

# SAVE OUR NHS

## From Labour cuts and privatisation



# Support resident doctor strikes

**ROGER DAVEY**  
CHAIR OF WILTSHIRE AND AVON UNISON HEALTH  
BRANCH (PERSONAL CAPACITY)

**C**are being delivered in hospital corridors, A&E resembling a battle zone, exhausted staff facing overwhelming demand.

The NHS faces its usual crisis this winter. The thing is, it now happens all through the year.

It is the result of a chronic lack of investment, and a privatisation programme that threatens the future of the NHS - continued under Keir Starmer's Labour government.

Health workers, and everyone fighting for the future of our NHS, will be inspired by the resident doctors standing up to Starmer's government and striking back.

A rise from £18 an hour to £22 an hour, to partially compensate for the 21% pay cut doctors have suffered

since 2008, is more than reasonable. Likewise the call for an increase in training places so that thousands of well-trained medics can find a job, is not only essential, but will save lives.

Yet the strike has been met with huge outrage from Labour health secretary Wes Streeting and the capitalist media.

Of course, all workers know that all industrial action is met with bitter opposition from the bosses and the media, but their rabid fury towards this action reflects their fear of health workers getting organised

in opposition to Labour's plans for further privatisation of the NHS.

The capitalists fear that the doctors strike, if successful, will inspire and give confidence to other health workers. It will encourage the belief that if they take action, not only can they improve their pay and conditions, but they can help defend and restore the NHS.

Despite all the media propaganda, the doctor strike has support amongst NHS staff, who face similar challenges. What is absent is trade union leaderships committed to take on the government, and

mobilise the mass of NHS workers. The leadership of my union, Unison, ties itself to the Labour Party and Starmer's government - something activists are fighting to change.

We need a new mass workers' party that has a programme of a huge increase in investment, kicking out all the private companies, ending PFI, nationalising the pharmaceutical industry, and taking the social care sector into public ownership.

Such a programme would gain huge support amongst NHS staff and workers everywhere.

# Graduates attacked by stealth

DEAN YOUNG  
LIVERPOOL SOUTH SOCIALIST PARTY

As a recent graduate attempting to find a reliable job, I took an interest in one of the hidden headlines in Labour's Budget – graduates are being 'stealth taxed' £7.4 billion.

What is a 'stealth tax'? The government is freezing the salary threshold at which graduates begin paying back their student loans.

This means, as wages rise with inflation, you are forced to pay back more of your student loan. The threshold was already kept low by the Tories, meaning more and more low-paid workers were forced to cough up.

## £7.4 billion

'stealth tax' on graduates

Just like Labour's income tax threshold freeze, once again, it's an attack on low earners, working-class people, a political choice instead of going after tax-avoiding multinationals and big business.

This is little surprise. Labour is a party and government of big business and for big business. Certainly not for workers.

By the time the student loan thresholds are reviewed again in 2030, the Office for Budget Responsibility says the minimum wage for a full-time worker will be £28,995 a year. This is just £400 below the repayment threshold, meaning basically every single graduate in the country will be paying student loans back much quicker out of their pay packet. Masters and doctoral graduates repay 6% on earnings above just £21,000.

It is a bleak situation. It is hard enough to get a job when you graduate. Recently, there were 1.2 million

graduate job applications for just 17,000 graduate jobs – 70 applicants per role.

It is little wonder increasing numbers of young people are desperately searching for a more radical solution to the crises of the capitalist economy. Labour has not delivered positive change. They've made things worse. Stealth taxes and increasing tuition fees being some of the 'highlights'.

## 1.2 million graduates applied for just 17,000 jobs

Capitalism cannot deliver the goods. It offers stagnation, squeezing of wages, and growing unemployment. Even after you spend years of hard work, doing things 'by the book'.

We need socialist change to nationalise the commanding heights of the economy under democratic workers' control, so it can be planned democratically, putting our skills and knowledge to good use.

A mass workers' party, with the trade unions at its heart, armed with a socialist programme, is desperately needed to spearhead the fight for that. If you agree, please join the Socialist Party in fighting for this.

● Socialist Students conference 2026 takes place Saturday 14 February at the University of Manchester – see back page and [socialiststudents.org.uk](http://socialiststudents.org.uk)

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Rachel Reeves and Keir Starmer  
JESSICA TAYLOR/UK PARLIAMENT/CC

“ Super-rich media giants should be nationalised under democratic control, rather than having a handful of billionaires deciding the vast majority of media output

# How is it democracy if the working class has no voice?

ADAM HARMSWORTH  
NAP0 UNION EXEC (PERSONAL CAPACITY) AND  
COVENTRY SOCIALIST PARTY

We live in a rigged system – a fact that is becoming clearer to many who don't trust the Labour government, any of the establishment parties, or the political system as a whole. The Electoral Commission Public Attitudes study this year found only 14% trust politicians; that many?!

A new report by the Equality Trust shows exactly why people are right not to trust the establishment. In short, it shows that the limited democracy that we do have in Britain has been gradually stripped away. For 20 years the power of the super-rich over our media and influence over politics has increased sharply.

For fifteen years, the pro-capitalist parties of Tories, Lib-Dems, and Labour before and after Jeremy Corbyn's leadership have been acting in the interests of bankers and big business bosses, almost unchanged.

This new report explains how, in that, period membership of the unelected House of Lords has grown, from averages of 676 members at the start of the century to 803 in 2020-2022. One of the individuals Keir Starmer is touted to be bringing in to the Lords: ex-Tory Iceland boss Richard Walker!

## 59%

support abolishing the House of Lords

The Socialist Party calls for the abolition of the House of Lords, something that is favoured by 59% of people, according to a 2024 YouGov poll (see 'Abolish the House of Lords' at [socialistparty.org.uk](http://socialistparty.org.uk)).

Political donations of over £250,000 went from £7.1 million back in 2002 to £47 million in 2019. Since the report was published, a new record political donation from a living individual has been set by a £9 million donation to Reform, from a cryptocurrency investor.

## £9 million

record individual donation

Meanwhile the three biggest media conglomerates in Britain have gone from owning 71% of all media in 2014 - already an obscene concentration of influence - to 90% in 2022. Two publishing chains - Newsquest and National World - run a majority of local newspapers and local news sites.

Super-rich media giants dominating our media means inevitably the interests of the super-rich and of capitalism get pushed through, insisting Labour is doing great in attacking the working class, for example. And using divide-and-rule tactics, trying to keep the working class at each other's throats with vile articles on migrants, benefits claimants, trans people and so on. Instead, media companies should be nationalised under democratic control, rather than having a

## 90%

of UK media owned by three conglomerates

handful of billionaires deciding the vast majority of media output.

Equality Trust's eight policy recommendations from the report would somewhat curb the influence of big business. It asks for a wealth tax, preventing large political donations, closing loopholes, and several measures to diversify media.

The working class has had to struggle for all its existing democratic rights, including the right to vote. A pressing need today is for the working class to have its own party, independent of the capitalist elites.

How do we possibly have real 'democracy' when the capitalist elites have loads of parties but the working class has none?

The creation of a new mass workers' party, including the democratic involvement of the six million-strong trade unions, would be a big step towards increased democracy. It would boost the confidence of the working class to get organised and fight back, which is why the bosses want to stop one coming into existence!

