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# the Socialist

Issue 1346

27 November - 3 December 2025

formerly **Militant**

## Fight Labour austerity

# THE WORKING CLASS NEEDS ITS OWN PARTY

# TRADE UNIONS MUST LEAD

**L**abour's Autumn Budget, presented to parliament on 26 November after the Socialist goes to press, will be a budget for the bosses.

It will double down on austerity policies of cuts and privatisation, designed to make the working class pay to try to keep the capitalist 'markets' happy; whatever the price for the working class, our communities and the services we all rely on.

It is plain for all to see that the working

class does not have its own party. And in the absence of a genuine workers' voice, right-populist Reform is benefiting by posing as being anti-establishment, but doing the bosses' bidding trying to divide the working class.

The 800,000 who initially signed up to support the creation of Jeremy Corbyn and Sarah Sultana's Your Party is proof of the huge desire for a left-wing political alternative.

The trade unions - representing over six million workers already organised to defend the working class against the bosses' attacks - must take the lead.

By acting on the policy of the TUC (Trades

Union Congress) to organise a union-led weekend demo against Labour austerity.

By organising the industrial fightback against the bosses' and Labour's attacks, like the heroic strike against the disgraceful attempt to slash £8,000 from Birmingham bin workers' salaries.

And by taking the lead in organising for a political alternative to Labour. For example, by fighting for candidates to stand in May's elections who pledge to resist austerity, backing no-cuts budgets, set to meet the needs of our communities and demanding the super-rich are made to pay.

Three days after the Budget, Your Party

starts its founding conference. To make good its stated intention of 'putting the working class at its heart', would require giving the organised working class in the trade unions a democratic voice inside its structures. And it should take up the huge and pressing opportunity of fighting for a wide, anti-cuts stand in the elections in May.



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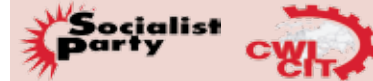
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"The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it."  
**Karl Marx**

# Reeves's Budget a real drag for low-paid workers

JOHN WILLIAMS  
CARDIFF SOCIALIST PARTY

There's been much speculation about Labour's Budget (put to parliament after the Socialist goes to press). It's been chaotic to say the least!

It's obvious that the government was planning to increase the basic

## 4 million more low-paid workers will start paying income tax

rate of income tax. The first time a British government would have done so in 50 years! But that policy had to be scrapped very quickly as its clear unpopularity would have mostly likely led to the end of Rachel Reeves as Chancellor. Although if you look at the polls, nothing can save her or Keir Starmer now.

Instead, one of the things it appears they will do is to freeze current tax thresholds. Essentially freezing the rate at which workers begin to pay tax and move up to the next bracket. It's estimated that freezing the thresholds until 2029-30 will raise an extra £8.3 billion a year. Four million more low-paid workers will

start paying tax at a lower rate. This is known as 'fiscal drag'; when your income goes up but the tax thresholds stay the same, you end up paying more tax without the government technically raising tax rates. With inflation and the ongoing cost-of-living crisis (energy bills going up as one example!), this hurts low-paid workers the most.

This stealth tax was used by the Tories when they were in power. They hoped, as Labour do now, that by not actually changing policy this would not end up an electoral liability.

But this is Starmer's Labour. Everything they do is an electoral

liability. Low-paid workers won't just be pissed off about how much tax they pay, some for the first time. Workers and young people are angry at Starmer's support for the Israeli state's assault on Gaza, them watering down their workers' rights bill, and a whole set of right-wing measures. Meanwhile, the wealth of the richest in society will remain largely untouched. This is what this Labour government and their Budgets for the bosses will mean.

And for low-paid workers, young people and all those trying to make ends meet, the time we can be rid of these bosses' politicians can't come soon enough.

# Covid inquiry report exposes Tory bosses' government

SCOTT HUNTER  
SWINDON SOCIALIST PARTY

The UK Covid-19 Inquiry published its second report on 20 November. Spanning more than 750 pages, the report paints a damning picture of a "toxic and chaotic" Downing Street that leapt from one bad policy to another.

This will come as no surprise to anyone who lived through that time. We remember then-Prime Minister Boris Johnson telling us there was nothing to worry about in February, before a sudden U-turn and lockdown in March. Then, the sudden turn to "eat out to help out" in summer, before being forced to make another hasty about-face and lockdown in Autumn.

Despite living through it, it is still striking to see the scale of the crisis and the government's complete inability to tackle it summarised in black and white. The report goes into the 'lost month' of February 2020, in which the government failed to take the threat of the virus seriously. Most damning of all, the report suggests that - if a lockdown had been imposed a week earlier on 16 March - this could have cut the death toll of the first wave nearly in half, saving some 23,000 lives.

The report levels specific criticism at Johnson and others in Downing Street - including Chris Wormald, then head civil servant at the health department and now Keir Starmer's cabinet secretary. However, while Johnson and co. have very real blood on their hands, any capitalist government would have displayed a similarly poor response to the threat of the pandemic - indeed, many others did around the world.

## Role of the working class

To avoid spreading the virus, people needed to stay physically isolated. Yet, in order to go to work, most people had to be around others. So, the government was confronted with the reality of capitalism, first described by Karl Marx over 150 years earlier: it

is the working class that produces all new wealth. The bosses, who we are told are 'wealth creators', could not for the life of them produce one iota of wealth without us!

That was the impossible situation facing feeble British capitalism in 2020, and that was why the government did everything it could to avoid a lockdown, until it was too late. Ultimately, they were forced to impose a lockdown and provide relief - though inadequate - through the furlough scheme, as it became clear that the death toll of an uncontrolled virus would provoke massive outrage that could threaten the capitalist system itself. All this, compounded by an NHS devastated by a decade of austerity which meant it did not have the capacity to deal with the crisis.

## Still a bosses' government

While the party of government may have changed, the nature of the state has not. Keir Starmer's New Labour Mark II, fully committed to defending decaying British capitalism, is still serving the interests of the bosses and trying to make us pay for the economic and social toll of the pandemic and other crises. Starmer is more than happy to increase arms spending while trying to cut benefits for the most vulnerable in society.

The Covid pandemic revealed the plain truth about society: it's the workers who keep society running. Supermarket staff, nurses, bin workers and many more. The government hailed us as key workers, then told us we didn't deserve a pay rise. But this experience led to the 2022-23 strike wave, which was just a small taste of our potential collective power as the working class in action. It also revealed another truth: you can't control what you don't own. We can't rely on the bosses' politicians to work for us, we need a mass party of the working class! More than five years after the start of the pandemic, the Socialist Party is playing a critical role in the fight to build such a party. If you agree, join us!



Former prime minister Boris Johnson ID DOWNING STREET/CC



Signs thanking NHS workers and demanding more PPE and tests LONDON/SP

# YOUR PARTY CONFERENCE AND THE STRUGGLE FOR A NEW PARTY OF THE WORKING CLASS



## WHAT WE THINK

Your Party was announced just five months ago. Now, thousands are preparing for its founding conference in Liverpool 29-30 November. The conference is likely to involve around 4,000 attendees, short of the 13,000 originally planned.

This smaller scale conference reflects that some of the shine has rubbed off Your Party since its first announcement. Only around 50,000 have actually joined, compared to the 800,000 who originally joined its mailing list.

Disagreements between those in the leadership, including between Jeremy Corbyn and Zarah Sultana, have become very public. A stark example being that Jeremy and Zarah will speak at rival pre-conference rallies.

The huge initial Your Party enthusiasm confirmed what the Socialist Party has been saying since Jeremy Corbyn was ousted from the leadership of the Labour Party after the 2019 general election, that a new political voice of the working class would be extremely popular. We raised that such a party could quickly become the biggest party in Europe. However, despite its potential, as it stands, the founding conference will not launch Your Party as the party of the working class that is needed.

Unfortunately, neither those organised in support of Jeremy or Zarah are calling for what is needed to establish Your Party as a workers' party. Zarah's call for socialist policies and increased members' democracy is positive. Equally, it is undeniable that Corbyn has huge authority from his time as Labour leader.

Many of those who signed up to Your Party will have also been mobilised by Corbyn 1.0, either voting for him, or joining the Labour Party because of his anti-austerity programme. At the height of enthusiasm for it in the summer, one poll found Your Party polling first among 18 to 24-year-olds, who would have been 14 years old or younger when Corbyn first became Labour leader.

The legacy of Corbynism is really from the demands which Corbyn stood on in the 2015 leadership election and the manifestos from the 2017 and 2019 general elections. Demands such as bringing in a decent minimum wage, nationalising the utility companies and for free university education. It was this programme which mobilised millions of people to support and vote for Corbyn's Labour.

That's why a clear anti-austerity programme which challenges the dire situations faced by big sections of the working class today, should be central to Your Party.

## May elections

In May 2026, thousands of council seats will be up for election, including all in London, as well as seats in the Welsh and Scottish parliaments. Your Party should stand widely, and against austerity - pledging that its candidates will fight for councils to set needs-based budgets, a policy supported by local authority workers in the three largest council trade unions.

Standing for needs-based budgets would mean committing not to pass on any further austerity measures, and instead demanding that central government coughs up the money needed to fund services. Successive Tory and now Labour governments have presided over slashed local government funding.

When Corbyn was Labour leader, the fact that Labour councils around the country continued to close libraries, sports facilities, and dismantle important services undermined Corbyn's anti-austerity message.

Unfortunately, such a bold stand is not clearly outlined in the Your Party 'organisational strategy' document which attendees are set to discuss at the founding conference. The document says "Your Party will seek to support all Independent socialist candidates." To take advantage of so-called 'fair media coverage', which entitles parties to an election broadcast and the chance to argue for fair representation in 'legacy media', Your Party candidates need to stand under a single electoral registration; that does also allow for different descriptions. It would make it harder for the establishment media to ignore the stand. Appearing as simply 'independent', or as part of a local independents group, for example, would not cohere a nationwide stand against austerity.

