Uncharacteristically, national president Martin Cavanagh allowed both motions to be heard. He spent the last year ruling out all motions from the left coalition that contradicted the general secretary, because last year the left coalition held a majority on the NEC and he knew our motions would be passed. Funny how democracy is applied differently once the balance of forces changes. Both motions from the left coalition were lost and the paper from the general secretary was carried.



There are two trends within PCS: those who want to fight and those who don't

This NEC meeting makes it crystal clear that there are two trends within PCS – those who want to fight, and those, including the Left Unity leadership, who don't.

Left Unity may have regained a majority on the NEC but this isn't an endorsement of their strategy or record. The determination of conference delegates to vote for a militant strategy is a sign of the real fighting mood (see 'PCS conference saddles up' for battle against Labour austerity' at socialistparty.org.uk).

Join the fight of the Broad Left Network to help fight for the strategy that members need: bln.org.uk

Aslef conference debates industrial and political strategy

KRIS O'SULLIVAN

DELEGATE TO ASLEF AAD, PERSONAL CAPACITY

I had the opportunity and privilege to be sent as a delegate from my local Birmingham branch to train drivers' union Aslef AAD (Annual Assembly of Delegates) 19-22 May in Durham.

Delegates represented members from across the UK, including train drivers on passenger services (Train Operating Companies - TOCs), freight services (Freight Operating Companies - FOCs) and recently nationalised operators. There were workplace reps, committee officers, and rank-and-file activists.

With just under 100 motions submitted, covering a whole range of industrial, political and social issues, from start to finish the conference floor was engaged in intense debate, addressing the issues affecting the lives of train drivers, and what role our union can play in the wider labour movement.

As a second time delegate, AAD this year was just as eye-opening

and thought-provoking as previously. But this time we were meeting under Starmer's Labour government.

Industrial items revolved heavily around health and safety and terms and conditions. Workplace conditions are often not suitable for the 21st century, especially in the freight sector, with lack of access to amenities and hygiene facilities. These issues spur on our crucial 'dignity for drivers' campaign.

Public ownership

Delegates rightly made the point that technical issues such as cab ergonomics, traction manufacture, railway infrastructure and implementation of new technology, should be done with direct input from the service workers themselves as the practical 'industry experts'. That reflected a strong desire to fight for more workers' control of the nation's railway.

These arguments leaned naturally into political topics, and the ownership of freight and the rolling stock

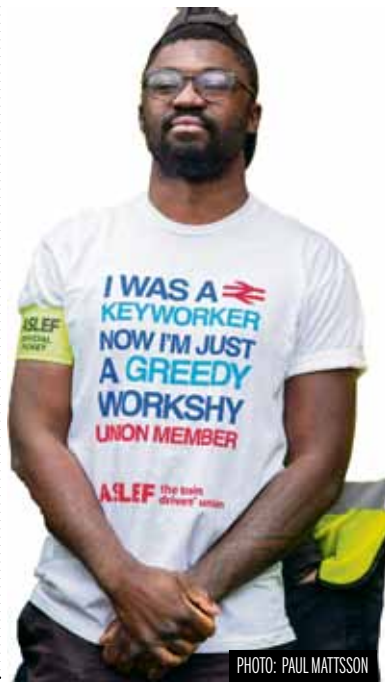


PHOTO: PAUL MATTSOON

companies. As more of the passenger network is brought into public ownership as 'Great British Railways', the sentiment was expressed 'You can't control what you don't own'. Aslef has welcomed the government's steps but says there is "scope to go further". It is the aspiration of Aslef for full nationalisation - we must demand that of Starmer's Labour.

Whilst there was no disaffiliation motion this year, the limits of Labour's nationalisation was just one issue which explains the mood of anger and frustration towards the Labour Party that exists among a significant layer of Aslef members.

Funds to Labour

This was reflected in calls from delegates that funds handed over to Labour candidates should be in the form of targeted support for candidates who support policies in line with Aslef policy.

References were made to attacks on striking workers, especially the Birmingham bin dispute; Starmer's stance on immigration in reaction

to Reform UK; the continuation of austerity policies; the attitude to minority rights, including trans people. If any 'honeymoon period' did exist among Aslef delegates, that was no longer present for many.

The bulk of Tory anti-union laws are still in place nearly a year after Labour's election – including the undemocratic 50% ballot threshold for industrial action. I moved a motion that our union should call on the TUC (Trades Union Congress) to organise a special conference to review the Employment Rights Bill and demand its strengthening, and to demand Labour implements fast track legislation to repeal the Tory 2016 Trade Union Act. On the advice of the Executive Committee, this motion was 'noted' by conference.

It was inspiring to see there was an atmosphere of working-class militancy from the membership. Solidarity was expressed for fellow workers in dispute, there was a preparedness to fight for improvements, and positive reception to socialist ideas for the direction of our union!

Labour uses court injunction against strikers

Mobilise solidarity with Birmingham bin workers

BIRMINGHAM SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBERS

Just as Labour Birmingham City Council proposed what Unite the Union calls a 'watered down' offer to striking bin workers, the High Court approved an injunction brought by the council against the workers, who face pay cuts of thousands of pounds a year.

Strikers, who have been out for thirteen weeks, will now be threatened with arrest for blocking the entrances to depots, walking in front of bin lorries, or congregating outside designated areas.

This shows who the justice system works for. The council bosses' arguments were listened to over those of the workforce and the union. This 'double-whammy' – legal action at the same time as reneging on offers reportedly previously discussed at ACAS – clearly shows how the courts back up attacks on workers.

This follows in the footsteps of previous court rulings against trade unions, including the ban on posties striking in 2019. Labour pledged to reverse some of the Tory anti-union laws within 100 days of coming to power, as well as a ban on the use of zero-hour contracts, which Birmingham council has taken full advantage of. Eleven months later and we're still waiting!

Unite is making plans to challenge the injunction. But if it's not overturned, other tactics can stop the scabs and put the pressure back on the council. On the picket lines each day and in our latest strike bulletin, Socialist Party members have been discussing this with Unite members.

Bin workers might be banned from standing in the way of depot gates, but what about other trade union members? Down the road from each of the bin depots there are bus garages, with plenty of Unite members with experience of blocking vehicles from their own successful strike in 2023.

Union members at other workplaces

A direct approach to union members at these workplaces and other large groups of unionised shift workers could bring out groups to help prevent agency crews leaving. And that's not to mention approaching other Birmingham City Council workers who could be next in line for cuts!

In Coventry, a handful of supporters and union organisers, including Socialist Party members, have managed to shut down the scab company Tom White Waste when they have picketed the depot.

Despite the council's best efforts, the strike has stayed solid, with more joining the strike than going back to work. A mass meeting of Unite members could debate and decide together what tactics can be used to delay and stop scab collections, and discuss what the union's red lines should be in negotiations, as well as how to respond to the voluntary redundancy offers that have been made to drivers.

Electing a strike committee that can support the reps in getting information out to members and feeding back to the union from the pickets can help keep the workforce united against the council's attacks, and get a resolution to the strike that all workers can accept.



