

LABOUR

VS

THE WORKING CLASS

Solidarity with Brum bin strike

BIRMINGHAM SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBERS

Birmingham bin workers in Unite the Union are in a heroic six-month dispute against the Labour city council, seeking to impose up to £8,000 pay cuts. The council has been using any means to break the strike - court injunctions to stop pickets, paying for a police and security presence, and even alluding to calling in the army.

The crunch time of the dispute has arrived. During Unite's conference,

council leader John Cotton effectively gave notice of 'fire and rehire'. This could be formally triggered very soon, and the consultation period could be as little as 45 days.

The emergency motion which passed at Unite conference supporting the bin workers - suspending Labour deputy prime minister Angela Rayner and the Birmingham councillors from Unite, and opening up a discussion on the union's relationship with Labour - has to be linked to decisively escalating the industrial action strategy.

Birmingham City Council has gone for the bin workers now, but all other council workers could be under attack. The discontent of council workers will only grow after the threats of fire and rehire.

Despite the council's use of targeted messaging to try to turn the workforce against the bin workers, council workers have not bought the lies! When the council asked workers in one department what could be done to make them feel 'valued', the answer was clear: "Stop the cuts and pay the bin workers!" The fact is, when you're not a commissioner on a grand a day, you can't imagine losing eight grand a year.

Solidarity action

Birmingham's attacks could have ramifications for all council workers across the country. Already, Unite is balloting bin workers in Wrexham over forced changes to their overtime agreement.

Mass solidarity action is needed. Unite should initiate a 'council of war' with the other council unions in Birmingham, including Unison.

Issues such as the pay and grading re-evaluation, attacks to sickness policy, and the reintroduction of performance management, can all be the basis to build a campaign across all council workers. Holding departmental members' meetings in workplaces, with bin workers invited to speak, can explain why solidarity is needed.

'Mega-picket'

This must then be taken out to the whole city and surrounding areas. At least 15 unions have supported the 'mega-picket' on 25 July, and Fire Brigades Union general secretary Steve Wright has sent a message of support and spoken out in the media. Jeremy Corbyn has also now been announced.

A national Saturday solidarity demonstration in Birmingham would give the opportunity to

mobilise a citywide campaign, calling on the whole trade union movement and local community, as well as any councillors and MPs willing to stand with the workers. Unite must name the date.

A Saturday demonstration could also be a statement of intent. To raise the idea of solidarity action by workers across Birmingham, effectively a potential citywide general strike, to face down the Labour council's attempt to inflict a defeat on the bin workers and Unite.

Striking bin worker Mike Masters said: "This strike is being compared to the past (the 1980s miners' strike). I'd like to think this strike will shape our future."

Next year will be the first council elections in Birmingham for four years. Unite and the bin workers should prepare to back and stand candidates who support the strikers.



Jeremy Corbyn and Zarah Sultana
PAUL MATTSSON/REEL NEWS/CC

What next in the fight for a new workers' party?

pages 2-3

1,000+ trade unionists discuss

WHAT NEXT IN THE FIGHT FOR A WORKERS' PARTY?



Trade unionists march with banners at Tolpuddle Martyrs festival. NICK CLARE



WHAT WE THINK

On 21 July over one thousand trade unionists – on Zoom and via a live feed – met to discuss the fight for a new workers' party. The meeting arose from a petition for trade unionists – with over 2,000 trade unionists, including 43 current and former members of trade union executive committees signed up so far – that declares: “We, the undersigned, believe it's time for the trade union movement to seriously discuss founding a new anti-austerity, anti-war party. Our movement will be weakened if workers see us as a voice for pro-austerity Labour. We call for urgent discussions within our union and across unions to organise a conference to establish a political voice for working people. The Establishment has four parties – it's time the working class had one of its own.” (see the online petition at www.change.org/TradeUnions-LaunchANewParty)

The meeting was initiated and hosted by **Dave Nellist** – a Socialist Party member, former Labour MP (1983-1992) and now chair of the Trade Unionist and Socialist

Coalition (TUSC). **Jeremy Corbyn MP** was a keynote speaker and **Zarah Sultana MP** also attended and addressed the meeting.

Jeremy covered a range of issues, including the importance of the Unite conference decision to back any of its members refusing to send arms to Israel, and the crucial character of the Birmingham bin strike because “if the government is able to get away with appointing commissioners in Birmingham whose job appears to be to make workers' pay for the financial problems of the local authority... then it will be tried elsewhere”. **Jeremy** concluded that “we need an alternative political voice, an alternative political party”, emphasising that a new party had to be “rooted in our communities, rooted in the democratic activities of people” with “the voice of community independents around the country, the voice of local communities all around the country, the voice of trade union members all around the country, and the voice of the political left all around the country that can come together.”

Zarah spoke about how inspiring it was to see “over a thousand on this call, and also the fact that I have had over 100,000 sign-ups after I posted my resignation from the Labour Party, and that we all know there is a real appetite and energy for a new left-wing force”. It's time, she declared, “for a party that stands with

workers not the wealthy, a genuine democratic socialist alternative that is rooted in the trade union movement and built by and for our class, the working class.”

Dave Nellist began the meeting by talking about the enthusiasm for a new party, and how opinion polls have indicated even before a party has been formed that a **Jeremy Corbyn-led** initiative would win between 10 and 18% of the vote, and come first among 18 to 24-year-olds.

New working-class party

The purpose of this meeting, however, was as a practical discussion on how to take forward the fight for a new party – based on the workers' movement – in different trade unions.

This modest, ‘nuts and bolts’, meeting was attended by members of at least 30 of the 48 TUC (Trades Union Congress) affiliated unions. Members of nine of the 11 unions affiliated to Labour were present – including around 200 Unison activists and more than 500 from Unite. In reality it was the most important discussion on a new party to have taken place since **Zarah Sultana** and **Jeremy Corbyn's** declarations that, as **Jeremy** put it, the “democratic foundations of a new party will soon take shape”.

The potential support, and the urgent need, for a new party of the working class are very clear, and the

10-18%

of the vote, opinion polls show a Corbyn-led initiative could win now

Socialist Party actively supports every step to make such a party a reality. That is why we voted for the offer of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) steering committee to, as an interim measure, ‘hand over’ TUSC's electoral “registration to **Jeremy** and **Zarah** if that helps the process along” (see box right).

But wholeheartedly fighting for a new workers' party does not mean simply cheering every announcement, regardless of whether it takes the process forward, but rather fighting for a party to be founded in the way that gives it the best chance of success.

That means fighting for a party that is rooted in the workers' movement. The trade unions are existing mass working-class organisations with over six million members. Their strength comes from the fact that they are collective, confronting the employers with demands agreed by the membership as a whole – not as associations of individuals fighting their own personal battles. A new workers' party needs the same

approach – with a founding conference made up of democratically elected delegates from trade union organisations, alongside others of course – including socialist groups and community campaigns – but a new party would, above all, be a political voice for the organised working class in the trade unions.

Trade unionists speak

At the meeting **Jared Wood**, the **RMT transport workers' union London Transport regional organiser**, pointed to the role of the RMT's predecessor union the ASRS in deciding that “hand in hand with an industrial fight there has to be a political fight, because an industrial fight alone cannot win lasting social change”, and therefore helping to found Labour as a voice for the working class. **Jared** was confident that RMT members would draw the same conclusions again but, he warned trade unionists, “don't outsource your politics to a party. The trade unions have to be absolutely integral to a new party.”

This meeting, then, was a vital step forward in that struggle. All the speakers were there in a personal capacity, but they pointed to the opportunities in their trade unions. **Unite Executive Council member Suzanne Muna** explained why the Unite conference, “the parliament of the union”, voted overwhelmingly to “re-examine” the union's relationship with Labour as a result of

the threat to ‘fire and rehire’ striking bin workers: “The government has a direct role in Birmingham through its appointed commissioners to the council and it led our conference to vote overwhelmingly, with only 5 out of 800 not supporting, and a standing ovation for the mover”. **Suz** concluded that “it certainly feels like **Unite** is strongly positioned to disaffiliate and consider alternative political representation.”

Marco Tesel, a member of the **NEC of the University and College Union (UCU)**, explained how he had successfully moved a motion at his union's congress this year which called on UCU members to stand in elections, linking up with other trade unionists, to fight for union policies. The motion also called for the UCU to invite **Jeremy Corbyn**, the **Independents**, and other pro-worker MPs to attend the UCU executive and discuss how they can support the union's campaigns. **Marco** concluding by asking: “What do we do now to ensure that the resolution is put into practice? Clearly we have to put persistent pressure on our general secretary and national executive. It is vital that UCU branches across the country insist on the implementation of that policy. Local reps and activists should get in touch with me.”