## Trade unions

Increasingly there is a discussion taking place among trade unionists regarding their union's relationship with the Labour Party, questioning, 'why is our union supporting a party and candidates which attack our members?' How can that discussion be ignored when there are examples like Birmingham Labour council's attempt to slash £8,000 from bin workers' pay? There, the council has hired scab labour, fought in the courts to prevent bin workers picketing and spent hundreds of thousands fighting this action. It was because of Labour's attacks on the Birmingham bin workers that Unite conference voted overwhelmingly, in a motion put forward by Socialist Party members and supporters, to reexamine its relationship to Labour.

There is a glaring contradiction, between the policies of Labour in government and the demands of most trade unions. At this stage, the majority of trade union leaders either defend their link to Labour, arguing that at least they get a seat at the table, using the threat of Reform to argue for continued support for Labour. Alternatively, facing the



The support for Enough is Enough, initiated by trade unions during the strike wave, is an example of the potential role the organised working class could play in the fight for working-class political representation BRIGHTON/SP



The huge initial Your Party enthusiasm confirmed what the Socialist Party has been saying since Jeremy Corbyn was ousted from the leadership of the Labour Party after the 2019 general election, that a new political voice of the working class would be extremely popular

growing anger at Labour from their members, they argue that trade unions should ignore politics and simply fight industrially, or that rather than being affiliated to a party, it is best to seek support from any politician willing to support them. But none of these positions answers the crucial question of a political voice of the working class.

And so far, those at the top of Your Party have assisted the trade union leaders in ignoring the issue. As the Your Party founding documents stand, a trade union would have more rights in the Labour Party of today than it would in Your Party - even after the gutting of trade unions' collective voice in Labour.

Your Party should instead make real the assertion in its political statement that it will be a party with the "working class at its heart", by allowing for trade unions - locally, regionally and nationally - to have a collective democratic voice in Your Party. It should be approaching the executives of the trade unions asking for a discussion about how Your Party politicians can best fight in their members' interests.

Socialist Party members have been part of organising discussions of trade unionists in 11 different unions, to discuss how to fight for the unions to take steps towards building their own political party.

There are those who argue that right-wing union leaders would use affiliation to hold back Your Party. But the right-wing trade union leaders were not able to hold back the wave of strikes in 2022-23. It was that wave of industrial action which has most recently won concessions from the then Tory austerity programme.

There are many examples of workers holding their leaders to account, pushing for the action needed. Your Party was announced just three days after a meeting of over 1,000 trade unionists preparing the fight for a new party in their unions. This was not a coincidence; the collective pressure of the workers' movement was being felt by Corbyn and Sultana, who both addressed the meeting.

However events in Liverpool transpire, the struggle for a new mass workers' party has begun. By basing itself on the trade unions as the existing mass organisations of the working class, Your Party can develop into the new mass workers' party needed, which would be a huge step forward in the struggle for socialist change.

## Come to the Socialist Party's fringe meeting at Your Party conference

Speakers include:

- Dave Nellist, former socialist Labour MP and now chair of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition
- Hannah Sell, Socialist Party general secretary
- Dave Walsh, President of Liverpool Trades Council

Saturday 29 November  
6.30-8.30pm  
Pullman Hotel, King's Dock,  
Port of Liverpool, Liverpool L3 4FP

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# Food inflation hits workers' pockets

TOM GIBSON  
LEEDS SOCIALIST PARTY

The working class has faced the brunt of capitalism's crisis over the last decade and a half. One of the main issues has been a severe rise in the price of food. As with water, food is an essential item for survival. Increasingly, people are going without.

Food inflation has seen a rapid increase since 2022, reaching its peak in March 2023 at 11.1%. It now stands at 4.5%, according to Office for National Statistics. A Guardian article details how one woman's regular shop went from £100 to £150, from 2022 to 2025. Our wages stagnate while food prices go up. This is on top of a rise in housing, transport and energy prices. Some workers find themselves going into debt as their wages can't match their living costs.

The capitalists portray rising prices as an inevitability, a small price to pay to have a 'free market' economy. While politicians and the bosses can shrug off increased food costs, ordinary workers cannot.

The government has announced an expansion of free school meals for all children whose households claim Universal Credit from September next year. This should be extended to all.

Nutrition is also an issue, as the price of fruit and vegetables increases, unhealthier food can be far cheaper than healthier meals.

### How to solve the problem

In his recent mayoral election, Zohran Mamdani proposed publicly owned stores that would sell food at cheaper rates, a good policy but one which could go much further.

Supermarkets are making record profits while people struggle to afford food, and those who produce and sell the food, aren't getting their fair share.

By nationalising the big supermarket giants under democratic workers' control and management, we could take profits out of the equation and reduce prices while also improving the working pay and living standards of employees.

Food insecurity is a product of capitalist greed. We need to take the food production and distribution out of the hands of agribusiness and the capitalist elite, and put it under the control of workers alongside small farmers and consumers. Only by replacing the capitalist system with socialism, in which workers plan production democratically based on a nationalised economy, can we end food insecurity for all.



It's getting ever more expensive for families to make nutritious home-cooked meals for the kids JOLI RUM/CC

# Labour ramps up attacks on asylum

## Fight for jobs, homes and services to cut across racist division

HUGO PIERRE  
SOCIALIST PARTY NATIONAL COMMITTEE AND FORMER UNISON NEC BLACK MEMBERS REP

Labour Home Secretary Shabana Mahmood is following in the footsteps of Denmark's right-wing Social Democrats by proposing drastic reductions to the right of asylum. Her proposals introduce refugee status as a temporary protection that must be reapplied for when it ends, and extended waits for residency of up to 20 years, from the current five. They will also decrease the levels of financial support, could force asylum seekers to contribute to costs of accommodation, and reduce the right to appeal.

Perversely, in introducing these measures, Mahmood cited the racism she has faced as a reason. But the language she used - claiming that without these measures "we will draw more people down a path that starts with anger and ends in hatred" - and the proposals themselves, will stoke more division and racism.

### Dividing the working class

Labour are using migration as a political weapon to try to divide the working class and to try to cut across a united struggle against its policies. They are failing to tackle all the economic misery heaped on the working class since the banking crisis of 2007-08. They are continuing down the road of austerity ramped up by the Tories but started by Gordon Brown, Labour's last prime minister before Keir Starmer.

Immigration appears to be the number one topic in the right-wing press and a perpetual discussion on the BBC and other broadcast media. But Labour has no plan to deal with the number one topic facing working-class people, the cost-of-living crisis, with policies that support the working class. Instead, they are continually looking at ways to give state handouts to their big-business pay masters.

Mahmood's plans will only feed more fuel for Reform UK's Nigel Farage, who has already said he now favours mass deportation of 'illegal immigrants', up to 600,000 over the lifetime of a parliament. Her plans, coupled with the anger in working-class communities already hit by public service cuts and rising prices, might increase the illusion peddled by the right wing that 'immigration is to blame'.

These proposals by Mahmood must be rejected and condemned.

### Trade unions must fight

Trade unions should be calling for an end to the scapegoating of migrant workers and instead unite workers of all backgrounds by leading the struggle against Labour austerity. They should call out the failures of the capitalist class that has enriched itself several times over since the 2008-09 crash yet failed to invest in industries and public services that we need.

The trade unions must now urgently discuss how they will campaign directly amongst their members for the agreed TUC policy of 'jobs, homes and services not racism' and the

concrete demands they will organise their members around in pursuit of this.

For example: 'no-cuts to council services' especially in the run-up to the 2026 elections, a co-ordinated pay campaign for a £15-an-hour minimum wage for all and above-inflation pay rises, the renationalisation of key sectors of the economy, and many other issues.

Further, this year's TUC Congress called for a mass demonstration against Labour's austerity plans. This would be an important mobilisation for 6.4 million workers organised in trade unions and the wider working class, to prepare a militant struggle for those concrete demands.



# Bristol schools strike victory! 'Proud to stand up for what was right'

SHEILA CAFFREY  
OFFICER OF BRISTOL NEU AND MEMBER OF THE NATIONAL EXECUTIVE FOR THE SOUTH WEST

After four days of brilliant strike action, and a further ten days planned, support staff at 12 schools in the Cathedral Schools Trust (CST) in Bristol and North Somerset have won a fantastic victory. The strike was by members of the National Education Union (NEU) and Unison, fighting together.

Talks with CST about stolen pay ended with an offer that will give every member of support staff a substantial financial settlement. Although all the details are not allowed to be shared, it was good enough to be agreed by 100% of members in less than two hours.

And all this from a CEO who was pretending he still didn't understand the dispute a week before!

It shows the power of collective union action - and although we never want to strike, the impact it has when we do!

Huge congratulations to the reps and members across the trust who have delivered this result. Our membership grew by over 100. We've got reps in every school, who have worked really hard with their members, discussing all the issues, answering the questions people have.

Strikers explained the issues



There were big picket lines at all 12 schools in the trust SOCIALIST PARTY

support staff face. Emma, NEU rep at St Werburgh's school, told us: "When I first started at this school, I was earning about £3 an hour more than the minimum wage."

"Currently, even with the pay increase, I'm earning less than a pound an hour more than minimum wage."

Susie Bennerson, NEU rep at Victoria Park Primary School, said:

"We've had really, really busy pickets. We've had a huge amount of support from the community. We've had a huge amount of parents and pupils and teachers who stood in solidarity with us on the picket line."

● See 'Huge support staff strike across 12 Bristol schools' at socialistparty.org.uk for more

## Strikers respond to the result

I am so proud to have been part of this action, so proud to stand up and be counted. Striking is never an easy decision, but this win proves that it's necessary, and knowing the difference it will make to support staff is amazing. And for me personally, I'm going to celebrate by turning the heating up a little bit higher.

It's a great feeling of satisfaction to see how collective action through the NEU can bring a benefit to everyone. It brings a sense of safety to our school communities. It's great to know that whatever difficulties we could be going through, the union will always be there to support us.

It's been an emotional roller-coaster and all staff have found it so hard, but to have this amazing win and be paid what we are owed was well worth all the strikes! I wanted to stand as a rep as I wanted to help our support staff have a voice. I am a working-class girl from a working-class background and I wanted to stand up for what was morally right!

