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the Socialist

Issue 1341

23-29 October 2025

formerly **Militant**

YOUR PARTY COUNCILLORS CAN

DEFY

STARMER'S

AUSTERITY

OSCAR PARRY
ENFIELD AND LEA VALLEY SOCIALIST PARTY

We have had decades of establishment political parties telling us cuts to our public services and jobs are necessary, while the billionaires get ever richer.

No wonder trust in those

politicians is at an all-time low. No wonder there is enthusiasm for Jeremy Corbyn and Zarah Sultana's Your Party.

2026 elections

In May 2026, there will be elections for thousands of council seats in dozens of local authorities in England, as well as for the Scottish Parliament and the Welsh Senedd. Your Party could win councillors in every authority, hold the balance of power and even win some councils. It is an opportunity to elect local councils to refuse to make cuts and instead say 'make the super-rich pay!'

We could have councils funding

free bus travel, introducing rent controls, building council homes, and reversing privatisation. Imagine councils providing breakfast clubs and free school meals, re-opening libraries and youth clubs. The council funding gap is £4.25 billion this year. But the combined wealth of the 350 richest people and families in the UK is £772.8 billion. The money is there, it's in the wrong hands!

Even where there aren't elections in 2026, councils must set budgets - and we should be demanding they include no more austerity cuts! The Socialist Party is calling on Your Party to bring together local trade

unions, community campaigns, and socialist organisations to collaborate in drawing up no-cuts 'people's budgets'. Documents listing what our communities actually need, not just what the government tells us is 'affordable'.

Budgets for us

Councils can use their borrowing powers and reserves to set no-cuts budgets as part of building a mass campaign for proper government funding for local services. That is a strategy supported by local authority trade unions Unite, Unison and GMB.

Your Party councillors defying

austerity would need to mobilise mass support from the working class and trade unions - a counter to huge pressure to stick to the establishment's austerity status quo.

Elected politicians, fighting on our side against the bosses for once, refusing to accept more cuts to our services. That can help to build Your Party as a mass party of the working class, and cut across support for the right-populist Reform.

The Socialist Party will be to the fore in putting forward a fighting socialist programme within Your Party, and making the case for the role of the organised working class to be central. Join us!

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the Socialist

formerly Militant

Issue 1341
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Send us reports of your workplace and community campaigns, short letters on working-class issues, or ideas for other articles.

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

Fragile Gaza ceasefire under threat

ALI MANSFIELD
YORKSHIRE SOCIALIST PARTY ORGANISER

The 'ceasefire' agreed by the Israeli government is already under huge strain. The Israeli military has carried out a series of fresh air strikes across Gaza.

Eleven members of a single family were killed in an Israeli military tank shell attack on a bus in Gaza City. The Israeli regime is severely curtailing aid from being delivered into the strip.

It was always the case that the ceasefire was unstable. Right-wing Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu has continued to deny the possibility of a Palestinian state.

With the Israeli military maintaining direct control of around half of Gaza, the potential is there for isolated fighting to break out. The fragile basis of the current ceasefire holds the potential for further escalation.

On the other hand, Netanyahu is feeling the pressure from Trump in the US and other capitalist governments worldwide - they're motivated by their own geopolitical interests, and fear mass protests against the war. Netanyahu has also been under pressure from an increasing number of Israelis wanting the war to end.

Even if the ceasefire holds, the task of rebuilding Gaza is immense, beginning with clearing more than 60 million tonnes of rubble. The UN estimates that more than 280,000 homes have been destroyed in Gaza, along with severe damage to infrastructure - sewage, water, hospitals, and roads.

In the immediate term, the interests of US imperialism are best served by a ceasefire in Gaza. But, the 'transitional authority' put forward by US President Donald Trump - prominently featuring the UK's former Labour prime minister Tony Blair, who wrought devastation across the Middle East by assisting in



Come and discuss
How can the wars against Palestinians be stopped, and a genuine and free Palestinian state be achieved?
SOCIALISM 2025
15 and 16 November
A weekend of socialist ideas in London

Hundreds of thousands protest in support of Gaza in London on 11 October, despite being told not to by capitalist politicians and media ADAM GILLMAN

the 2003 invasion of Iraq - cannot be remotely trusted.

Hundreds of thousands of people marched through central London on 11 October, the day after the ceasefire agreement took effect, despite being told by capitalist politicians and media not to protest. This showed people's clear distrust in the international political establishments.

As imperialist powers look to impose 'technocratic' colonial control over Gaza, capitalism is unable to meet the needs of Palestinians, or

to deliver any kind of stable peace. Alongside death and destruction in Gaza, military and settler violence continues in the West Bank. The anti-war movement must continue to struggle.

Genuine self-determination for the Palestinians is possible on the basis of their own mass working-class struggle, independent of capitalist interests and armed with a socialist programme. The international anti-war movement has pressured world leaders towards supporting

a ceasefire and can develop further to support that struggle for full liberation.

The mass workers' strikes in Italy against the war on Gaza marked an important escalation, showing that the trade unions and organised working class can play a leading role in the anti-war movement.

Committee for a Workers' International
FIGHTING FOR A SOCIALIST WORLD
socialistworld.net

Subpostmaster scandal

Fujitsu boss gets outrageous pay rise

CLIVE WALDER
BIRMINGHAM SOCIALIST PARTY AND RETIRED CWU MEMBER

Subpostmasters will be horrified. The UK head of Fujitsu, the company responsible for the Horizon scandal, excellently dramatised in 'Mr Bates v The Post Office', has reportedly received a 52% pay rise, bringing his pay up to £591,000 a year.

Both Fujitsu and Post Office hierarchy knew that faults existed. But both organisations maintained the fiction of 'false accounting shortfalls', which ultimately led to 900 prosecutions, 230 prison sentences, and tragically, 13 suicides of subpostmasters.

The Horizon scandal revealed

much that is rotten about the British capitalism and government. The Fujitsu executive in question is a former senior civil servant, who held government jobs at both the Treasury and Cabinet Office.

There is a pervasive 'revolving door' between senior civil servants, government employees, and private industry, with woefully lax oversight and regulation, producing widespread conflicts of interest, and reluctance to investigate possible wrongdoing.

It wasn't Tory or Labour governments, or Fujitsu, but the determination of ordinary subpostmasters that brought the issue to the public's attention. Even now, subpostmasters have not had the compensation they

deserve. That should be paid in full immediately.

Fujitsu is currently suspended from bidding for UK government contracts. But this isn't enough.

Under diseased and corrupt British capitalism, public sector procurement is used to drive the profits of contractors like Fujitsu, rather than value for money for us, or the best public services.

To remove the possibility of a repetition of scandals like Horizon, and the scandals of incompetent executives getting rewarded for failure, and ruining the lives of innocent workers, public ownership of all companies that bid for government contracts is needed, overseen by democratic working-class control.

UK Fujitsu head gets 52% pay rise, bringing pay up to £591,000



JON DALE
UNITE THE UNION, NOTTINGHAMSHIRE HEALTH BRANCH

Some of the world's biggest pharmaceutical companies have cancelled investments in the UK worth almost £2 billion. New research centres planned in London, Liverpool, and Cambridge have been halted in the past few weeks. This is another blow to Labour's vain hopes of private 'growth' funding the NHS and other public services.

AstraZeneca, and other companies, claim the NHS isn't paying enough for the medicines they make and sell. The NHS spends 9% of its total budget on drugs and medical supplies, compared to similar countries' 14-20% of health spending.

The size of the NHS enables it to negotiate better deals from the drug companies. This is threatened as our health service is splintered and privatised.

US President Donald Trump has demanded that European countries pay more. He claims that US patients are paying to subsidise our NHS. US prices are on average 278% higher than 33 other OECD 'advanced capitalist' countries.

Predictably, the pro-big business Labour government is caving into Trump's demands, with a deal that would mean paying billions of pounds more, in return for low or zero tariffs on UK medicines imported in the US. Trump has threatened 100% tariffs on medicine imports into the US.

This 'deal' would knock a hole in the NHS budget, swell drug companies' already vast profits, and do nothing to stop US patients paying extortionate prices. The rampant free-market private healthcare industry and insurance racket in the US is the reason patients pay more there.

Wes Streeting

Labour - and its health secretary Wes Streeting - is also conceding to Big Pharma's demand to pay more for their drugs. But health economists have shown that spending on conventional healthcare -

GPs, A&Es, or surgery can do more to improve and extend healthy lives. Under Labour austerity, spending more on the most expensive drugs means less for other NHS care, benefiting fewer people.

And what about the money wasted

on drug company profits? And the NHS money wasted on Private Finance Initiative (PFI) payments, private healthcare paid by the NHS, and other NHS funds pouring into private company bank accounts?

A socialist NHS would bring all these private companies, including the pharmaceutical giants, into the NHS, with public ownership and democratic control by health workers and the wider community.

A socialist society - addressing poverty, poor housing, pollution, and the other major contributors where capitalism causes ill-health - would be of far more benefit than swelling Big Pharma profits.

Come and discuss
Could a new party help save the NHS from Labour's privatisation onslaught?
SOCIALISM 2025
15 and 16 November
A weekend of socialist ideas in London

Vets for pets not profit

JANE WARD
TEESSIDE SOCIALIST PARTY

Vet prices are rising nearly twice the rate of inflation. The cost of pet treatments have risen by 63% over seven years, the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) says. Pets requiring extensive treatment can incur bills of many thousands of pounds.

Pet vaccinations can cost from £50 to £200. Neutering dogs, £120 to £700. Emergency out-of-hours care can be from £200 to £300. The blame for the spiralling prices is mostly due to large private companies buying up practices.

The CMA says that 84% of vet practice website have no pricing information at all. Included in the CMA's recommendations were that

vets should make owners aware of cheaper medicines available online, that prescriptions should be capped at £16, as well as itemised bills.

Pet insurance is available. But there are many problems. Often, policies do not cover pre-existing conditions, and exclude routine and preventative care, like vaccinations and dental treatment. Older pets have much higher premiums. Many policies have a maximum claimable amount. And claims are often denied altogether, because of what lies hidden in the small print.

Pet owners are finding that these prices are a huge burden. Many will delay a much-needed trip to the vet. Plenty of owners have had to make the heartbreaking decision to have their pet put to sleep, because

there is no way they can afford the treatment.

CMA's provisional findings are up for discussion until 20 November, before a legally binding order is published next year. The CMA's interim report suggests that vets will be required to be more transparent and limit their prices.

We need to stop the blatant profiteering of vet practices, which is at the expense of the health of our pets, and the pockets of the pet owners, who are already suffering the cost-of-living crisis.

Six big firms dominate the vet market, they should be brought into democratic public ownership, along with the big pet food manufacturers, pharmaceutical, and insurance industries.