PHOTO: BIRMINGHAM SOCIALIST PARTY

Close to £1 million has so far been spent policing the strike. And that's to say nothing of money the council has spent on legal fees, private security and overtime payments to agency crews, rather than settling the dispute! As the council's running tab becomes clear, it should be broadcast across the city, so that Brummies can see who is really responsible for the strike dragging on.

Battleground against Starmer's cuts

If Birmingham is the main battleground against Starmer's cuts, then Unite needs to bring the fight here by calling a national demonstration to demand a fair deal for Birmingham bin workers and all in the public sector struggling for fair pay.

It's clear this dispute is being used as a testbed for further cuts to be carried out by Labour councils and the government. Unite should appeal to other unions to join them in a mass demonstration – as a step towards joining them in a mass strike.

A wider political campaign with bin workers at its head could shift Angela Rayner, secretary of state for local government, and the other Labour ministers and government commissioners who are helping to impose a huge pay cut on the bin workers.

But if Unite continues to feed Labour, by default it will funding the hand that bites it. Trade unions should support only genuinely anti-cuts and pro-worker candidates as a step towards building the working-class party we need.

Livv Housing strikers celebrate win!

KAREN GREER

LIVERPOOL NORTH SOCIALIST PARTY

Unison and Unite members employed by Livv Housing in Knowsley, Merseyside, are celebrating after voting overwhelmingly to accept a fresh offer negotiated between the unions and Livv Housing management. The strike was in response to a wholly inadequate pay offer of 5%, and the workers have been taking discontinuous strike action since October 2024.

Livv management tried to sit out the dispute, assuming that the strike would eventually crumble. However, the determination of the strikers to see the strike through to a successful conclusion eventually forced the management to back down.

The main elements of the settlement are a pay rise of between 8% and 8.5% over two years; the introduction of a transparent pay progression framework; discretionary Christmas



PHOTO: LIVERPOOL SOCIALIST PARTY

holidays becoming contractual; an immediate reduction of working hours for maintenance workers from 40 hours to 39 hours a week, with the aim of reducing this to 38 hours within 12 months and a further reduction after that (administrative and technical workers are already on a 37.5 hour week); and the start of joint work between management and the unions to improve the current pension scheme, employers

have already agreed to increase their contributions from 8% to 10%.

Moreover, it is not considered to be entirely coincidental that Livv's chief executive officer is currently serving out her notice!

This settlement is yet another example demonstrating that determined strike action can bring real benefits to working-class people. Congratulations to the Livv Housing strikers!

Notts teachers strike over increasing hours

Teachers are striking against increased working hours at 14 schools in the Outwood Grange Multi-Academy Trust (OGMAT). Pickets at Outwood Valley School in Worksop, Nottinghamshire, explained the issues to **Jon Dale**.

The school day currently finishes at 2.30pm, but there is just one 15-minute morning break and 30 minutes for lunch – shorter than most schools. Many pupils stay on for after-school clubs. OGMAT wants to lengthen the day by thirty minutes, with no extra time for teachers to prepare or mark the added work.

Teaching assistants have also been cut – often none are present in classes over 30, where three are needed to support pupils with special needs.

National Education Union (NEU) members took a day of strike action on 3 June, with two days planned for the next week and three days the following week. Members of teachers' union NASUWT are likely to join the strike.

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

JOIN THE SOCIALISTS
socialistparty.org.uk/join



Stand up to Starmer and the bosses

Come to the NSSN conference 2025

ROB WILLIAMS
NSSN CHAIR

The National Shop Stewards Network (NSSN) conference on 5 July will take place exactly a year since Starmer's government won the election with a 174 seat majority. So it will be both a balance sheet of Labour's first 12 months in office and a vital forum for union reps and activists to discuss how to take forward the fight against Keir Starmer and Rachel Reeves's austerity and the bosses' offensive. Right now, the Birmingham bin workers are in the front line of that fight, and a discussion on how to build solidarity with their struggle will be a central part of NSSN conference.

On entering Number 10 last July, Starmer promised: "We won as changed Labour, and we will govern as changed Labour." This echoed the words of Tony Blair in 1997. Starmer is a return to New Labour 1.0 – his 'changing' of Labour refers to the repudiation and retreat from the party that was led by Jeremy Corbyn on the most radical pro-worker programme for three decades. Starmer is a pillar of the capitalist establishment and has set out his stall to govern as such, both at home and abroad.

Even before the election, he tail-ended the Tories on Gaza, and with his feet under the Downing Street table, Starmer has embarked on Labour austerity – refusing to lift the two-child benefit cap, cutting the winter fuel allowance, attacking disability benefits, and announcing a £2 billion cut in the civil service, threatening 80,000 jobs. All this while massive pressures build in the NHS, schools, councils and a funding catastrophe unfolds in further and higher education.

When Starmer spoke at last September's TUC (Trades Union Congress), he tried to schmooze the union leaders with talk of 'partnership' – with his government and the 'good' employers. The first steps have been taken in education, including the vicious privatised academy chains.

But the disgraceful actions of Starmer and his deputy Angela Rayner, ex-Unison NEC (National Executive Council) member, in backing up the brutal strike-breaking measures of Labour Birmingham City Council against binworkers fighting a massive cut in wages of up to £8,000, show that it's not partnership that is needed but militant union organisation and action.

And for all the fine words of the New Deal for Workers, now retitled more blatantly as 'Labour's plan to make work pay', loopholes for zero-hour contracts remain, and the Birmingham binworkers know full well that 'fire and rehire' is alive and kicking. Also, the undemocratic Tory industrial action 50% ballot thresholds, brought in by David Cameron in 2016, still remain in law, despite Starmer's huge majority. Any national strike ballots this year in the public sector against Labour's



PHOTO: SEMAN

nationalshop
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2025 NSSN Conference
Saturday 5 July
Conway Hall, London WC1R 4RL
11am-4.30pm

**MAKE THE RICH PAY,
NOT WORKERS!**
Organise against Starmer and Reeves's austerity
and the bosses' offensive

Register in advance by emailing us via info@shopstewards.net

shopstewards.net

unfunded pay offers, that will be mostly below RPI inflation and promise cuts, will have to be conducted under this restrictive barrier.

However, the tremendous strike wave of the last three years showed that workers and their unions can overcome such obstacles, including on a national scale. Sunak's Minimum Service Levels anti-union legislation, attacking the right to strike of the whole union movement, was defeated and rendered inoperable by train drivers' union Aslef on one rail company, LNER. Starmer's election 'landslide' wasn't an endorsement of his pro-business policies. It was 'a mile-wide and an inch thick' because workers wanted to smash the hated Tories after 14 years of austerity and the cost-of-living squeeze, not to endure more of the same. The beginning of Labour U-turns is a sign that Starmer is feeling the pressure of the mounting anger of the working class.

However, he is looking over his right shoulder to Reform, shamefully mixing up some measly concessions by copying their anti-migrant rhetoric. It is because of the political vacuum on the left that he isn't looking over his left shoulder. The workers' movement must fill that vacuum, both industrially and politically, as the most effective way to unite workers against the racist divide and rule agenda and apply more pressure to Starmer.