# Glos phlebotomists: 'The real bloodsuckers are in the boardroom'

NIAMH CASSIDY

When phlebotomists rallied in Gloucester on 17 November it was their 236th day on strike - the longest in NHS history. The Unison members have been taking strike action since 27 March, due to a pay banding dispute.

The team of 37 (specialist healthcare workers who draw blood) are currently on Band 2 pay, the lowest band in the NHS (£12.36 per hour), and are asking to be uprated to Band 3 to better reflect their skills, for an additional £1.09 per hour.

The latest offer from the trust was to replace their phlebotomist title with a new Band 3 Healthcare Support Worker (HCSW) role. According to the trust, this would involve 50% other duties.

In her speech, Dawny Elliott said: "The trust's idea of a resolution is to change our roles to healthcare support workers, which would dilute our skills and remove the specialist nature of our work. It's clear this is being driven by money, not patient care."

"What happens here will set a precedent for phlebotomists across the country for every hospital and future generations. It sends a message that expertise and dedication are disposable."

"If management think they can scare us, they've clearly forgotten who the real vampires are... The real vampires and bloodsuckers are in boardrooms, draining the

NHS dry, while we fight to keep it alive."

Striking phlebotomist Caroline Hayhurst said: "It's been tough. None of us knew for one minute that this was going to last over eight months, but we're still here. It's become not just about our pay; it's about fair play. It's about holding the trust accountable."

Striker Jayana Mistry emphasised: "It's not easy to stand here. We really want to go back to work, and we really want to do our job, because we love our job. We are standing strong, striking strong, and we will win."

The rally was supported by Socialist Party members, trade unionists and the public. Tam McFarlen, National Officer for the Fire Brigades Union, gave a personal insight. "When your blood pressure drops, and when your skin becomes hypersensitised to pain, the one group of people you want to see walking into that room are phlebotomists... They're worth every single penny they're asking."

"We've got a superpower in our movement, and it's called solidarity," he concluded.

Throughout the industrial action, CEO Kevin McNamara has shown a lack of presence or willingness to negotiate, until very recently. Caroline said: "At no point did he make any effort to come and visit our department, discuss with us what we wanted, how we felt. Not once."

He told the BBC that "this is taxpayers' money." Yet it has been



Above: The CEO is not popular Right: Strikers speak SOCIALIST PARTY

disclosed that over £100,000 of taxpayers' money was used in legal fees to twice appeal against an industrial tribunal finding that he had bullied a member of staff!

According to Unison, correcting all the phlebotomists' wages would amount to just a quarter of McNamara's salary.

It isn't easy to stand here. We really want to go back to work, because we love our job. But we are standing strong



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# Defend the NHS and civil service: PCS leadership needs to lead Come to the Broad Left Network conference

FIONA BRITTLE  
PCS NEC MEMBER, PERSONAL CAPACITY

The UK civil service is faced with thousands of redundancies and office closures.

Plans by Keir Starmer's Labour government to reorganise the NHS involve a bonfire of jobs, which could cost as much as £1 billion across NHS England and the Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC).

Eight months on from the announcement that NHS England would be dissolved into the DHSC, the sole concrete accomplishment seems to have been the creation of more 'executive leadership' posts on salaries of up to £210,000!

So far, PCS (the union of government employees in the civil service and outsourced contracts) has limited its public comments to the need for consultation with the union.

Contrary to the view of the union's National Executive Committee (NEC) under the leadership of general secretary Fran Heathcote and president Martin Cavanagh, the Broad Left Network in PCS has repeatedly argued that Starmer's Labour government is no friend of workers. Its plans are not aimed at fixing public services: it serves big business.

Our approach must be to ready the union's members for battle across the UK civil service, devolved areas and the private sector.

### PCS's role against austerity

A decade ago, under the 2010-15 Tory-Lib Dem coalition government and its swingeing cuts, PCS was at the forefront of fighting austerity, when there were massive coordinated demonstrations and public sector strike action.

We involved tens of thousands of members in a political debate to create the 'PCS Alternative', on



PCS members at the British Library have been striking over pay and have rejected the latest offer. Members at Tate galleries will be walking out between 26 November and 2 December. Westminster security staff will be striking on Budget Day

everything from benefit sanctions to decarbonisation.

In contrast, Starmer's Labour government, after 18 months in power, is getting off very lightly.

The illusion must be broken that we must suck up whatever Labour dishes out to us, or we wake up with Nigel Farage as Prime Minister. The truth is quite the reverse.

If the trade unions do not act as a pole of attraction, we will see a backlash against Labour, including votes for Reform.

A new 'PCS Alternative', this time to Labour's austerity, and a serious political strategy that focuses on preparing the union to stand and support candidates in elections who will stand up for our members and for our public services, are crucial weapons in the fight with a vicious Labour government. The current PCS

leadership is letting us sleepwalk into that fight.

A revamped political strategy, that begins from how to fight to defend our members' jobs and the services they deliver, would be a huge step.

It would help give the lie to the argument made repeatedly by Cavanagh and Heathcote that there is no mood to fight - most recently seen in the demobilisation of the union's national campaign on pay, jobs and hybrid working.

We simply do not believe that there is no mood to fight.

There is confusion. Members are deeply worried. There has been no leadership from the NEC for years, especially since they shut down the strike wave in June 2023. It was this betrayal which brought a left-majority NEC to office in May 2024 - but the president, Cavanagh, vetoed any

steps to build a campaign, and the left didn't have the two-thirds majority needed to override him.

It is the responsibility of trade union leaders to lead. If we understand that a fight is the only way to stop the flood of job cuts, office closures and - we anticipate - yet more real-terms pay cuts, then it is our responsibility to prepare for that fight, and to give members confidence.

### Lead a fight

We need to relearn the techniques of years gone by, including:

- Briefings of reps laying out the steps to a significant strike campaign, including demands that will resonate with members
- A strategy to coordinate disputes that are already live - and there are plenty
- A strategy to be able to ballot for

and call strike action, and to pay strike pay for targeted action

• Well-written materials that put forward the arguments - whereas this leadership has not produced a single leaflet this year to start readying members

There is scope to change all this: all it takes is an NEC decision. Yet once again, at the NEC on Wednesday 19 November, the 'campaign' paper from the general secretary proposed nothing.

Socialist Party members call on all those who want a fighting, democratic union to come to BLN conference in December, and help us build the fight-back against Labour austerity and prepare for next spring's NEC elections.

• Broad Left Network conference Saturday 13 December 12 noon on Zoom. Contact pcsblnetwork@gmail.com

Get all the latest union news  
nationalshop  
stewardsnetwork  
NSSN bulletin: shopstewards.net

## JOIN THE SOCIALISTS

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

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

## East London mental health workers strike

JAMES IVENS

East London mental health NHS facilities workers, members of Unite, are taking six weeks of strike action over pay. Their employer, Grosvenor Facilities Management, makes millions in profit from NHS contracts but refuses to bring the pay of their staff in line with workers doing the same job employed by the NHS.

Strikers are protesting most days, including at the corporate HQ in central London, and the seat of the London mayor, City Hall.

There is a very good mood - determined and confident. Despite the freezing rain and snow, reps told me that more workers are joining the strike.

A concerted campaign to raise money for the strike fund has helped boost members' confidence to join the strike. Socialist Party members are campaigning for donations from the local trade union movement.

We argue that all these contracts should be brought back in-house. In 2022, a successful struggle to achieve that was waged by facilities workers in Unite in a neighbouring NHS trust, Barts Health.



Newham GFM workers lobbied City Hall alongside RMT members campaigning for cleaning contracts on Transport for London to be brought back in-house. Privatisation means low pay and poor conditions in every sector! ROB WILLIAMS

## A serious fight by UCU in FE can win, despite leadership delays



UCU members and students lobbying for adult education funding

DUNCAN MOORE  
UCU NEC MEMBER, STANDING FOR RE-ELECTION

The ballot of members of the University and College Union (UCU) in Further Education (FE) colleges in England closed with a 90% vote for strike action.

A special Further Education Committee (FEC) met on 21 November to discuss the outcome of the FE ballot and decide on strike days.

The national turnout was over the Tory 50% threshold (scandalously still in place more than a year after the election of Starmer's government). Had this been an aggregate ballot, UCU members in every college would have been able to strike against the collapse in our pay and conditions, and the lack of national, binding collective bargaining agreements.

However, because the right wing of the union leadership, and those around general secretary Jo Grady, took the view that UCU could not win an aggregated ballot, members were balloted branch by branch, disaggregated.

32 branches got over the threshold. This will make for significant nationwide action which we must all build vigorously for.

The national ballot of UCU members in Higher Education closes on 28 November. Four university unions are balloting, raising the prospect of

serious national action in post-16 education.

21 branches did not reach the threshold, despite the hard work of reps and activists on the ground. 17 settled local pay negotiations under pressure from the college employers, with some achieving pay rises above inflation, but many getting 4% or lower.

### Debate on best way forward

I submitted a motion to the FEC calling for an automatic rebalot of branches which got over 40% turnout, with branches getting 30% or more to rebalot following a branch meeting to decide if they wanted to be included. This would strengthen the numbers and impact of the dispute. Seeing other branches out on strike would raise the confidence of all members and encourage them to organise to join in the action.

The right wing on the FEC argued against rebalotting branches that missed the threshold. Objections were raised to the word 'automatic' in my motion on the alleged grounds that this impinged on branches' autonomy to make their own decisions. But when I offered to amend it to 'should be allowed' this was also refused.

Some members of the 'UCU Commons' faction that supports Grady argued openly that branches should not rebalot, and had effectively missed their chance! Others claimed

to support the right of branches to rebalot, but were not prepared to call for the national union to back them in doing so, leaving branches on their own. The motion fell ten votes to nine.

A motion brought by Regine Pilling, a member of the 'UCU Left' grouping and Vice President candidate, and backed by Socialist Party members, called for strikes to begin in December.