Concrete proposals to take the struggle forward were a theme of every speaker. **Sheila Caffrey**, **National Education Union (NEU) Executive member**, explained how she was circulating a model motion to NEU branches asking them to pass them at September meetings. **Marion Lloyd**, of the **PCS civil servants' union**, reported on the motion she and others would move at their NEC meeting in the coming days.

Anger at Labour

April Ashley, who has just won 28,792 votes to be re-elected as the female black members' rep on the **Unison National Executive Council**, reported on the enormous anger at Labour among her union's members: “At Unison conference 2025, every delegate who called for a new party for workers got massive applause. However, that was not the only view expressed. Our current



It certainly feels like **Unite** is strongly positioned to disaffiliate and consider alternative political representation

Suz Muna (member of Unite's EC)

general secretary, **Christina McAnea**, praised the ‘significant changes’ she claimed we're seeing under **Starmer's** government.”

However, **April** explained, the left candidate for the upcoming **Unison** general secretary election, **Andrea Egan**, had pledged to review **Unison's** relationship with the Labour Party and how **Socialist Party** members are fighting for her to call for a new workers' party in her manifesto.

Katrine Williams, a member of **Wales TUC general council**, reported on the initiative of **Cardiff Trades Council** to convene a conference this autumn to discuss how the unions can ensure a workers' voice in next year's elections for the **Welsh Senedd**.

Socialist Party

Nancy Taaffe, the **Unite conference delegate** who spoke to the **Unite** conference emergency motion on the **Birmingham bin strike** and the union's relationship with Labour, also talked about the role of the **Socialist Party** in her contribution. She reported she was one of just six **Socialist Party** members who were elected delegates to the 800-strong **Unite** conference, but by putting forward a clear socialist programme in bulletins and on the floor, that small group had made a very important contribution to the debates at the conference, not least on the need for a new workers' party.

A future workers' party will inevitably face relentless attacks from the capitalist class, combined with pressure to move away from defending the interests of the working class and be more ‘reasonable’ and ‘moderate’ – in other words to become just one more capitalist party. The freedom of the **Socialist Party** to argue for our programme for the socialist transformation of society within a new party, and for all others to put their point of view in the inevitable debates on the way forward, will be crucial to resisting those pressures.

Next steps in the unions

The meeting concluded with a speech by **Ian Hodson**, **President of the bakers' union, BFAWU**, and with a pledge by **Dave Nellist** that this



The freedom of the Socialist Party to argue for our programme for the socialist transformation of society within a new party, and for all others to put their point of view in the inevitable debates on the way forward, will be crucial

was just the beginning. Next steps would include meetings of activists for a new party in each union in order to plan their campaigns, to which **Jeremy Corbyn** and **Zarah Sultana** should be invited.

Inevitably those campaigns will vary from union to union, and the structure of a new party will need to take that into account. Some unions may affiliate nationally at an early stage, with others it will be some local branches or regions that take the first step. There too we can learn lessons from the workers who fought for the foundation of the **Labour Party** in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. They also faced fierce struggles with those in the movement who wanted to continue backing a capitalist party – at that stage the **Liberals**.

Labour origins

It was in 1900 that a motion moved by the **RMT's** predecessor, the **ASRS**, successfully led to the foundation of the **Labour Representation Committee**, bringing together trade union and socialist organisations in the precursor to the **Labour Party**. At the time, one left newspaper, the **Clarion**, called the **LRC** “a little cloud, no bigger than a man's hand, which

may grow into a united **Labour Party**”. Yet from these small beginnings the **Labour Party** became a mass force which, however imperfectly, did provide a voice for the working class. It was not formed ready made in one act, however. For example, the **Miners' Federation of Great Britain** was then the most powerful union in Britain. The **Lancashire and Cheshire Miners' Federation** was an early affiliate to the **LRC**. However, the first members ballot for national affiliation in 1906 was defeated, and the **Federation** as a whole did not join until 1908 when a second ballot was won.

Today – with the **Tories** falling apart and **Starmer's** capitalist **Labour** elected by only 20.1% of the electorate – the support for the parties of the capitalist establishment is lower than ever before. The need for the working class to have its own party could not be clearer. What will be needed this time is not just to build a workers' party with a mass base, but to fight for it to have a programme and leadership capable of leading a successful struggle for socialism. Over recent weeks some small but important steps towards such a party have been taken. Now they need to be built on.

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TUSC offers full backing to moves towards a new party

The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) all-Britain steering committee has offered its full backing to the recent moves made towards the establishment of a new political voice for the working class to challenge the continuity **Tories** of **Keir Starmer's** New Labour party.

The TUSC national chairperson **Dave Nellist**, also a former Labour MP (1983-1992) from **Coventry South East**, said:

“Our activity has always been aimed to help develop the self-confidence of the working class that it is an alternative power to the tiny capitalist elite who rule our society. And that it has the capacity to create and build its own democratic mass workers' party to realise that power politically”.

“It is from that starting point that TUSC has been involved in some of the discussions that preceded **Zarah Sultana's** announcement on 3 July. And it is on that basis too that we will enthusiastically contribute what we can to the process of getting a new party off the ground”.

Party registration offer

Dealing with the next practical steps to be addressed, the TUSC national election agent **Clive Heemskerk** added: “Establishing a new workers' party able to bring together trade unions, anti-war protesters, working-class community campaigners, environmental activists, young people fighting for a future, and the already existing groups of independent councillors, is a process and not something to be achieved in one act”.

“One issue is the requirement under **Britain's** election laws to register a party with the **Electoral Commission** before it can appear on ballot papers, including the restrictions on what the name could be if it

overlaps with already existing parties. As an interim measure, the TUSC steering committee agreed that we would be prepared to ‘hand over’ our registration to **Jeremy** and **Zarah** if that helps the process along”.

“It would allow things to get going straight away. And actually, TUSC's ‘federal coalition’ model of organisation also fits in with how a new, inclusive party could operate, at least in its early stages, to achieve the greatest unity. Over the years various socialist parties, independent councillors, community organisations – and for ten years a national trade union – have participated in TUSC's ‘consensus method’ of decision making which, while often requiring patient discussions with everyone's viewpoint both being and being seen to be equal, has brought everybody along”.

“Of course, once a party is registered – or, in this case, if our offer is taken up, new statutory officers appointed – things can be amended later on with the democratic involvement of members. That could include a debate on the best ballot paper name, although TUSC's legally-registered descriptions including ‘**Socialist** and **Trade Union Candidate**’ and ‘**Independent Trade Union** and **Socialist Candidate**’, have the advantage of saying clearly which side of the class division of wealth and power the new party's candidates would be on”.

“But the most important thing to realise now is that the idea of a new party is out there and the chance to take a big step forward for working-class political representation must be seized”.

• This is an edited version of the statement. The whole text can be found by searching: “TUSC offers full backing to moves towards a new party” at tusc.org.uk



Jeremy Corbyn and Zarah Sultana. PAUL MATTSSON AND REEL NEWS/CC

Thames Water bosses bonus bailout Nationalise the water companies

SAM WARD
LEICESTER SOCIALIST PARTY

After a £3 billion emergency bailout for Thames Water there was outcry at this money being used to pay bosses millions in bonuses. Chair Adrian Montague told MPs that the £2.46 million of bonuses to senior management were being "withdrawn". Now it turns out there's no plans to get back these payments, and more bonuses later in the year may still get paid!

Montague stated the company's "most precious resource" was its senior management team. More precious apparently than the water we drink or the workers that actually maintain the creaking water system.

While sewage and dangerous 'forever chemicals' enter our water supply, the bosses keep getting richer at our expense. Labour's 'crackdown' on bosses of polluting water companies with its 'landmark' legislation has done nothing to deter them.

The bailout loan, aimed at stabilising Thames Water's financial woes, was never going to be used to help the company deliver for its consumers. It will be used to pay off senior managers and creditors, while workers get stagnant wages, households foot the bill and receive shoddy services. Entry level roles at Thames Water start at around £22,000. Essential workers who keep the water system running are paid peanuts, while senior management pay themselves off with millions.

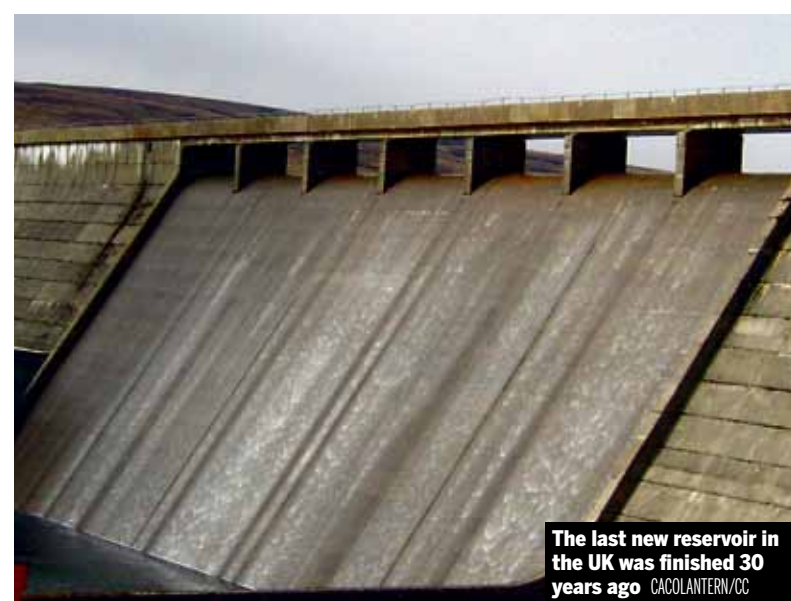
Thames Water states that it will raise bills by £17 per month, on average. It claims that "we've done everything we can to avoid increasing our prices". A good start would be to not pay senior management £2.46 million worth of bonuses!