SOCIALISM 2025

A WEEKEND OF DISCUSSION OF SOCIALIST IDEAS
15th and 16th November
Institute of Education, Bedford Way
London WC1 OAH

Saturday rally 5:30pm:

How can
Your Party
be a party of
working-class struggle
and socialism?

WHERE AND WHEN?

Socialism 2025 takes place at the Institute of Education, 20 Bedford Way, London, WC1H 0AL, on the weekend of the 15th and 16th November. The venue is a 5 minute walk from Russell Square tube station, and a 15 minute walk from Euston station.

WHAT TIME DOES IT START?

The event will start at 11am on Saturday and finish at 4:15pm on Sunday. Registration will open at 9am on Saturday.

HOW MUCH DOES IT COST AND WHERE CAN I STAY?

Ticket prices start at £5 and are available at socialism.org.uk. A 'golden ticket' includes entry to the entire weekend and one night in a London hostel. The hostel is the Generator at Tavistock Square - less than a ten minute walk from the venue, Institute of Education. **There is also a free creche which runs throughout the event. To book your place, please email theosharieff@socialistparty.org.uk.**

SUNDAY CLOSING RALLY

3:15PM-4:15PM

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Wales trade union conference pledges to support only candidates and parties that will stand up for the working class

DAVE WARREN
SWANSEA SOCIALIST PARTY

Over 50 trade unionists from 11 unions attended a conference hosted by Cardiff Trades Council on 18 October.

The 'Wales Trade Union Conference on the Crisis of Political Representation' was endorsed by five trades councils, the Bakers, Food and Allied Workers Union (BFAWU), civil service union PCS Wales, and a long list of trade union branches, along with Disabled People Against Cuts and the campaign group ACORN.

The conference was promoted as a forum for trade union reps and members to discuss "the way forward for our movement after 15 years of austerity, cost-of-living crisis and racism." It was prompted by deep concerns over Labour's continued austerity programme, its scandalous attacks on the Birmingham bin workers, and inadequate response to the horrifying massacres in Gaza.

It was originally conceived before Zarah Sultana and Jeremy Corbyn's announcements, but the developments concerning Your Party obviously gave this event even greater relevance.

The conference was intended to facilitate a "full and free discussion", and that objective was achieved, with a long procession of speakers



The character of Your Party is not yet decided and unions must take part in the process to help shape its direction



An opportunity exists to create a new party based on the working class and fighting for socialist policies

from the floor rather than platform speakers dominating. One view that was entirely absent was the idea that unions should continue to affiliate to Labour. Because some unions are affiliated to Labour and because they are the party of government in the UK and in Wales, Cardiff Trades Council had specifically invited Labour to provide a speaker at the conference to try and defend their record. That did not happen.

Much of the discussion centred on whether trade unionists ought to affiliate to any political party. A member of the BFAWU for example, stated that disaffiliation of his union from Labour had freed up funds for many other purposes directly benefiting members. Speakers from ACORN were particularly

prominent in arguing against political affiliation, advancing the slogan "no permanent enemies, no permanent friends". They were wary of association with any political party that might attack working people at some stage.

Betrayals

This is an understandable sentiment given the betrayals of Labour and the cuts carried out by Plaid Cymru and the Greens when they have led councils in Wales and England respectively.

However, these arguments were countered mainly by members of the Socialist Party, who pointed out that an opportunity now exists to create a new party based on the working class and fighting for socialist policies. The

character of Your Party is not decided, and the trade unions must take part in the process to help shape its direction. It is essential to robustly defend workers at work and in the community, but it is also necessary to have a political strategy. The two things are not mutually exclusive, they go together.

The conference ended by agreeing for those in attendance to take a charter of demands for political representation back into their organisations. The introductory paragraph stated: "The working class should not pay for this crisis. Instead make the rich pay. Trade unionists in Wales need representatives who will stand up for the working class and not surrender to the demands of big business".



Council workers in Wales need attacks on jobs and pay to end

SOCIALIST PARTY WALES

participation from the members, and is dominated by speeches from the platform. The proposed timeline for the party suggests delaying the Cymru Founding Conference until October 2026, five months after the Senedd elections.

The Gathering consultation document proposes a debate on the Senedd election at constituency level with options including standing in all seats, targeted seats, or even not standing. Some in the party have suggested that Your Party/Peoples Party Wales should stand down in favour of Green or Plaid Cymru candidates.

It would be a big mistake to decide to stand aside at all. The format of the Senedd elections will elect six Senedd members for every one of the 16 Senedd constituencies on the basis of proportional representation.

It will be possible for a candidate to be elected with 10-12% of the vote in each constituency.

Stand against austerity

If Your Party/People's Party Wales were to stand a robust campaign against austerity and for socialist policies in every constituency, it would channel the dissatisfaction with the status quo into a positive, socialist direction and undermine support for Reform.

And a large group of Your Party Senedd Members could be elected, which would change the whole political landscape in Wales. The group could represent the struggles of workers and our communities against austerity in the Senedd. A likely Plaid-led coalition government would represent a continuation of

the austerity policies of Welsh Labour and, in the absence of a genuinely left alternative, the field of opposition would be left wide open to Reform, which unopposed will likely win a number of seats. But a large group of Your Party/People's Party Wales MPs could force that government to look over its left shoulder and, rather than making concessions to Reform, could be forced to retreat from carrying out cuts.

The launch of Your Party in Wales represents a historic opportunity to force back austerity, racism and division and to reforge the socialist traditions of the Welsh working class. Socialist Party Wales will play its part in the discussions and debates to argue for a democratic, inclusive, working-class party as a vehicle to begin the change of society.

HOW CAN WE MAKE SURE THAT THE WORKING CLASS IS "AT THE HEART" OF YOUR PARTY?



PHOTOS: JESSICA WYLD/UK PARLIAMENT/CC

Model motion: 'Your Party' councillors can defy austerity

It is six months until nominations close for the May 2026 local elections in England. Those polls present a huge opportunity for Your Party to win council seats, even to lead authorities. What a platform that would be to showcase how elected councillors can help to build a working-class fightback against Starmer's austerity! Below is a model motion for Your Party meetings, which can be adapted for your area.

The May 2026 local elections present a huge opportunity for 'Your Party' candidates to be elected as councillors in [your area].

The thousands of potential supporters here are desperate for an end to council tax and charges hikes, and permanent austerity cuts to our services.

[Closed libraries, a lack of council homes, youth services underfunded, council-owned parks sold off, and you can also enter local issues here] ... there are countless issues residents here are angry about, and a huge need for investment in public services.

Your Party candidates pledge to take these issues and more into the council chambers, campaigning for a no-cuts budget that meets the needs of our communities and demanding the money to pay for it from central government. There is vast wealth in society, the super-rich should be made to pay.

This is the best way to expose and cut across Reform UK who pretend to offer an alternative but are also led by millionaires - and Tories. They divide working-class people so that it's harder for us to fight back.

To that end, Your Party in [your area] agrees to bring together an open public conference, including representatives of trade unions, community organisations, anti-austerity political organisations, socialist parties, and others, to draw up a draft budget to fund what services [your area] needs - a no-cuts 'Peoples' Budget' based on our community's needs not Starmer's continued austerity.



WHAT WE THINK

In the last few days, everyone who has signed up to the new party being launched by Jeremy Corbyn and Zarah Sultana has received the draft documents around

which the party will be founded. The documents have been uploaded to the Your Party website (yourparty.uk).

The massive response to the party's initial declaration, with more than 800,000 signing up, is a clear indication of the huge potential. Since then, the public divisions at the top of the party have dampened some of the initial enthusiasm. Nonetheless, the party is on course to be founded at a national conference at the end of November, and has the potential to be a significant step towards the creation of a mass workers' party with a socialist programme.

It is welcome that the introductory political statement describes Your Party as a "democratic, member-led socialist party", with the task of building "a mass party for the many not the few", with the "working class at its heart" and the goal of "the transfer of wealth and power, now concentrated in the hands of the few, to the overwhelming majority in a democratic, socialist society".

Central Executive Committee
However, it is the proposed character and method of election of the Central Executive Committee (CEC) which most clearly shows the problems with the draft constitution. It is to be made up of the leader, four public office holder representatives (two of which are to be MPs), and 16 ordinary members. The CEC would elect officers who would be responsible

Mistake

Unfortunately, however, the initial proposals for the structure of the

party do not put the working class at its heart. It is inevitable that at this stage many things are left to be decided in the future. But it is nonetheless a mistake that there are currently no proposals in the draft constitution for how trade unions and other workers' organisations could affiliate to the party and play a central role in its functioning at local and national level, but only a promise for that to be discussed over the next twelve months.

The proposed constitution also states that "members may not hold membership of any other political party, excepted if specified by the Central Executive Committee". This is a not dissimilar approach to the Labour Party constitution which states that members cannot be members of political parties or organisations declared by party conference or by the National Executive Committee "to be ineligible for affiliation to the Party".

As a safeguard against infiltration by parties representing hostile class forces this is reasonable, but only on the basis that in Your Party all members of all socialist organisations are accepted by the Central Executive Committee, which is due to take office in March 2026.

However, it is the proposed character and method of election of the Central Executive Committee (CEC) which most clearly shows the problems with the draft constitution. It is to be made up of the leader, four public office holder representatives (two of which are to be MPs), and 16 ordinary members. The CEC would elect officers who would be responsible

for the day-to-day running of the party, including the appointment and direction of staff. The CEC would be elected every two years by an online ballot of the entire membership.

This is a clear example of a 'horizontalist' approach which, while it can superficially appear ultra-democratic, actually centralises power in the hands of a small leadership, with very limited means to hold them to account.

This is a consolidation of the mistaken approach taken for the party's founding. Regional 'deliberative' meetings are being followed up by the founding conference with those attending selected by lottery. Following this, final votes will be taken online with all members voting on a one-member-one-vote basis.

In our view, these proposals are not an effective means to build a democratic workers' party. A democratic conference should be based on representative and accountable delegates, including from affiliated organisations. At the moment, the draft constitution leaves open whether future conferences will be delegate-based, including whether local branches will get to elect delegates, but it makes clear that they will have no part to play in the election of the leadership.

Of course, even finalised constitutions are not set in stone. These are draft documents which will be debated in the coming months. Socialist Party members have joined Your Party and will take part in those discussions, raising these and other points on what is needed for Your Party to develop as a mass workers' party with a socialist programme.



Socialist Party members have joined Your Party and will take part in the discussions

Your Party Wales Gathering

DAVE REID
SOCIALIST PARTY WALES SECRETARY

The Wales Gathering of Your Party in Merthyr on 25 October is a welcome, if limited, start to building a new workers' and socialist party. The 31,000 people in Wales who indicated in July they wanted to join shows the huge potential for a mass party to challenge the established parties, and to cut across support for right-populist Reform.