This is why it's essential that union activists discuss how we support the strikes, especially how we build united action across the movement, in the private and public sectors. Resident doctors (previously junior doctors) in the British Medical Association (BMA) are balloting and University and College Union congress has agreed strike votes in further and higher education.

But the bin strike in Birmingham also puts front and central the need for the workers' movement to debate the need for a political alternative to the pro-business parties – from Labour and the Tories to Reform. As a striking bin worker put it: "If Labour acts like Tories, we treat them as Tories."

The NSSN conference is a forum for all the debates that face union activists, in addition to learning from the struggles that have taken place and are unfolding.

No to partnership – stand up to Starmer and the bosses – come to NSSN conference!

Socialist Party WHAT WE THINK

When chancellor Rachel Reeves steps up to the despatch box in parliament on 11 June to present her summer spending review, it will contain details of brutal austerity measures - huge cuts to day-to-day spending on services.

During less than a year in office, Keir Starmer's Labour government has exposed itself as being, like the Tory government before it, determined to make the working class pay in service of the capitalist bosses' profits.

Maintaining the cruel two-child benefit cap, the pensioners' winter fuel payment cut, cuts to NHS England, attacks on disabled peoples' benefits... On top of the already crumbling state of public services ruined by over a decade of Tory austerity, and the long, painful, relentless driving down of workers' living standards.

Meanwhile, Britain's super-rich have continued to amass vast wealth at our expense. The recently published Sunday Times Rich List details how Britain's richest 350 individuals and families have a combined wealth of £772.8 billion. Since 2008, the rich list wealth has increased at a rate four times that of median UK household wealth.

To put it simply: the money is there. There is more than enough wealth and resources to afford a decent home, a well-paid job, quality public services and a free education for all.

Some Labour ministers have raised extremely modest tax proposals, not yet taken up by Reeves, to bring in up to £4 billion a year. Unite the Union points out that a 1% tax on assets of the richest 1% in society could raise £25 billion.

Reeves's refusal, so far, to raise taxes on wealth is a sign of this Labour government's subservience to the capitalist investors. Her motivation to stick to her 'fiscal rules' comes from complete subservience to the capitalist markets. Investors internationally hold Britain's economy in low esteem, which could provoke another Liz Truss-style crisis, rapidly driving up government borrowing costs and risking triggering major financial crises.

Under pressure, a tweak to the fiscal rules or modest tax rises is likely, but will not be on the scale necessary to fundamentally change the course that is already set towards ongoing brutal austerity. And that is without further economic shocks that Britain is especially vulnerable to in an increasingly volatile world.

Any measures to take wealth and power out of the hands of the super-rich capitalist class should be supported. But Starmer's government has made it absolutely clear that it is the bosses' interests that it is there to serve. So there has to be a fight.



PHOTOS: NUMBER 10/CC AND SOCIALIST PARTY

Strikes

The Birmingham bin workers' battle is an example of a fight already under way. Workers face an £8,000 a year pay cut from a Labour council, and a strikebreaking operation assisted by the courts, the police, neighbouring councils – all backed up by Starmer's government.

Within weeks of entering government, ministers were crowing about having ended national strikes in the public sector. In admission of the fact that striking works, Reeves described how the pay deals as being calibrated to a level which they judged would be enough to end strikes. The junior doctors' determination to fight was the reason their pay was higher than across other sections of the public sector.

Now, the next pay offers from the government have been announced, short of what would be needed to address over a decade of shrinking pay in real terms, and unfunded.

Socialist Party members are fighting in the trade unions for strike ballots to be organised, for a decent pay rise, linked to the demand of full funding.

It is not an accident that, despite Labour's promise to the unions that it would be abolished, the Tories' anti-strike 50% turnout threshold remains.

During the 2022-23 strike wave, there were several days where strikes of different sections of workers were coordinated to take place on the same

day. In 2011, in response to the Tory government austerity onslaught on public sector pensions, two million workers took strike action together in a public sector general strike.

Socialist Party members will be marching on the People's Assembly demonstration on 7 June, but the fight against Labour austerity must be led by the unions themselves. A week-end demonstration, organised by the trade union movement in its own name, could be a step towards future coordinated strike action too.

A new party

If the 1 May local elections showed one thing above all else, it is that the Tories and Labour are extremely unpopular, unprecedentedly so. In those elections, a section of working-class people picked up the opportunity to vote for right-populist Reform UK to demonstrate their anger.

Now is the time for the trade unions to give a lead by taking steps towards developing their own political voice. Trade union support for a Labour government carrying out brutal austerity only serves to undermine the authority of our movement.

The petition launched by trade union activists 'Time for trade unions to take the lead in forming a new working-class party' (see front page), signed initially by 25 current and former trade union executive members, should be welcomed. It can play an important role bringing together

activists in the unions battling for a new party.

Labour signalling future U-turns on pensioners' winter fuel allowance and the two-child benefit cap is an indication that pressure can be applied. Fighting for and winning more can give confidence to working-class people to refuse to accept further austerity in all its forms.

Socialist change

The profit-driven capitalist system is crisis-ridden to its core, the world is increasingly volatile and unstable, and Britain is especially economically vulnerable. Unwilling to stand up to the super-rich bosses and unable to imagine the possibility of an alternative, Starmer and Reeves will continue to try to make the working class pay.

The alternative is for the working class to take wealth and power out of the hands of the capitalist class. By nationalising big business and the banks under democratic working-class control and management, the vast wealth and resources in society could be put to planned use to meet the needs of all and the environment.

Driven by competing profit interests and capitalist nation states, capitalism means war and conflict. A government of the working class in Britain would be able to act in solidarity with the working class internationally, laying the basis for socialist change and an end to war and oppression worldwide.

Stop the cuts

- Reinstatement of pensioners' universal winter fuel payments
- No disability benefits cuts, scrap the two-child benefit cap. For real living benefits for all who need them
- No NHS cuts – fully fund services. Kick out the profit vultures. Make all health and social care public, under democratic control of workers, service users and communities
- Increase school funding per pupil to meet needs. No school closures, reduce class sizes. End academisation, bring schools under local democratic control
- No uni tuition fees rises, no course closures, no job losses. For free, fully funded education with living maintenance grants. Write off student debt
- Fully fund council services. Councils should set needs-based budgets, demanding funding from central government



Now is the time for the trade unions to give a lead by taking steps towards developing their own political voice

Trade union action

- Fight for fully funded pay deals which begin to restore pay lost through Tory austerity - £15-an-hour minimum
- No public sector job losses
- Trade unions prepare to ballot now for national strike action
- Ditch the undemocratic 50% strike ballot turnout threshold. Scrap all Tory anti-union laws now
- For a Saturday national trade union-led demo against Labour austerity, as a step towards future coordinated action

A political alternative

- For working-class unity against the bosses' division - no to discrimination and oppression
- For a new mass workers' party – trade unions must act to build their own political voice, independent of Labour
- Renationalise energy, water, steel, rail, telecoms and mail, with compensation only on the basis of proven need, nothing for the capitalist bosses
- Take the wealth off the super-rich. Bring the big businesses and banks which dominate the economy into democratic public ownership, under workers' control and management, to develop a plan of production to meet the needs of all and the environment



Birmingham City Uni: Support lecturers' strike

Defend student union democracy!