Strikes in the run-up to Christmas are not ideal - we had supported balloting earlier in order to take action in October. But that didn't happen due to the timetable voted for by the right wing.

But holding off action till January risks losing momentum and could signal to employers and the government that UCU is not serious. College principals will step up efforts to pressure reps into accepting local deals. Action in December would cohere the dispute and counter some of that pressure, in preparation for more serious action in the new year.

But the right wing, again acting on advice of the senior officials, voted to delay strikes till mid-January, losing the first two months of our six-month mandate.

The right wing's reasoning became clear in the committee secretary's report. Discussions between UCU officials and the Labour government have yielded little movement, and the right wing do not believe progress

can be achieved in the course of this parliament.

But what can be achieved will be decided by fighting for it, not by cosy meetings. UCU members have shown over and over again that they are prepared to fight. But they are suffering from the effects of a leadership which does not have any confidence, and which is not prepared to stand up to Starmer's government.

We should now argue for regional meetings before Christmas to build up confidence.

## United left stand needed for NEC elections

It's urgent now that the left of the union agrees a single slate for the National Executive Committee elections in January, to give members the fighting leadership they need. Socialist Party members have written an open letter to others on the left to try to achieve this; as a minimum to not run candidates against sitting left NEC members. See [socialistparty.org.uk](http://socialistparty.org.uk)

## Fighting for adult education funding: 'We haven't seen lobbies like this in a long time'

DAVID KAPLAN  
WM COLLEGE UCU, PERSONAL CAPACITY

Over 300 students and teachers lobbied parliament on 19 November, calling for proper funding for adult education. The lobby was called by London Region University and College Union (UCU) in advance of Budget Day. We wanted to draw attention to the dire crisis facing adult education, and how a reversal of the cuts since 2010 could provide life-changing education for adult learners in all our communities.

The lobby was even supported by CEOs and principals of some of the London adult education colleges.

About 100 students and staff went from my college, from ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages), English and maths departments. I asked one curriculum manager if they were attending: "Of course I am!"

The Post-16 Education and Skills White Paper notes: "8.5 million adults have low proficiency in English, mathematics or both. 7.3 million lack the essential digital skills required for the workplace, and those without a level-2 qualification are far more likely to be out of work."

The classroom-based adult learning budget fell from £5.1 billion in 2003-04 to £1.7 billion in 2023-24. Spending is now over 60% less than in 2010. There are an estimated 6,000 job vacancies in England's colleges, with high levels of persistent vacancies in 'priority' areas such as construction, engineering, health and social care, science and maths.

### Finding a voice

In the build-up to the lobby, students and staff wrote to their MPs. One adult learner described how when she first came to the UK, she did not know a single word of English. Every day felt like a struggle. When she was pregnant with her first baby, she had to ask someone to attend every appointment with her, or hope that her GP could find a translator. Then she joined an ESOL class, which enabled her to find her voice.

Braving the cold and sleet, students and staff from at least seven different colleges protested, then queued up to get into parliament to speak to our MPs. The lucky first 100 were allowed straight in, but others were left standing for more than an hour.

The committee room booked for lobbyists was full to capacity, with some having to leave to allow others to come in. UCU general secretary Jo Grady and president Maria Chondrogianni addressed the meeting. Six or seven MPs also addressed the meeting, including Labour MPs John McDonnell and Apsana Begum, and independent MP Jeremy Corbyn. Student after student spoke of the transformative value of adult education.

One of the MP's officers said: "We just haven't seen lobbies like this in a long time."

## CALLUM JOYCE

SOCIALIST PARTY NATIONAL COMMITTEE

Our right to protest is under attack. Recent years have seen a whole number of measures meant to undermine our democratic right to fight back: the jailing of Just Stop Oil protesters, increasingly heavy policing of protests against the slaughter in Gaza, and the shocking proscription of Palestine Action as a supposed 'terrorist' organisation. This last attack now means a potential 14-year prison sentence for being a member of Palestine Action. Over 2,000 people have since been arrested for protesting against the ban, including a number of pensioners, simply for holding placards.

The freedom to express opposition in the cultural sphere is under threat as well. Culture Secretary Lisa Nandy attacked music group Bob Vylan for leading anti-IDF chants during their performance at this year's Glastonbury festival and Irish rapper Mo Chara from the group Kneecap was also threatened with a terror charge after allegedly being seen with the flag of proscribed organisation Hezbollah.

Clearly this Labour government is attempting to create an atmosphere of intimidation to discourage people from organising and protesting against the war and austerity agenda that it has pursued since coming to power last year.

## Unpopularity

At last year's general election Starmer won an historic majority, defeating the hated Tories. So why would a supposedly popular government be worried about resistance to its policies? The reality is that the 'historic' majority represents very little in terms of real support. Starmer was only able to win 9.7 million votes - fewer than the supposedly unpopular Jeremy Corbyn

won in both 2017 and 2019 - and he has only become less popular since. His approval rating is now lower than Rishi Sunak's prior to the election!

The Socialist Party warned at the time that this new Labour government - wedded to big business and divorced from the working class - would seek to manage the growing economic crisis through a policy of cuts to public spending and the driving down of living standards. This is exactly what has happened and, as the lack of serious economic growth continues, the attacks will only get worse.

But the other development has also been the beginning of mass opposition to the government's pro-austerity policies, particularly around attempted cuts to the winter fuel allowance and disability benefits - both of which the government has had to at least partially retreat on. It must loom large in the minds of Labour politicians that similar policies from the Tories provoked mass strike action and huge anti-war demonstrations, the likes of which had not been seen in a generation. More recent international events cast a shadow as well - 7 million demonstrating against Trump in the US and general strike action in France against attempted public spending cuts.

Labour's attacks on the right to protest are an attempt to cut across movements of that type developing in the future. But they in no way represent a strong government, confident to go on the offensive against the working class. Rather, they reveal a government that is increasingly weak and ailing, terrified of how mass movements and strike action could accelerate its political demise.

Look how much effort has been spent trying to break the heroic strike of bin workers in Birmingham with the use of court injunctions and arrests to try and prevent

# DEFENDING THE RIGHT TO PROTEST IN THE AGE OF AUTHORITARIANISM

effective picketing. The government correctly realises that a victory for those workers would be a confidence boost to workers everywhere else about the possibility of resisting austerity at council level.

## Backlash

But even implementing repressive measures is not straightforward and can end up even further undermining Labour's already crumbling support. Over 70% of Labour's own membership, when polled, thought that the proscription of Palestine Action was a mistake and a number of Labour MPs voted against the measure in parliament. Even a number of pro-capitalist newspapers came out in opposition to the ban - not because of their genuine concern for democratic rights, but because the more sober representatives of the ruling class can recognise the huge danger of these attacks provoking a backlash and giving a fresh impetus to the movement against this government rather than stopping it.

While the ruling capitalist class is certainly united on the need to make the working class pay for its crisis, how those attacks should actually be implemented is harder to agree on and splits are beginning

to show in ruling circles over the way forward. This was shown by the fact that the proscription of Palestine Action took place around the same time as the winter fuel allowance was reinstated for pensioners - the government is trying to balance between implementing repressive measures on the one hand while giving concessions to the movement on the other. Unfortunately for them, neither has been sufficient to quell the rising mood of anger against their policies.

The danger of what a backlash can lead to was illustrated on numerous occasions when the hated Tories attempted to attack the right to protest and strike for the same reasons. At the end of 2023, the then Home Secretary Suella Braverman denounced protesters against the slaughter in Gaza as 'hate-marches' and made comments which provoked far-right elements to try and attack the anti-war demonstration that November. The response to this was the defiant mobilisation of hundreds of thousands on one of the biggest demonstrations so far. Braverman was unceremoniously removed in a cabinet reshuffle shortly after - no doubt being seen to have gone 'too far' in attempting to attack the movement at that stage.

The Tories were humiliated again the following year after attempting to use their new 'minimum service

levels' law to compel striking workers to return to work in certain key sectors. The response of Aslef, the train drivers' union, when this was deployed against them, was to call an additional five days of strike action - forcing a rapid retreat by the government and a repeal of the order. There was never even an attempt to use the law again - it was rendered completely unenforceable just by the threat of workers' action.

These events contain key lessons for the movement today in developing a strategy to defy Labour's new round of undemocratic attacks. Individuals or small groups will struggle to effectively resist state repression, but mass movements with correct organisation can make the implementation of undemocratic laws and attacks unworkable.

## Mass mobilisation

As Starmer's attacks continue, there is a clear urgent need to build such a movement in a way that will give an increasing number of people the confidence to stand up and fight back in the face of increasing repression. As the largest democratic organisations in the country - organising potentially the most powerful force in society, the working class - the trade unions have a key role to play in organising this.

A crucial next step is to implement the policy that was agreed unanimously at this year's Trades Union Congress (TUC), and to organise a national trade union-led demonstration against Labour's austerity - and, we would add, against the attacks on our right to protest.

Properly built for, this could lead to the mobilisation of hundreds of thousands, representing not just trade union members themselves, but the millions of people who oppose this government. Such a show of strength would give confidence to people that it is possible to fight back and could be a launchpad for a serious sustained campaign - including strike action and further demonstrations - in defiance of Labour's policies. What better way to show the government that any further attacks on our rights

or standard of living will face serious resistance from the organised working class?

This goes for any attack on groups or individuals, even those with tactics or policies that we don't fully agree with. The Socialist Party would have criticisms of some of the methods of groups like Just Stop Oil and Palestine Action on the basis that, by focusing on the actions of a small number of activists - while undoubtedly genuine and self-sacrificing - they can fail to point towards the mass struggles necessary to change society, or even risk pointing in the opposite direction. We completely oppose the state repression and brutal court sentences inflicted on those activists. If these attacks were to go ahead unchallenged, similar attacks could then be more easily carried out against trade unions and socialist organisations in the future.