Real democracy would be to have society run in the interests of the working-class majority. That would mean a socialist society based on the public ownership of big business and the banks, and where the wealth created by the working class is owned and democratically controlled by us – the working class.

# Child poverty – Labour worsens cost of living

ALEX SAMPSON  
PLYMOUTH SOCIALIST PARTY

One glance at the truly horrifying statistics on child poverty shows exactly why change is needed.

In the sixth-richest nation on the planet, it's appalling. Child poverty is higher in Britain than other similar countries. In England alone in 2023-24, there were 4.5 million children in "relative low income", and two million in "deep material poverty". And these figures are rising.

Almost three quarters of all children in poverty are in working households. 172,000 children are currently homeless, living in temporary accommodation.

The waiting lists for social housing are so long that more and more families are forced into unregulated private-rented housing – which is insecure, often poorly maintained, and almost always overpriced.

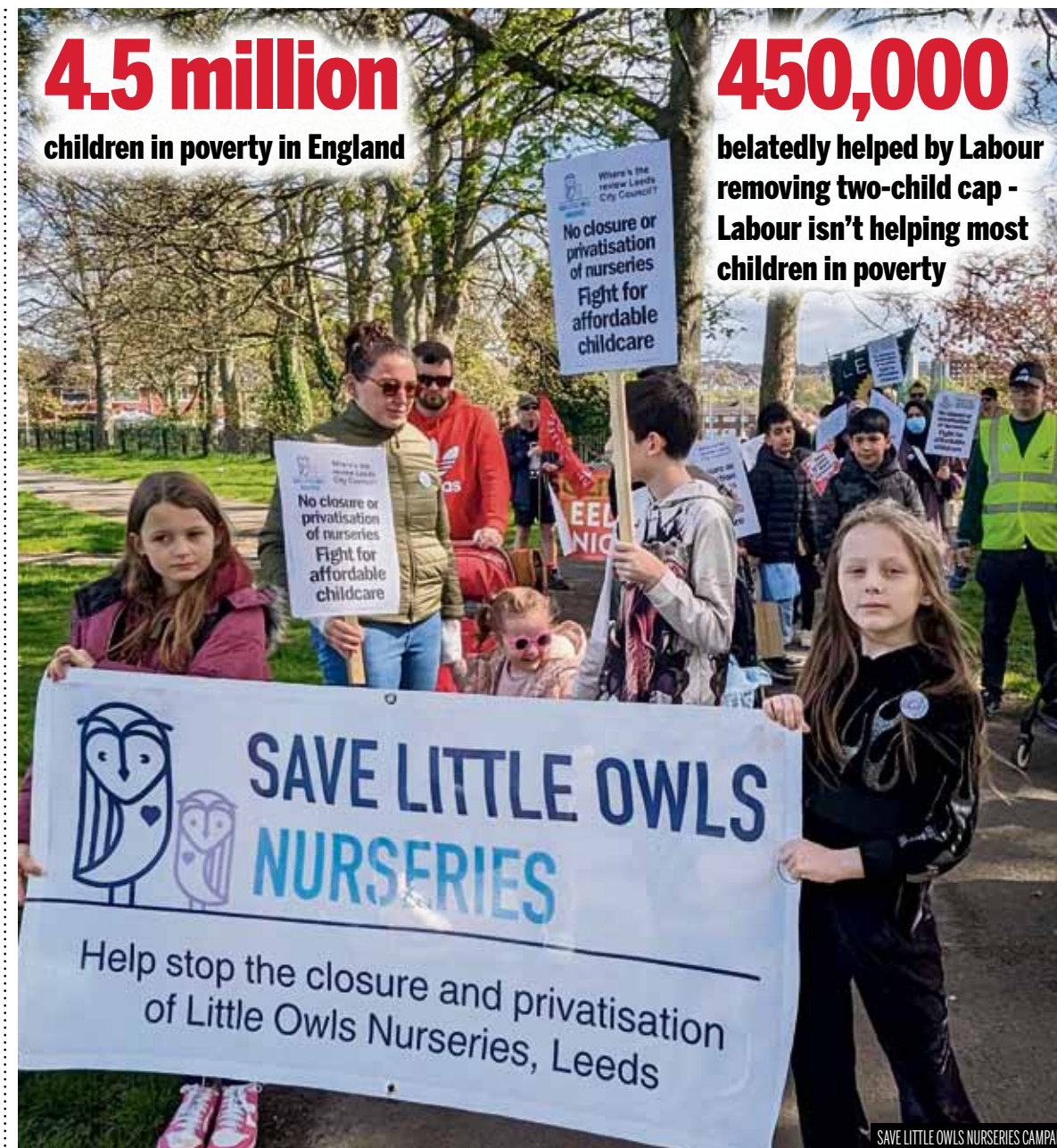
After delays and delays, Labour has finally said that it will lift the two-child benefit cap from April – almost two years after they took power. That should bring desperately needed relief to 450,000 children, by lifting them out of deep material poverty.

But this will not necessarily last. The cost of living – rent, electricity, food, clothing – continues to rise faster than Universal Credit or pay.

In the last five years, food costs have risen by 37%, energy prices by 62%. Whose pay has risen to keep pace with these rises, except maybe the billionaire bosses?

“ Whose pay has kept pace with food and energy prices, except maybe the billionaire bosses?

Labour is still attacking the most vulnerable. The majority of families with a disabled parent live in poverty, and yet the government is trying to cut disability benefits. Labour acknowledge that the cost of living is a problem, and yet do nothing to cap rents, energy prices, or the profiteering of supermarkets. While the two-child benefit cap has been lifted, Labour is maintaining the overall cap on benefits, which was brought in by the Tories. We need to ensure that all workers earn a minimum of £15 per hour, that safe, secure, and reasonably priced council housing is available to all who need it, and that energy companies are nationalised, so we can cap bills. Childcare should be free to all parents who want it. Schools, care



## 4.5 million

children in poverty in England

## 450,000

belatedly helped by Labour removing two-child cap - Labour isn't helping most children in poverty

SAVE LITTLE OWLS NURSERIES  
Help stop the closure and privatisation of Little Owls Nurseries, Leeds

services, and the NHS should be properly funded.

But rather than take any of those measures, on the back of its long overdue announcement to abolish the two-child benefit cap, the Labour government has announced a series of policies to supposedly reduce child poverty.

“ Labour is doing nothing to cap rents, energy prices, or profiteering supermarkets

This include an £8 million pilot scheme to help get families out of temporary accommodation faster, but only after six weeks. Labour doesn't understand that the moment a child loses their home, that knowledge of their insecurity will mentally affect them for life.

Under Labour's plans, free school meals will still not be provided for the vast majority of children. And children do not exist in isolation. If a child is missing a meal, the chances are that their exhausted, stressed, and overwhelmed parents have missed more. Children notice these things. It affects them.

Labour says its launching new 'Sure Start'-style family hubs. Sure Start was cut nationally under Tory austerity. But how can we trust Labour to provide local services? It was Labour councils and councillors, voting for millions of pounds of local cuts, every year for 15 years, that cut and depleted Sure Start and other local services.

Labour's final announcement – making baby formula products available on supermarket discount schemes – comes with a patronising addition. Parents will be made aware that cheaper 'own brand' formula is also nutritious! As if parents aren't already cutting every single penny they can off their food budget.