The potential for a workers' party with socialist policies in Wales could not be clearer. This article is being published before the Caerphilly by-election on 23 October, but the likely catastrophic result for Labour, in a constituency the party has held for 100 years, is an indication of the complete alienation of Starmer's Labour from the working class.

At the time of writing, Reform lead in the polls, showing the danger if an anti-austerity, socialist alternative is not provided to cut across the populist right. Working-class alienation with all the pro-capitalist parties has opened up a vacuum that needs to be filled by the socialist left.

The appetite for change was shown in the conference of Welsh trade unionists on political representation called by trades councils across Wales that met on 18 October (see

above). The conference presented a Workers' Charter of policies that, as a minimum, trade unions should demand of their political representatives to gain their support, and above all the need for a party based on the working class and the trade unions. Your Party potentially could play this role providing it is organised to allow and encourage the affiliation of trade union bodies.

The Gathering in Merthyr will be presented with a consultation document prepared by the leading group in Wales around Corbyn-supporting ex-MP Beth Winter and ex-PCS trade union general secretary Mark Serwotka. The group has begun the process of registering the People's Party Wales as a description for the party in the Senedd elections due to take place in May.

Discussion and debate

Democratic discussion and decision-making is key to allow full debate. Discussion and debate would not lead to division in Your Party if it is conducted in an open and comradely way - on the contrary it would clarify the direction of the party. Unfortunately, the format of the Gathering and plans for Your Party Wales do not provide for a serious discussion and airing of views by the members. The proposed agenda for the Gathering allows for hardly any time for

Come and discuss

Forum: How can the new party be built as a voice for the working class?

The Liverpool struggle - what did a political voice for workers in struggle look like?

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How should working-class democracy be organised?

Lessons from UCU university strikes

BEA GARDNER
UCU MEMBER

In the debates taking place about the democratic structures of 'Your Party', the Socialist Party has consistently argued for the trade unions to have a collective democratic voice. There are some however, including some trade unionists, who are as yet unconvinced.

One argument is that the unions themselves often do not act democratically. In the UCU, for example, current general secretary Jo Grady has consistently acted to try to undermine members' disputes through undemocratic delays and retreats. In doing so, she and those around her have faced fierce opposition from sections of the elected lay leadership of the union - the National Executive Committee, and at the union's annual Congress (the delegate body which, according to the union's rules and constitution, sets policy and strategy).

The idea of e-votes and one member one vote is being counterposed to collective representative democracy within the debates about the structure of 'Your Party'. Yet it is precisely those measures which have been spearheaded by Jo Grady. In her 2024 manifesto, Jo Grady pledged to commission a formal review of the union's democratic structures to 'modernise' the union, and she has pushed for greater use of member surveys and e-consultations, for example.

Undermining collective decision-making

In fact, these measures have already been used as tools to undermine the collective decision-making of the union's delegate bodies, such as during the 2023 Higher Education disputes.

In March 2023, Grady announced a 'pause' of planned strike action without consulting the elected negotiators or the union's Higher Education Committee. In an attempt to justify her actions, she launched an 'informal member e-ballot' which asked three questions in one: "Do you support UCU members voting on the proposals that have been negotiated in both disputes, and pausing strike action while this vote takes place?"

It's anyone's guess as to whether the 67% who voted 'yes' were voting to be consulted, to pausing action, or both. But in a Branch Delegate Meeting, where the questions were separate, and where there was discussion, delegates voted to put the proposals to members but to keep the action on.

After this unnecessary delay, members ultimately rejected the proposals and delivered a strong mandate for renewed strike action. In May, Higher Education sector delegates voted in favour of a summer-long re-ballot. In August, a branch delegate meeting voted 98% in favour of an immediate re-ballot. Yet no summer



Collective action and collective decision-making LIVERPOOL SOCIALIST PARTY

re-ballot took place, leaving members participating in action short of strike with no legal mandate to continue their action.

What could be used to justify the blatant disregard of decisions made at multiple UCU decision-making bodies on so many occasions?

The accusation is that branch reps, and elected delegates, do not 'represent' the views of their members' because they are most active. One claim is they have 'vested political interests', for example.

Results of e-consultations are used as 'evidence' by the general secretary. Though precisely what information is reported to members is also under the control of the general secretary and her staff. For example, in September 2023, an e-ballot of members was launched to decide whether to end action short of strike action early. 27% of eligible members voted, and of these 60% voted to end early. What wasn't reported, however, was that 62.7% of members who were actually participating in the action voted to keep it on!

The dispute effectively ended in November 2023 when 68.32% voted to continue with industrial action in a statutory postal ballot, but turnout fell short of the required 50% turnout.

There is no doubt that the failure to meet the ballot threshold was a reflection of a lack of confidence in the union's leadership, and confusion caused by the mishandling of the dispute. Yet despite all that, members still showed their determination and voted overwhelmingly to continue the dispute. (Read more from 2023: 'UCU university strikes: We need a serious strategy to win' at socialistparty.org.uk)

There are important lessons from this experience for 'Your Party'. If democracy is reduced to all-member votes, power is not in the hands of members but of those who set the questions, who send out official communications and control the flow of information.

Rather than deciding how to vote after discussion with other

members engaged in the process of fighting to build the party, an 'e-consultation' model means decisions are made in isolation to others, not as a conclusion to a discussion.

Fight for democratic unions

Socialist Party members fight every day within our unions for them to be democratic, fighting organisations. And for the maximum possible involvement of members in the democratic structures. For example, we support local and national strike committees and regular national branch delegate meetings during disputes. Members should decide the course of action - not through passive votes while isolated at home, but in meetings where the arguments can be raised and a collective decision arrived at.

It remains the case that greatest participation in our union structures comes when branches mobilise and organise. Take, for example, the upcoming UCU strike ballots. A centralised campaign via social media and email is not enough. It takes discussions in the workplaces, direct contact with members, to achieve a decisive 'yes' vote.

National coordination and leadership is vital for building confidence and having a greater impact. But effective strike action has to be organised locally, and to do that, members need to be organised. And it is this that will develop the pressure on and accountability of the leadership.

Socialist Party members are fighting vigorously for a 'yes' vote in the ballot and have every confidence that we can build a successful campaign. Learning these lessons will help us do that.

And it is that kind of trade union organisation that we are arguing should have representation at all levels of Your Party too.

- The national ballot of Higher Education members has opened, see 'University workers across four unions to ballot for industrial action' at socialistparty.org.uk

Equity members discuss how to win a political voice

Meetings have taken place in several trade unions following on from a 1,000-strong 'Trade unionists for a new party' meeting hosted by former Labour MP Dave Nellist on 21 July. We carry here the report of the meeting of Equity members. The full model motion for Equity members to use, and reports and motions from the other meetings, can be read on the website of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition tusc.org.uk

How can arts workers achieve a voice in politics accountable to us? This was the question addressed at an open meeting for members of performing arts union Equity on 18 October via Zoom.

Equity has moved to a more fighting stance under its present leadership. The West End dispute in 2023 won its strike ballot - and major concessions without even taking strike action. The meeting agreed the union now needs to build on it in regional theatre, including preparing members to strike if needed.

But struggles including fighting the threat of AI, and employment directory Spotlight's extortionate fees for performers, have not won improvements. Equity members clearly need a political voice accountable to us if we want legislation in our favour. The meeting agreed 'Your Party' represented a big potential opportunity for this and Equity should try to seize it.

Manchester and both London branches were represented, with several members of Equity Council, the union's executive, expressing interest but unable to attend. We agreed model motions on a political voice for arts workers, and the ongoing regional theatre negotiations.

Our rulebook lets Equity "work with others whose aims are the same or similar to the Union's... providing that the Union does not affiliate to any political party".

Equity members fighting cuts in 2023 - but where is their political voice? BRISTOL SOCIALIST PARTY



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

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Surrey Unison members fighting cuts SOCIALIST PARTY

South East Unison local government delegates challenge Starmer's austerity and reorganisation plans

PAUL COUCHMAN
SURREY UNISON MEMBER AND LG REP TO UNISON REGIONAL COMMITTEE, PERSONAL CAPACITY

On 17 and 18 October, around 75 Unison activists gathered for the annual regional local government (LG) AGM and conference in Woking.

Surrey County Branch won the award for 'best branch campaign' due to our battle over pay, achieving an agreement for Surrey County Council to go back to national bargaining.

There was a series of discussions on issues including local government reorganisation (LGR), organising migrant workers, and LG funding and cuts. In both the sessions, on LGR and on funding, the issue of Unison's link to the Labour Party would not go away - much to the chagrin of the regional officials.

After over 15 years of austerity and over a year of a Labour government, the jobs and services massacre shows no signs of letting up. Council funding in almost every area of the UK is at crisis levels.

The funding gap (between what a council needs to continue running current services and the amount of money it receives) across England, Wales and Scotland is predicted to reach £4.1 billion in 2026-27, with an estimated cumulative shortfall of £7.4 billion over 2026-28. In England alone, these figures are £3.4 billion in 2026-27 and £6 billion over 2026-28.

At least 30 English councils have been forced to seek 'exceptional' financial support from government in the past 12 months - a figure that means such demands are no longer exceptional. Seven councils have issued 'section 114' notices, allowing government-appointed commissioners (on £1,000 each per day) to effectively take over any decisions on spending.

In Surrey, three of the district councils currently being considered for merger into a new unitary, single-tier authority (Woking, Spelthorne and Surrey Heath) are in the top ten of largest funding gaps in England. Woking tops the list with a £170 million funding gap this year.

These are just numbers - huge

numbers - but what they represent is cuts. Cuts already taking place and cuts planned. Cuts in jobs and in essential services.

Unfortunately, the only current answer from the Unison leadership is to write to our MPs, talk to councillors, arrange lobbies etc.

Review Unison's political funds

Delegate after delegate questioned why we are still affiliated to, and funding, the Labour Party when they are overseeing this crisis. Why Labour councillors are meekly voting through cuts and austerity in the council chambers. Why Unison branches are not allowed to support candidates who will support Unison policies, refuse to vote for cuts, and pursue needs-led, no-cuts budgets.

When I raised that all the delegates in the room should stand for election next year on this basis where possible, there was a round of applause followed by an animated discussion as to how we could do this. Nothing in Unison's rules prevents members from standing.

I mentioned the petition recently launched by 'Unison members for a new party' and suggested delegates sign it and get involved. The petition calls for a full review of Unison's political funds so that all members can democratically decide how that money is spent.

Unison members are moving a model motion in branches which notes that "the 2025 Unison annual report stated that only 16% of members paid into the Labour Link fund. This clearly shows that affiliation to Labour is no longer a fundamental 'Aim and Objective' for Unison members."