While water is privatised, however, this farce will continue. To stop this, Thames Water, along with the entire water sector, needs to be renationalised immediately under democratic workers' control and management, with no compensation to the fat cats. By kicking out the waste or private profit we could invest in infrastructure to reduce leaks, bring down bills and protect the environment.

£17
water bills to rise on average per month



Thames Water workers PHILAFRENZ/CC



The last new reservoir in the UK was finished 30 years ago CADOLANERN/CC

Ofwat gone... now what?

The first 'great stink' caused MPs to vomit as the smell of sewage entering the Thames invaded the Houses of Parliament in 1858. The second "great stink moment", as Sir John Cunliffe put it while presenting his review into the water and sewage system, again sees sewage dumped into our waterways. Meanwhile bosses make mega-profits as debt builds up. It's not just Thames Water - the whole system of privatised water stinks.

So what is the Labour government's response to the review? Ofwat, the regulatory body responsible for

water, is getting flushed down the toilet. A new regulator with befed up powers will take its place.

But it's as clear as sewage-riddled mud we don't just need a new regulator in charge. Water bosses are already sniffing out loopholes to get out of any fines.

And this Labour government was never going to do what is required - to kick out private profit from the water system, with no compensation given to the fat cats. The review wasn't even allowed to consider what effect renationalising water would have. Until we remove the miasma of private profit from the system, we'll be stuck with the malodorous effects - polluted rivers, sky-high bills and a few getting rich off our shit.

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Reeves's regulation rhetoric reminiscent of lead-up to financial crash

ADAM HARMSWORTH
COVENTRY SOCIALIST PARTY

One word dominated chancellor Reeves's 'Mansion House' speech to the bankers, speculators and parasites of the financial services sector - regulation. And she wasn't announcing new ones!

She described regulation of the finance sector as a "boot on the neck of businesses", spoke repeatedly about regulating "for growth", and proudly proclaimed that Labour is sweeping away regulation.

In short, Reeves plans to tear up the paltry rules that attempt to keep banks and investment firms in check, hoping this will encourage those banks and the super-rich to throw more money at the UK. Wealth clearly hasn't been trickling down to the working class in Labour's year in office. Does she think we'll believe that, letting the wealthy get even wealthier will somehow change this?

Reeves complains in her speech that Britain has been too concerned about risk. Perhaps she has forgotten why such strict regulations were introduced in the first place, or more likely she's desperate for any signs of economic growth. In the early 2000s banks and big businesses in Britain and abroad amassed wealth, making risky investments to try and win even

bigger profits. In 2007-08, it all unravelled. The financial crash shook capitalism to its core. Ever since, governments in the major world economies including Britain have been making workers pay the price while the rich have only got richer.

New Labour bailed out the banks and brought in some regulations, in theory to stop such a crisis returning, and mindful of the working-class breathing down their necks threatening their system. Now, Labour is back in power and happy to let the super-rich speculators loose on the British economy once again. It's a desperate move from a government that hasn't delivered any growth and has only taken more from the working class.

This deregulation of the finance sector will worry and anger workers, especially those who experienced the first financial crash and lost jobs and homes, vital public services, pay, pensions, savings. Whatever triggers the next economic crash, we won't have a decade-long boom to soften the blow as we did in 2008.

Reeves and the whole Labour government are prepared to risk a new crisis just to let the rich gamble their ill-gotten billions of pounds, while millions of workers continue to count their pennies to make ends meet. Reeves has underlined whose side Labour is on - not ours!

Instead of even less control over the finance sector, we should control it entirely. The major banks and biggest businesses should be in public ownership, with their resources democratically controlled by us instead of profit-obsessed bankers and speculators.

'We don't know'

• HMRC's answer to how much tax billionaires in the UK pay and avoid



Far right exploit Epping anger Fight for jobs, homes and services for all

EPPING FOREST RESIDENT

Protests have been held outside the Bell Hotel in Epping, Essex following the sexual assault of a 14-year-old girl, which an asylum seeker being housed there has been charged with. The protests have grown, from a couple of hundred people on 13 July to over a thousand a week later on 20 July.

Far-right groups and figures have called on their online followers to take part and tried to exploit the situation. There have been several arrests as some of the protests have descended into violence, including attacks on the police. On 17 July, schools and the local council offices closed early, fearing scenes like those that took place outside asylum hotels in some parts of England last summer. Now far-right agitator Tommy Robinson has called for another turnout on 27 July.

Small counter-protests have been organised by Stand Up to Racism which have been threatened and attacked when marching to the hotel.

Many local people are appalled by some of the violence that has been seen and reject the far right. It is the workers and communities of Epping - the trade unionists and local workers on the tube, postal depot, fire station, hospital, schools, council offices and supermarkets - backed up by the trades councils and trade unions in the surrounding areas of Essex and north and east London, that

can push back the far right in their area. Far-right activists are trying to capitalise on the fears and anger of a local population that has suffered deep cuts and a big housing crisis for years. The local community can be united in a fight for the resources all residents need and against the far right, violence and racism, with a programme and movement rooted in the working class.

Savage Tory austerity, now continued by Starmer in government, has been passed on by local councils - in Epping's case a Tory council. Coupled with decades of low pay, poverty and a housing crisis, this has created the basis for despair and division in our communities which dangerous racist far-right groups aim to exploit, aided by the disgraceful anti-migrant rhetoric of all the main parties, including Starmer's Labour.

We say:

- **Oppose all racism and division; defend the right to asylum; workers' unity against attacks on asylum seekers**
- **End all council cuts. Demand full funding from the government for all our communities' needs**
- **Jobs, homes and services for all**
- **Build council houses; cap rents**
- **Oppose all sexual harassment and violence. Restore funding for women's services; invest in street lighting and other measures to keep our streets safe**



Unions must act to defend the right to protest

JAMES IVENS
SOCIALIST PARTY NATIONAL COMMITTEE

Facing multiple crises, caught between the bosses' demands for more austerity and simmering working-class anger, the weak and hated Starmer government's attempts to buy time include fresh attacks on the right to protest.

Alongside the draconian ban on protest group Palestine Action, arrests of anti-war activists are intended to have a chilling effect on working-class opposition. Meanwhile, Labour has still not partially repealed anti-union laws, as promised - on the contrary, court injunctions and army planners have been used to undermine the Birmingham bin strike.

Armed police arrested a woman in Canterbury on 14 July for holding placards saying "Free Gaza" and "Israel is committing genocide". The spurious grounds were support for a proscribed organisation.

Such scandalous attacks are not new. Arrests were made under the beleaguered Tory government at an earlier stage of the movement, linked then to alleged support for Hamas.

Before the proscription of Palestine Action, over 70 protesters - including a former national executive member of the National Education Union and leading members of anti-war campaign groups - were arrested

in January at an anti-war demonstration. The grounds then were breaching a police order not to march.

The Socialist Party utterly opposes these attacks on the democratic right to protest, and the capitalists' programme of war, occupation and austerity they seek to defend. We demand the immediate dropping of these charges and democratic restrictions.

Mass action can win
One crucial lesson is that mass movements can defend against these attacks while smaller, more isolated protests can be more vulnerable. When Tory home secretary Suella Braverman called on the Met Police to suppress Palestine protests in



Protesters filled the streets in November 2023 in defiance of Tory Suella Braverman threats ROGER THOMAS

2023, calling them "hate marches", outrage at her comments made the 11 November march on the US embassy the largest of the movement to date, around 800,000 strong. This humiliating undermining of authority led to her sacking.

The trial of anti-war marchers arrested in January was initially set for 7 July. This has now been postponed to February 2026. As with the other examples, the government and courts are trying to intimidate protesters while also fearing a backlash.

So what is needed to push back all these attacks? Two open letters have circulated opposing attacks on the right to protest, signed by trade union leaders, alongside celebrities such as Charlotte Church. More than

public statements, trade union leaders need to organise the widespread opposition into a fightback.