In 2017 and 2019, Labour under

Jeremy Corbyn's leadership stood on a programme of:

- Raising the minimum wage
- Ending austerity, and investing in public services
- Rent control and building 100,000 council homes a year
- Massively expanding free childcare
- Reversing Sure Start cuts, launching a new service
- Free school meals for all primary pupils

Compare that to Labour's current proposals that will not solve the cost-of-living crisis. In May's local elections we need candidates who are fighting for policies like those.

To ensure that all children have the life they deserve, we cannot tinker around the edges of a broken and unjust system, it needs a total overhaul. The capitalist system we live under is not providing these things. If we genuinely believe in ensuring that all our children get the best future, we need to fight for socialism.



“ No wonder young people are desperately searching for a more radical solution to capitalist crises

York Socialist Students IAIN DALTON

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

# NEU exec agrees to fight 'continued austerity in education'

SHEILA CAFFREY

NEU EXECUTIVE MEMBER, PERSONAL CAPACITY

The National Education Union (NEU) Executive in November agreed to ballot members in England - teachers and support staff - over teacher pay, funding and workload, with an indicative ballot in February. Socialist Party members helped to ensure there was a strong decision at the meeting.

No new money for schools was announced in Labour's Budget. The Labour government's recommendation to the School Teachers Review Body (STRB) is for an unfunded 6.5% pay rise over three years, a real-terms pay cut.

This is a worse funding settlement than under the last two Tory governments. We are already seeing cuts and redundancies in all areas, and the government has made it quite clear that staffing cuts are where 'savings' should be made.

We are already all overworked with staffing cut to the bone - we cannot accept further austerity in our schools. This is a political choice and is certainly not one we're willing to accept!

The Executive was unanimous in its decision that we need to ballot to fight. Socialist Party members put forward two key strengthening strategies: the need to include support staff in the ballot alongside teachers; and using the special conference planned for February, where we'll have a massive group of NEU activists together, to launch the campaign.

Both these proposals were agreed. This ensures we can take action this academic year - pushing back against the government before the three-year deal is implemented. And as support staff jobs are more vulnerable to funding cuts, it's essential that all school staff are included in the fight to save education!

Socialist Party members have long argued that it is essential that the fight on pay is linked to fighting for full funding and on workload. The announcement from head office declares: "We need a commitment to fully funded and above-inflation pay rises that start to address the real-terms pay cuts since 2010. And we need a guarantee to raise the level of education funding to reward and retain our amazing school staff." The exec agreed to include fighting against threats to increase the hours teachers are directed to work, making workloads - already on average over 60 hours a week - even more excessive.

## Support staff organising

There will be a special NEU conference to decide about organising support staff in February. We should aim



Belmont Park pickets MARTIN REYNOLDS

to have at least 20% of delegations to be support staff, but also that discussions are had around the model motion that was passed at the exec.

Unfortunately, the proposed motion to go to the special conference from the Executive was presented to the relevant exec subcommittee just three minutes before the official end of the meeting! We objected to this effective fait accompli - we should be making sure our decisions are thought through and discussed with members.

In our view, it is important to build campaigns with support staff and teachers working together, and to aim at working in unity with other support staff unions. That should apply at a national level too; our union executive should approach the executives of the other unions to try to agree a cooperative way forward.

## Solidarity with UCU in FE

In Further Education, the University and College Union (UCU) ballot for action over workload and pay was successful in a number of colleges. In my NEU district in Bristol, successful solidarity action was built with workers not covered by ballots collectively using their legal right to refuse to cross-picket lines this year in our sixth form strike and recent Cathedral Schools Trust dispute. That approach has now become part of the union's national campaign! So the NEU will share

information and support for NEU members to not cross UCU picket lines, strengthening the action.

## End supply rip-off

The Supply and Home Tutors Organising Forum met at the start of December. We discussed the government's suggestions to cap agency fees for schools, as well as dropping finders' fees - it's no coincidence that these concessions have been proposed just weeks after the union relaunched our End the Agency Rip-off campaign!

The best way to end the agency rip-off would be to fight for supply to be brought back in-house - a power that councils have. Socialist Party members will be arguing that MPs and political leaders who say they are on our side should be invited to the Executive to discuss what they can do. NEU general secretary Daniel Kebede talks with Zack Polanski of the Green Party, for example - why not call him in to demand that Green-led councils bring supply back under democratic council control?

## Fighting racism

With very little notice, the exec was presented with a resolution to support the new anti-racism alliance 'Together'. Socialist Party members expressed our concerns about the approach in this campaign. ● See article on pages 6-7

## East London school staff take on management

Members of the National Education Union (NEU) at Belmont Park school in Waltham Forest, London, are taking multiple days of action over numerous issues with the school leadership. Belmont Park is a small secondary school for students with social, emotional and mental health needs. Taking strike action can be a powerful way to draw together a workforce that the head is trying to divide.



## NEU REP SEAN SPOKE TO MARTIN REYNOLDS ON THE PICKET LINE

We're on strike over a number of issues, including jobs not being given out fairly, not being advertised. People feel they've been victimised, especially people in the union.

We've also had issues around our pay not being correct in terms of the tax code changing, which has led people to miss out on things like mortgages that they are in the process of planning, and other people on Universal Credit have been affected massively with the discrepancy in pay. On top of that, pensions haven't been paid since May by the school, and people nearing retirement are finding that particularly stressful.

Things in school are becoming quite unsafe with staff numbers, amalgamation of classes to cover absence, and a management which has not engaged collegiately with the issues from the staff.

Most people feel that the headteacher has come in with an agenda. She's made it very clear that certain people are not welcome and others are favourites.

Unfortunately the most experienced and most qualified staff members are the ones she's decided to target. And the younger members, or more recent members, or agency members of staff who have more precarious employment, feel intimidated, and they are the people that she tries to use.

People who have a voice, or have union representation, or experience, and are very confident in what they do, they're the enemy. So it has created a huge divide in the school and I think that is on purpose, sewing division in order to achieve her goals.

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# UNITE'S STATUS AS A MILITANT UNION ON THE LINE IN UPCOMING ELECTIONS

ROB WILLIAMS

UNITE MEMBER AND SOCIALIST PARTY TRADE UNION AND WORKPLACE ORGANISER

As we reach the last weeks of 2025, Unite, one of the biggest and most influential unions, with over one million members, nears vital elections in which the industrial and political approach of the union is at stake, and its status as a militant union is on the line.

The elections will take place as the pro-capitalist character of Keir Starmer's Labour government becomes ever clearer, with a new wave of anti-working class austerity in the offing.

In the first four months of 2026, the Executive Council (EC), the lay-member leadership of Unite, will be elected. After that, there will be the election for general secretary, where Sharon Graham, who will be standing for re-election, is opposed by International Officer Simon Dubbins.

## Workers Unite slate

In the new year, branches will be able to nominate candidates for the EC. Socialist Party members are standing on the left 'Workers Unite' slate that supports the manifesto on which Sharon was elected in 2021. The slate includes fellow supporters of the Unite Broad Left.

We supported Sharon's candidature in the 2021 general secretary election because her programme best ensured that Unite would maintain itself as a militant industrial union. This has been borne out by events. Sharon was previously Unite's head of organising, effectively the lead officer responsible for the union's industrial action strategy. As general secretary, this has been taken to an even greater level, on a systematic scale.

Since Sharon became general secretary, Unite has called over 1,500 disputes, winning 83%. Those disputes have won £605 million for members.