- Sign the petition 'Labour's not our party! Let Unison members decide our political choices' at change.org
- The full model motions in Unison and other unions can be found at tusc.org.uk
- Socialist Party members in Unison support Andrea Egan in the Unison general secretary election



Surrey Unison members fighting cuts SOCIALIST PARTY

Napo AGM confronts rising crises in probation and family courts



ADAM HARMSWORTH
NAPO VICE-CHAIR, PERSONAL CAPACITY

The AGM of probation and family courts trade union Napo began on 16 October, weeks after a ballot of probation members clearly in favour of industrial action over pay was sabotaged by the Tories' anti-union voting thresholds - still on the books despite being over a year into a Labour government.

The probation unions still haven't received a pay offer despite submitting a claim ten months ago, while members are battling horrendously high workloads, an epidemic of work-related stress and health issues, and report a culture of bullying engrained in the Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS).

These growing issues defined the 2025 AGM. The activists who attended AGM seriously discussed the problems in probation and wider political issues. Health, safety, and stress were top of the agenda in motions. A motion to get probation out of HMPPS received cheers from attendees, two contrasting views on use of AI software in probation provoked debate, as did discussion on how our movement confronts the far right. Napo members in Cafcass (family courts) brought motions on

abysmal employee relations practices, rising workloads, and poorly planned practice changes.

Motion on political representation

Cafcass members also proposed Motion 21: 'Enough is Enough - We Need New Political Representation'. It called for Napo to play a part in fighting for a new working-class party, including inviting Jeremy Corbyn, Zarah Sultana and pro-worker MPs to discuss with the National Executive Committee.

A 'Napo For A New Party' meeting was held on Thursday evening. This meeting discussed developments in Your Party, and the role Napo and the trade union movement could play in campaigning for Your Party to be the vehicle for change workers desperately need. Discussion also reflected fears about the threat from right-populist Reform, and how the actions of the Labour government had only bred support for Reform.

On Friday afternoon Motion 21 was debated, without a word throughout the debate in defence of Labour's atrocious actions in government. Much of the argument against was focused on fears regarding Napo's position in the civil service and historic neutrality to all political

parties. Unfortunately the motion was lost, but 37% of AGM were convinced of the need for Napo to make that historic step to help build a new party for the working class.

Napo AGM had the Liberal Democrat MP and justice spokesperson Josh Babarinde speaking - yet the LibDems were part of the 2010-15 coalition government with the Tories that introduced the savage austerity and disastrous privatisation which probation and the family courts are suffering from. This illustrates why we will be better served with political representatives which we and other trade unionists can control and hold to account, rather than hoping for support from unreliable 'friends'.

The issues that Motion 21 raised will inevitably come up again, as the Labour government goes further in trying to make us pay for capitalism's long-term crisis.

Napo is already preparing for a ballot in probation when a pay offer is eventually received, and continues to campaign on the disastrous under-funding and mismanagement of the service. But without pushing for working-class political representation in the increasingly turbulent period ahead, the union will be fighting with one hand behind its back.

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After the TUC Congress - the struggle to build fighting trade unions under Labour

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POLITICAL FRAGMENTATION AND POLARISATION IN THE RUN UP TO HOLYROOD POLL

Your Party must stand as part of a mass working-class and socialist election challenge

PHILIP STOTT
SOCIALIST PARTY SCOTLAND

The Scottish National Party (SNP) annual conference met 11-13 October, just seven months before the Scottish Parliament election due in May 2026. Prospects for an SNP win in the Holyrood vote have improved significantly over the course of this year.

Primarily, this is due to the collapse of Labour's support since Starmer was elected in July 2024 and the rise of Reform UK, who are currently polling at 20% in Scotland and eating into Labour and Tory support.

However, the possibility of the SNP winning next May is in no way reflective of a positive endorsement or enthusiasm for them. Their support has fallen from 47% at the last Holyrood election in 2021 to just 34% currently, and from 40% in the regional list vote then to 29% now.

Collapsing party membership has also accompanied these polling reversals. The SNP have around 50,000 members - a drop of more than 50% since the aftermath of the 2014 independence referendum (indyref). They also lost 39 MPs at the Westminster election last year.

Political fragmentation, reflecting the increasing undermining of the traditional parties and polarisation in Scotland, is continuing to deepen. With Reform likely to enter Holyrood for the first time - and with the possibility of Your Party registering to stand - next May could see seven or eight parties gaining representation at Holyrood.

At the same time, the falling away of support for the SNP, who have increasingly been exposed for their role in cutting public services and other anti-working class policies, has been accompanied by a strengthening of support for Scottish independence. The majority of polls since Starmer became prime minister show rising support for independence, currently at just over 50%.

Growing disenchantment with the SNP has also created a politically 'homeless' segment of the independence-supporting electorate. In 2011, 90% of those who supported independence voted SNP. Today, that figure is less than 60%.

To a certain extent, the Scottish Greens have benefited from some of this layer, as the pro-independence Alba hope to do next May as well. However, the potential for the emergence of a new workers' party in Scotland to appeal to all those seeking an alternative is continuing to grow.

Socialist Party Scotland is calling on Your Party to register a name and prepare to mount a major election challenge for Holyrood. By basing itself on socialist policies and a fighting appeal to the working class as a whole, it would be possible - given the acute political vacuum that exists - to win the election of a number of MSPs.

National question

Political polarisation around the national question also continues to be a major feature of Scottish politics. Left in the hands of pro-capitalist parties like the SNP on one side, and Labour, Tories, and Reform on the other, that polarisation will continue. However, there is one thing that all sides agree on, and that is the need to make the working class pay for the capitalist crisis through cuts to public services, wages, and benefits.

That's why it's essential to build a united working-class political alternative in the form of a mass workers' party with socialist policies. Such a force could cut across both forms of bourgeois nationalism while resolutely defending the right of self-determination for the Scottish people.

To do that effectively requires a sensitive approach. On the one hand, it means fighting for the right of the Scottish Parliament to be able to organise a second independence referendum; and that means overcoming Westminster's refusal to allow it. On the other hand, it also means appealing to workers with a socialist solution, including to those who are not convinced that capitalist independence can offer a way out of the crisis.

That's why Socialist Party Scotland has always refused to give an iota of political support to the SNP, even while many on the socialist left were capitulating to nationalism in 2014 by taking part in a joint indyref campaign under the leadership of the SNP (Yes Scotland), while some even called for a vote for the SNP or a form of electoral pact with them.

We warned that the experience of the SNP in power would burn away the enthusiasm of those who hoped that the leadership of Alex Salmond and Nicola Sturgeon would stand up for the working class - and so it proved. Left in the hands of the Scottish nationalist leadership, the struggle for democratic rights has been driven into a constitutional dead end, accompanied by SNP cuts to housing, health, and council services.

Of course, the primary responsibility for refusing to allow any possibility of a second indyref lies with the Tories and now Starmer's Labour government. They will fight tooth and nail to prevent the break-up of the UK for their own class and strategic interests. And if that means denying basic democratic rights, then so be it as far as they are concerned. Look at the way the institutions of British capitalism were used - for example, the UK Supreme Court ruling that Holyrood could not organise

an independence referendum.

Yet still the SNP leadership continue to peddle the myth that there can be a return to the 'gold standard' arrangement that allowed for the Edinburgh Agreement. When the SNP won a majority at Holyrood in 2011, the then Tory government of David Cameron signed a deal with Alex Salmond to allow a legal referendum to take place. Cameron had calculated that they could easily defeat independence and that would end the issue for generations to come. It did not turn out that way. An insurgent independence campaign came very close to defeating the pro-union side.

Today, with support for independence at over 50%, not the 30% it began at before the 2014 referendum, there is no chance that appealing to Starmer to respect constitutional fair play will move the dial.

Back to the future

First Minister John Swinney proposed to the SNP conference that if they win a majority of seats at next May's Holyrood election,

"this will then be taken by the Scottish Government as a mandate to start negotiations for a second vote."

"This is what happened in 2011, and precedent is a substantial factor in legal consideration of the right of the people of Scotland to decide their own future."

This approach will not deliver the right to hold a second indyref. Moreover, the SNP leadership know this. So why are they taking such an approach? Primarily, the calculation is driven by the need to shore up their support base. It's an appeal purely aimed at maximising the SNP vote and the number of MSPs amid falling support.

Rather than seek to build a mass campaign by mobilising the working class in a struggle for democratic rights - including mass demonstrations, strike action, and occupations - the SNP are happy to use the issue of indyref2 for their own electoral benefit exclusively. Nor do any of the other pro-independence parties, such as Alba or the Scottish Greens, have any other viable strategy.

The struggle for self-determination has to be linked to the social and economic liberation of the

working class if a majority is to be won for independence.

Moreover, the demand for an independent socialist Scotland, linked to a united struggle for socialism in England, Wales, and Ireland, is a vital one for socialists to fight for. Not only does it clearly differentiate this from the idea of the SNP's capitalist independence, but it can also appeal to workers, both in Scotland and in other parts of Britain and Ireland, who rightly seek to maintain the unity of the working class amid genuine fears of division driven by nationalism, racism, and sectarianism. All of these methods of divide and rule are used by the capitalist class to maintain its domination.

That's why, while being the best fighters for democratic rights, socialists have the responsibility to advocate an independent socialist Scotland as part of a voluntary and democratic socialist confederation with England, Wales, and Ireland - as a step toward a socialist Europe.

Again, unlike the SNP, who want to liberate Scottish capital from the 'limitations' of British capital in order to exploit the Scottish

working class all the more surely, socialists stand for public ownership and democratic planning of the economy - in other words, ending the rule of profit.

A fresh start?

The latest regurgitation of the benefits of capitalist independence from the Scottish Government, 'A Fresh Start with Independence', was unveiled by Swinney just before the SNP conference. It begins:

"Scotland is a wealthy country with enormous potential, yet too many people in Scotland today are finding it difficult to make ends meet."

The blame, says Swinney, lies with Westminster austerity and the decision to leave the EU. Not a word about the SNP's own role in accepting and then passing on Westminster austerity from Holyrood to councils, the NHS, and public services. Not a word about what could have been done if the SNP-led parliament and SNP-led councils had refused to make cuts and had instead set no-cuts budgets while launching a united fight-back for the return of the money

stolen by the Tories.

Neither is there a word about the actions of the EU and the European Central Bank in the enforced pauperisation of the Greek working class, among others, during the sovereign debt crisis of the 2010s. Nor is there anything about the EU bosses' club and its role in enforcing strict limits on national governments' right to increase public spending and restrictions on bringing industries and services into public ownership.

The document goes on to state: "Setting credible and responsible fiscal rules, and demonstrating that there is a plan in place to meet them, is essential to ensuring market confidence in a newly independent Scotland... Given the Scottish Government's aspiration for an independent Scotland to join the EU, we would propose that fiscal rules were, as far as practical, aligned with the principles and the approach of any future EU Stability and Growth Pact."