TOM PORTER-BROWN

BIRMINGHAM CITY UNI SOCIALIST STUDENTS

As part of the Funding Not Fees campaign, Birmingham Socialist Students is setting up links with the University and College Union branch at Birmingham City University (BCU). Its members are currently on strike because of the attacks and job cuts from the vice-chancellor.

We've tried to encourage students to support university staff by using the student union (SU) 'ideas board', which would allow us to more easily mobilise on campus. But for any notice on the ideas board to be taken forward, it requires at least 25 votes, and the current board of SU trustees intends to increase this minimum to 300 votes. Or more precisely, 3% of the total students at BCU.

We want a say

This is obviously an attack on students' ability to have a say in how our university is run, even if the ideas board has its bureaucratic limitations. Fortunately, the 300-vote minimum has yet to be implemented. A Socialist Students member was able to attend a conference between students and the SU and challenged the decision.

The excuses given by the SU trustees was that not enough students engage with the ideas board or with student elections in general and that this massive increase would

encourage students to vote. In actuality this is designed to make it harder to pass ideas meant to prioritise the interests of students, and the trustees themselves know this.

Management plans shelved

Fortunately, one socialist arguing against the increase was enough to encourage other students in the meeting to oppose it as well. The result was the trustees shelving the increase, for now at least. It's also worth mentioning that the trustees also faced criticism for claiming to be politically impartial when questioned about Palestine and the Supreme Court ruling on trans rights, yet they were quick to release a statement regarding India and Pakistan.

The SU is only impartial with politics its tops don't agree with. Those leading the SU come under pressure to side with uni management over students. That's not to say there aren't individuals who want to help students, but it'll take them being prepared to mobilise the mass of students, including linking up with uni workers, to bring about change.

Socialist Students will stay alert to future attacks on student democracy and will make sure they are challenged or shut down. This doesn't just apply to Birmingham, it's happening all over Britain and it's why I encourage fellow students to join the struggle for a socialist education system.



BCU UCU on strike earlier in the year
BRUM SP

Save St Matthews Community Centre

GUY JACOBS

LEICESTER SOCIALIST PARTY

Socialist Party members took part in a council consultation on the 'relocation' of St Matthews Community Centre. It comes as Leicester City Council aims to make £2.1 million cuts to the libraries and community centres budget.

Council lies

The councillors there, Vi Dempster and Mohammed Dawood, tried to push the narrative that the current building was too expensive and that they could move the building and reduce costs without impacting on the quality of service. Many of those who had come to the consultation were sceptical of this claim, highlighting the fact that the current community centre is the 'heart of the community' and that there are no suitable buildings in the vicinity to move it to.

Any questions raised that highlighted the inadequacies of this plan were dodged by councillor Dempster. When one Socialist Party member asked if she could guarantee that the level and quality of services would not drop, and highlighted

the austerity nature of these decisions, she simply denied that this was austerity, but refused to give any guarantees that services would not be made worse. However, she did acknowledge that the indoor sports hall (which has currently been closed for two years due to structural issues) would not be able to be relocated within the St Matthews area, already showcasing one of the services that will be lost in the relocation.

'Heart of community'

The consultation highlighted the anxiety that these cuts have caused among an already deprived community. A community for which the community centre plays a key role in providing vital services such as adult education and spaces for groups to come together and socialise.

The relocation of this space will inevitably be combined with cuts to services. We are demanding that the council invests in improving the current building. The council should actually stand up for communities and, instead of continuing austerity, demand the funding needed from central government.

Leicester: fined by the council for campaigning against council cuts

HEATHER RAWLING

LEICESTER SOCIALIST PARTY

I am going to be issued with a £100 fine for having a campaign stall table. Apparently, we need to apply for a licence from Labour-controlled Leicester City Council to campaign against the cuts the council is making!

Even the street warden who cautioned me could see my point!

A crowd gathered

As I was being 'advised' by the street wardens, a small crowd gathered round to support our refusal to take down the stall table. One person gave us a £5 donation to the Socialist Party fighting fund for standing firm. When I was being informed of the fixed penalty notice, I asked the warden to wait while I set my phone up to record the conversation. (Read more: 'Leicester defiance against cutting Labour council' at socialistparty.org.uk)

When announcing £20 million cuts for the next three years, council leader Sir Pete Soulsby said it would be "painful". Yes! Painful for those who rely on council services and for those who may lose their jobs. Already 2,000 jobs have been lost. On the council's



Heather (right) being fined by the council for campaigning

hit list are libraries and community centres. Disabled people receiving PIP will have to pay more council tax. There is anger at these cuts.

The Socialist Party is working with Leicester and District Trades Council in organising a Leicestershire

Anti-Cuts Alliance to oppose all council cuts. And the Socialist Party is holding a public meeting against the cuts and for a new mass workers' party on Thursday 19 June, 7.30pm at Leicester Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate, LE1 1WB.

Standing firm against cuts in Sefton

CONOR ANTHONY O'NEILL
LIVERPOOL NORTH SOCIALIST PARTY

Upon the recent resignation of an independent councillor who left the Labour Party last year citing her opposition to austerity politics, a by-election was called in Sefton for the Blundellsands ward.

We have a strong record of standing candidates as part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) across Sefton, most notably in the St Oswald ward where I came second to Labour in the 2024 local elections, beating the other establishment parties including the Greens, the Tories and the Lib Dems.

Independent

Having previously stood with the description 'Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition', we have this time opted to stand under TUSC's alternative registered description 'Independent Trade Unionist and Socialist Candidate', using the 'TUSC against cuts' emblem, as a concession to the local independents group, including Councillor Sean Hallsaw. Last year, Sean took the courageous stand and resigned from Labour in protest against Starmer's pro-cuts, pro-war agenda. Sean's grouping however, indicated to us its decision to support the Green candidate in this election.

Greens

Given TUSC's commitment to avoiding unnecessary electoral clashes and in recognition of the Green councillors' recent progressive votes in Sefton to condemn Starmer's attacks on the elderly and disabled, as well as Hallsaw's own commendable record since going independent, we contacted the Sefton Green Party offering to potentially stand down in the upcoming Blundellsands ward by-election if they committed to campaigning on TUSC's six core principles - including opposition to all cuts and closures, no



Conor (second right) standing in another Sefton by-election for TUSC in 2024

council tax and charges increased (see tusc.org.uk for the core principles).

A representative of Sefton Green Party responded, declining any formal electoral agreement. Despite claiming to agree with the core principles, the Greens insisted that they would not be prioritised in their election material on the grounds that "banging on about these issues isn't going to win the election". Instead they intend to prioritise "community" issues.

Working-class communities in Sefton need councillors who are prepared to 'bang on' about the brutal austerity being inflicted on our local services, and who have a strategy to fight for the funding needed to end it.

Given the large vacuum left by Keir Starmer's rightward shift in the Labour Party, many will see the Greens as an alternative. However,

the Green Party's record in power is one of implementing - not fighting - austerity. It runs Bristol council and is making over £50 million of cuts, for example.