Where possible, they prefer the use of 'capitalist democracy', as it allows the ruling class to try and foster the illusion that people can effect change without the need for open struggle against the system. While the key levers of the economy and the state remain firmly in the bosses' hands, this type of 'democracy' does not fundamentally threaten their control over society in normal times. Of course, the right to vote and form political parties even under such a truncated form of democracy has still had to be fought for by the workers' movement. The fight for working-class political representation, independent of the capitalist class, is a key demand for socialists. Other demands to defend and extend democratic rights - for example, to lower the voting age to 16 - are also necessary.

## Democracy and struggle

This must be seriously taken up by the workers' movement, or it will risk giving the government confidence to go ahead with its undemocratic measures. Clearly none of the rights that we have won will ever be secure while we live under a government that prioritises defending the profits of the super-rich over the interests of ordinary people. Even in 'democratic' Britain, the ruling class is not above using repressive, authoritarian measures when its interests are threatened.

Does that mean that they would go as far as trying to end democracy in Britain at this stage given their increasingly weak position? The risky alternative of open authoritarian rule - capitalism without its

democratic mask - would display the brutal nature of society all the more clearly and would risk provoking huge movements in defence of democratic rights that could go as far as bringing down the government. Just look at the events in South Korea last year, where an attempt to implement martial law and suspend parliament by an unpopular president was met with general strike action and mass protests. Overnight, the coup was aborted and the president eventually impeached and forced to resign.

Given the backlash in response to the undemocratic attacks that have already taken place, it seems extremely unlikely that the ruling class in Britain would look to 'give up' on democracy at this stage. But clearly they will still attempt to implement attacks on our right to protest and organise even while remaining within the framework of capitalist democracy.

Where possible, they prefer the use of 'capitalist democracy', as it allows the ruling class to try and foster the illusion that people can effect change without the need for open struggle against the system. While the key levers of the economy and the state remain firmly in the bosses' hands, this type of 'democracy' does not fundamentally threaten their control over society in normal times. Of course, the right to vote and form political parties even under such a truncated form of democracy has still had to be fought for by the workers' movement. The fight for working-class political representation, independent of the capitalist class, is a key demand for socialists. Other demands to defend and extend democratic rights - for example, to lower the voting age to 16 - are also necessary.

Even if dictatorship is not on the cards today, any attacks on the right to protest must still be taken very seriously and fully opposed by the workers' movement. But this must be done while also explaining the driving factors behind those attacks and that we will have to continue defending our rights for as long as we remain under this crisis-ridden capitalist system.

The only way to permanently end these attacks and to guarantee genuine democracy is to bring about the socialist transformation of society. With the huge wealth and resources in society nationalised, under working-class control and management, a democratic plan could be drawn up to end poverty, war, economic

instability, and all the other factors that drive division and oppression around the world.

The apparatus of the state that exists today, and is used by the capitalist class to repress workers - the courts, the army, the police and so on - could be replaced with new bodies under the democratic control of communities and workers' organisations that would defend the interests of the majority in society, rather than repressing them in favour of a tiny minority. Once the material basis of want and exploitation were removed, the need for any form of repressive apparatus in society would be removed too.

We are in an age of increasing authoritarianism in Britain and around the world. But we are also in an age of mass struggles and revolutionary movements of workers, young people, and the oppressed on every continent. The crushing of democracy by a desperate ruling class could only succeed on the basis of a demoralised workers' movement following a whole series of setbacks and defeats.

It is clear today that the balance of forces is still overwhelmingly in favour of the working class. Provided it is armed with the correct ideas and a socialist leadership it can certainly defy any attacks on its democratic rights and fight to transform society into one where repression and authoritarianism are consigned to the history books.



**Selling the Socialist**  
 Just some of the events where the Socialist newspaper was sold in the past week...

● **Doncaster residents angry about Labour ID cards**

PETE DYSON  
 SOUTH YORKSHIRE SOCIALIST PARTY

For the last six weeks, Socialist Party members have resumed our weekly Friday market day campaign stalls in Doncaster, which were very successful during our Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) election campaign in May.

Whilst continuing to campaign against disability benefits cuts and Israeli state genocide in Gaza, we have highlighted the threat of mandatory digital ID cards, which Keir Starmer announced in September he'd introduce in this parliament.

On our recent stalls, we have met many people with strong opposition to this imposition. Many see it as further curtailing their personal freedoms and civil rights.

This has led to many interesting conversations. Many Reform voters – Doncaster elected a Reform council in May – as well as those on the 'left' are opposed.

That makes it important that we link the issue to building workers' opposition to an increasingly authoritarian Labour government, implementing unpopular policies of austerity and war. This policy can be defeated. MPs could be pressured to rebel again, as they were forced to over pensioners' winter fuel allowance and disability benefit cuts.

Youngsters especially are adamant that this should not be allowed to happen, and promptly sign the petition. This has increased Socialist paper sales – we say: "The Socialist is written by the likes of us, not them up there", pointing to the billionaires – and boosted fighting fund donations, collecting £25-£40 on each stall.

The Labour government's plans on

this issue, in the opinion of Doncaster residents, are not at all welcome. This one issue has helped bring about a heightened awareness to other issues and petitions we have available on our stall.

● Read our article 'No to ID cards' at socialistparty.org.uk

● **Universal anger at Labour's budget in Newcastle**

JAMES ROBISON  
 TYNE AND WEAR SOCIALIST PARTY

I suggested we nominate an advanced date once a month for a special additional Socialist paper sale. This would allow us to get as many members out as possible to promote the Socialist Party and our ideas.

22 November was the first date on Newcastle's Northumberland Street. Our campaign stall was adorned with flyers and petitions opposing Labour's upcoming Budget, as well as the front and back pages of the Socialist – 'Make the rich pay, not the working class'.

There was interest in the Socialist Party's ideas. But there was a lot of response to the petition.

There is a complete lack of belief and trust in the main parties. It is an opportunity for our party to fill this void with our ideas and programme.

For a first attempt at a larger Socialist paper sale, we think this was a success. 15 December is our next date.

One of our newest members was on her first paper sale. She was very confident and comfortable promoting the party and its ideas.

● **Reform try to fill anger at Tories and Labour**

RYAN LEONARD  
 HILLINGDON SOCIALIST PARTY

On a freezing cold Friday afternoon, even the most enthusiastic Socialist Party members might be forgiven for not fancying to go out and sell

the Socialist. But, although bitterly cold, the Christmas market's PA system helped keep spirits up. After a bit of a dance to Feliz Navidad and Last Christmas, we got down to campaigning.

The mood in Uxbridge has changed very little since last summer's election. Anger at the Tories has become anger at Labour. Cuts to SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disability) provision, PIP payments for disabled, and winter fuel have meant that victims of Tory austerity have seen nothing to show Labour is any different.

Despite successive far-right campaigns in the area, Reform's appeal isn't very deep. Some workers are taken out of political engagement, as they are focused on day-to-day existence, but that doesn't mean they aren't aware of their exploitation.

While Reform may do well in Uxbridge in May's elections, two things are clear. Firstly, they won't sweep to power with any great support, their secret weapon is people's apathy. Secondly, to beat them we can't just oppose Reform's racism. We need a compelling vision, a workers' alternative, that is more compelling than their anti-migrant 'race to the bottom'.

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**£61,896 raised!**

Thank you to all who contributed to the record high Socialism 2025 appeal. What a vote of confidence in our political ideas.

£61,896 was pledged during the rally, so far £20,408 has been paid in. £10,000 of what was raised will go to the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI).

Please redeem your pledges by the end of the year – to pay online visit [socialistparty.org.uk/socialism-2025](http://socialistparty.org.uk/socialism-2025)

Help fund the fightback  
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Newcastle NICK FRAY



ALEC THRIVES

BEN GOLIGHTLY  
 SWANSEA SOCIALIST PARTY AND DPAC WALES

It's hard to predict exactly what Budget Day will bring. The Socialist goes to press before we know. The government itself doesn't seem to know, hinting at policies one day, only to U-turn the next.

What is certain is that Labour are determined to deliver a "pro-business Budget", while our public services continue to be cut. With the British economy literally stagnant, this can only mean a Budget that attacks the working class.

The government remains determined to pick on disabled people, starting with Motability cuts and the demonisation of young disabled people. Labour has also signalled its willingness to take more from pensioners – current and future.

**Torsten Bell**

The Swansea West Labour MP, Torsten Bell, was promoted in August to lead preparations. He is co-chairing the 'Budget board' that meets weekly with City of London business leaders.

Where are his weekly meetings with worker and community representatives? Disabled People Against Cuts (DPAC) Cymru asked for one, months ago. His office said he was too busy.

Bell, barely a year into his job as an MP, put his name to the disastrous

disability cuts bill. It was defeated decisively.

When Bell's fingerprints are all over an anti-working-class Budget on 26 November, there can be no doubt that he is not only failing to represent us, he is actively working to the detriment of our communities.

**But we are fighting back**

Swansea is in a rolling boil, witnessing a confident strike from First Cymru bus workers, a recent victory for Swansea health workers in Unison, a no-confidence vote over £25 million of job cuts at Swansea University, higher education staff in Unite balloting for strike action over pay, communities mobilising against the government's division and scapegoating, and disabled people furious at the open contempt the Labour government is showing us.

The question of working-class political representation is crying out. Trade unions and communities must take up shared demands, and give it political expression.

Socialist Party members put forward the need for a new workers' party, based on the trade unions, with disabled people at its heart. 'Your Party' urgently needs to steer in this direction.

DPAC Cymru is appealing for everyone affected by the Budget to protest together on Saturday 29 November, 1pm, Swansea Castle.

● **Liverpool trade unionists unanimously back people's budget**

Liverpool Trades Union Council unanimously approved a motion on 20 November. This called for the trades council to call a city-wide public meeting in order to discuss

planning a people's budget, based on the needs of working-class people, as opposed to the cuts demanded by Keir Starmer's Labour government.

In accordance with the motion, a 'working group' was set up to lead this work. The motion was moved by Socialist Party member Dean Young, on behalf of his Unite the Union branch.