It's worth pointing out that the requirements in the Treaty on European Union states that public deficits should not exceed 3% of GDP. Currently, Scotland has a deficit of 11.6%. So, to join the EU would mean a massive clampdown on public spending to achieve that figure, unless there were a transformation in economic growth under capitalist independence, which is ruled out.

Given the crisis in Scotland's NHS and ongoing cuts to council services and social care, how can the promise of further cuts possibly inspire anyone to support the SNP's vision for independence?

"Living standards are not rising, energy prices are high," says the Scottish Government document. Yet the remedy for this is to bring the entire energy sector into public ownership under democratic working-class control and management. This is the surest way to cut energy bills and to ensure the freeing up of billions in profits to invest in renewable energy, as well as ensuring a socialist transition for workers in the fossil fuel sector with guaranteed employment and no loss of pay. Yet there is nothing from the SNP on this.

Ireland and Denmark are once again rolled out as the models for what a capitalist independent Scotland could achieve. This despite the horrendous housing, health, and social crises that have taken root in the Republic of Ireland after decades of underinvestment, while foreign multinationals have been making a fortune. Food inflation and the cost-of-living crisis are adding further unbearable pressures for growing sections of the working class. Is this the model the SNP want to see in Scotland?

During the post-war economic upswing from the 1950s to the mid-1970s - at least in the advanced capitalist countries - the working class won important concessions on welfare, public services, full employment, and, relatively speaking, improvements in wages and incomes. Denmark was one of the Nordic countries that represented the pinnacle of this Keynesian model, based on high levels of taxation on profits and wages, high government spending, and quality public services. These were concessions made by the ruling class to secure a degree of social peace by giving up a portion of their profits to secure some stability.

The economic crisis in the mid-1970s brought this period of upswing to a crashing end. A crisis of profitability and the emergence of hyperinflation meant that the capitalist class could no longer afford full employment and decent public services. In Denmark, where there still exists a degree of the previous social gains, this has been undermined.

The economic crisis of 2008-09 hit Denmark severely. Its property bubble burst, banks went under, and billions were cut from public budgets. The Social Democratic-led government introduced an unprecedented austerity package in 2012-13 that included the slashing of unemployment entitlement for workers. This was implemented alongside tax cuts for the richest. Against this backdrop, there has also been a rise in racist divisions over immigration, with electoral advances since then by the right-populist Danish People's Party and the Denmark Democrats.

Your Party must stand

For all these reasons, it's absolutely clear that a socialist and working-class alternative based on the trade unions is essential for the Holyrood elections. The enthusiasm for the Your Party announcement by Jeremy Corbyn and Zarah Tulsana in July was echoed by tens of thousands in Scotland. The Scottish Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition is working with others to build as wide a socialist challenge as possible. Our preference is to do so as part of Your Party.

If the enthusiasm for a political alternative can be married to building a mass socialist force, with the 600,000 trade union members in Scotland at its heart, then the tide can be turned in favour of the working class, and against all those who wield austerity as a weapon and attack public services while big business and the super-rich cash in. That, in turn, would open the door to the overcoming of racism and division by a united working class and socialist movement.



Come and discuss
Scottish elections 2026 -
a testing ground
for a new
party?

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Large community counter-protest against far right in Southampton

SOUTHAMPTON SOCIALIST PARTY

In recent weeks, far-right protests against an asylum hotel have taken place in Southampton. They have faced opposition from the local community, anti-racists and trade unionists who oppose attempts to divide our community and scapegoat vulnerable people for problems created by Tory, and now Labour governments.

On 18 October, large numbers from the Muslim community, arranged by the nearby Bashir Ahmed Mosque, joined the counter-protest as the far right marched through a local shopping high street, angry at attempts to intimidate the community and determined that racism will be challenged. As they joined the anti-racist counter-protest outside the hotel, many applauded as our community stood together, outnumbering the small gathering of the far right and their supporters.

This response has come after the far right has rallied outside a local mosque and attempted to intimidate Gaza protests.

We have called on trade unions to lead a mobilisation in the city under the banner of 'Jobs, homes and services not racism'. The local trades council has been at the forefront of mobilising for counter-protests and organised stewarding on the Gaza

protests.

This needs to be stepped up to ensure our communities are safe and organised against any threats to divide us and intimidate those from protesting. The overwhelming majority oppose racism and are angry at Labour continuing Tory cuts. Reform and the far right are trying to exploit that anger and mobilise a scapegoating campaign against asylum seekers. But it was the government who cut funding for housing, the NHS, schools and youth clubs. It was the bosses who cut jobs and pay, and corporate landlords and the banks who put up our rents and mortgages.

Only a united campaign of working-class communities and the trade unions can build a powerful movement to force the government to fund the services we need. Attempts to divide us only play into the hands of the super-rich who want us to pay for their economic crisis. It is the financial backers of the far right and Reform who want to weaken our ability to fight back.

To be effective, our campaign needs to make clear that we stand for an end to austerity and are prepared to build an electoral alternative that represents the real interests of all working-class communities and those hit by austerity. That potential can be realised if Jeremy Corbyn's and Zarah Sultana's Your Party

initiative prepares now to stand candidates in next May's local elections.

What is possible was seen locally last year when, standing under the banner of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition, Nadia Ditta won 848 votes, 32% in the inner-city Bevois ward. Electing socialist anti-cuts fighters like Nadia, who has successfully fought to stop the closure of the local Venny park and St Mary's Leisure Centre, shows we can force the council and the government to find the money to fund the jobs, homes and services our communities so vitally need.

18 October shows the potential for a campaign to grow that unites not divides us and can deliver real change for all.

Come and discuss
After the 'Unite the Kingdom' protests - how can workers and youth fight back against racist division and capitalism?

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Southampton protest against the far right in August PHOTO: SOUTHAMPTON SP

Disabled people versus Sir Stephen Timms: even the Tories know when to back a winner!

PHOTO: HUW LEWIS



BEN GOLIGHTLY
SWANSEA AND WEST WALES SOCIALIST PARTY
AND DPAC CYMRU CO-COORDINATOR

"I fully support Disabled People Against Cuts Cymru (DPAC Cymru)". That was quite an incredible thing to read, coming as it did from the Conservative shadow cabinet secretary for equalities and social justice in the Senedd (Welsh Parliament). It was not that long ago DPAC was campaigning against Tory-Lib Dem cuts.

We lobbied the Senedd, handing in 700 signatures calling for the review of the PIP disability benefit to be taken out of the hands of the UK disability minister Stephen Timms and instead for it to be run independently and democratically by disabled people's organisations.

DPAC Cymru has certainly never pulled any punches, or run a tame campaign. Earlier this year, we sharply criticised the Welsh Government and city councils for not holding Welsh Labour MPs to account as they voted for disability cuts, or in the case of Swansea West MP Torsten Bell, helped design them in the first place.

We told the Senedd if they weren't going to put up the necessary fight, then we would. All they would have to do is lift a finger and give us some resources.

We have won cross-party support for this demand.

But even more significantly than this, our call also includes the demand that the review, in a process led

by disabled people, must also involve trade unions as democratic organisations of 1.4 million disabled workers and millions of non-disabled allies, including the workers that carry out the day-to-day delivery of the services that we all rely on.

This points to the potential for service users and workers to democratically plan a socialist welfare and employment system where everyone can live, meeting a basic demand from disabled people: from each according to their ability, to each according to their need.

And crucially, with the involvement of the trade unions, linked into

other industrial and social struggles, amid wide discussion on working-class political representation, is the potential strength and organisation to carry through those changes.

Even before the launch of Your Party, DPAC Cymru had made calls for an urgent debate in the trade unions on the need for a new workers' party that puts disabled people at the heart of everything it does.

DPAC Cymru's coordinators unanimously voted to endorse, and send observers to, the Wales trade union conference on the crisis of working-class political representation (see page 4).

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

AREA	£ RECEIVED	£ TARGET	Q4: OCTOBER-DECEMBER 2025	DEADLINE: 5 JANUARY 2026
North West	361	1,200	30%	
Southern & SE	398	2,400	17%	
Yorkshire	410	2,650	15%	
London	716	5,000	14%	
Northern	101	800	13%	
South West	226	2,100	11%	
Eastern	101	1,300	8%	
Wales	185	2,400	8%	
West Midlands	193	2,700	7%	
East Midlands	51	2,050	2%	
Other	222	2,400	9%	
TOTAL	2,963	25,000	12%	

Save Lindsey Oil Refinery jobs - Nationalise!

IAIN DALTON
SOCIALIST PARTY YORKSHIRE REGIONAL SECRETARY

"Emergency, emergency - save our refinery!" rang out as hundreds of workers gathered at Lindsey Oil Refinery for a rally organised by Unite the Union.

The crisis at Lindsey has escalated in recent weeks, with 125 workers given redundancy notices on 30 September. Hundreds more directly employed and contract workers could face the same fate as early as 31 December, with the knock-on affects hitting even more local jobs.

This follows current proprietor Prax, and its owner Sanjeev Kumar, having their UK assets frozen due to alleged irregularities.

The plant, which supplied 25% of the UK's diesel, is not operating right now. It has been suggested that decommissioning the plant would require 30 years of remedial works, as well as devastating the local economy.

Unite demands that a new owner is found by the Labour government.

The union has raised concerns that the company overseeing the site and the bidding process, TFI Consulting, is registered at the same location as one of the bidders, Phillips 66, which runs a neighbouring site. The Phillips 66 bid would slash jobs as part of ending refining and making the site an import-only facility.

Another publicised bidder is headed by Swiss financier Marc Amram.

This bid has been dubbed a 'public-private partnership' which claims to preserve all jobs - but it would be reliant on private equity funding.

But many workers and Unite members already have experience of private equity investors. In the last year, Unite members have fought many battles against companies run down by private equity owners, including Morrisons, VetPartners and Oscar Meyer. Private equity ownership will not provide the job security that Lindsey Oil Refinery workers deserve.

Unite general secretary Sharon Graham also raised that if the bids received by the government weren't good enough, then perhaps the government needed to take a stake in the refinery.

Both Prax and previous owner Total failed to put the necessary investment in to modernise the refinery as they didn't see sufficient profit in it. Why would another private investor be any different?

The only way to guarantee jobs and to ensure that the revenue generated from the site is reinvested to ensure job security long-term is to bring Lindsey Oil Refinery into public ownership.

The Socialist Party calls for nationalisation of the energy industry, under democratic workers' control and management, with compensation only on the basis of proven need. This should be part of an environmentally sustainable socialist energy plan which could transfer jobs to green energy without loss of pay,

terms and conditions.

There was huge anger at the rally against the Labour government. The chant "Keir Starmer's a wanker" was taken up spontaneously by the workers.