## United Left in political retreat

The Socialist Party had been a part of the United Left (UL) group since Unite was formed in 2007. The UL had been the main broad left in Unite, playing the lead role in the union, supporting the previous general secretary, Len McCluskey.

But in the run-up to the 2021 general secretary election, it was clear that UL was in political retreat, tying itself to Starmer's New Labour mark II and cutting Labour councillors. In response, Socialist Party members played a key role in the setting up of a new left in Unite - the Unite Broad Left.

The shift to the right by UL was graphically shown during the 2021 election, when UL candidate Steve Turner criticised the union's



Birmingham bins BIRMINGHAM SOCIALIST PARTY



The issue of Starmer's pro-big business policies came to a head at Unite conference over the long-running Birmingham bin dispute

Organising Department, headed by Sharon, for publicly demanding that Manchester Labour mayor Andy Burnham intervene in a Unite bus strike during the mayoral election.

In contrast, at the first Unite Policy Conference under Sharon's leadership, in September 2021, a motion was passed that was initiated and long-campaigned for by Socialist Party members, calling on Labour councils to refuse to pass on the cuts of central government, then the Tories and now Starmer's Labour.

Since then, in the run-up to Labour's victory at the 2024 general election and in the first phase of Starmer's reign, the UL has attempted to pass motions at conferences to effectively reverse this policy.

However, because of the experience of Starmer's pro-big business, anti-worker policies, this has proved impossible. This reality crystallised around this year's long-running Birmingham bins dispute, where a brutal Labour council has looked to fire and rehire bin workers, slashing their wages by up to £8,000. Worse

still, this and the council's vicious anti-union strike-breaking operations have been backed to the hilt by Starmer's Labour government, which has still not delivered on its manifesto pledge to scrap the Tory 50% strike ballot thresholds.

## Unite's relationship with Labour

It actually came to a head during this year's Unite Policy Conference in July, as the council launched its fire-and-rehire attack on the bin workers. Socialist Party members and close allies on the conference floor drafted an emergency motion in support of the bin workers, suspending from Unite membership cutting Birmingham Labour councillors and the then deputy leader Angela Rayner. It also committed the union to opening up a debate about Unite's relationship with Labour. It was virtually unanimously passed, with only a handful of UL-aligned delegates not supporting it.

Socialist Party members in Unite are campaigning for that debate to start, and for a special rules



The elections in Unite form the most immediate battleground in the fight for militant trade unionism in this period of brutal capitalism

conference that would free up the ability of Unite to support candidates outside of Labour who support Unite members and policies. It is essential that these steps, including Labour disaffiliation, do not mean Unite moving in a non-political direction. Instead, Unite should take the lead in creating a political voice for workers that fights on a socialist programme.

This need has been further amplified by the recent retreat by Starmer's government on workers' employment rights from day one, despite being elected on a 160+ seat majority. Sharon has been one of the few union leaders to condemn this U-turn.

Without this, the political vacuum created by Starmer's policies will only widen, giving the opportunity for Farage's Reform to try and fill it with his divisive poison.

## Socialist Party's programme

The Socialist Party stands on the left slate with our own political and industrial programme. Not all those who stand with us support this position. But a victory for UL in the EC and general secretary elections would strengthen those in Unite who want to move closer to Starmer's Labour, whether in Westminster, Cardiff, Edinburgh, or the council chambers. It would also, therefore, blunt and compromise the union's industrial muscle, especially where it comes up against these Labour-controlled employers.

The elections in Unite form the most immediate battleground in the fight for militant trade unionism in this polarised period of brutal capitalism. It is essential that left reps, activists and members join the fight against this attempt to push Unite into reverse, retreat, and partnership.

We are supporting the 'Workers Unite' slate of candidates, which includes:

- South West: sitting EC member **Suzanne Muna**
- London and Eastern: **Len Hockey**
- Construction, allied trades and technicians: **Dave Walsh**
- Community, youth workers and not-for-profit: **Tanis Belsham-Wray**
- LGBT+: **John Williams**
- Young members: **Oisín Mulholland**
- Local authorities: **Kathy Smith**

See all candidates on the slate: [backtotheworkplace.org/executive-council-candidates/](https://backtotheworkplace.org/executive-council-candidates/)

PAULA MITCHELL

SOCIALIST PARTY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

On 2 December, a new anti-far right alliance was announced: Together. "Together we can reject narratives of division and racism. Together we can build solidarity across communities."

Together has announced a 'Love, Hope and Unity' demonstration on 28 March 2026, followed by leafletting in the May elections, "urging people to use their vote to stop Reform".

The need to combat racism and the far right is urgent. Although recent polls have shown a small dip, Nigel Farage's racist right-populist Reform UK is at around 25%. In the summer, over 100,000 people marched with far-right activist Tommy Robinson on a 'Unite the Kingdom' demonstration. Protests have taken place at asylum hotels around the country. There is a widespread fear among Black, Asian and migrant communities, and among many workers and activists, of the likelihood of gains for Reform in the May elections and the possibility of a future Farage-led government.

But the Socialist Party is clear: the politics and methods of 'Together' are not what is needed.

This new alliance was simultaneously announced on the websites of Stand Up To Racism (SUTR), unions including the University and College Union and Fire Brigades Union, and various other organisations, including the Socialist Workers' Party (SWP) and Morning Star, the paper of the Communist Party of Britain.

Signatories start with a long list of celebrities (34 at latest count). Then comes a list of over 40 politicians, including Jeremy Corbyn and Zarah Sultana of Your Party, Zack Polanski of the Green Party, and left Labour MPs such as John McDonnell and Richard Burgon. It also includes Starmer-supporter Stella Creasy.

Next the 'organisations' - the TUC (Trades Union Congress) and 24 trade unions are randomly mixed in with charities and campaigns such as Friends of the Earth.

Clearly a lot of discussion went on before this was launched. But it seems

not among the over five million trade unionists represented by the union signatories - at least in some cases their lay elected leaderships were not even informed it was happening.

The Executive of the National Education Union (NEU), for example, was presented with a paper just the night before its meeting on 29 November. This paper informed the exec that "SUTR approached the NEU with the idea of trying to build a broader anti-far right organisation"; that a "series of meetings were convened from late October with a variety of unions, NGOs, campaign groups, political parties and politicians"; then a "planning day was held in mid-November where a draft campaign plan, including a set of aims and strategies, was drawn up, as was a founding statement."

All behind the scenes, without the necessary discussion in the unions themselves about what aims and strategies are needed to combat the far right. The organised working class in the trade unions, the biggest organised force in society with the potential power to unite and mobilise millions of people, is sidelined behind celebrities and charities.

## Fight austerity

The territory for dangerous far-right thugs like Tommy Robinson, and for racist right-wing populists like Nigel Farage, has been created by years of austerity and the soaring cost of living. The pro-big business, anti-working class, austerity policies of Keir Starmer's Labour government - echoing the right in its treatment of migrants and refugees - have compounded that.

In the early 2010s when the English Defence League was organising demonstrations, the SWP attacked Socialist Party members for raising the necessity of linking the fight against racism to the fight against austerity. We were told that this was a fight against racists only; that if we were also against austerity, people who were in favour of cuts (such as service-cutting Labour councillors and Blairites like Walthamstow MP Stella Creasy) wouldn't participate.