This means organising to get big trade union contingents on anti-war demonstrations, not just making statements. It means gathering reps in affected sectors to discuss how to resist the dictates of management and government - and showing members their union will defend them against attacks.

It also means leading the fight against Labour austerity, including through national strike action to win improved pay and conditions from the bosses and their weak Labour government. It would shift the balance of confidence and power across workplaces and wider society in workers' favour. The Trades Union Congress should call a national weekend demonstration against Labour's attacks as a step in this direction.

And most of all, a mass working-class alternative to all the capitalist politicians is needed. A party based on the huge potential power and collective democracy of the unions, armed with a socialist programme to take the wealth and power off the capitalists and win resources and rights for all, would inspire huge confidence. The announcements of a potential new party by Zarah Sultana and Jeremy Corbyn are an opening for this - the unions need to fight to build it as such a vehicle for working-class politics.

the Socialist

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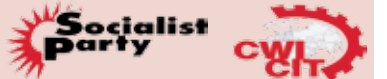
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"The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it."
Karl Marx

NEU Executive reviews the last year but a serious strategy is still needed

LOUISE CUFFARO
NEU EXECUTIVE MEMBER, PERSONAL CAPACITY

The last full National Education Union (NEU) Executive meeting of the academic year took place on 17 July.

It has been a year full of increasing crises for education in the wake of the election of the Labour government in July last year.

We have seen the ongoing crisis of funding cuts. We have an inadequate pay rise of 4% for teachers, less for support staff, which is not fully funded. We have millions of pounds leached out through privatisation and academies. In many London boroughs there are increased threats and actual closures of schools, and in others there have been unprecedented levels of restructuring and redundancies.

Under a Labour government, we should expect falling rolls (due to lower birth rates, and a lack of affordable housing driving working-class families out of London and other large cities) to be an opportunity for smaller classes and better ratios of staff to pupils.

Even more so in the case of pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), when SEND funding is acknowledged by local authorities and headteachers to be in a worsening crisis. Families of children who need SEND support are being triply failed by Starmer's Labour, which is doing nothing to address their social care, medical and housing needs on top of education cuts.

Unfortunately, in Daniel Kebede's general secretary report, which included a review of the year, this was barely mentioned.

The strategy of the NEU continues to be 'lighting fires' in individual schools and Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs). Socialist Party members on the exec support all strikes in schools to defeat workload increases, toxic management, bullying and redundancies.

But we make the point, alongside others on the exec, that this should not be instead of a national strategy of action. That is what is needed to retrieve the funding being diverted to private companies, and to increase the funding needed for full restoration of pay, and all the necessary resources to upkeep and improve the breadth of the curriculum, which is being eroded. PE specialists, music and art educationists, support staff for SEND pupils, cleaners and dinner supervisors are often the first to lose their hours or jobs.

The problem of falling rolls, lack of funding and subsequent restructures and redundancies is a national problem, even though it is unevenly spread at the moment. It can only be resolved by a national strategy and national action.

Yes, all these services were driven down by Tory governments every time they have been in office, but much of the privatisation started under Tony Blair and it is being continued under Keir Starmer's Labour



NEU members on strike alongside other public sector workers in 2023. YORKSHIRE SOCIALIST PARTY

government. We have the worst levels of funding and class sizes in all of Western Europe. And yet Starmer has no plan even to undo any privatisation to take back academies, supply agencies, teacher training, catering, cleaning etc under properly funded and democratically accountable local authorities.

At the beginning of this year, Starmer invited the NEU leaders and officers to sit at the table with Labour ministers and academy bosses in a partnership arrangement called 'Improving Education Together'. But how

can there be a consensus with these people over, for example, reversing privatisation and academisation?

Socialist Party members on the Executive would have welcomed at least a reference in Daniel's review of the year to the recent announcement by Sarah Sultana of the intention to co-found, with Jeremy Corbyn, an alternative to Labour. We will be proposing that the NEU seriously engages and discusses with other unions about how a party based on trade unions in the interest of all workers can come about.

NEU staff dispute

In previous exec meetings, Socialist Party members have raised concerns that exec members were not kept informed and were not being allowed to discuss a dispute which has led to three days of strike action by members of the majority union of our own NEU staff, Unite.

Daniel had assured us that the 17 July meeting would discuss the dispute, but it was not on the agenda again. We were given a sketchy report on the restructure, and told we would 'hear more' in September - but so far we have not had any opportunity to be informed and to discuss. Decisions seem to be made by senior staff and a consultant from New Zealand (not in education). Negotiations with Unite were dismissed as unreasonable, including by an SWP exec member!

In contrast, and in solidarity with the staff, we and others on the exec questioned a strategy we haven't been party to, and called for the restructure to be paused pending full negotiations with staff and consultation with NEU reps and officers. Any restructure should then follow NEU policy, not like most of the restructures that are taking place in schools.

North West ambulance control room educators fight pay cut

CHRIS CANNON
UNISON STRIKER, PERSONAL CAPACITY

Prior to 2023, North West Ambulance Service (NWAS) staff progressing from control room roles to control room educators were awarded a 9% premium. These staff are wholly responsible for training 999 and 111 call handlers as well as ambulance dispatchers. They include new recruits alongside those taking on new internal roles.

The payment was introduced because the service was struggling to recruit and retain staff in education roles. It ensured that there was genuine career pay progression for staff taking on additional responsibilities.

This all changed following a NWAS restructure to the education team, which created two different posts doing the same work originally done in one role. These posts are still paid the same NHS pay band, but when the Trust created the new roles, they removed the top-up payment.

This meant that staff who were previously seconded long-term to

educator posts, some for several years, immediately suffered a 9% pay cut. It meant that some staff on substantive contracts retained the 9% payment, while their colleagues are paid less to do exactly the same job, with the same responsibilities and requirements.

NWAS did all this without undertaking the joint review with trades unions, or providing any pay protection or extended notice. It created a divided, two-tier workforce. The education team consists of 16 staff, many with years of good service including through Covid. This number accounts for 0.23% of the NWAS workforce of 7,000 staff. Restoring the much-needed 9% premium would be a drop in the ocean of their £470 million annual budget.

When the education team challenged the employer's decision through a grievance process, the employer gave a commitment that a review would take place and that data used to justify any change would be shared. That was July last year, and it's not happened since!

That's why, reluctantly, Unison

members balloted for industrial action. 17 days of strikes have taken place, finishing the latest round on 16 July. More days are planned through August, and the team has recently reballoted.

NWAS has failed to put forward any reasonable offer of a resolution. All the while, the impact on the team is huge. The majority of staff are now seeking other roles in the service - and some even say they might leave the NHS - because they can't afford to take a pay cut whilst taking on additional responsibility. Yet NWAS says there's no retention crisis that warrants reinstating the payment.

This is reckless. Everyone in our society depends on an effective ambulance service that has staff with the skills and experience to keep us and our loved ones safe.

To make our voices heard, we are lobbying the NWAS board on 30 July, 10am-midday, at NWAS's headquarters at Ladybridge Hall in Bolton. Join us to show our employer that while they might try to ignore us, we aren't going away and we will fight for fair treatment.

Reading school workers' strike



PHOTO: SARA GULLMAN

Reading Socialist Party members gave our support to a very well-attended National Education Union (NEU) picket line on 15 July.

Around 50 members at the Maiden Erlegh Trust 'community of schools' were there, experiencing lots of support from passing motorists.

The dispute revolves around

increasing workload and pay cuts to TLRs - a teaching and learning responsibilities role. NEU members are defending fair working conditions and standing against unfair cuts.

We discussed with a striker who told us "It's just not right" that the CEO of the Trust was on about £200,000 and yet they are facing pay

cuts. They are striking to protect education and making a difference through supporting each other.

The dispute will be carried on in September if no resolution is found. Strikers thanked us for our support, and we said we'd be back if needed in September!

SARA AND ARCHIE, READING SOCIALIST PARTY

PCS in HMRC: Fight back against outsourcing plans!

PCS BROAD LEFT NETWORK MEMBERS

On 25 June HMRC (Revenue and Customs) management announced, without prior consultation with civil service union PCS, that it plans to engage a 'Managed Service Provider' (MSP) before the end of 2025. This is management-talk for outsourcing - ie privatising - work, particularly across the customer service group.

It is clear that HMRC has not learned the lessons from its last experience with an MSP.

Lessons from the last time

Under the then Tory government, between May 2014 and November 2016 the private agency firm Concentrix was used to handle calls about tax credits. The contract was terminated early following a disastrous experience - it was even debated in parliament, with MPs condemning HMRC and Concentrix for "gross failure of customer service".

A parliamentary Work and Pensions Committee report concluded that there was a "cut first, think later" attitude, that "plunged claimants into humiliating hardship and debt." 90% of appeals against decisions were upheld - and yet HMRC was pressuring Concentrix into finding even more



HMRC members on strike in 2023. ROBERT THOMAS

cuts! The consequences for claimants were severe, with some feeling no option but to take their own lives.