ROGER BANNISTER  
 LIVERPOOL NORTH SOCIALIST PARTY



Socialist Party's sister party in Germany - Sol - on a protest opposing the Israeli state's war on Gaza SOL

**Solidarity with Linksjugend**

- **Opposing the capitalist Israeli state is not antisemitism**
- **Defend the right to debate the way forward in the Middle East**

**SOCIALIST STUDENTS STEERING COMMITTEE**

Socialist Students sends our solidarity to members of Linksjugend [solid] – the youth section of the German left party Die Linke – who have been subjected to vicious public attacks for their criticism of the Israeli state.

Shamefully, these attacks have come not just from the capitalist media in Germany, but also from the leadership of Die Linke itself.

**Motion**

At the federal conference of Linksjugend in early November, delegates voted in support of a motion on the Middle East that referenced the "colonial and racist character of the Israeli state project... from its beginnings to the present day".

If anything, this characterisation is vague on the policies of mass expulsion, occupation, and state terror carried out by Israeli capitalist governments ever since the foundation of the Israeli state.

But the motion was still seized upon by the billionaire-owned press in Germany to spread accusations of antisemitism, in an attempt to defame Die Linke and its youth wing,

and the global movement in solidarity with the Palestinians that has resurged in the past two years.

Unfortunately, the Die Linke co-leaders have responded by assisting in a witch hunt of its own young members in Linksjugend. They have asserted that "one cannot question the protection of Jewish life" – in other words, claiming that by opposing the Israeli capitalist state, Linksjugend members are undermining the safety of Jewish people.

But the opposite is true. It is the Israeli ruling class, and their staunch defence of an unequal capitalist system based on exploitation and oppression for private profit, which poses the biggest threat to the lives of Jewish people in Israel.

**War**

By ramping up war throughout the Middle East, the Netanyahu government has only increased fears and unease of most people living in Israel. Currently one-in-five Jewish Israeli children grow up below the poverty line. That's before mentioning the genocidal policy of the Israeli government in Palestine, which in two years has claimed over 60,000 Palestinian lives and laid waste to Gaza – intensifying the national

conflict and Palestinian suffering, and not bringing greater security to Israelis.

Socialist Students believes that the building of a movement for socialist change in Israel – which would include replacing the current capitalist Israeli state with a democratic workers' government – will be a key part of the struggle for a socialist Middle East. That is the only way to finally end poverty, war, and oppression in the region. In opposing the current Israeli state in this way, socialists are the foremost defenders of the right of Jewish and all people to a genuinely safe and decent life.

**Youth**

As a socialist youth organisation, Socialist Students defends the right of all young people to discuss and debate a way out of the horror that capitalism means for billions around the globe. That includes the right to debate how the current nightmare in Palestine and the Middle East could be ended. We send solidarity to members of Linksjugend who, by adding to this debate, have faced vicious smears by agents of the capitalist class in Germany, both inside and outside Die Linke.



ALMANSFIELD

LOUIE NARDINI  
 YORK SOCIALIST STUDENTS

The marginalisation of working-class students continues with this latest round of cuts at the University of York. Socialist Students has been doing campaign stalls against the 50% cut to bursaries for poorer first-year students. Instead of £2,000, they now receive £1,000.

With university life already hard enough for low-income households, this adds further difficulties and fewer incentives. Education should be encouraged, regardless of income barriers. That is why we advocate for fully funded, free education. That extra cut to bursaries for poorer first-year students who make up the university, not its shareholders.



● **Liverpool students oppose right-wing Labour minister on visit**

JESS O'SHAUGHNESSY  
 LIVERPOOL HOPE SOCIALIST STUDENTS

Liverpool Hope Socialist Students came out to protest against Labour minister Alison McGovern when she visited our uni on 21 November. McGovern has supported Labour maintaining the Tories' two-child benefit cap, keeping hundreds of thousands of children in poverty. She also supports Labour's disability benefit cuts.

We stood outside the main

university building, explaining why we opposed her – putting forward the dire need for a new workers' party. The students we spoke to agreed.

Hope University management considers Alison McGovern to be a worthwhile speaker, while the university itself continues through cuts and redundancies, and has not opposed rising tuition fees. Socialist Students launched the 'Fund Not Fees' campaign to demand that tuition fees be scrapped, with extra funding provided for education.



# WHAT WE STAND FOR

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

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

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

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



### WORK, PENSIONS AND BENEFITS

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

### PUBLIC SERVICES

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

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

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

### ENVIRONMENT

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

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

### DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS

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

### SOCIALISM AND INTERNATIONALISM

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

Do you agree? Join the fightback!

## JOIN THE SOCIALISTS

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

Help fund the fightback!

## DONATE TODAY



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

# Nigerian socialists oppose Trump's threat of military action

Widespread banditry, terrorism, and social unrest are direct consequences of the failure of capitalism and pro-capitalist policies of successive governments

For united, non-sectarian, multi-ethnic, multi-religion and democratically run defence committees in communities

ABIODUN BAMIGBOYE AND CHINEDU BOSAH  
SOCIALIST PARTY OF NIGERIA

The Socialist Party of Nigeria (SPN) strongly condemns US President Donald Trump's recent threat of military action in Nigeria and equally rejects Nigerian President Bola Tinubu's hollow nationalist rhetoric, which serves only to conceal the monumental failures of his pro-capitalist administration in addressing the insecurity facing the country and safeguarding lives.

To us in the SPN, both Trump's imperialist posturing and Tinubu's false patriotism represent two sides of the same capitalist coin - both committed to the continued domination and exploitation of Nigeria's working people and collective resources by local and foreign capitalists. We say that the Nigerian working masses must not be drawn into supporting any faction of any capitalist ruling class, either local or foreign. Our

allegiance must remain firmly with the collective struggle for liberation, justice, and socialism as working people of Nigeria rather than being divided among ourselves.

Donald Trump's threat to invade Nigeria is premised on a bid to stop killings of Christians in the northern part of Nigeria, an attempt to appease his evangelical support base at home. There should be no illusions that Trump wants 'peace'. On the contrary, Trump shows complete hypocrisy by his silence over the slaughter now taking place in Sudan, a country with a mixed Muslim-Christian population. For us in the SPN, every life lost through criminality (banditry, insurgency, kidnapping, violence etc) or through social-economic crises (lack of quality healthcare, bad roads, hunger, homelessness, poverty etc) is regrettable, condemnable and avoidable. We condemn the killing of Christians, Muslims, people of other religions and non-religious people,

and also the failure of the Tinubu administration and past governments to end the killings. We demand an end to all sectarian and criminal violence and killings across the country. The failure of the capitalist system and the capitalist ruling elites is responsible for growing socio-economic crises and violence in Nigeria and globally.

Nigeria's worsening insecurity lies in the decades-long imposition of anti-poor, pro-capitalist policies by successive governments. These policies have destroyed industries, thrown millions into unemployment, and condemned the vast majority of Nigerians to live in poverty, while a handful of corrupt capitalist elites continue to accumulate obscene wealth. As a result, basic necessities such as food, education, jobs, health-care, and housing have become unaffordable luxuries for most citizens, while access to arable land and water have become a source of another battle between different contending social forces due to climate change and lack of planning. No amount of military force, foreign intervention, or hollow patriotic speeches can solve this deepening socio-economic crisis without addressing its root cause, which is the exploitative capitalist system.

The SPN therefore rejects, in the strongest possible terms, any attempt by any imperialist power to interfere in Nigeria's internal affairs under the deceptive pretext of 'restoring order', protecting Christians or 'protecting democracy'. History has shown that such interventions only bring chaos and destruction, as witnessed in Iraq, Libya, and other countries that have been victims of imperialist aggression. Equally, we denounce President Tinubu's false nationalism, which represents nothing more than an attempt to rally the masses behind a crumbling regime that continues to impose anti-people policies, deepen inequality, and silence dissent. As far as we are concerned, the working masses are not obliged to defend a corrupt and exploitative capitalist state, but to fight for genuine liberation from poverty, oppression, and injustice.

## Mobilisation of the masses

The SPN firmly believes that only through the conscious organisation and mobilisation of working-class and oppressed Nigerians can Nigeria achieve genuine independence, peace, and development. We call for the setting up of non-sectarian multi-ethnic, multi-religion and democratically controlled community defence committees, which could bear arms, if necessary, as an effective and united way to respond to sectarian and criminal violence.

The SPN calls on Nigerian workers, trade unions, youth, students, and community organisations to unite and build a strong movement against both imperialist threats and the exploitative policies of the local thieving ruling class in Nigeria. The working masses must organise independently of all capitalist politicians and their political parties in order to build a mass movement rooted in collective struggle, solidarity and socialist ideas. Such a movement must seek to replace the current system of greed and corruption with a socialist order that guarantees decent and secure jobs, free and quality education, universal healthcare, affordable housing, and the democratic control and management of Nigeria's wealth by the working people themselves.

Furthermore, this struggle must be linked to a wider international movement of the working class. We urge Nigerians in the diaspora and the working class worldwide to stand with Nigerian workers and youth in opposing imperialist invasion, exploitation, and the growing assault on democratic rights. The struggle of the Nigerian working class is part of the worldwide fight against global capitalism and for a new socialist world founded on equality, peace, and collective prosperity.

• The Socialist Party of Nigeria includes members of the Democratic Socialist Movement (CWI in Nigeria)



## DO YOU HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY?

- Send your news, views and criticism, in not more than 150 words, to [editors@socialistparty.org.uk](mailto:editors@socialistparty.org.uk)
- We reserve the right to shorten and edit letters. For legal reasons, we need your full name, address and phone number - but confidentiality will be respected if requested

# THE SOCIALIST INBOX



Marching against cuts in Caerphilly borough including Llancaiach Fawr in Sean Morgan's ward PHOTO: DAVID REID

Green Party welcomes pro-cuts ex-council leader

To his ward, he's the councillor who pushed to close his own library and his town's main tourist attraction. To the Caerphilly borough, he's the one-time council leader who oversaw massive cuts while pouring money into the hands of management consultant Pargo. To the Green Party, however, Sean Morgan is apparently a potential asset. The councillor, who both left Labour and resigned as council leader in September, has claimed that he disagrees with the direction of the Labour Party over the past year. This would be a bit more believable if he'd ever made a serious stand against the slashing of vital community services. Fellow Nelson ward councillor Brenda Miles actually did oppose the plans to slash libraries and leisure centres this year, and lost the Labour whip over it. It looks far more likely that Morgan is looking for a vehicle to keep his career going. He tried to ingratiate himself in a Your Party meeting in October, and is rumoured to have tried approaching Plaid Cymru as well.