We have not stood aside for the Greens in Blundellsands. We will campaign against austerity and use our stand to make the case for a new mass party of the working class, working with all those who want to take steps forward in that regard, including independents like Sean.

- Conor Anthony O'Neill is the Independent Trade Unionist and Socialist Candidate in the Blundellsands by-election on 19 June
- Come to 'meet the candidate', 7pm, 12 June at the Ferndale Lodge pub

Chester: Undermining the right by fighting for jobs, homes and services for all

MARK PEARSON
CHESTER SOCIALIST PARTY

On Saturday 24 May, a right-wing initiated demonstration called the 'Great British Strike' took place in Chester's Town Hall square.

There was no counter-demo organised so Chester Socialist Party members turned up to try to cut across any divisive or racist ideas by raising working-class demands for 'jobs, homes and services for all'.

Anti-racist youth

Our focus was on engaging with students and other young people in the vicinity. We did this and successfully gathered petition signatures and sold copies of the Socialist. Three young lads who were looking for an anti-racist counter-demo noticed us. They came along to the next Socialist Party meeting.

The 'British Strike' protest itself attracted roughly 120 participants. However, only about 15 of these were the familiar core group of far-right thugs. Some of our members distributed leaflets calling for jobs, homes and services not racism. We encountered a few negative remarks, but also secured two petition signatures and handed out leaflets. We were able to get our message across.

The 'British Strike' crowd comprised

various segments of the working class. A significant portion appeared to be individuals feeling disconnected and disillusioned, rather than committed racists or right-wing agitators. Most of this small assembly quickly blended back into the Saturday crowds of shoppers and tourists. The anticipated 'march' turned out to be just one man carrying a Union Jack flag, accompanied by a couple of friends; they walked down Northgate Street to the cross and then vanished. Our leafletting and calm conversations with attendees evidently helped to cut across what the small number of far-right activists there wanted to achieve.

Joining the Socialists

Following a coffee break and a swift evaluation of the event, we set up a Socialist Party stall near the prominent Eastgate clock. This proved highly successful. The arrival of a new young member of Chester Socialist Party provided a welcome boost to the team's energy. We sold numerous Socialist newspapers, met several people interested in joining the Socialist Party, and received substantial donations to our fighting fund.

In summary: although Chester Socialist Party is small in number, we achieved considerably more success throughout the day than the far-right contingent!



Chester Socialist Party members campaigning on the day NORTH WEST SOCIALIST PARTY

We Demand Change in Sheffield shows appetite for new party

ISABELLE FRANCE
SHEFFIELD SOCIALIST PARTY

We Demand Change held its 'Summit of Resistance' in Sheffield on 18 May, featuring speakers such as Jeremy Corbyn and deputy leader of the Green Party, Zak Polanski.

Around 460 were in attendance, many with hopes of hearing about a new left-wing party being announced. This shows the potential mass support within the city for a real socialist alternative to Starmer's Labour and the mainstream parties.

What next?

Unfortunately those hoping to hear a concrete call for this from Corbyn were sadly disappointed. He spoke loosely about 'hope' and 'change'

with no clear path forward towards an electoral challenge.

The panel to discuss a new party included two who are part of the local Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition steering committee. In the discussion, many speakers echoed the need for a new party to fight against austerity and called for a united front. Members of the SWP (Socialist Workers Party, which was behind organising the event), showed a political unwillingness to support this call, claiming that building a new party was 'too hard' and 'would take too long'. Instead, they announced they would be beginning to stand and support 'independent' candidates in upcoming elections. But what is there to distinguish a 'We Demand Change' supported independent from any others on the ballot paper?

The next election upcoming in Sheffield is the 26 June Stocksbridge and Upper Don by-election. The Reform candidate in that election was, in 2024, an independent candidate, for example. Claire Wraith will be standing for TUSC, putting up a challenge to all the austerity parties - including the Greens who have been part of a cutting 'rainbow coalition' with Labour and the Lib Dems in Sheffield.

When Socialist Party members asked whether We Demand Change would support the TUSC candidate for Stocksbridge, they said they'd not support any candidate from a political party - only independents. We will continue to fight for the workers' movement and trade unions to take steps towards building the new party of the working class we need.



WHAT WE STAND FOR

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

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

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

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

WORK, PENSIONS AND BENEFITS

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

PUBLIC SERVICES

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

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

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

ENVIRONMENT

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

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

DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS

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

SOCIALISM AND INTERNATIONALISM

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

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Anger finds expression at firefighters' union conference



Firefighters lobby Parliament in 2022

SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBER

Fire Brigades Union (FBU) national conference met in Blackpool the same week that Labour's potential winter fuel allowance and two-child benefit cap U-turns hit the news. It was also the first FBU conference to take place under the new general secretary Steve Wright.

With RPI inflation for April running at 4.5% and Labour offering public sector workers below-inflation pay deals, a potential showdown between the public sector trade unions and Labour is taking shape. The situation in the FBU is different however. In April, the FBU Executive Council recommended acceptance of a 3.2% pay deal to members, which was accepted ahead of the conference.

What can firefighters win?

The Executive Council argued for acceptance on the basis that, at that stage, the offer was greater than what was budgeted for by the government for education and health, in addition to the pay offer coming with a "commitment from employers to negotiate with the FBU on pay progression". Since then, still inadequate pay offers higher than 3.2% have been tabled for other public sector workers.

Anger at yet another below-inflation pay offer found expression at the FBU conference from delegates. The second morning of the conference, the Executive Committee moved an emergency resolution on pay which raised the possibility of an early recall conference ahead of May 2026 to discuss next steps if negotiations on the issue of pay progression weren't to the satisfaction of members.

In the debate which followed, it was clear why the EC moved the motion. Some delegates spoke about the need to break with the pattern, which developed during the tenure of the ex-general secretary Matt Wrack, of the leadership postponing steps towards industrial action over the issues of pay and conditions.

Delegates also spoke about not wanting to return to conference in May 2026 to discuss yet another pay offer secured without a serious fight against the government and that, if progress wasn't made in talks on workload, pay progression and funding for the Fire and Rescue Service (FRS), FBU conference should be recalled early to discuss a timetable for industrial action.

According to the FBU, central funding for English fire services for 2025-26 is increasing by 1.4% in cash terms. But this is far lower than inflation. So, in reality, it's a massive cut. Many FBU members will be left wondering why a timetable for industrial action isn't being set now to fight Labour for the funding the FRS needs.

Reform and far-right threat

FBU conference also came hot on the heels of right-populist Reform's increased vote in the May local elections. An EC policy statement entitled 'Opposing the Threat of the Far Right' correctly highlighted the threat posed to the working class in Britain, as well as the need for the trade union movement, including the FBU, to mobilise its members to counter far-right mobilisations in the streets and in local communities. A motion passed from Scotland made the link between austerity and the rise of the far right.

Unfortunately however, beyond internal education programmes and articles targeted at FBU members, no strategy was put forward to cut across growing support for Reform.