The Concentrix staff taking these highly distressing calls weren't trained in how to handle life or death situations. Staff themselves suffered mental harm through no fault of their own, also victims of this doomed contract.

Private companies are profit-driven organisations that should not be paid out of the public purse. This insufficient provision is baked into all outsourcing. Inadequate training

and worse terms and conditions for staff are a recipe for providing a service on the cheap.

Yet Starmer's Labour government - despite all its claims to "bring about the biggest wave of in-sourcing of public services in a generation" - is going down the same road. HMRC has indicated that outsourced staff will be used to address basic queries from service users, downplaying the complexity of the work in order to get as low a quote as possible. This knowing disregard for providing quality support for ordinary

working people who rely on HMRC is unacceptable.

In addition to the 'degrading of services' - the words of the Public Accounts Committee, not ours! - there will be a negative and potentially job-threatening impact on civil servants on permanent contracts.

There can be no doubt that outsourced workers will be treated as a quick and cheap fix, instead of employing staff on a permanent basis and investing time and money into the training and retention. There is a real danger that a two-tier workforce

will be created, and that the pay, terms and conditions of outsourced staff could be used by the employers to attempt to undercut permanently employed, union-organised civil servants.

Members in the Surge and Rapid Response team (SRRT - a department used to address surges in demand, work backlogs, or crisis situations across government) are first in the firing line, with most SRRT staff currently engaged in customer service roles.

PCS members in the Broad Left Network (BLN) say we must fight back! The HMRC group executive committee must make clear to HMRC its opposition to this move, including the lack of consultation. Every PCS branch in HMRC should organise members' meetings to fully brief members and gather their views and fighting ideas. PCS should raise with members the prospect of industrial action or 'action short of a strike'. This issue should be included in a wider campaign in HMRC, to fight on pay, office attendance and employee relations. We should also call on MPs in the PCS Parliamentary Committee to raise opposition in parliament.

● If you agree, join the BLN and join the fight for a campaigning, fighting and democratic PCS: bln.org.uk

Ardagh Glass forklift drivers in Wakefield strike for union recognition

IAIN DALTON
YORKSHIRE SOCIALIST PARTY

Forklift workers at beer bottle manufacturer Ardagh Glass in Knottingley, Wakefield, are striking to defend their right to be collectively represented by their union, Unite.

In March, Lockwood Haulage company took over the forklift contract at the site, but refuses to recognise the union, despite this being written into workers' contracts when they were transferred over from previous employer GXO.

Many of the forklift drivers have worked at the site for years, with one striker listing to me a whole series of companies that have held the contract and recognised the union. The motives of Lockwood management have been revealed. They are trying to force workers who have taken part in training since the takeover to sign over to new, inferior contracts. The new contracts include only statutory sick pay rather than current arrangements for six months of company sick pay, for example.

Strike action began with two days on 18 and 21 July, with a live mandate running until December.

PAY THE DOCTORS!

Following the doctors and dentists review body award, pay erosion against RPI inflation for resident doctors (formerly known as junior doctors) will be at 21%. Or, put another way, resident doctors are still working a fifth of their time for free compared to real-terms pay in 2008-09.

"A pay uplift of 26% is needed to reverse it."

"After 26,766 resident doctors voted 'Yes' (90% of those voting) to industrial action on a turnout of 55%; the BMA (British Medical Association) has called a five-day walkout of resident doctors in England, beginning Friday 25 July."

LIVERPOOL RESIDENT DOCTOR



On strike in 2024. NICK HART

ALL MANSFIELD WRITES:

The NHS as a whole is in deep crisis after 14 years of brutal Tory austerity. But Labour has no intention of taking the serious action needed to reverse this. A token funding increase of 3% announced in the summer spending review will barely keep pace with rising costs, and by no means make up for decades of underfunding.

Disgracefully, Wes Streeting has also expressed sympathy for the idea of reintroducing Private Finance Initiatives, opening the door for more private profiteers to leech money from the NHS.

Streeting has admitted that "the NHS is hanging by a thread" - but rather than address underfunding, excessive workloads or the strain put on the NHS by declining social care, he uses this as an excuse to attack resident doctors and their right to strike!

All doctors want to provide safe, high-quality care for their patients, but they need the right conditions to do so. More funding is desperately needed to protect services, and fair pay - on top of being well-deserved - is vital in protecting staffing numbers.

The fight for fair pay in the NHS should be linked with other struggles against Labour's austerity agenda.

Hinkley Point C resolution

The Socialist 1330 reported on a walkout of thousands of workers at Hinkley Point C nuclear power plant against bullying management (see 'Construction workers walk out at Hinkley Point C' at socialistparty.org.uk).

The dispute has now been resolved. This action shows that workers can push back management. We send the workers our support and solidarity.

Join the fightback

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

- Visit socialistparty.org.uk/join
- or call 020 8988 8777
- or text your name and postcode to 07958 032071 to find out more today!



nationalshopstewardsnetwork
1PM SUNDAY 7TH SEPTEMBER - THE OLD SHIP HOTEL, 32-38 KINGS RD, BRIGHTON BN1 1NR
LOBBY THE TUC
CALL A NATIONAL DEMO AGAINST STARMER'S CUTS!
SHOPSTEWARDS.NET

YOUTH WALKOUT AGAINST TRUMP

WEDNESDAY 17 SEPTEMBER



Learning from history

'DAY X' – WHEN HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS WALKED OUT AGAINST WAR

In the run-up to the invasion of Iraq in March 2003, school students in Britain walked out of classes and protests multiple times against the war.

The Socialist Party was a leading part of the huge anti-war demonstrations that year, some of the biggest in history, and we were also among the main organisers of the school walkouts, with the campaign 'International Socialist Resistance – youth against the war' (ISR) calling a walkout on 'Day X' - the day of the invasion - and other initiatives.

Protests and walkouts build up

On 15 February over 30 million people internationally demonstrated against Bush and Blair's war for oil in Iraq. Many of those protesting were school and college students who saw the demo as the first step in building the anti-war movement.

We helped school and college students across England and Wales to set up student-run anti-war groups and to organise walkouts, strikes and protests as part of the international student day of action against the war and cuts in education on 5 March.

On that day in **Coventry**, **Max Toynbee** from Finham Park school reported: "At my school we got about 35 people to a meeting at which **Dave Nellist** spoke [then Coventry Socialist Party councillor for St Michael's ward]. A lot of people there were year seven students, who are in the first year of secondary school, 11 and 12-year-olds."

In **Sheffield** 400 students took part in the strikes: "When students arrived in the city centre, there was a really lively march with loads of chanting and singing - which then went onto the FE college and another school and went round calling for students to 'Come Out and join our protests.'"

"This took place in the background of some head teachers and the education department trying to stop the walkouts through the press, including a head teacher sending letters home to parents telling them students had been given ISR flyers!"

In **London**, Downing Street and Whitehall came to a grinding halt for an hour when 500 school students took a rolling protest from Parliament Green down to the gates of Downing Street.

"School students from across London - from north, south and west - and even from Potters Bar in Hertfordshire came to the demonstration. Throughout the day new groups of students arrived after walking out of their school. Some had just heard about the action on the news and decided to walk out. A number of students had been threatened with exclusion but as many said: 'They can't exclude all of us if we stick together.'"

There were more walkouts on 7 March, in **Leicester** alone our reports suggest that at least 1,000 walked out, from maybe ten schools around the county.

In the next two weeks there was further action. Over 100 school students from **Clapton girls school in Hackney**, London, organised a lively strike on 17 March.

Natalie, 16, told the Socialist: "We organised this strike because we felt like we needed our voice heard and to do something before the war starts. The strike has gone really well, apart from some teachers telling us to go back into school. We are going to build this by going to as many schools as possible to get them to protest - Blair isn't listening and we have to make him!"



ALL PHOTOS: SOCIALIST PARTY

Day X

And then came Day X and the invasion itself on 20 March. Within hours of cruise missiles exploding in Baghdad a wave of anti-war demos and protests, involving millions of people, swept around the globe. And as our reports from issue 293 of the Socialist show, students on Day X were to the fore as tens of thousands walked out.

We said: "The London borough of **Waltham Forest** has never seen anything like it. At the peak of the protest 3,000 school and sixth form students took over the streets. Together they marched chanting and shouting from school to school in the borough. Terrified teachers rushed to lock the gates and stop students from joining the march, although a few managed to escape."

Aftermath

We didn't stop on Day X either. We organised more action and said the lead of the school students should be joined by the trade unions and workers: "The school students who turned out in the run-up to and including Day X in London and throughout the country definitely inspired many groups of workers."