The Greens have welcomed in this ex-council leader. But what demands will they put on him for what he needs to do? Will they tell him to go to the council chamber and move a budget to reverse the Labour council's austerity? A party that truly fights for the interests of working-class communities is needed now more than ever. Making sure councillors fight for a clear, no-cuts programme is a vital demand to fight for in Your Party. No doubt other careerists will look to jump ship if Your Party takes off, and demanding serious anti-austerity action will be important for filtering out the Sean Morgans of the world.

GERAINT THOMAS  
CAERPHILLY SOCIALIST PARTY

'The Butcher of Baghdad': Dick Cheney dead at 84

Former Republican vice-president Richard Cheney has passed away from his long-standing heart condition at the age of 84. Although both liberals and conservatives within the US political establishment have paid tribute to Cheney, much of the global working class will certainly not share the same grief. Cheney is most notorious for being vice president during the George Bush administration from 2001 to 2009, when he enjoyed influence over many areas of policy and day-to-day government administration not seen in previous VPs. He played a role in supporting further tax cuts for big business, screening potential Supreme Court nominations, as well as being a key architect of the Patriot Act in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks. The Act entailed a programme of mass surveillance and various other attacks on the civil liberties of US citizens, including the use of illegal detentions and 'enhanced interrogation', more commonly known as torture.

Mr Cheney will most certainly go down in infamy for his part in the illegal 2003 invasion of Iraq. No stranger to foreign war crimes with his involvement in previous Republican administrations, Cheney played a key role within Bush's White House in advocating for military intervention, as well as the false case that Saddam Hussein possessed weapons of mass destruction. In reality, however, despite a vibrant anti-war movement at the time, the only mass destruction in the Middle East was caused by the US- and British-led 'coalition of the willing', which claimed the lives of over a million Iraqis and led to the rise of religious extremism across the region. Following the invasion, Iraqi oil drilling contracts were handed over by occupation forces to Halliburton, of which Cheney was formerly Chair and CEO.

Following the end of the Bush

administration in 2009, Cheney took a step back from frontline politics due to the aforementioned health issues and was even given a heart transplant in 2012. However, in a rare intervention during the 2024 presidential election, Cheney came out of retirement to formally endorse the Democratic nominee Kamala Harris, citing President Trump (ironically as "a danger to democracy"). In reality, although Trump proved to be little different himself, the Harris-Walz ticket was a continuation of hawkish neocon foreign policy abroad and big-business politics at home. The Biden-Harris administration played a key part in aiding the ongoing Palestinian genocide in Gaza, so this intervention was very on-brand as the final public act of 'the Butcher of Baghdad'.

Despite his demise, his politics still live on, as the Trump administration currently seems intent upon an intervention in Venezuela; only a mass working-class movement can challenge the drive to war over natural resources in the service of big business.

CONOR O'NEILL  
LIVERPOOL SOCIALIST PARTY

Austerity education

Like many other parents of a three-year-old, we have spent this autumn visiting schools, to decide which ones to apply for when he starts in September.

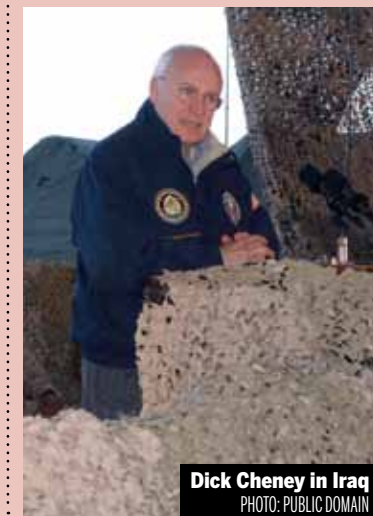
The three schools we have visited have all been different in various ways. Something they have had in common was headteachers who, during the tour, referenced the effects of austerity.

One spoke about how impossible it is to get access to the services of a speech and language therapist. Another about redundancies in what used to be the county's school music service. And another about how the use of coaches for school trips is no longer affordable; they are now limited by what can be reasonably reached using local public transport.

Marketisation of our education system means we are asked to choose between about half a dozen schools within walking distance of where we live. To help us make up our minds – Ofsted, exam league tables, and 'vibes'. Who knows...

But we will continue to fight against austerity, in support of education workers fighting back, and for a new party that demands the wealth and resources are taken out of the hands of the super-rich to pay for the education our kids deserve – school trips and music lessons included!

THOMAS ASHER



Dick Cheney in Iraq  
PHOTO: PUBLIC DOMAIN



U.S. Navy personnel ride along on a Nigerian boat as part of a previous Africa Partnership Station exercise PHOTO: PUBLIC DOMAIN

Christians in Futuna, northern Nigeria PHOTO: GWANJO/CC

# UKRAINE: TRUMP CLASHES WITH ZELENSKY AND EUROPEAN BACKERS OVER 'PEACE PLAN'

NIALL MULHOLLAND  
COMMITTEE FOR A WORKERS' INTERNATIONAL

The war in Ukraine has returned to the top of global headlines following US president Trump's latest attempt to impose a peace plan on Ukraine president Zelensky. Trump's new "28-point Ukraine peace plan" which was drafted "with Russian input" would impose huge concessions on Kyiv.

The plan was conceived over the heads of the European powers and the Ukraine government. Ukraine would be required to cut its armed forces by 50% and face strict limits on future military build-up. Kyiv would have to surrender long-range missiles, heavy artillery, and parts of its defence systems. Ukraine would be obliged to permanently hand over all remaining parts of the Donetsk Oblast still under its control to Russia.

The plan corresponds to a key Russian demand that would bar Ukraine from joining Nato and would restrict deployment of Nato troops on Ukrainian soil. Crimea, which was annexed by Russia in 2014, would be internationally recognised as Russian under the plan. And Trump's plan would see Russia welcomed back into the G8.

In private, European officials have called the plan a "capitulation". In public, they have to be much more circumspect, given that the United States is the main funder and arms supplier to the Ukrainian army. French, German and British governments have said the plan contains "important elements" but "requires additional work" to ensure lasting peace. They note that neither the EU nor Nato were consulted about the deal plans. EU officials have added that halving Ukraine's military would leave it vulnerable to future military attack and that conceding territory legitimises Russia's war of aggression.

While Vladimir Putin has expressed cautious approval, he is expected to push for stricter constraints on Ukraine's military and to reject any proposed Nato-like security guarantees for the country.

There are major economic benefits for the US should Trump's plan see the light of day. By forcing Ukraine to reduce its armed forces and limiting Nato involvement, the US could scale back billions in military aid and redirect resources to other parts of the world. Sanctions relief for Russia would stabilise global oil and gas markets. American companies would gain rights to share profits and royalties from Ukraine's critical minerals. Reintegrating Russia into the G8 would open new markets for US firms. And the US would control mechanisms that deliver economic

rewards to Russia, allowing the US to shape global capital flows.

When asked what would happen if Zelensky refused to sign the proposal, Trump dismissively retorted: "He can continue to fight his little heart out."

The reality is Trump's deal is huge in Moscow's favour. All the red lines put forward by Zelensky, other European leaders and the previous Biden administration are being crossed. It would mean losing territory, military capacity and aspirations to join Nato. And Russia would regain legitimacy and reintegration into global institutions.

This is too much for European powers to stomach. At a hastily called meeting in Geneva on 23 November, involving senior figures from the US, Ukraine and Europe, the European leaders tried to delay, dilute, fundamentally renegotiate or sabotage Trump's plan.

For the EU and Britain, the plan signifies Trump's wish to withdraw from the Ukraine conflict and leave European powers largely to pay for post-war economic and military costs. It signifies dramatically that the US will no longer be the superpower behind the backs of the European nations or Nato in all circumstances.

Should Zelensky unequivocally reject Trump's proposed peace plan, Trump has threatened to cut off crucial US military and intelligence support. Facing such pressure, both Kyiv and European leaders might find themselves compelled, albeit unwillingly, to engage with the substance of Trump's initiative and to agree to major concessions. It is also possible that the Trump peace plan cannot be agreed and unravels.

## Facts on the ground

The backdrop to Trump's plan is the facts on the ground. For weeks, Russian drone barrages have made strikes on Kyiv and against energy facilities and infrastructure, causing widespread power cuts and rationing, as winter bites.

As the grinding war now approaches four years, it is clear that Russia is winning in its ambitions, and that both sides have had to pay enormous costs in human lives, infrastructure and economically.

Facts and figures are hard to verify given the massive propaganda from both sides in this conflict. The United Nations, as of October 2025, has verified 53,000 civilian casualties, of those, 14,000 deaths. Military casualties are extremely high. Estimates vary widely but it is likely that hundreds of thousands on both sides have died.

The war has caused enormous

economic destruction. Ukraine's gross domestic product collapsed between 2022 and 2023. Infrastructure damage is in the hundreds of billions. The energy, agriculture and manufacturing sectors in Ukraine have been devastated.

The massive displacement of people in Ukraine due to the war has caused severe pressure on public finances, which are heavily dependent on Western funding.

Russia, in turn, has been hit by sanctions. Inflation has grown and foreign investment collapsed. Moscow has shifted trade towards China and India, and embarked on a huge military build-up and new military alliances, including with North Korea.



**Under the presidency of Trump, a major shift in US policy quickly emerged. Trump has correctly judged that Ukraine cannot win the war and he wants to bring the war to an end so that US resources can also be redirected towards South East Asia and confronting the growing power of China**

The war has represented a geopolitical turning point. It marks a major rupture in global relations and intensifies great power rivalries.