From the platform, Sharon Graham called for environment minister Ed Miliband and employment minister Michael Shanks to resign over their failure to take swift action to defend jobs.

Other speakers said they didn't trust any politicians - which underlines how important it is that Unite urgently debates its political strategy, including putting forward candidates committed to pro-worker policies and accountable to trade unionists.

Otherwise it leaves a vacuum that can be exploited by other forces masquerading as on the side of the working class but actually hostile to the workers movement.

Reform Greater Lincolnshire mayor Andrea Jenkyns was stood near the front of the protest. Speakers pointed out that Jenkyns is a former Tory MP who was part of Boris Johnson and Liz Truss's governments. She applauded the criticism of the Starmer government - but that was noticeably not the case when Sharon Graham announced that Unite reps at the six refineries across the country were discussing the possibility of strike action to defend jobs.

Come and discuss
Why can't Starmer save the sinking ship of British capitalism?

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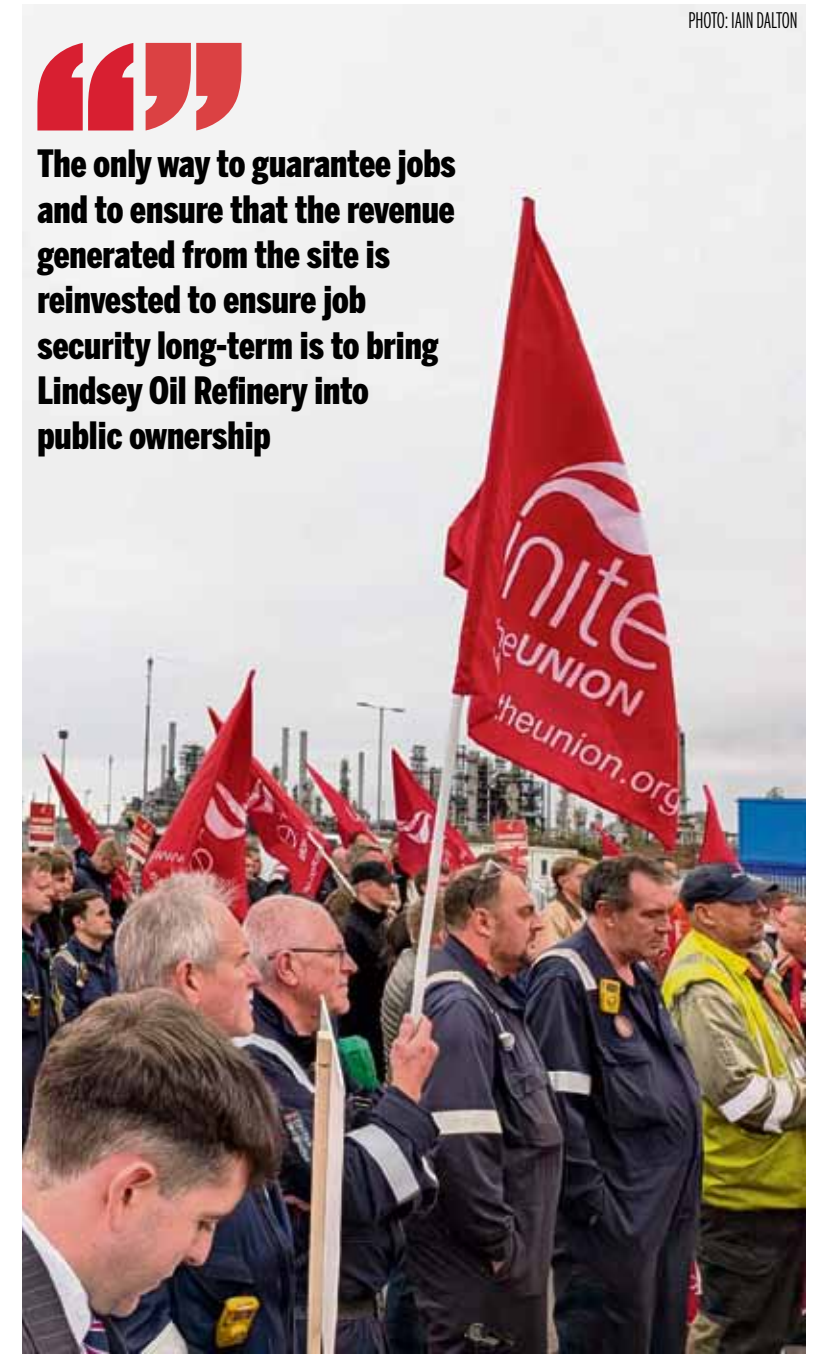


PHOTO: IAIN DALTON

The only way to guarantee jobs and to ensure that the revenue generated from the site is reinvested to ensure job security long-term is to bring Lindsey Oil Refinery into public ownership

Wakefield low-paid mining museum strikers up the pressure

PHOTO: YORKSHIRE SP



JOHN VASEY
WAKEFIELD SOCIALIST PARTY

Socialist Party members continue to support the Unison picket line at the National Coal Mining Museum England in Middlestown, near Wakefield.

The strike has closed the museum, leaving the museum without its main attraction.

The dispute is over the employer's refusal to follow through with a pay increase it had been considering, despite the inferior rates of pay when compared to that of mine guides at the Big Pit National Coal Mining Museum Wales. This was amplified on one of the strikers' placards: a top rate of £12.87 per hour in England and £18.98 per hour in Wales.

Pickets gave out leaflets to the public on entering the scaled-down attraction, explaining their action.

Management had been refusing to even meet with Unison until recently, which was illustrated by a mock negotiating table on the picket line, with Unison reps ready to meet management.

However, after an intervention by local Starmer-supporting Labour MP Jade Botterill, management did meet the strikers - but offered an

even worse deal than previously, with some workers who would have got a 80p an hour pay rise now only offered 62p an hour! Unsurprisingly, this was rejected by the strikers.

But pressure is continuing to build on management. Wakefield Labour council unanimously passed a motion suspending the council grant to the museum until the dispute is resolved.

Most of the funding comes from the government Department for Culture, Media and Sport. The Labour council should make it clear that if the Trust that runs the museum isn't willing to pay decent rates, the council will step in to take over the museum, with democratic control, and join the workers in demanding that the Labour government fully funds the museum, to ensure decent pay.

This could be part of the discussions in the area between trade unionists, independent councillors and Your Party supporters about campaigning for a People's Budget.

More people refuse to cross the picket line, including artists exhibiting at the museum. Socialist Party members will be continuing to offer our full support to the strikers, including organising a solidarity meeting next month.

'Who Murdered the Vets?' 1935 US Labor Day Hurricane 90 years on



Wreckage and destroyed homes in the Florida Keys after the hurricane. Inset: 'Who Murdered the Vets?' issue of the New Masses
PHOTOS: PUBLIC DOMAIN AND MARXIST.ORG

SCOTT JONES

Smoking cigarettes and having a drink cooling off after a long day's work in the tropical sun back at camp, veterans building a highway to connect the Florida Keys to the mainland in September 1935 noticed the wind picking up, and heard reports of bad weather on its way. The next morning "not a blade of grass" remained.

The Labor Day Hurricane of 1935 was the most intense Atlantic hurricane on record, only broken over 50 years later, culminating in a devastating storm surge that swept all before it. Unfortunately, almost 700 workers, World War One veterans, were before it, with only "match-box wooden shacks" for shelter.

Among the first to turn up and aid with rescue and recovery, and to witness the horrific catastrophe, was writer Ernest Hemingway who lived in Key West and owned a fishing boat. He had also served and was wounded in World War One giving him a connection to these vets. Writing that same month in the socialist magazine *New Masses*, Hemingway hammers out on his typewriter his most impassioned and hard-hitting non-fiction work, "2,800 words of dynamite", as he later called it.

Under the headline: "Who Murdered The Vets?" he contrasts the "wealthy people... such as President Hoover and President Roosevelt"

who "do not come to the Florida Keys in hurricane months" because they know of the danger to their yachts and themselves, with the vets who had no choice and knew no better. Hemingway writes scathingly: "Veterans, especially the bonus-marching variety of veterans are not property. They are only human beings and all they have to lose are their lives."

It was not until late the next day after the hurricane that any boat could get to Matecumbe Key where the camps were. What they found were hundreds of dead veterans in grotesque states and places. They had nowhere to shelter and nothing to stop them from being washed away. Hemingway said: "You found them everywhere and in the sun all of them were beginning to be too big for their blue jeans and jackets that they could never fill when they were on the bum and hungry... I would like to make whoever sent them there carry just one out through the mangroves." Some of the surviving vets compared it to what they had seen during the war.

The veterans were there as part of President Franklin D Roosevelt's New Deal program to get the unemployed back to work during the 1930s depression. But they had to campaign just to get that. In 1924 an act awarded bonuses to World War One veterans but not for 20 years, an insult at the time but a bearable one,

given most had jobs. But by the early 1930s, many were out of work following the Wall Street Crash.

A so-called 'Bonus Army' numbering 43,000 marched on Washington DC in 1932 demanding the bonus now, but was brutally crushed by the US Army led by General Douglas MacArthur on the order of President Hoover. There was pressure on new president Roosevelt to act, he did so by sending the vets to work on projects like the Florida highway, seeing it as an opportunity to get them out of the way.

To give the scale of the tragedy, Hemingway says in *Camp Five* only eight out of 187 survived. Everyone knew when hurricane season was and there had been storm warnings and hurricane flags all over the Keys, meaning there was time to evacuate the vets. The subsequent investigation was a whitewash, completed just days afterwards and failing to call any witnesses.

A lack of concern for the victims of extreme climate events still remains and millions more every year are potential victims due to climate change. 90 years on we should remember who murdered the vets and fight to change the system that allowed it to happen.

● Read Ernest Hemingway's article in *New Masses* Volume 16, no 12 17 September 1935 at marxists.org/history/usa/pubs/new-masses

Notorious ex-council leader attends Caerphilly Your Party meeting



MARIAM KAMISH
SECRETARY CAERPHILLY TRADES COUNCIL
(PERSONAL CAPACITY)

As Labour leader of Caerphilly Council, Sean Morgan cut 600 jobs last September. Meals on Wheels and Blackwood Miners Institute only escaped Labour's axe after massive protests organised by trade union Unison. Under his leadership, the council did manage to close the very popular Llancaiaich Fawr manor house - an act of historic vandalism. And then they came for three leisure centres and ten local libraries. We're still fighting the council on those.

But that's not Sean Morgan's concern. Because on 11 September, he resigned as council leader after - in the space of just three days - we'd staged an occupation of Abertridwr Library and the High Court in London had awarded costs against the council and ordered him to re-open all ten libraries.

This was the man who walked into a Caerphilly meeting of Your Party, a formation representing the huge desire for a new mass party fighting in the interests of the working class and against austerity. He tried to make a speech. The chair closed him down fast.