"However, it is still the case that the anti-union laws and the threat of victimisation still weighs heavy on many people, who would like to take protest action and strike action but still are not fully confident about initiating such action themselves. While there were lots of protests and workers taking time off, the occurrence of actual industrial action was, unfortunately, limited, because many union leaders did not back up their calls for action with concrete plans. "That is why the Socialist Party

In **Birmingham**: "Well over 5,000 school, college and university students poured into Victoria Square, Birmingham after a wave of walkouts and strikes across the city. "Many school students were barricaded into schools by teachers but climbed over fences and gates to join the protest against the war. Whole schools were threatened with suspension if they walked out. However, this had little effect."

Lev Taylor in Reading said: "The amount of people was amazing - just about the entire school had turned up and there were groups yelling anti-war slogans." Students in Britain were joined by others internationally. **Sascha Stanicic**, CWI Germany, wrote about the 150,000 who walked out in **Germany**:

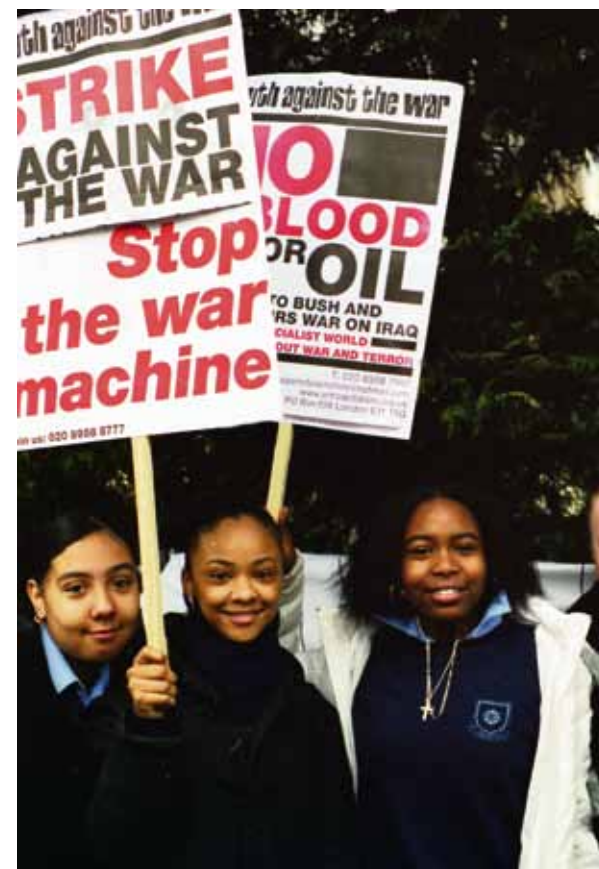
"In a magnificent show of anger against Bush's war, school students stopped their lessons and took to the streets. In some cities headmasters tried to lock them into the schools. This prompted youth to shout "freedom for the political prisoners". In other cases, teachers joined in the strike and took their whole classes to the demos.

"In Hamburg, we co-organised a half-hour stoppage of work by apprentices in the defence company Airbus. Hospital workers in some southern German cities also stopped work for 30 minutes against the war. One of the biggest school student demonstrations took place in Berlin with 70,000 on the march. Stuttgart followed with 20,000 in the second school strike within a month."



proposal for organising a meeting of workplace reps, union executive committee members and general secretaries is crucial."

And for the school students, we fought disciplinary action that had arisen in some places against those who walked out: "Those who have been disciplined or threatened with exclusion by their schools for taking



BUILD YOUTH WALKOUTS AGAINST TRUMP 2025

ADAM POWELL-DAVIES
SOCIALIST STUDENTS NATIONAL ORGANISER

Young people are determined to have a say in our lives and the big events that affect them, as was shown by the student walkouts against the Iraq war in 2003 (see left), as well as school climate strikes, mass Gaza protests, Black Lives Matter and more.

The capitalist education system tries to strip away our confidence to take action. Restrictive rules, a lack of say in our curriculum, locked gates that trap us in the whole day - it's designed to make us feel powerless.

Walking out is a way to temporarily turn this arrangement on its head. It's a chance for young people to get a sense of our own agency, and link up with wider struggles taking place. The experience of a one-day walkout can be the lesson of a lifetime, which is that we don't have to accept things the way they are.

That is what hundreds of thousands of students showed by walking out against the invasion of Iraq. By helping to organise the biggest possible walkouts against Trump's state visit to the UK on 17 September, Socialist Students wants to show that young people today are again prepared to fight back for a future free from poverty, war and oppression.

The work we do now over the summer is laying the foundations for huge protests when term starts again.

What you can do now

1) 26 July – Day of action against Starmer's meeting with Trump

Ahead of his formal state visit in September, Trump is visiting Scotland from 25-29 July.

As part of this visit, he will meet with prime minister Keir Starmer. Both men are united in their defence of a capitalist system that means chaos and brutality for the vast majority of the world's population - demonstrated, for example, in their support for the Israeli state's genocidal war on the Palestinians. No wonder Starmer has spoken of his "good personal relationship" with Trump!

Socialist Students is calling a UK-wide day of action on Saturday 26 July

to protest against the war and austerity agenda of Trump and Starmer. It is a chance for everyone who has said they will walk out on 17 September to get together in their area and give Trump a taste of what's to come.

You could organise a protest, hold a mass leafleting and poster session, or do a campaign stall with an 'open mic' or megaphone that allows us to tell passers-by why we will be walking out. The important thing is being visible to other young people who we can talk to about getting involved in the campaign over the rest of the summer.



Getting a great response building for walkouts



2) Poster the town red!

Socialist Students has had a flurry of names through our website from areas that have been covered in 'Youth Walkout Against Trump' posters. You can organise to stick up posters in places where young people are likely to see them - like parks, or town or city centres. If you want to get posters to put up in your area, or any other Trump walkout material, email socialiststudents@gmail.com.

3) Big opportunities for leafleting

There are a number of 'headline' events where we can meet young people over the summer. These include:

- Pride events
- Music festivals and other community/cultural festivals
- A-Level results days at sixth forms/colleges (Thursday 14 August)
- GCSE results days at schools (Thursday 21 August)

If we get a group of young people going along to hand out leaflets, we can have an even bigger impact. Why not start by inviting your friends to help you out?

4) Organise a meetup – what ideas are needed to beat Trump and capitalism?

If all goes well, there will be a group of students walking out from your school, college or university on 17 September. But what do we chant? What slogans are we protesting around? After 17 September, what will the next steps be in the fight against Trump and the chaos he represents for our futures?

Answering all of that requires a discussion on what Trump is, the capitalist system he represents, and the need for socialism as the alternative.

A vital way to build the campaign over the summer is getting young people together to discuss how we can beat Trump and capitalism - combining our action with ideas to change the world.

5) Building links with the workers' movement

Walking out can be a nerve-racking experience. One way to gain confidence in our action is by building points of support in our community, to show that, as young people, we don't stand alone.

The trade unions are organisations that bring together workers who, like all of us walking out against Trump, are fighting to change society in the interests of ordinary people, not the bosses.

You can send our model trade union motion to trade union branches and trades councils in your area, to ask for their solidarity - including asking if we could speak about our campaign at an upcoming meeting.



Fight fire cuts in Hampshire and Isle of Wight

DECLAN CLUNE
SOUTHAMPTON SOCIALIST PARTY

Frontline fire services in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight face £1.6 million of cuts. A protest outside of Hampshire Fire and Rescue HQ in Eastleigh was called by the local Fire Brigades Union (FBU) branch and Southampton Trades Council on 15 July. Socialist Party members in the area joined in support.

The fire service is already stretched beyond safe limits, and this renewed wave of austerity poses a threat to both firefighters and the public.

12,000 jobs

This latest round of cuts will mean 30 firefighter jobs being axed, as well as cuts to vital safety equipment, including engines and pumps our firefighters and communities rely on in an emergency. It is clear that this will put more lives at risk. The cuts nationwide since 2010 have seen firefighter numbers slashed by 12,000.

The other impacts of these cuts include an increase in response times across the service. Firefighters told us that when a serious fire took hold recently in Petersfield, Hampshire, there were no available firefighters in the area and a response was delayed from Grayshott Station, 49 miles away. Only one engine was deployed due to a lack of resources and

found that it was unable to engage with the fire due to its size. Only by pure luck this was not a residential fire.

A firefighter also informed us that, due to a lack of resources on the island, firefighters have had to be deployed from the mainland to deal with fires there. They have had to use ferry services to cross the Solent, losing valuable time.

Endanger lives

They said cuts would lead to an increase in already unachievable workloads for members who are already working beyond capacity. There will be a reduction in the resilience for response to incidents due to having fewer fire stations to call on, and it would undermine public safety and endanger the lives of our firefighters.

Previous cuts have amounted to almost half of firefighters at some stations. At Redbridge Station in Southampton, they have already been cut from 64 down to 36. These new proposals could see only 24 firefighters left at Redbridge, a station that in 2010 saw the tragic loss of firefighters James Shears and Alan Bannon when responding to a fire in a tower block.