When marches of the far right were

# 'TOGETHER' - OR A UNION-LED FIGHT AGAINST RACISM AND THE FAR RIGHT?



The idea, of union leaders urging people 'to use their vote to stop Reform' without arguing for an alternative is not a new one. This year TUC general secretary Paul Nowak made numerous denunciations of Nigel Farage in the run-up to the elections in May - which saw Reform top the polls with 31% of the vote.

Such attacks actually played into Farage's hands, allowing him to present himself as 'the real voice of the workers'. To the extent that, in an article in the Sunday Times (20 April), he claimed to be a friend of the late Bob Crow, the militant former general secretary of the RMT. Even arguing that "had Bob not died, my [Brexit] referendum campaign was going to be a double act with him and me touring the country".

This, of course, is a fantasy. Bob, working with the Socialist Party and others, set-up the No2EU campaign to contest the European elections against Farage's then UKIP party in 2009, standing himself as the lead candidate in London. He then went on to co-found the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC), not set-up 'a double act' with an enemy of the working class.

That's the way today's union leaders should act too - fighting the far-right not just in words but in action, including by providing a workers' alternative at the ballot box.

quite small, as was the case with the English Defence League at that stage, it was possible to mobilise enough people to outnumber them without raising a class programme. But we warned then, that approach does nothing about the conditions that breed support for the far right.

A decade later, Tommy Robinson mobilised over 100,000 and Reform is rising, but SUTR has persisted in restricting demands to only opposing racism and 'Nazi scum', and welcoming refugees. Taking that approach has failed to mobilise large numbers on demonstrations.

The combined recognition of failures of SUTR and the pressure being felt by trade union leaders will have contributed to the launch of Together. Now, Together is forced to recognise that Reform and the far right "seize on the very real economic problems people face, in order to scapegoat migrants, Muslims and refugees."

But nothing in Together's statement argues against austerity or puts forward any answers to those economic problems, never mind the socialist policies needed to lift people out of the conditions inflicted by brutal capitalism. Going even 'broader', proposing 'love' and 'unity', falls far short of what is required.

The Socialist Party is not opposed to uniting with other organisations, political figures and celebrities to oppose racism. But that should not be on the basis of relinquishing the necessary demands that can mobilise a movement with a programme that can undercut support for Reform and the far right.

But in its pursuit of Starmer-supporting MPs, SUTR and now Together jettison pro-working class policies to get their support. Instead of putting demands on the likes of Stella Creasy to stop voting for the policies that create the breeding ground for racism, they ask trade unionists to line up with those who are cutting their jobs and pay and services. We will be told that this is a 'united front', but it is in reality a 'popular front' - subordinating working-class interests to the demands of other class interests.

## Trade unions must lead

Where the Socialist Party plays a leading role in union branches and trades councils, we have argued for trade unions to take a lead on a local level, linking the fight against the right to the fight for the resources, jobs, homes and services that communities need. That has been the case in Southampton and in response to the events in Epping, for example.

It is significant that the London and South East regional committee of the PCS civil service union issued a call to union branches and trades councils to start discussing "the duty of the trade union movement to fight back." They said: "We have not yet risen to the challenge... for decades we have relied on external organisations... We need to produce our own materials to oppose far-right lies; and to mobilise seriously and safely for counter-demonstrations with our own defensive stewarding."

It is only the working class, organised in a mass fight for socialist policies,

that can draw behind it broader layers in society and wipe out support for the far right. Instead of letting the union leaders off the hook, it is essential to build a fight for the trade unions, with their 6.5 million members, to lead. The strike wave in recent years showed the potential power trade unions have and how they can become a pole of attraction for all those suffering from austerity, appealing to unorganised and demoralised layers of society.

TUC Congress in 2018 passed a motion - initiated by Socialist Party members - for a 'Jobs, Homes, Not Racism' campaign, which it has never implemented. The most concrete way to do that right now is to fight for the national trade union demonstration against Labour austerity that was agreed unanimously at TUC Congress this year. Instead of putting their names to a march for love and hope, the trade union leaders should call that demonstration under the slogan 'No to austerity - jobs and homes, not racist division.'

## A socialist electoral alternative

Together proposes to leaflet against Reform in May's elections. But unless there is an anti-austerity socialist alternative in those elections, that inevitably means encouraging people to vote for parties that carry out austerity policies when in power.

In April, during the local elections, TUC general secretary Paul Nowak accused Farage of "cosplaying" as

being on the side of working-class people, saying: "I think it's my job to say to people, don't just listen to what he says, look at what he does". But it is due to the relentless and savage cuts to jobs and pay, closures and privatisation, carried out by Labour nationally and locally over years that numbers of trade union members now say they have voted for Reform.

Undercutting support for Reform cannot be achieved by just telling people not to vote for them. We have to fight for the trade unions to take responsibility and build a political alternative. Instead of just all adding their names to Together, Corbyn and Sultana should be appealing to the trade unions to take a central role in building a new party. The trade union leaders should be inviting them into the executive committee meetings of their unions to discuss how a real working-class-based political voice can be built.

For May's elections, it would be much more productive if they were to organise for trade unionist, socialist, anti-austerity Your Party candidates to stand as widely as possible, committed to resisting the cuts demanded by Starmer, and preparing for budgets that meet the needs of local communities. The national impact such a campaign could make would be immeasurably greater than just marching at the front of an anti-racism demonstration. Preparing for Your Party councillors and councils to link together nationally and mobilise trade union and community campaigns to demand funding could begin to transform the real experience and outlook of millions of people.

Trade union branches and trades councils can encourage that to happen by contacting other trade unionists and campaigners in their areas, including Your Party supporters, to hold people's budget meetings and organise for as wide an anti-austerity trade union-based stand in the elections in their areas as possible.

## Trade union stewarding

When dangerous far-right forces try to march through local communities, it is important to campaign to assist the local community to defend itself. As well as, more long term, helping to build up a movement that can unite local people in fighting for the resources they need, and a key part of it can also be mobilising demonstrations to demoralise and even prevent the far right from marching. Trade unions can play a crucial role, with an energetically built campaign involving local workplace meetings to mobilise members.

It is not only the demands that can limit the size of anti-far right demonstrations. People also need to feel that they are not being needlessly exposed to violent attack, from the right or the police. Socialist Party members have participated in many counter-demonstrations and we salute the bravery of the marchers who have found themselves in sometimes dangerous situations. However, this summer, SUTR's leaders have recklessly marched anti-racist demonstrators towards potentially dangerous confrontations with inadequate stewarding, relying on the police for defence. If people know that their security is being taken seriously, many more will be encouraged to participate.

General secretary of the rail union RMT Eddie Dempsey has come out in support of Together. In the late 2010s, in response to the Football Lads Alliance at that time, Eddie Dempsey was one of the RMT organisers who initiated steps towards more organised trade union stewarding of counter-demonstrations.

Socialist Party members welcomed that, and proposed that a list of hundreds of volunteers from each union

could be compiled, from which stewards and a chief steward with experience could be drawn on each occasion.

We would argue that the trade union leaders who have signed up to Together should do that now - each union could appoint a chief steward, and gather lists of volunteer stewards, and offer to work in a united front with other unions.

Socialist Party members will be moving a model motion that proposes the role trade unions could play in this vital battle.