The fight to save the libraries has become a lightning rod for discontent across Caerphilly. It is the number one issue on the doors in the current by-election to the Senedd (Welsh parliament). To try to cut across voter fury, the Labour candidate has, ludicrously, launched his own petition against the Labour council's library closure plans!

When will a council U-turn be announced then? And when will it be extended to all of the other services cut?

Stiff disagreement has arisen among local activists about whether or not Sean Morgan should be allowed to join Your Party. Certainly, very few of the trade unionists and other campaigners who've fought his closures and job cuts would be willing to build a party alongside him.

Currently sitting as an independent councillor, how will he demonstrate he's changed? A starting point would be to move an emergency motion at the council to reverse the cuts which, until weeks ago, he led.

Class struggle booted out a butcher of council jobs and services. Workers won't be willing to offer him refuge in what we hope to build as a new workers' party.

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Your Party meetings Hastings - we brought our socialist message

DAMIAN COSGROVE
EAST SUSSEX SOCIALIST PARTY

The Socialist Party had a core message at the Your Party meeting of 250 people. This an opportunity to muster an anti-austerity campaign, underpinned with a commitment that elected councillors will mobilise the working class in Hastings to fight back on any cuts that the central Labour government try to force through.

Particularly urgent for discussion are elections to the new local government authorities coming in 2026, including in Sussex. If Your Party councillors fight to improve the living standards of the working class on a local level, then it will help establish it as the political vehicle of the working.

It's one thing to speak 'left'. It's another to stand up for the working class in the face of extreme pressure from the capitalist system, such as Liverpool's socialist council did in the 1980s - led by Militant, now the Socialist Party.

Despite a fully booked event, with an expected turnout of around 500, there were less than half that in the room on 18 October.

It was easy to distribute our Socialist Party material to people. We could count on a single hand the number of attendees that refused our leaflet on budget cuts.

Our leaflet was one of the most widely distributed at the event, with enthusiasm about our upcoming

public meeting. 18 people bought the Socialist paper, donating another £47 to the Socialist Party fighting fund on top. We met mainly younger people that wanted to join the Socialist Party.

The panel of union activists, local campaigners, and Jeremy Corbyn talked about NHS privatisation and damp housing in disrepair.

Corbyn made the case for the sortition (lottery) model of selecting conference 'delegates'. He stated that it is more democratic, and engages broader sections of the movement, including those who may not consider themselves politically active.

However, Corbyn stressed that this was just a suggestion, and not yet a final decision. But it wasn't said how we could challenge this undemocratic decision. We wouldn't choose representatives to lead our unions by random lottery, and not by open debate and democratic elections!

At the Hastings meetings, discussion about trade union involvement was limited, with no mention of pushing for affiliation from mass workers' organisation. And we were unable to put this message across in the just seven minutes given to questions from the floor.

The desire for a political voice for working-class people is growing louder. The Socialist Party will continue to be involved in the campaign to build Your Party into a working-class organisation to take power away from the bosses, and into our own hands.



Socialist Party members before the meeting PHOTO: SOCIALIST PARTY

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to find out more about joining us today!



Zarah Sultana and Dave Nellist address Coventry Your Party meeting



VINCENT MOON
COVENTRY SOCIALIST PARTY

A sense of quiet optimism built into the 400-strong Coventry Your Party meeting on 17 October. Coventry Socialist Party members worked hard to help build for the turnout. Leaflets were flying out of our hands to people queuing early for the rally. Several people came up to our Socialist Party stalls inside and outside to sign up and show active interest in building for an alternative that working-class people can rely on.

The meeting began with an impressive speech from Grace Lewis, a Coventry councillor who has resigned from Labour to support Your Party. She spoke about how work needs to be done now to build Your Party, with local campaigns against brutal austerity cuts that Coventry and other councils continue to make.

Then Matt Reid, Unite lead steward for the striking Birmingham bin workers, spoke. He described

the brutal attack his members have faced from a Labour council, including the use of fire-and-rehire tactics. The Birmingham bin strike illustrates the need for the working class and trade unions to have their own political voice.

Hundreds of thousands have mobilised in protest against the genocidal slaughter in Gaza. Bali Akhtar, who has been a key organiser in Coventry, delivered an impassioned speech. She has organised those interested in going to 32 national demos and been involved many marches in the city. She raised the need for Your Party to stand firmly against war.

Dave Nellist, Socialist Party member and former socialist Labour MP in Coventry give a brilliant speech. He described how the wealthy have grown wealthier with greed and how Your Party can defeat Reform with the backing of the working class.

Dave raised the challenge of retaining Grace's council seat and standing 53 more candidates when every

Coventry seat is up for election in May.

Contributing to the discussion from the floor, Socialist Party member Jim Hensman made the case for Your Party to fight for councils to set needs-based, no-cuts budgets.

Finally, Zarah Sultana, a Coventry MP who with Jeremy Corbyn launched Your Party, spoke about Coventry's history of working-class struggle. She touched on how it is now more important than ever to build for an alternative with community organisations and trade unions.

What was clear from all speeches is the need for a new workers' party with the proper backing of trade unions and the working class. This sentiment was certainly echoed in discussions after the meeting, where people were eager to know more of what's to come. Lots of people brought copies of the Socialist, showed an interest in joining us at the Socialism 2025 event in London and in joining the Socialist Party.

Hackney - what will Your Party fight for?

ROB THOMAS

There were speeches from Camden general election candidate Andrew Feinstein, and Taylan Sahbaz, from the local Turkish Kurdish organisation Day Mer. About 125 people attended on 15 October. But just 15 minutes were allocated to contributions from the floor.

Andrew Feinstein said that the Camden People's Alliance, which he is part of, will stand candidates if Your Party doesn't. He also said that Your Party representatives that win elections should return a proportion of their income back into the party or local movement. The Socialist Party calls for elected representatives to only accept the wage of an average skilled worker. Taylan Sahbaz said we need to reach out to the working class who are politically disenfranchised.

Socialist Party members spoke from the floor, raising the question of what programme Your Party will stand on. Will Your Party fight all cuts, and fight Westminster for the funds? That's needed to convince wider layers of the working class.

Socialist Party members were also able to report back to the main room from the breakout groups, raising how Your Party can cut across Reform, and the role of trade unions in building Your Party.

Come and discuss

Your Party and working-class political representation at Socialism 2025 including: 'After Polanski's leadership win - are the Greens a viable socialist alternative?'



GREAT REVOLUTIONARIES
BY PETER TAAFFE

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Their history is told through a compilation of twelve articles written by Peter Taaffe, who devoted his life to helping build struggle, in Britain and globally, first as editor of the Militant newspaper, then as general secretary of the Socialist Party.

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WHAT WE STAND FOR

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

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

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

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



WORK, PENSIONS AND BENEFITS

- A trade union struggle for the immediate implementation of the TUC demand of a £15-an-hour minimum wage for all as a step towards a real living wage, without exemptions. For the minimum wage to automatically increase linked to average earnings or inflation, whichever is higher.

- Share out the work. A maximum 32-hour working week with no loss of pay or worsening of conditions. The right to flexible working, under the control of workers not employers. An end to insecure working, for the right to full-time work for all who want it; ban zero-hour contracts.
- All workers to have trade union rates of pay, employment protection, and sickness, parental and holiday rights from day one of employment. End bosses using bogus 'self-employment' as a means to avoid giving workers rights.
- No to austerity through inflation. For all wage rates to be automatically increased at least in line with price rises.

- Open the books of all companies cutting jobs or claiming they can't afford to pay a real living wage. State subsidies, where genuinely needed, for socially-useful small businesses.
- For trade unions independent of the capitalist state, with members having democratic control over their own policies, constitutions and democratic procedures. For all trade union officials to be regularly elected, subject to recall by their members and paid a worker's wage.

- Reduce the state retirement and pension age to 55. For decent living pensions.
- Replace universal credit and the punitive benefit system with living benefits for all who need them.

PUBLIC SERVICES

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

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

- For local councillors who are committed to opposing austerity and all cuts to local services, jobs, pay and conditions.

- For a socialist NHS to provide for everyone's health needs, including dental and eye care – free at the point of use and under democratic control. Kick out the private companies! Nationalise the pharmaceutical industry under democratic workers' control and management.

- Renationalise privatised utilities – including rail, mail, water, telecoms and power – under democratic workers' control and management.
- Free, publicly funded and democratically run, good-quality education, available to all at any age. Abolish university tuition fees and write off student debt, end marketisation, and introduce a living grant. No to academisation. For all schools to be under the genuine democratic control of local education authorities, school staff, parents and student organisations.

- The right to a safe secure home for all. For the mass building of genuinely affordable, high-quality, carbon-neutral council housing. For rent controls that cap the level of rent. Fair rent decisions should be made by elected bodies of tenants, housing workers and representatives of trade unions. For cheap low-interest mortgages for home buyers. Nationalise the privately owned large building companies, land banks and estates.

- Oppose the dictatorship of the billionaire owners of the media. For the nationalisation of newspaper printing facilities, radio, TV and social media platforms. Access to these facilities should be under democratic control, with political parties' coverage being allocated in proportion to the popular vote at elections.
- For a new mass workers' party, based on the trade unions, and drawing together workers, young people and activists from workplaces, and community, environmental, anti-racist and anti-cuts campaigns, to provide a fighting, socialist political alternative to the pro-big business parties.

ENVIRONMENT

- Prioritising major research and investment into replacing fossil fuels and nuclear power with renewable energy, and ending the problems of early obsolescence – where products are designed to 'wear out' and be replaced - and unrecycled waste.
- Nationalisation of the energy companies, under democratic workers' control and management, with compensation paid only on the basis of proven need, in order to carry out a major switch to clean, green energy, without any loss of jobs, pay or conditions.

- A democratically planned, massively expanded, free to use, publicly owned transport system, as part of an overall plan against environmental pollution.
- For a major, publicly funded, insulation and energy transition plan for existing housing stock.
- Agribusiness to be taken into democratic public ownership. For a food processing and retail industry under workers' control to ensure that standards

- 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!

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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.
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'Largest single-day protest in US history' against Trump



Protesters in Downtown Minneapolis
PHOTO: CHAD DAVIS/CC

Millions of people took to the streets in the US on 18 October, tens of thousands marched in thousands of cities and towns in 'No Kings' demos, protesting against Donald Trump's presidency.

Organisers estimated that the protests drew nearly seven million, about 2% of the entire US population, which would make it the largest single-day protest in US history.

It follows a similar day of action in June and the over one-million-strong 'Hands Off' protests on 5 April, and took place despite smears and intimidation by the Republican Party ahead of 18 October.