The discussions taking place at the protest centred on the failures of the Labour government and its

continuation of cuts to vital public services. Some of the FBU activists informed everyone that they would be attending a lobby of MPs in Parliament the following day to try and apply pressure and stop these cuts.

The FBU campaign locally is called STOP, THINK, REASSESS. This was the message given to the protest outside the fire authority meeting taking place to discuss these latest cuts. There was clear support from the local traffic passing by, with vehicles beeping and drivers shouting words of encouragement.

No-show councillors

Shamefully, it was reported later the meeting could not proceed due to the fact that only five members of the Fire Authority (made up of local councillors) had turned up, and was postponed.

We will do all we can to support the FBU to grow the campaign and stop these horrific cuts, fight to restore funding to our fire services and bring back our firefighters to restore the numbers of firefighters, along with the engines and equipment they need.

• Please support the campaign by signing the petition here: www.megaphone.org.uk/petitions/stop-think-reassess-dangerous-cuts-to-firefighter-numbers



Declan (right) protesting with the firefighters

• Bristol Pride anger at Supreme Court ruling and Labour austerity

JOSH HARPER
BRISTOL NORTH SOCIALIST PARTY

Bristol Pride on 19 July was my first time helping out at a campaign stall with the Socialist Party.

Many were protesting the recent Supreme Court ruling, which is being used to weaken the rights and security of transgender people. I also saw lots of banners opposing ongoing

austerity policies, which is worsening the living conditions of LGBTQ+ people.

The Socialist Party attended the march to stand in solidarity and engage with the LGBTQ+ community.

I felt a little awkward at first. But after ten minutes of "hellos" and handing out leaflets to passers-by, it started to feel good. Many people gladly accepted the Socialist Party's

material, and seemed enthusiastic about our message.

I had a couple of conversations with members of the public. It was really nice to hear about their ideas and experiences. This helped me develop my political understanding, but also made me realise I have lots to learn.

It felt good to be active, and to be part of something bigger.



Tolpuddle Martyrs Festival: Sea change against Labour and a new workers' party on people's lips

TOM BALDWIN
SOUTH WEST SOCIALIST PARTY

The Tolpuddle Martyrs Festival sees hundreds of trade unionists descend on a sleepy Dorset village every year. The weekend festival, organised by the South West TUC, commemorates a victory for the early trade union movement. In 1836 a mass campaign overturned the draconian sentence of transportation to Australia which had been imposed on six agricultural workers who were victimised for trade union organising.

Labour and Tory austerity

The first order of business for Socialist Party members at the festival was setting up our campaign stall. In previous years our banner said: 'Fight Tory austerity'. It is now changed to 'Fight Labour austerity'. The fact that the slogan still holds with the name of the party changed is an indictment of the pro-big business, anti-working-class nature of the Labour government.

Consequently, there had been a sea change in people's attitudes. A striking Birmingham bin worker won a huge round of applause when excoriating the Labour council and government for acting like Tories in imposing fire and rehire and £8,000 pay cuts on them. "If it looks like a duck and quacks like a duck - it's a duck."

The Socialist Party contingent on the march through the village got applause and people joining in with our chants of "When Labour say cut back we still say fight back", "No cuts, no war, don't fund Labour anymore", and "Keir Starmer what a farce, build a party of the working class".

New party

The prospect of a new party was on many people's lips. We were able to have a real impact as our call for a working-class party with the trade unions playing a central role really grabbed people. We got dozens of signatures on the petition calling for the unions to lead the building of a new party.

We sold 110 copies of the Socialist newspaper and met a number of people who were interested in joining the party, despite the festival being seemingly smaller this year.

Through rain and shine, Socialist Party members were tirelessly building the ideas of socialism and putting forward the next steps needed for the working-class movement to build its power.

Help fund the fightback
DONATE
socialistparty.org.uk/donate

AREA	£ RECEIVED	£ TARGET	Q3: JULY-SEPTEMBER 2025	DEADLINE: 30 SEPTEMBER 2025
South West	815	2,100	39%	
Northern	178	800	22%	
North West	205	1,200	17%	
Wales	398	2,400	17%	
Yorkshire	360	2,650	14%	
Eastern	97	1,300	7%	
West Midlands	192	2,700	7%	
London	255	5,000	5%	
East Midlands	69	2,050	3%	
Southern & SE	37	2,400	2%	
Other	622	2,400	26%	
TOTAL	3,228	25,000	13%	

Why I joined the Socialist Party 'Campaigning experience my deciding moment'

AILEEN BARR
MANCHESTER AND SALFORD SOCIALIST PARTY

I've always been moderately politically active but I was becoming increasingly disappointed with the impact I was having by voting, emailing my MP, donating to one-off causes and debating with anyone who'd listen.

I had joined the Labour Party when Jeremy Corbyn was leader, and left when it became clear that Keir Starmer was taking the party further and further away from my values of equality, a strong social security net and dignity for everyone. I felt politically isolated.

Then a series of escalating crises, including NHS waiting times, wealth

inequality, child poverty, attacks on trans rights, disability cuts, climate change, Ukraine and Gaza prompted me to seek out an alternative political outlet.

I found the Socialist Party online and felt like I finally found an organised political group that didn't compromise on what's important. I went to a couple of meetings, read more Socialist Party material, and joined a campaign stall.

So much support

The stall was the deciding moment for me. So many people stopped to show their support and said they found it inspiring to see a working-class alternative to the right wing. But the stall also attracted a few

who disagreed with what we stood for. One of these people was recording a video for his YouTube channel who asked why I support "communist death camps". He posted the clip of me looking confused, saying, "I don't," and walking away to join other campaigners who immediately rallied around me.

Meeting so many like-minded people and standing up to hate while being supported by my fellow comrades made me feel like I was finally in the right place.

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



Marching to save Caerphilly libraries

Save Caerphilly library Rebel councillor joins campaign

MARIAM KAMISH
CAERPHILLY TRADES UNION COUNCIL SECRETARY

'Rebel councillor' Brenda Miles has joined campaigners marching to save the ten local libraries that Caerphilly Labour council wants to close or offload. Councillor Miles says this would put the council in breach of its statutory duty to provide library services.

Our march set off led by local children dressed as story book characters. Caerphilly Unison secretary Lianne Dallimore carried one end of a banner calling on the council to use a £5 million underspend in the budget to secure the future of the libraries. Unison branch president Juan Garcia

handed out Unison flags, which the children waved enthusiastically.

The massive Fire Brigades Union (FBU) banner sailed above us. The kids were delighted later to receive their costume competition prizes from a real-life firefighter, FBU South East Wales secretary, Gareth Tovey.

Marching

As we marched, a Cardiff Trades Union Council car rolled in front of us, booming out a rousing soundtrack.

The trade union support for our march shows what the council is up against - not just the anger of local people, but the organised working class.

The campaign is heading from

strength to strength. BBC and Wales Online reporters filmed as our march set off. The South Wales Argus ran an article entitled 'Caerphilly libraries heading for closure may be saved', with a photo of a recent protest.

Under pressure, Labour council leader Sean Morgan has followed Keir Starmer's example, and withdrawn the Labour whip from councillor Brenda Miles for standing up against library closures. For her principled position, she has lost all her committee roles.

We say, Caerphilly Council, if you style yourself on Starmer, U-turn! Keep our libraries open, and in council control.

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Colombia is in crisis, three years since election of left President Gustavo Petro

JENS JASCHIK
SOL (CWI GERMANY)

Three years after the election of left-wing candidate Gustavo Petro as President of Colombia, the country is in crisis. Following the failure of negotiations with the ELN guerrilla group, the assassination attempt on right-wing presidential candidate Miguel Uribe, and the escalation of violence in various regions, many people fear a return to the country's dark years. Meanwhile, right-wing parties are waiting in the wings to take back control in 2026.

Until 2021, Colombia was considered a safe haven for US interests in Latin America. But when the ruling elites planned a tax reform that would further erode the already low standard of living in the country, with the highest social inequality in Latin America, the people had had enough. Massive protests shook society. In the 2022 presidential elections, former guerrilla fighter Gustavo Petro prevailed. He became the first social democratic president in the history of Colombia; a country where trade unionists are regularly murdered by paramilitaries and entire trade union



PHOTO: PUBLIC DOMAIN

structures have been dismantled.

Petro's election raised enormous hopes that the country would develop in a positive direction for the majority of the population. Petro promised far-reaching reforms during his term in office that would massively improve the lives of ordinary people. Some on the left hoped that Colombia would transform itself from a vassal state of US imperialism into a modern capitalist state with extensive workers' rights. But Petro's government had to contend not only with resistance from the old elites, but also with the crisis of global capitalism, in a country that is particularly hard hit by US tariffs.