Extract from the motion, see full motion at [socialistparty.org.uk](https://socialistparty.org.uk)

This [union branch, executive, conference, trades council] demands:

- That our union must move at the TUC General Council for it to enact the policy passed at this year's TUC Congress to organise a national weekend demonstration against Starmer's austerity offensive. It could be on the theme: 'No to austerity, make the rich pay! Workers unity not division - jobs and homes not racism!'
- That where the far-right call protests in localities, the trade union movement takes the lead in organising counter-protests, linking up with migrants, refugees and any targeted communities as well as anti-racist and anti-fascist organisations.
- That all such protests are well stewarded by trade unions to guard against any threat from far-right groups. Our union should take the lead in demanding that the TUC and the unions organise and build a national organisation of union reps and members to steward protests against the far-right
- That unions fight to compel the Labour Government to implement pro-worker policies. If it does not do so, the unions will call a conference to discuss the building of a political vehicle for workers, linking up with Jeremy Corbyn, Zarah Sultana, independent and suspended MPs identifying with the Left and groups of independent socialist councillors fighting anti-austerity measures and racism in their own local communities.

Marching against Tommy Robinson  
PHOTO: IAN PATTISON

## SOCIALISM TODAY

Monthly magazine of the Socialist Party

December-January issue includes...

● Anti-fascist tactics on trial

In November, Socialist Party members Lois Austin and Hannah Sell appeared before the SpyCops

inquiry. In answering the Met Police 'justifications' for their undercover policing, important issues about how to fight the far right were contested. Hannah writes, laying out Marxist tactics to fight the far right.

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## WHAT WE STAND FOR

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

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

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

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

### WORK, PENSIONS AND BENEFITS

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

- Share out the work. A maximum 32-hour working week with no loss of pay or worsening of conditions. The right to flexible working, under the control of workers not employers. An end to insecure working, for the right to full-time work for all who want it; ban zero-hour contracts.

- All workers to have trade union rates of pay, employment protection, and sickness, parental and holiday rights from day one of employment. End bosses using bogus 'self-employment' as a means to avoid giving workers rights.

- No to austerity through inflation. For all wage rates to be automatically increased at least in line with price rises.

- Open the books of all companies cutting jobs or claiming they can't afford to pay a real living wage. State subsidies, where genuinely needed, for socially-useful small businesses.

- For trade unions independent of the capitalist state, with members having democratic control over their own policies, constitutions and democratic procedures. For all trade union officials to be regularly elected, subject to recall by their members and paid a worker's wage.

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

### PUBLIC SERVICES

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

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

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

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

Nationalise the pharmaceutical industry under democratic workers' control and management.

- Renationalise privatised utilities – including rail, mail, water, telecoms and power – under democratic workers' control and management.

- Free, publicly funded and democratically run, good-quality education, available to all at any age. Abolish university tuition fees and write off student debt, end marketisation, and introduce a living grant. No to academisation. For all schools to be under the genuine democratic control of local education authorities, school staff, parents and student organisations.

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

### 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

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## Turkey: Solidarity with arrested Workers' Party members

### Arrested for protesting child labour and work-related child deaths

On 1 December, members of the Private School Teachers' Union and 17 student members of the Workers' Party of Turkey (TIP) were arrested while protesting against Turkey's Education Minister, Yusuf Tekin, and the government's Vocational Training Programme (MESEM) at a summit in Istanbul.

The Committee for a Workers' International (CWI) sends its solidarity to TIP and to all working-class and young people struggling against Erdogan's government.

MESEM is a government scheme in which hundreds of thousands of school students are currently enrolled. As part of this programme, schoolchildren as young as 14 and 15 years old are working in extremely dangerous environments, such as construction sites, factories, and workshops.

Students enrolled in this programme attend school one day a week and spend the other four days working full time for a pittance. Their poverty wages are not paid by employers but by the government.

According to the Health and Safety Labor Watch (ISIG) - a network founded by workers and their families - 85 children have died this

year in work-related incidents. Many more have been injured while working in unsafe conditions. A significant number of them were working in these environments as part of MESEM.

Outrageously, students who exercised their democratic right to protest have been arrested and remain in police detention.

Erdogan's regime knows how deeply unpopular it is and fears any protest or campaign that exposes government policies designed primarily to meet the needs of the bosses.

The richest 35 individuals in Turkey possess three times more wealth than the bottom 50% of the population (42.5 million people). Erdogan's policies have allowed the rich to become richer while everyone else has experienced a massive deterioration in living standards. Young people have been denied a decent future.

Despite the regime's attempts to clamp down on protests and intimidate young people, Erdogan is weak and will inevitably face mass working-class opposition.

Release all 16 TIP members!  
Defend the right to protest!  
Solidarity!



## Solidarity appeal: Justice for Mediceram workers in Malaysia

### SOSIALIS ALTERNATIF (CWI MALAYSIA)

A total of 177 Bangladeshi migrant workers at the Mediceram factory in Negeri Sembilan were summarily dismissed and forcibly sent home after they launched a strike demanding unpaid wages, promised reimbursement of recruitment fees, and the return of their personal documents which had also been confiscated.

The employer's retaliation has involved threats, forced deportation, and continued intimidation. This case exposes the harsh reality of the exploitation of migrant workers in Malaysia - from debt bondage, passport confiscation, to violations of the most basic human rights.

### We say:

- We call on progressive organisations and individuals to express solidarity collectively
- Write and send a statement from your organisation to us (via WhatsApp or email to [sosialisalternatif@gmail.com](mailto:sosialisalternatif@gmail.com)). Your statement will be shared, and used as pressure on the company and the governments of Malaysia and Bangladesh

- Sign and share this petition: <https://c.org/Q6gdyPTBrj>
- Join the WhatsApp group Solidarity for Migrant Workers (Malaysia) for updates and to participate in coordinated workers' solidarity actions

Without international solidarity, the working class will continue to be systematically oppressed in silence, without just protection.

Forward with the workers' struggle - forward to democratic socialism!

## Protests sweep Poland against use of Polish-produced TNT in Gaza



Kraków protest  
PHOTOS: RÓŻA KWIECIŃSKA



## Filton 24 Palestine protesters on hunger strike

The largest hunger strike on these islands since the 1981 Republican prisoners' protest in the Maze prison in the north of Ireland is barely being registered by the mass media. The Filton hunger strikers are a group of Palestine Action imprisoned activists, many of whom have refused food for weeks in protest against their detention and the presence of Israeli arms manufacturer Elbit Systems in Britain.

The Filton 24 were arrested in connection with an August 2024 raid on the Elbit plant in Filton, Bristol. They are accused of property damage and related offences and remain held on remand without trial. They are demanding the closure of Elbit Systems' UK sites, the lifting of the government's ban on Palestine Action, and for bail and fair trials rather than indefinite detention.

Eight prisoners are currently or recently have been on an open-ended or partial hunger strike. So far, six prisoners have refused food for up to four weeks, with more expected to join.

Four of the hunger strikers have been held on remand since last

November, far exceeding the six-month pre-trial custody limit. Prisoners report dangerous neglect and inhumane treatment.

The hunger strikers have also highlighted the Labour government's escalating crackdown on the right to protest and on democratic rights, including the banning of Palestine Action and mass arrests of those who defy it. Amnesty International has raised concerns about the misuse of terrorism powers by the government and the excessively long periods of pre-trial detention being imposed.

Clearly, the state is attempting to break the prisoners' morale. It is also trying to send out a stark signal to all activists and protesters of what awaits them should they take militant action.