Under the presidency of Trump, a major shift in US policy quickly emerged. Trump has correctly judged that Ukraine cannot win the war and he wants to bring the war to an end so that US resources can also be redirected towards South East Asia and confronting the growing power of China.

Since he came in to office, Trump has had a very strained relationship with Zelensky. He has been consistent in arguing that Ukraine has to accept that Russia will keep significant parts of territories it occupies.

Trump's meeting with Putin in Alaska last summer triggered panic amongst European powers. Many of them rushed to the summit to act as a buffer for Zelensky. They were terrified that the Ukrainian leader would face the same type of humiliation as he did when he visited the White House early this year, when he was hectorated by Trump and Vice President JD Vance, in front of the world's media.

European powers have acted to obstruct any meaningful negotiations; their aim has been a forlorn hope that, as the war continues, Russia can be eventually exhausted and forced into retreat. Their long-term objective is to destabilise or collapse the Putin regime. However, although many European leaders are belligerent, the European Union is divided, to some extent, on the Ukraine war.

## Deep splits in Europe

Many leaders in Europe, such as Starmer in Britain, are determined to fight to the last Ukrainian's life, to defeat Putin. But deep splits exist inside the EU. Hungary and Slovakia have broken with the EU war policy.

After the collapse of an initiative for talks in Budapest in October, Trump lashed out at Putin. He announced a new round of sanctions, which were tougher and more targeted than previously. No doubt the sanctions are painful, but they are far from decisive blows against the Russian economy.

For now, Putin appears relatively secure. He has defeated internal challenges during the war, including the mutiny led by the Wagner military group in June 2023. Russia's military position has improved and is now dominant in drone warfare. Drones are responsible for an incredible 70-80% of casualties.

A massive military mobilisation process allows Russia to throw far more soldiers into the 'meat grinder' than Ukraine can do with a much smaller population. Nevertheless, there will have been pressures growing on Putin over the last few months. There is a growing war weariness and anger from families of dead soldiers. Putin's position could well be shaken if the economy seriously falters or the war drags on without more decisive breakthroughs.

Ukraine's position is far more perilous. Despite huge Western military and financial backing, Ukraine is on the defensive and losing ground. State corruption, which saps at the war effort and morale, remains rampant.

Public sentiment is shifting in Ukraine. Only about 24% think the war is worth fighting until victory. Zelensky has been forced to seek more protection and support from European powers since Trump has come to office.

But the EU is divided on war financing. Sharp debates take place within the EU on how to continue funding Ukraine's war effort. The latest European Commission proposal is to use loans backed by frozen Russian state assets. Other ideas are a levy on EU member states. But this faces strong opposition.



Zelensky and Trump meet in September PHOTO: THE WHITE HOUSE/CC

Most European states face weak growth, high debt levels and high interest rates, and are unwilling to take on new economic burdens, despite their tough talk about fighting Putin to the end.

After the Alaska talks, Trump escalated threats against Russia and said he was considering sending Tomahawk missiles to Ukraine. This has long been a demand of the Zelensky government. But Trump pulled back after his military advisers warned this would be a major escalation.

The war will eventually end, formally or informally, at some point. But all the diplomatic acrobatics in Alaska and the attempts to have further talks in Budapest hide the reality that the battlefield will determine the timing and balance and outcome of any talks, fundamentally. At present, Putin holds the initiative. He can continue to gain territory and further weaken the Zelensky regime.

Zelensky, in turn, fears serious negotiations. He will enter from a position of severe weakness. Current polls in Ukraine show that he's likely to lose an election. His stance of refusing to negotiate while losing territory is a dangerous gamble. It has the risk of a regime crisis in Ukraine. The possibility of Zelensky being removed and replaced by a figure more open to the Trump line is possible.

Whether the war comes to an end through formal negotiations at this stage or not, we can see the outlines already. Barring any military catastrophes for the Russian army, it is clear that Putin will hold large chunks of eastern Ukraine and Crimea. On this basis, Ukraine will be a divided country, heavily militarised on both sides. It will join other so-called 'frozen conflicts' in the former USSR; except these are not frozen, as ongoing fighting continues at different levels, with endemic instability and periodic flare-ups.

In the case of Ukraine, the risk of renewed war, with potential spill-over across eastern Europe and further afield, will be inherent in a post-war situation.

Ukraine will have lost large parts of its territory, and is left with a devastated economy. Russian workers also, of course, have to bear the cost of the war economy in Russia, and the tightening of Putin's authoritarian regime.

## Deep capitalist crisis

This disaster, which has befallen the people of Ukraine and Russia, reflects the deep crisis of global capitalism and shifting geopolitical relations. After 1991, the US acted as the sole superpower, imposing its agenda from the Middle East to Afghanistan and beyond. However, US imperialism is in relative decline. The US economy, still the strongest in the world, is also in relative decline, with China rapidly closing the gap and going ahead in some sectors. The US remains militarily dominant on the planet, but China has massively expanded its capabilities militarily. The world is increasingly unstable.

The CWI opposed the 2022 Russian invasion, arguing NATO expansion cannot justify Putin's chauvinistic, reactionary war, which damages working-class interests.

The Ukrainian people had the right to resist Russia's 2022 invasion. Their response forced a Russian pull-back from Kyiv to the east. Putin misjudged Ukrainians' willingness to

fight, and NATO's willingness to support a prolonged war.

In eastern Donbas, bombarded by Ukrainian forces since 2014, the wishes of the population is unclear, but it is certain that they reject the rule of Ukraine nationalist chauvinist regimes, yet are wary, to put it mildly, of Putin's rule.

Putin annexed Crimea in 2014, following a pro-Western coup in Kyiv. Crimea was historically transferred to Ukraine by Khrushchev in the 1950s, where many identify with Russia, though minorities like Tatars feel oppressed.

Socialists advocate for a democratic, unhindered self-determination for Crimea and the Donbas region, overseen by independent working-class organisations.

The most fundamental problem facing the impoverished masses in both Ukraine and Russia is the lack of independent workers' organisations and strong socialist movements, creating a vacuum filled by reactionaries, ultra-nationalists, and chauvinists, fuelling the war.

The CWI has supported the demand for the immediate withdrawal of Russian forces, an end to Western arms for the Zelensky regime. We reject ruling-class 'peace plans' like Trump's, made over the heads of the working people of Ukraine and Russia.



**Socialists need to oppose any peace deal imposed from above by different imperialist powers and the Ukrainian capitalist government. The real solution lies in building movements from below that can permanently end the war, conflicts and divisions on the basis of allowing working people to decide their future**

Socialists need to oppose any peace deal imposed from above by different imperialist powers and the Ukrainian capitalist government. At best, for a time, it will freeze fighting. The real solution lies in building movements from below that can permanently end the war, conflicts and divisions on the basis of allowing working people to decide their future, to defend and restore democratic rights, and work to create workers' governments that end oligarch rule and break with capitalism. This would begin to create the basis for genuine co-operation in building a new, genuine socialist society.

To reach these goals, requires today building independent, democratic, combative trade unions and socialist organisations to challenge oligarchies and imperialism, leading to workers' governments that can peacefully discuss their common future and fight for socialist transformation.

● This is an edited extract of an article 'White House clashes with Zelensky and European backers over Trump's 28-point Ukraine peace plan' posted on socialistworld.net on 24 November

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# the Socialist

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formerly **Militant**

# HANDS OFF PALESTINE!

## Build mass struggle for socialist change



PHOTO: SOCIALIST PARTY

**JUDY BEISHON**  
SOCIALIST PARTY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

**F**or the ultra-right Israeli government led by Benjamin Netanyahu, the Gaza ceasefire agreement didn't mean an end to war on the Palestinians. Hundreds have been killed in Gaza in recent weeks along with further destruction of whole neighbourhoods. Gaza's Palestinians - mostly displaced - continue to suffer intolerable conditions.

The Israeli regime is trying to impose new 'facts on the ground' - currently maintaining direct control of over half of the Gaza strip. A US official said that reunion of the strip is only "aspirational".

The Trump-led peace plan is for an authority to be imposed on Gaza from outside, which even a Guardian editorial admitted "looks like a colonial authority". The authority would be enforced on the ground by an International Stabilisation Force consisting of troops from whichever countries will supply them - but none have been readily committing to it as they fear those troops will be viewed as aiding the Israeli regime's agenda.

They would for sure be aiding that agenda, because while the Palestinians in Gaza have been desperate for an end to the war, the whole ceasefire deal is fundamentally in the interests of the world's imperialist powers and

Israeli capitalism. It doesn't even promise Israeli military withdrawal, never mind a Palestinian state; instead posing those Palestinian rights as vague prospects loaded with caveats.

The United Nations Security Council agreed the plan without any of its 15 member countries applying a veto - a sign of less tolerance of the Israeli regime's atrocities. That isn't due to concern for the Palestinians, but rather is concern over the anger being expressed from below globally, the added instability across the Middle East caused by the war and other Israeli state aggressions, and the damage the imperialist powers see Israeli capitalism as doing to its own interests.

### Workers' struggle

In Italy in October, mass anger surfaced in a general strike in support of the Global Sumud flotilla that was trying to deliver aid to Gaza. In the US, there has been a marked shift of opinion against the war, with one poll showing 43% of people believing that Israel has committed genocide in Gaza and another indicating that a majority oppose sending additional aid to Israel.

Despite the tenuous ceasefire, anger in Britain and globally remains high, not only on the nightmare situation in Gaza but also against the ongoing Israeli state aggression and ethnic cleansing in the West Bank, and the recent

stepping-up of military attacks on Lebanon. Demonstrations and workers' actions need to continue and escalate, demanding an end to all the Israeli state slaughter - and in support of democratically organised struggles by Palestinians for defence and towards liberation.

The growth of socialist ideas in that struggle is essential. Only through building workers' organised strength with the aim of removing capitalism in Israel-Palestine will an independent, socialist Palestinian state be possible, alongside a democratic socialist Israel, as part of a voluntary, equal socialist confederation in the region that can end war, oppression and poverty.

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