From Alaska to Florida and from Hawaii to Massachusetts, millions took to the streets in 2,700 locations. There were trade union marches in New York and Los Angeles, protests in Utah where a protester was killed in the June march, and there were also solidarity demonstrations in Barcelona, Madrid, London, Berlin, Dublin, Paris, and other cities.

Trump's authoritarian actions are provoking struggle, in which the trade unions (who were among the organisers) and workers' movement should put itself central, fighting for a mass working-class political alternative.

On the website



Japan: Election of right-populist Sanae Takaichi as leader of Liberal Democratic Party precipitates government crisis

The global headlines about Japan having its first woman prime minister had hardly sunk in before reality started to bite. The election of Sanae Takaichi to leader of the governing Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) soon precipitated a major government crisis, and even her election as the next Japanese Prime Minister was not guaranteed.

Ireland: Presidential election - the key issues

The presidential elections are in full swing in Ireland. One of the three candidates, Jim Gavin, backed by Fianna Fáil, a governing coalition party, along with Fine Gael, has abandoned the race after it emerged he had failed to pay a former tenant in one of his properties for sums owed. Gavin's name remains on the ballot paper but the official race is now between Catherine Connolly, backed by left and 'centre-left' parties and Sinn Féin, and Heather Humphreys, right-wing Fine Gael's candidate. Militant Left (CWI Ireland) reporters look at the contest and the main issues under debate.



Committee for a Workers' International

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Philippines: Police violence used against state corruption protests

KRASNAYA PLUMA

Protests have erupted across the Philippines over billions of dollars worth of state corruption in fraudulent flood control projects. On 21 September, the 53rd anniversary of the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos Sr's declaration of martial law, Filipinos across different classes and groups went out to the streets to denounce the corruption, called for the stolen funds to be returned, and for those involved to be persecuted. The funds that were supposed to go to climate adaptation projects went into the pockets of greedy politicians and their cronny contractors, which enraged the entire Filipino masses.

The protests in the capital were largely peaceful. Violent demonstrations emerged in some areas of Manila. Masked demonstrators set fire to vehicles, whilst some threw rocks and Molotovs at police officers. In response, the police beat up the demonstrators and arrested them. Authorities reported that more than 200 people were arrested, with some of them minors. However, according to videos and reports circulating online, the police killed two young people, and the detained violent demonstrators were allegedly tortured.

Corruption amid climate crisis

The Philippines is one of the most vulnerable countries to climate change. If risks continue to be ignored, the country will suffer more intense droughts, crop losses, and a decline in its reefs and fisheries, as well as increased flooding and water scarcity. The climate crisis would also lead to increased epidemics. With intense flooding becoming a norm, the cases of leptospirosis, a life-threatening bacterial infection, will continue to rise. Increasing temperatures are also contributing to the surge in diseases such as dengue, malaria, cholera, and typhoid. The presidency of the late dictator's son, Ferdinand 'Bongbong' Marcos Jr, in its declared effort to avert this, funded billions of dollars to climate adaptation projects. However, despite the substantial budget, the flooding problem remains unresolved.

Greenpeace Philippines, the local branch of the international environmental activist group, estimated that as much as PHP1.089 trillion (approximately £13 billion) was lost due to anomalous climate adaptation projects. The Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH), the government branch responsible for building national infrastructure, received PHP800 billion, the bulk of the budget, with PHP560 billion potentially lost to corruption.

The government reported that 5,500 out of 9,855 flood control projects were completed in 2022. However, the media, both mainstream and alternative, revealed that most of these 'completed' projects turned out to be of low quality and non-existent,



University of the Philippines students on an anti-corruption protest 21 September PHOTO: KEJ ANDRES/CC

or, as the Filipinos called it, 'ghost'. The anomalous flood control fund is only a small fraction of the corruption pie. There are also high levels of corruption in other sectors of the government, such as the Philippine Health Insurance Corporation and the Department of Education, among others.

The corruption scandal came to light on 28 July, during Marcos Jr's 2025 State of the Nation Address (SONA 2025), in which he ordered an investigation into the corruption and told those involved, "Shame on you!" The statement from the president is nothing but mere political cant from someone whose family plundered an estimated \$10 billion of public money whilst in power, pushing millions of Filipinos into extreme levels of destitution, with its effects still felt up to this day.

The big names identified by the whistleblowers included, the president's top aide, the president's beloved cousin, who recently resigned as House speaker and, a former secretary of DPWH, appointed by the president in 2022. The whistleblowers also named incumbent senators. Members of the House of Representatives who aligned with the Marcos-Duterte alliance in 2022

were also included, and the list continues to grow. Those above denied the allegations.

The biggest names in this issue are the Discaya couple, who have been dubbed the 'Bonnie and Clyde' of flood control projects by Filipinos online. The Discayas bagged projects worth PHP31 billion from their owned and affiliate companies between July 2022 and May 2025 alone.

The Discayas, with the aid of high-ranking government officials, manipulated and rigged the bidding process for contracts. The Discayas have 13 affiliated companies; most of these were founded by them, while the rest are under joint ventures with the couple's business firms. The bidding process exists to fool the people. The officials in charge have already blocked the bidding process, forcing contractors to submit to their own terms and conditions, ie, to give a massive kickback in exchange for contracts. A negotiator will then conduct the proper bidding ceremony to make it appear legitimate, while also evading the scrutiny of anticorruption watchdogs. With the state-wide corruption scandal involving officials from all echelons of the government, the Philippine government has now become a syndicate - activists

argue that it has always been one since its inception.

The people continue to suffer

Whilst corrupt politicians and their cronies continue to live in prosperity, most workers, youth and the poor continue to live in poverty. The stolen money is too massive to comprehend. To put it in perspective, stacking PHP1.089 trillion into PHP1000 bills vertically would measure around 15,000 km; that would be approximately 18,900 times taller than the Burj Khalifa. But the accurate measure of the corruption doesn't lie in the height of the stacked bills; it is measured in lives.

The stolen money could have been used to tackle homelessness. There are around 4.5 million homeless people, and about two-thirds of this number are in the National Capital Region, which is a region hugely affected by flooding.

The stolen funds could have been used to improve the Philippine public healthcare system. The government-run Philippine Health Insurance Corporation, the body responsible for managing the country's public healthcare system, which is

also grappling with its own corruption issues, has been impoverished by a series of budget cuts and rapid privatisation.

There is a lot more that could be done with the stolen funds. The money could have been used to improve other sectors, such as education and agriculture, among others. However, merely returning the stolen funds is insufficient. The returned funds will then be used for another cycle of corruption within the government. There needs to be a solution to avoid this, that is, a workers-led government.

State violence

On 21 September, over 100,000 people took to the streets in Manila alone. The protest was largely peaceful, but some areas were riddled with violence. The protestors who made violent demonstrations were met with brutal force by the state cops. At least 219 protesters were arrested, 95 of them minors, with the youngest being nine years old.

Most of the arrested children did not take part in the demonstrations. They were bystanders who, like all children, became curious about what was happening with the protests. With the usual moral bankruptcy of the state cops, they beat up the children and arrested them violently. Children's rights lawyers condemned the brutality of the police. The parents of these children were barred from visiting them.

The most brutal display of state violence was the shooting of Eric Saber, a bystander who took no part in the protest. Eric was hit by a stray bullet fired by a police officer dressed in civilian clothing. It was not surprising to the public when the Philippine National Police (PNP) stated that no one was hurt when Eric's death was not yet revealed to the public, but once it was released, the police justified why they had to fire those bullets.

Struggle for socialism

We must demand the end of the corrupt capitalist system. Merely returning the stolen funds is not enough. The recovered money will likely be used again for another cycle of corruption within the government.

We need a sustainable solution to prevent this cycle. The new generation of capitalist looters has inherited enormous wealth, and corrupt methods will only continue to increase poverty and suffering.

We must come together to establish an independent organisation that unites workers, youth, environmental activists, farmers, the poor, and all oppressed and marginalised communities living under harsh conditions. It is now the time to create a united front of mass workers' and community organisations and youth campaigns against capitalism. Such an organisation can promote economic policies - specifically socialist policies - that prioritise the people's benefits over profit.

What we need is an alternative to the profit-driven, corrupt capitalist system. The establishment of a socialist, workers' government is essential to reversing environmental damage and implementing measures to improve working and living conditions, for all.



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FOR JOBS, HOMES AND SERVICES FOR ALL



Come and discuss
The case for a national
trade union stewarding
organisation
against the
far right

SOCIALISM 2025
15 and 16 November
A weekend of socialist ideas in London

TOWER HAMLETS SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBER

Over the summer, anti-immigration protests outside hotels housing asylum seekers, Tommy Robinson's 'Unite the Kingdom' rally in September, and Reform polling ahead of Labour have created real fear, particularly among Black, Asian and migrant communities.

There is growing anger in working-class communities after years of attacks on housing, wages and public services, and the epidemic of violence against women. Starmer's Labour has proved it is just another party serving the interests of the bosses.

Farage's Reform UK is posing as a voice of 'ordinary people.' What is it doing to fight for our services, decent pay and council homes? Behind the anti-establishment mask, Reform represents the same big-business interests as the Tories and Labour. Farage himself is one of the highest-earning MPs, pocketing over a million pounds a year while peddling the lie that migrants, not billionaires, are to blame for poverty and insecurity. His anti-immigration rhetoric divides the working class to let the bosses off the hook.

In contrast, trade unions bring together workers from all backgrounds to fight together against the bosses. Unions can unite the working class with the slogan of 'Jobs, homes and services, not racism' to address the growing class anger currently being exploited by the far right. The trade unions must adopt this not just as a slogan, but build a mass campaign fighting against cuts, for decent wages and good jobs, mass council-house building and proper funding of public services to cut across racist scapegoating.

On Saturday 25 October, Nick Tenconi the leader of the now far-right UKIP, is bringing his "mass deportations" tour to Whitechapel in east London. Tower Hamlets has a proud history of standing up to racism and fascism, and that tradition must continue. Trade unions, community organisations, and local campaigners have called for a mass counter-demonstration to mobilise the working class and youth in the borough against the far right.

Tower Hamlets Unison, which represents council workers, has organised a group of trade unionists to build a union-led fight against the far right in the borough. Calling for proper trade-union stewarding and speakers on the day, and making sure that those who are fighting for the working class in the borough are at the centre of it.

But the fight cannot end on the streets. Working-class people need a political alternative to the parties of big business. Trade unions should take the next step - standing workers' candidates in the upcoming council elections, committed to no-cuts budgets and fighting for jobs, homes and services for all. Corbyn and Sultana's Your Party has the potential to unite trade unionists, socialists and community campaigners to challenge both the far right and the capitalist system that fuels them.

- Join the counter-demonstration in Whitechapel on Saturday 25 October.
- Stand together for jobs, homes and services - not racism! Join the fight against the far right and austerity - join the Socialist Party!

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



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