On 5 December, around 70 activists blockaded Elbit's Filton site, demanding justice for the hunger strikers. Protests have also taken place in London and other parts of the UK. Many of those playing a leading role in these mobilisations are people from an Irish background.

This reflects the strong association

felt by many Irish people with the plight of the Palestinians, shaped by their own history of colonial oppression and Ireland's long tradition of hunger strikes.

It is imperative that socialists and the wider trade union movement mobilise to support the demands of the Filton protesters. The call to end all arms manufacturing for the Israeli state in the UK must be linked by socialists and trade unions to the demand for a just transition of those workplaces - bringing them under democratic public ownership and converting them to socially useful production, with no loss of pay, hours, or conditions for the workers.

The crackdown against Palestine Action and Gaza protesters should send alarm bells ringing throughout the organised workers' movement. Such authoritarian tactics can be used against trade unionists in struggle, and other activists.

Socialists fight for the right to free protest and for the reversal of the anti-democratic legislation introduced by successive Tory and Labour governments.

**NIALL MULHOLLAND**

### RÓŻA KWIECIŃSKA IN KRAKÓW

At the end of November, protests swept across Poland in response to a report on the genocide in Gaza, which says: "Without the TNT produced in Poland, the unprecedented scale and intensity of the aerial bombardments - which have claimed the lives of tens of thousands of Palestinians and destroyed living conditions in the Gaza Strip - would not have been possible."

According to the authors of the high-profile report: 'The Missing Ingredient: Polish TNT', there is a high probability that a significant portion of the bombs used since October 2023 contained Polish TNT. These bombs constitute one of the main tools of the genocide carried out by Israel.

Nitro-Chem, a company owned by the Polish State Treasury, is the largest producer of TNT among Nato and EU countries. By supplying this key material to the United States, Polish TNT has contributed to the deaths of tens of thousands of people. Over the two years of genocide, the US government has provided Israel with more than \$30 billion of weapons.

200,000 tons of explosives According to the IMEU Policy Project, at least 200,000 tons of explosives have been dropped on Gaza in the past two years. In the same period, Poland sent 50,000 tons of TNT to US companies. TNT produced in Poland is systematically used in the production of large aerial munitions, artillery shells, and MK-80 series aerial bombs. It was precisely this type of bomb that Israel used, for example, during the massacre in the Jabalia refugee camp, where at least 126 Palestinians were killed, 280 were injured, and an area of 2,500 m<sup>2</sup> was completely levelled.

In most major cities in Poland, people protested against the Polish government's complicity. But what would happen if the workers took control of the factory? Decisions could be made democratically, without the pursuit of profit. No amount of 'regulation' or rebranding will stop private companies from operating primarily for the benefit of their shareholders. Public money will continue to flow into private profit and into funding genocide instead of public infrastructure.

Protests and workers' action should continue to demand an immediate stop to the Israeli state's attacks, while supporting Palestinians' efforts to fight for their freedom. Like we saw, for example, in Italy: trade unions called a strike that blocked ports and railways in a protest concerning the Global Sumud Flotilla. It showed how much power workers actually have and should serve as an example for trade unions in other countries, including Poland.



# End victimisation of reps on London buses – east London drivers strike

As we go to press, Unite members at Lea Interchange bus garage in Leyton, east London, are preparing for strike action on 12 and 13 December.

Following a powerful industrial action ballot, these workers have secured a massive mandate to fight against the victimisation of their union reps and aggressive management practices.



A UNITE ACTIVIST AT LEA INTERCHANGE SPOKE TO THE SOCIALIST

"The mood in the garage is tremendous. 15 more people have joined the union just yesterday. We've gone from being a small group of members to 93% density. In April, when a fresh layer of activists took office, they started to organise and take up the issues that were affecting members. We were recruiting and having consultative ballots on various workplace issues. That was the start of the victimisation. We had reps targeted. We did lots of leafleting and meetings to make members aware that it wasn't just reps being targeted but an attack on the members too. When the rep was suspended, we balloted, and got a 98% 'Yes' vote, and got over the turnout threshold.

"There's about 450 drivers in this garage and we've now got about 400 members. Management reinstated

the rep with a final written warning. But when he returned to work he faced hostility from management on his first day back. It's a clear example of how workers in the depot are treated.

"Workers want a change in management. All we are requesting is to be treated fairly, with dignity and respect. Management have been slow on pay negotiations; pay should have been sorted in the middle of the year. Other London bus companies and garages have made offers. Lea Interchange is one of very few garages left in London that still hasn't agreed a pay rise and implemented it.

This dispute isn't about pay. But workers understand that we can negotiate to get a pay rise, but with this management our jobs are not secure if we have a union without a voice. But now if they do change management, they'll be thinking twice before they move on reps in the future.

"This has also sent a shockwave throughout London buses. Since privatisation, I think this is the first



PHOTO: PAUL MATSSON

time there's been a successful legal ballot on victimisation. Reps across London buses are now saying, we can stand up too. The companies do not want this to be a precedent, their biggest fear is of it spreading. This has raised the confidence of workers, they feel they have power in their hands through democratic action."

Attacks on reps are not an unhappy coincidence. Private operators are making profits from running what used to be publicly owned bus routes. All private operators try to cut off fighting trade unionism in

the garages.

Bus drivers throughout London work too many hours for not enough pay, and with worsening terms and conditions. Unite must step up its fight for:

- A living wage and shorter working week for all bus workers
- Common wages and conditions, demands to be decided by London-wide meetings of reps
- London buses to be brought back into public ownership, with workers' control and management

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# Oxfordshire firefighters stand against killer cuts

HANNAH CHAPMAN  
OXFORD SOCIALIST PARTY

Fire Brigades Union (FBU) members from stations all around Oxfordshire gathered in Slade Park fire station on 3 December to discuss cuts to the fire service suggested by the Lib Dem county council.

These cuts would include the outright closure of Eynsham, Woodstock and Henley fire stations. Rewley Road and Kidlington fire stations would be 'merged', though without clear plans on how such a merger would be organised! 42 firefighters face redundancy, and those who remain would have to work unsafe 12-hour shifts.

Oxfordshire's fire service has already been the victim of austerity. In the last ten years, 100 firefighter positions have been cut.

These cuts have had consequences. Average response time has increased from less than nine minutes to more than 11. That's two minutes worse than the national average in a situation where every second



PHOTO: FBU/X

counts. And the council wants to keep cutting!

The assembled FBU members were united in their disgust for the plans. If these cuts are forced through, they will likely be paid in the blood of residents and firefighters. The FBU is standing firmly against the consultation, and has suggested that industrial action

should not be ruled out as a potential response.

The Socialist Party supports the FBU in the face of vicious austerity. We encourage all union branches, whose members are being impacted by cuts, to support a people's budget for Oxfordshire. Uniting the working class like this can end the vicious austerity that hurts us all.

# Mining museum strikers determined to continue until victory is won

MICK GRIFFITHS  
WAKEFIELD AND PONTEFRAC SOCIALIST PARTY

400 people demonstrated in support of the National Mining Museum dispute for fair pay in Wakefield on 6 December, despite bad weather conditions.

After five months of all-out action, Unison members have vowed to continue for however long it takes to win.

The rally heard solidarity greetings from the Birmingham bin workers strike and expressed anger at the Labour government and councils sacking and rehiring workers on less pay.

This dispute has become much more than a struggle over pay. It is now widely regarded as a battle to defend the right to collective bargaining and the very existence of basic trade unionism against management's attempts to crush union resistance.