Workers' party & socialist policies

When Petro was elected, we argued that a plan of struggle was needed to implement the programme on which he won. The mobilisation for the election campaign and the previous mass protests against President Iván Duque should have been used to build a mass party of workers and youth. Instead, Petro relied on top-down politics, hoping that the office of president would be enough to push through the necessary changes. No independent role was envisaged for the mass of workers. The right-wing opposition has tried to prevent all of the government's reforms. Whenever tactical manoeuvring and negotiations failed, Petro called for protests to demonstrate support for his programme and break the right-wing blockade. However, far-reaching concessions to the pro-capitalist opposition meant that the reforms

were only adopted in a watered-down form.

Ordinary Colombians fear that in the elections next March, the right wing will turn back the clock and a representative of the oligarchy will once again be at the helm of the country. But it is not too late to build a workers' party. Time and again, young people and the working class have shown that they support Petro's progressive measures, even if disillusionment and disappointment are spreading. Most recently, the trade unions supported the labour reform with a 48-hour strike, and Petro threatened to push the reform through by referendum, bypassing the Senate. The intensification of the political struggle should be used to transform the short-term mobilisation of the masses into the long-term organisation of the class. The trade unions and left-wing sections of Petro's electoral alliance of progressive organisations - the Pacto Histórico (Historical Pact) - must take the initiative to build a workers' party with socialist policies. Such a party could turn the tide in the upcoming elections.

Lessons

In such a party, activists, trade unionists, workers and young people could exchange experiences, coordinate and plan the next steps in the struggle for social justice and equality. This also includes taking stock of the last few years. Petro's government not only shows the limits of a politics that focuses on one person as a saviour, but also that the

conditions for profound change do not exist within capitalism. The experiences of left-wing governments in countries such as Venezuela, Bolivia, Ecuador and Peru, in the past, show that, without a break with capitalism, the living conditions of the masses cannot be fundamentally improved. This also applies to Colombia.

The ruling class and its political accomplices have shown that they will fight tooth and nail against any reform, no matter how small, that is in the interests of the majority of the people. They are prepared to stop at nothing to achieve their goals, as the history of Colombia has shown. In order to defend what has been achieved so far and to break the power of the oligarchy, we must pull the rug out from under their feet.

Socialism

The struggle for democratic reforms must be linked to the struggle for socialist change: a programme for the nationalisation of banks and corporations under democratic control and management by the working people, as well as the redistribution of land to poor farmers. Only such a socialist programme can provide the basis for uniting the vast majority of workers and poor people in a party, and the implementation of this programme is the only starting point for Colombia's development.

CWI World Congress – donate to support the fight for socialism worldwide

The 14th World Congress of the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI), the socialist international that the Socialist Party is part of, takes place in Berlin at the end of July.

We are living in a rapidly changing world full of uncertainty and volatility. Donald Trump's return to the White House brings dramatic headlines every day as his administration turns the capitalist world order on its head. The crisis of the global profit system, of which Trump 2.0 is both a symptom and an accelerator, is deepening at an alarming speed. Wars – including the terrible war on Gaza – inflict massive loss of life, injury and displacement. Congress will have delegates from Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and North America, to debate and discuss the world situation and develop a political perspective for the unfolding of the class struggle.

While politically crucial, the World Congress will add enormous pressure to the finances of the CWI in 2025. The Socialist Party is campaigning to raise £25,000 to ensure that the Congress is a success and to support the political work of the CWI over the remainder of 2025. So far, £13,476.50 has been paid in. What can you donate to help us reach the target?

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

Solidarity appeal – defend US trade unionists victimised over Palestine protest

Two trade union activists, educators at the Massachusetts College of Art and Design (MassArt) in the US, face being fired for participating in a peaceful protest against the Israeli state's terror in Gaza in April. The two trade union activists, including Peggy Wang, a member of the Independent Socialist Group (Socialist Party co-thinkers in the US), have been placed on leave since 5 May and now face the threat of losing their jobs.

- Support the demand for the two victimised workers to be reinstated without punishment: actionnetwork.org/letters/dont-fire-massart-educators-for-exercising-their-right-to-free-speech-and-protest/

Cuba: 'Beggars', the embargo and power cuts

Defend the revolution and fight for workers' democracy

SCOTT JONES

"There are no beggars in Cuba", according to former Cuban Minister for Labour Marta Elena Feitó Cabrera.

On 15 July she resigned after saying at a session of the National Assembly: "There are people pretending to be beggars to make easy money," and accused people searching through the rubbish of being "illegal participants in the recycling service". But these 'beggars' do exist and are not simply looking for easy money, and she caused anger in claiming otherwise.

Cabrera was criticised by Cuba's president Miguel Díaz-Canel, aware of the worsening economic crisis hitting the island due to reduced tourist income and Donald Trump's tightening of the stifling US embargo on the country.

Díaz-Canel said the leadership could not "act with condescension" or be "disconnected from the realities" of the people. And those realities are real, with the economy probably at its weakest since the collapse of the Soviet Union and its effect on the Cuban economy in the 1990s.

Cuba's main income since has been through tourism, but the pandemic effectively stopped that for a couple of years and numbers have still not recovered. Cuba did not reopen its borders to international travel until November 2021, by which

time many visitors had gone elsewhere. And this January it received only 196,000 tourists, its worst since the pandemic and a third of the number for January 2019.

The US trade and economic embargo has cost Cuba billions over the decades and hindered Cuba's ability to acquire basic goods. On 30 June, Trump tightened the screw further in a 'National Security Presidential Memorandum', part of which was to implement a new travel ban and make it harder for Cubans in the US to send money back to families on the island.

The most obvious sign of the economic issues is the effect that fuel shortages are having on daily life, and inevitably on tourism too. In March, a major failure at a substation left much of the country without power, leading to vast work and school closures, and it was the fourth national outage in six months.

Despite these obstacles, millions took to the streets, including 600,000 in Havana, to take part in the traditional May Day parades on 1 May, showing the mass support that exists for the revolution of 1959 and its many and long-lasting gains for the working class and poor of Cuba. But, even wading through the misinformation from the US and other opponents, it is clear there have been protests in the last few years against conditions on the island.

We defend the Cuban revolution and its gains, and the struggle for democratic rights by the working class, poor and youth in Cuba is crucial. A full debate to draw up an emergency economic plan to deal with the crisis needs to be elaborated by the working class and the mass of the population.

The need to oppose and build an alternative to the increasing threat of capitalist restoration, and to fight for genuine workers' democracy and a socialist planned economy in Cuba in these tumultuous times, is more urgent than ever.

This movement, defending the gains and winning new ones, fighting alongside the working class and youth who are increasingly moving into action all over the world, could build a real socialist alternative to capitalism. And this movement, taking inspiration from the Cuban revolution, while learning its lessons, can win.

- Read more at socialistparty.org.uk: 'Cuban protests – what do they represent?' and 'Cuban revolution at 60: defend the gains and fight for workers' democracy'
- Buy Cuba: Socialism & Democracy by Peter Taaffe, £8 and Che Guevara – Symbol of Struggle by Tony Saunois, £4 available at Left Books – the bookshop of the Socialist Party. Visit leftbooks.co.uk



PHOTO: RICHARD HURD/CC



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.

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ENVIRONMENT

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

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

DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS

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

SOCIALISM AND INTERNATIONALISM

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

Do you agree? Join the fightback!

JOIN THE SOCIALISTS

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- or text your name and postcode to 07958 032 071 to find out more today!

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the Socialist

Issue 1331

24 July - 6 August 2025

formerly **Militant**

YOUTH WALK OUT AGAINST TRUMP!

17 SEPTEMBER 2025



Starmer and Trump NUMBER 10 DOWNING STREET/CC

Disgusting atrocities against ordinary Palestinians, growing inequality, poverty and repression, the slide to deeper climate catastrophe. The world, led by super-rich billionaires all pursuing their own profit interests, is in crisis. Young people's futures are under threat.

US President Donald Trump, the archetypal billionaire bigot, is visiting Britain 25-29 July to play golf on his two Scottish golf courses. And Britain's prime minister Keir Starmer will pay him a visit for an informal chat. Excusing the Israeli state's brutality in Gaza, making the working class

pay while the rich get richer, and backing policies which will see climate change getting worse - they do have quite a lot in common!

Both are also widely disliked, particularly by young people. Trump will face protests in Scotland. And when he comes back to Britain for his state visit on 17 September, we want to make sure he is met by even bigger protests.

Socialist Students is organising walkouts of school and college students. If you are a young person wanting to protest - get in touch!

• **Read more about what you can do to build in your school, college or uni - pages 8-9**

Join the student fightback!

JOIN **socialist students**

- Visit socialiststudents.org.uk/join
- or call **020 8988 8761**
- or text your name and school, college or uni to **07515 921 699**

WHAT WE STAND FOR: THE SOCIALIST PARTY'S MAIN DEMANDS >>> see column on p15