The FBU is affiliated to the Labour Party, only reaffiliating under Jeremy Corbyn's anti-austerity leadership. In government, and with Starmer as leader, Labour is now presiding over cuts to fire services, on top of those made by the Tories.

An industrial struggle to win funding and a real-terms pay rise is needed. It would be strengthened by a political struggle too, including FBU supporting candidates to fight on the side of the working class against this austerity Labour government.

Socialist Party Wales conference - Lively, optimistic and prepared to fight

DAVE WARREN

SWANSEA AND WEST WALES SOCIALIST PARTY

The 2025 conference of Socialist Party Wales took place in Cardiff on 1 June. There were lively and optimistic discussions on the political situation worldwide, in Britain and specifically in Wales. We went on to apply our conclusions to the main tasks that face us as a party in the months ahead.

In Wales, we have had a Labour-led

government ever since devolution in 1999, yet we still face the same problems as workers throughout the UK. The current Labour Welsh government was silent at first on all the attacks on working people carried out by the UK government. But with elections to the Senedd less than a year away, and the collapse of support for Labour and the Tories in council elections in England, Welsh Labour has been forced to speak out. Also, a recent opinion poll put Labour at an

historically low 18%, with Plaid Cymru at 30% and Reform at 25%.

'Clear Red Water' or same Welsh Labour?

In response, the Welsh First Minister, Eluned Morgan has criticised Starmer's government on the cut to the winter fuel payment, and the proposed cuts to disability benefits. She has used the phrase 'Red Welsh Way', echoing the slogan of 'Clear

Red Water' of former First Minister Rhodri Morgan in 2002, attempting to distance Welsh Labour from unpopular policies emanating from Westminster. This opportunism will fool nobody.

The conference vowed to redouble our fight to defend workers in Wales against these attacks and to campaign for a new mass workers' party with a socialist programme to combat Reform and to fill the void of workers' political representation.

In recognition of our deceased former general secretary Peter Taaffe's immense contribution to the struggle for international socialism, a financial appeal raised a fantastic £2,825 to help the work of the Committee for a Workers' International (the international organisation we are affiliated to). This reflected the determination of the conference to build on Peter's legacy and bring about a society that works for all, not just for the privileged few.



Archie (left) campaigning with Reading Socialist Party



James and the Medway socialists campaigning in Chatham, before our Socialist Party meeting in town CALLUM JOYCE

Why I joined the Socialist Party

The old unwritten social contract is broken

I have been interested in politics for a few years. But it was only when the new Labour government came in that I really saw the need for a political alternative outside of the major capitalist parties.

Since joining the Socialist Party, I have been involved in various political work. Most recently, helping to canvass for a local by-election that

we stood in. I was honestly surprised to see how open people were to political alternatives, even in a supposedly affluent area.

Especially people of my generation – early 20s – we're really seeing the breakdown of the old unwritten social contract. A full-time job should be able to afford food, rent or mortgage, a car etc.

For a lot of people, this just isn't a reality anymore. The need for genuine working-class political representation is greater than ever.

ARCHIE BETTS

READING SOCIALIST PARTY



Medway socialists challenge Labour and Reform

Socialist Party members organised a campaign stall in Chatham. We're campaigning in Medway over the summer.

Issues discussed on the stall included introducing rent controls and building new council housing to confront homelessness. Medway Council, controlled by Labour since 2023, has stalled on council housing. Combined with Labour's austerity in Westminster, local people are paying the price.

A homeless person came by the stall to pick up a leaflet. We

conversed about the forces driving her and many others into dire times. After she proposed immigration as the root cause, we countered with the impact of austerity and lack of investment, which she was receptive to.

In Medway, Reform UK so far holds two council seats. The fate of Kent County Council during the May local elections tells us Reform could control Medway come 2027.

Towards the end of the stall, someone approached me, querying about the Socialist Party's precise housing plans for the area. It was welcome to see someone passionate about political issues.

We held a Socialist Party meeting after. Socialist Party Southern and South East regional organiser Callum Joyce outlined what we stand

for, including building affordable and high-quality council houses. Amid the vibrant discussion on utilities, nationalisation, right-wing propaganda, and the rise of AI, the meeting's underlying theme was workers fighting back since the strike wave in 2022.

Calls for a new workers' party are growing. Neither Labour nor Reform can offer Medway the alternative it needs, but trade unions can. In solidarity, the organised working class can undermine right-wing influence, and solve the problems, like housing, that workers face.

JAMES GRETTON

KENT AND EAST SUSSEX SOCIALIST PARTY



East Midlands conference - Building Socialist Party in world in turmoil

ASH RITCHIE

NORTHAMPTON SOCIALIST PARTY

Judy Beishon, from the Socialist Party Executive Committee, opened the discussion at the East Midlands regional conference: 'A world in conflict, and how it impacts class struggle in Britain'. Judy highlighted the effect from Trump and his tariff wars, and the importance of the Socialist Party and the international we're part of, the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI) – building socialism on an international basis.

East Midlands Socialist Party organiser Seamus Smyth, based in Northampton, opened the discussion on building the party. He spoke about the rise of right-wing populist parties, such as Reform, and the

importance of uniting the working class in struggle.

Capitalist division

The divisive policies put out by Reform are not new. It is a divide-and-conquer tactic that the capitalist ruling class has always used. We need to be ready for the class battles that lie ahead.

Financing our party is extremely important. We do not have any rich backers. All the money raised to produce socialist campaign material and spread our programme comes from our members and supporters.

East Midlands Socialist Party organiser Heather Rawling asked people if they could increase their monthly membership subs, and Leicester Socialist Party member

Odunayo Eniayekan asked attendees to donate to help fund the CWI World Congress in August.

Socialist Party member Jon Dale opened our conference with a tribute to Karen Seymour. Socialist Party member Karen was running in the May local elections for the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC). Sadly, Karen passed away (see socialistparty.org.uk).

Peter Taaffe – for decades Socialist Party general secretary – also passed away in April (see socialistparty.org.uk). In Peter's memory, Gary Freeman from Nottingham Socialist Party sold books Peter wrote about the history of our party and more, and previous issues of our monthly magazine, Socialism Today.

Finally, East Midlands Socialist



SOCIALIST PARTY FIGHTING FUND

AREA	£ RECEIVED	£ TARGET	Q2: APRIL-JUNE 2025	DEADLINE: 30 JUNE 2025
North West	1,696	1,200		141%
South West	2,261	2,100		108%
Wales	2,216	2,400		
East Midlands	1,461	2,050		71%
London	3,413	5,000	68%	
West Midlands	1,540	2,700	57%	
Southern & SE	1,331	2,400	55%	
Yorkshire	1,263	2,650	48%	
Northern	318	800	40%	
Eastern	376	1,300	29%	
Other	1,921	2,400		80%
TOTAL	17,795	25,000		71%

Party secretary Steve Score proposed a new regional committee. Steve spoke about the importance of youth rising to take the lead, with the support of older more experienced comrades. Two newer younger members – myself and Odunayo – stepped up and were elected, joining the current regional committee.

Fund the fightback

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Trump and Musk part ways

DAVE MURRAY

At the time of writing, the world's richest man Elon Musk has stepped down as the head of the US government's Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE), following a "physical altercation" with US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent in and around the Oval Office. Eyewitnesses say that Bessent confronted Musk with the suggestion that DOGE, despite firing thousands of federal employees, has saved only \$100 million from the federal budget. This is the figure that Bessent contrasted to the \$1 trillion savings claimed by Musk at that time.

The combatants were fighting over whose man would get to be the new head of the IRS, the USA's tax levying authority - still a powerful figure even after thousands of IRS employees have been laid off by DOGE. Having lost the shouting match (the wrestling was cut short by members of the Secret Service), Musk has since announced that he will be spending more time with his money.

Financiers and investors involved in Musk's various commercial enterprises (Space X, X, Grok AI, Tesla etc) are said to be relieved that he will be paying more attention to these and hoping that he can get them back on track following the damage done to brands like Tesla by antics such as the Nazi salutes Musk publicly gave during his tenure as the 'first Buddy'.



Musk and Trump
PHOTO: WHITE HOUSE

Musk's intimacy with the world's most powerful man had a lot to do with the \$300 million donated to Trump's election war chest.

Final straw

Fellow tech billionaire Mark Zuckerberg coined the phrase "move fast and break things", and Musk certainly did that, unleashing a small army of tech and finance bros onto various federal agencies, firing people in their thousands with little serious thought for the consequences. Even though the consequences were a malfunctioning state, plummeting popularity and widespread ridicule - which began to rub off on the commander in chief. Musk's criticism of Trump's "Big Beautiful Bill" of tax cuts for the rich, tariffs and cuts to the social wage of millions of Americans (to be clear, he didn't criticise the tax cuts) was the final straw.

Nobody should be under the illusion that Musk's departure represents a return to 'business as usual' or even a drug-free White House (Musk is said to self-medicate with MDMA, Psilocybin and Ketamine). The Trump presidency represents the rise of a section of the capitalist class that advocates naked self-interest and the promotion of toxic narratives in a desperate attempt to halt and reverse the US's relative decline in global terms. On the other hand, there are sections of the capitalist class that oppose his tariff moves, over which Trump faces legal challenges in the courts.

It's a matter of time before the working class in the US and internationally is drawn into the political arena to have its own say.

Stop bombing Yemen

MARIAM KAMISH

Since 15 March, US forces have hit 800 targets in Yemen - including a detention centre holding African migrants. Hundreds of people have died. Trump has intensified those air strikes, while axing measures to limit civilian casualties. On the 29 April, Britain joined in, bombing a military facility. Clearly, for Starmer it's been important to show Trump that Britain is a valuable ally.

Biden and Sunak conducted air strikes on Houthi targets in Yemen, claiming they were necessary to defend world trade.

Yemen is important to world capitalism. The Mandeb Straits which borders it is, in normal times, for up to 22% of global shipping. This is how Middle East oil and gas reaches the Suez Canal. The Aden region of Yemen also has major gas and oil reserves.

But since late 2023, attacks by Houthi rebel forces - backed by Iran - have disrupted that vital shipping lane between Yemen and the Horn of Africa. The Houthis say their aim is to put pressure on Israel to stop attacking Gaza.

As a result, much of the international shipping has been rerouted around Africa at great expense.

In 2011, revolution in Yemen followed the revolutions in Egypt and Tunisia. People talk about the Arab Spring. Arabs call it al-Hirak.

Working class

Yemen lacks the large industrial base that Egypt has, for example - it lacks the social weight of confident, independent workers across a wide range of industry. So, while twice weekly general strikes became routine in Yemen, they never moved to an all-out general strike, clearly demonstrating the limitations of the movement.

Yemen's left political parties proved largely a hindrance. At the height of the movement, millions were in the streets, but the leadership controlled and contained the movement.

At the same time, imperialism was determined to prop up the completely discredited regime. By ignoring repression and corruption and the regime's inability to control vast areas of the country, imperialism allowed a political vacuum to open up in the North that let the right-wing religious populist tribal force - known as the Houthis - grow until it was able to descend on the capital and take over the government in August 2014.

On the one hand, the movement showed an awareness that revolutionary energy needed to be channelled into effective organisation. You could see that with the beginnings of democratic committees at certain points in 2011. It didn't go far, but that process didn't happen

elsewhere at the time, even in Egypt.

Young people interviewed in the streets of Ta'izz talked about how the revolution was in danger - revolutionary youth had to defend it.

There was a certain mood that ordinary young people and workers had made the movement and the politicians had jumped on board and seized the leadership. That opened up the way for populist religious leaders to get a hearing.

They needed to appeal to rank-and-file soldiers to join the revolution. And they needed to unite the masses from all religious strands, from the cities and the rural areas, in all regions, with a programme to renationalise oil, gas and land.

A socialist Yemen could have become a genuine beacon to workers and the poor across the region.

Instead, there has been a decade of civil war, with Saudi Arabia leading air strikes and backing the discredited coalition government they helped restore in the south.

War has driven more than 4.5 million Yemenis from their homes. Despite its mineral wealth, the country faces an acute risk of large scale famine. More than 18.2 million are in dire need of assistance.

The working class and the poor masses in the south of the country have a revolutionary history. They could play an important role in the struggles of the region in future.



Protests in Yemen 2011
PHOTO: NOORAL HASSAN/CC



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



Iran: Truck drivers strike spreads to more than 150 cities

SCOTT HUNTER

Truck drivers in Iran have been on strike since 22 May. Beginning in the southern port city of Bandar Abbas, the strike has spread to more than 150 cities in the days since. According to the Alliance of Iran Truckers and Truck Drivers' Unions (AITTD), over 400,000 vehicles remain off the road out of approximately 433,000 registered HGVs.

The strike has been sparked by the government's plans to introduce a tiered pricing system for fuel, which would sharply raise prices compared to current state subsidies. Truckers are demanding maintenance of the current subsidies; relief from insurance and toll fees; improved road safety and infrastructure; and fairer rates for freight, which are regulated by the state.

Despite reports of arrests of strikers and the use of military vehicles to transport goods, the truckers appear to be remaining strong. This national action has grown despite the fact that 93% of HGVs in Iran are owned by self-employed individuals. The AITTD itself is a semi-legal organisation, active since at least 2018, which has assumed a central organising role in contrast to the state-backed Union of Nationwide Transportation Truckers' Cooperatives (UNTTTC), which has criticised the strike. This all shows that when workers have had enough and are determined to struggle, they can overcome all barriers.

This truckers' strike is the latest in a series of strikes and protests in Iran over the last several years, including strikes by teachers and workers at the



PHOTO: RAB LAWRENCE/CC

large Haft Tappeh sugar refinery and the Women, Life, Freedom movement in 2022. Underpinning all these movements is a deeply reactionary and oppressive theocracy attempting to manage Iranian capitalism in deep crisis. Inflation in Iran continues to hover at around 40%. Clearly, the bosses are intent on making ordinary Iranian workers' pay the price.

In a joint statement, over 180 civil rights and student organisations in Iran have expressed their support for

the truckers and have urged other sections of society - including teachers, factory and service workers, shopkeepers and students - to form coordination councils and broaden the movement. Similar councils were set up during the Women, Life, Freedom movement, although these were unable to establish deep connections with the organised working class. This present strike offers a new opportunity to not only revive the coordination committees but to draw

in broad layers of workers. A national network of coordination committees, with the organised working class taking the lead through the semi-legal unions, would be essential for workers, civil rights activists, students, shopkeepers etc to both coordinate strikes and protests and to discuss and democratically agree a programme and list of demands.

The theocracy in Iran needs to be overthrown. The crucial question is: what next? Iran has been in conflict

with Western imperialism since the 1979 revolution which saw the theocracy take power. Because of this conflict, some capitalists in the West have spoken in favour of workers' struggles in Iran. Even exiled 'Prince' Reza Pahlavi has supported the truckers and called for international solidarity from other trade unions! Workers, in Iran and internationally, must be under no illusion about these capitalist forces who would no doubt like to see a 'colour change' in Iran - replacing the theocracy with a more 'liberal' capitalist government. There is no prospect of a capitalist Iran being able to improve the living standards of ordinary Iranians, and any such government would quickly find itself compelled to attack Iranian workers.

The Iranian working class must maintain its political independence from all so-called 'liberal' or 'progressive' capitalist forces. Bringing together the industrial and civil rights struggles in a national network of coordinating committees would be a great step forward. This would immediately pose the task of fighting to build a mass workers' party with a socialist programme to not only overthrow the theocracy but also to consign dead-end Iranian capitalism to the rubbish heap and begin to build a socialist Iran, with appeals to the working classes of the Middle East and the world for solidarity. Such a struggle would have an explosive effect.

The Committee for a Workers' International sends solidarity to the Iranian workers and welcomes discussions with all forces looking to build a socialist Iran and a socialist world.

Call for international solidarity with striking Berlin workers!

SOL - SOZIALISTISCHE ORGANISATION
SOLIDARITÄT (CWI GERMANY)

For several weeks, non-medical staff, including canteen, garden, security, transport, logistics, cleaning and technical workers at Charité Facility Management (CFM) in Berlin, a subsidiary of Charité university hospital, the largest in Germany, have been on strike. After the strike was suspended for several days for negotiations, which proved fruitless, it is now continuing.

The workers' concerns are more than justified. They are fighting against 'wage dumping' - being outsourced to a subsidiary which has placed them outside the public sector collective agreement, allowing the employer to legally pay them less than workers employed directly by Charité, even though CFM is itself owned by the Berlin state government.

In some cases outsourced CFM workers earn 600-700 euros less per month for the same work. For years and in a total of three coalition contracts, the Berlin state government - the Berlin Senate - has promised the colleagues a return to Charité and thus reintegration into the public service collective agreement. However, except for empty phrases from politicians, nothing has

happened since then.

The response of the CFM workers was therefore: strike! But at the beginning of the strike, the CFM management showed what kind of dirty tricks it was willing to use in order to continue cutting costs on the backs of the workers. It tried to ban the strike through the courts, but this was unsuccessful. However, it did manage to get the court to approve an 'emergency service agreement' (minimum staff levels) for the strike, which in some cases is higher than normal staff levels. But this has not changed the colleagues' willingness to strike - on the contrary, week after week, they are setting new strike participation records!

It took five rounds of negotiations to get the management to make a less than inadequate offer, which was rejected by the workers without hesitation. Another negotiation meeting was cancelled by the management one day before it was scheduled to take place. The workers responded with a spontaneous demonstration of 150-200 people in front of the government building.

Support the CFM workers!

The signal that a successful strike would send should not be underestimated. In some recent rounds of

collective bargaining, we believe that the full potential for struggle was not used, or strikes were even completely abandoned. A success at CFM would show that more democratic participation by colleagues has a positive effect on the willingness to strike and on membership recruitment, and that if you fight, you can win - even in times of austerity policies by pro-capitalist parties.

But for this to happen, solidarity with the colleagues at CFM is necessary - especially internationally. When reading out messages of support, the colleagues were especially happy to hear messages of international solidarity. These show even more that the colleagues are not fighting an isolated battle, that they are not alone in facing these problems, and that their struggle is seen as important beyond the Charité campus and across national borders.

Therefore, everyone is invited to write a message of solidarity to Berlin which would be deeply appreciated.

Please send them to cs@solidaritaet.info so as Sol we can forward them and pass them on to the striking workers at the picket lines.

Hoch die internationale Solidarität! (Long live international solidarity!)



Charité Hospital
PHOTO: DIRK1981/CC

£1/£2 solidarity price

socialistparty.org.uk



the Socialist

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END ISRAELI STATE'S GAZA TERROR

Fight for socialist change

JOE FATHALLAH

CARDIFF EAST SOCIALIST PARTY

Gaza was put under a complete blockade by the Israeli government for over two months up to 19 May. No food, medicine or even water was allowed to enter the territory, resulting in the deaths of at least 57 children by starvation, mass malnutrition and homelessness.

Even last week, after the lifting of the blockade, just 388 trucks were allowed access – compared to over 2,000 per week before the invasion in 2023. For civilians in Gaza, life is living hell.

Into this situation has stepped the 'Gaza Humanitarian Foundation' (GHF), an organisation run by American mercenaries, establishing aid compounds and attempting to usurp the United Nations (UN) as the main distributor of aid. On Tuesday 27 May, a GHF compound opened in southern Gaza. The entrance was immediately swamped by Palestinians desperate for food and medication. The fences gave way under the weight of the crowd, and masses of people climbed into the building, taking whatever they could to feed themselves and their children. The IDF intervened with live fire, resulting in at least one person dead and 48 injured.

There are three GDF sites established in the south of the territory and only one anywhere near the north, where around half of the population still live. This means that civilians, including the elderly, children and disabled people, will have to travel 30km through a war zone with the hope of receiving a package of food.

This is consistent with the Netanyahu government's aim to displace the population of northern Gaza into the south, with the intention of driving all the Palestinians out of the area into prison camps the other side of the Egyptian border, or simply into the desert. His regime aims to control all the Palestinian territories, to scupper any prospect of the creation of a genuine Palestinian state, and to placate the far-right parties inside his coalition government.

It's vital to keep up the mass pressure on governments internationally, which are constantly evaluating what action (or inaction) they can get away with in the eyes of their own population, including in Britain.

There have been consistent mass protests in Britain in solidarity with Palestinians. The election of four 'Gaza independent' MPs plus Jeremy Corbyn at the 2024 general election was a shot across the bow of Keir Starmer's incoming government. The working class taking further steps towards developing its own political voice independent of Labour would ratchet up that pressure.

Workers taking action in Britain and elsewhere against the capitalist bosses strengthens the struggles of the Palestinian masses and workers across the Middle East, including in Israel. The Socialist Party fights for the working class to develop its own mass parties which can fight to bring an end to the capitalists' rule and bring about socialist change.

The Socialist Party fights for:

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

WHAT WE STAND FOR: THE SOCIALIST PARTY'S MAIN DEMANDS ►►► see column on p12



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