Our Socialist Party stall was inundated with members of the public

supporting not only the mining museum strikers' petition, but also expressing concerns about some of the many key issues faced by the working class, such as nationalisation of energy companies, further privatisation of the NHS, digital ID cards imposition, etc, etc!



PHOTO: TANSI B-W



PHOTO: YORK SOCIALIST STUDENTS

# York students protest £1,000 bursary cut

LOUIE NARDINI  
YORK SOCIALIST STUDENTS

Socialist Students organised a demonstration with the York uni Your Party society, opposing the bursary cut put forward by the university management. The £1,000 cut affects working-class students and others, struggling to keep up with the cost-of-living crisis.

But it also affects medical students and refugee students, who also face severe cutbacks. Refugee students were receiving £3,000, as an incentive for higher education. Now it's £2,000.

Medical students receiving a HYMS bursary would be getting £1,400 less for every year at university. For students with a residual household income of less than £25,000, they used to be eligible for £2,400 per year. Now

it's down to £1,000. This adds up to £7,000 of student entitlements over five years of study that is now completely missing!

At the protest, we had speakers from the University and College Union (UCU) and York Rent Strike 2025.

We all know that Labour is not going to pay a penny to fund universities, unless it is forced to under pressure. Student protest can build the pressure. So can the struggles of university workers, organised in their trade unions. A new mass workers' party – fighting for free, fully funded education – would strengthen our fight too.

Join the student fightback  
**JOIN** socialist students  
socialiststudents.org.uk/join

# The reality of the world awakened something in me

## Why I joined the Socialist Party

SORANA SECU  
WALTHAM FOREST SOCIALIST PARTY

I moved to London from Romania in 2010 – an overwhelming year, marked by the aftermath of the 2007-2008 financial crisis, and the austerity, inequality, and hopelessness that followed. Little by little, the reality of a world that I had never agreed to, a humanity divided and struggling, began to seep into the edges of my being, and awaken something in me.

But I was lacking courage. The courage to express my anger at the injustice, to stand by others, and to live a life that was truthful to my real self.

In 2015, I went through a painful and unjust redundancy, followed by a long and cruel burnout. That year taught me the need for unions and solidarity.

But it also revealed to me the cold-blooded reign of capitalism – a system in permanent crisis. The need for a better, more creative, just, and humane alternative felt urgent, not abstract.

Living close to Walthamstow Market, I began to meet some of the Waltham Forest Socialist Party members. I would sometimes donate to them, buy the Socialist newspaper, and sign their petitions.

This summer, I met Paula at a Socialist Party campaign stall in Walthamstow Central, and we spoke for longer. I went along to a branch



PHOTO: MARTIN REYNOLDS

meeting in Leyton, then to a couple of public meetings in the borough, and most recently to Socialism 2025.

Socialism 2025 was eye-opening and vibrant, and convinced me to officially join on the first day, after some excellent talks on the rise of AI, and on domestic violence and misogyny, followed by wonderful conversations with comrades from everywhere, including from my own country, Romania.

My aim is to make even a tiny difference, to learn as much as I can from others' experience, to help fight for the least protected in whatever way I am able, and to go beyond ideas and debates, into action. I believe

a socialist world is possible. If you are worried about the future, and curious about socialism and what it stands for, go to a branch or public meeting, or support the Socialist Party by donating or by buying this newspaper. See if it stirs something in you.

Karl Marx said: "Philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point, however, is to change it."

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

# Hillsborough: IOPC finds cops guilty but no punishment or justice will follow

JOE WOOLFALL  
LIVERPOOL SOCIALIST PARTY

The Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) has released long-delayed findings on the behaviour of South Yorkshire Police during and after the 1989 Hillsborough disaster, when a fatal crush killed 97 Liverpool FC supporters. It is the largest independent investigation into police misconduct in UK history.

The IOPC concluded that 12 police officers should have faced gross misconduct proceedings for serious failings connected to the disaster and its aftermath.

On 15 April 1989, the police opened a gate to reduce congestion outside the stadium. The officers' failure to direct incoming supporters away from the central tunnel led to fans entering already overcrowded central pens in the Leppings Lane stand, which caused the deaths of the Liverpool fans.

The current IOPC investigation only began in 2012, 23 years after



PHOTO: JOHN BRADLEY/CC

Hillsborough, and was triggered by another report, the Hillsborough Independent Panel, which exposed failings and inaccuracies in previous accounts of the disaster.

The officers who would have faced misconduct proceedings would also have faced discipline for efforts to shift blame onto supporters after the disaster. The consequences of the attempt to blame Liverpool supporters by the police, Tory prime minister Margaret Thatcher, and a certain 'newspaper' are still felt today by Liverpoolians.

The IOPC, however, states that it did not find sufficient evidence, as required by its evidentiary standard, of a fully orchestrated cover-up. This is despite evidence of attempts to deflect responsibility from the police to those who were present at Hillsborough and losing family and friends in the process.

None of the 12 police officers mentioned will face disciplinary action, because all had retired before investigations were launched. At the time,

regulations prevented disciplinary proceedings against retired officers. The law has now changed, but it cannot be applied retrospectively.

The IOPC says victims, families, and survivors were "repeatedly let down" across decades. Lawyers of Hillsborough families have said that although the recent report reveals more of the truth, there is still "bitter injustice".

As the truth that the families and survivors always knew comes out, and the Hillsborough Law makes its way through the committee stage in parliament, there is still no real justice. And nor can real justice be truly won whilst the economic system which grants power to the super-rich and exploits the working class still exists.

The Hillsborough Law is a step forward, but it doesn't prevent disasters from happening, and the capitalist state is still set up to protect its component parts as the police force have again walked away without consequence.

£1/£2 solidarity price

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# the Socialist

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formerly **Militant**

# YOUTH GET ORGANISED

# FIGHT FOR SOCIALIST CHANGE

## Come to Socialist Students conference University of Manchester, 14 February 2026

**T**he genocidal siege of Gaza. Climate breakdown that threatens the existence of life on our planet. Governments whipping up racism, sexism, and all forms of division. Attacks on the right to protest and more authoritarian laws. There is no shortage of issues pushing students and young people into the fore of mass movements, taking action for an alternative.

Internationally, the past year has unleashed a wave of mass protests and uprisings spearheaded by young people, from Indonesia to Nepal, Madagascar to the Philippines. In Britain, young people have continued to march in our hundreds and thousands to demand an end to Israeli state terror and war in the Middle East.

But despite the heroic preparedness of young people and the working class to fight back, the politicians, institutions, and the 'profit-before-all' system they uphold - capitalism - remain in place. And so the nightmare of war, poverty, and climate destruction

continues, as our futures are sacrificed for the profits of a super-rich few.

What needs to be done to put an end to this nightmare? That is the key question that the Socialist Students conference 2026 is setting itself.

Socialist Students is a democratic, national organisation of students fighting for a socialist alternative to capitalism. We are active in schools, colleges and universities across the UK. Our conference is open to all students and young people who want to discuss, debate and make a collective plan of action for how to build a socialist youth movement in Britain today.

There will be plenty to discuss, including:

- How can we build a mass socialist party to give students a voice in the fight against Labour and Reform? What role could Jeremy Corbyn and Zarah Sultana's Your Party play? What about Zack Polanski and the Green Party?

- How can students support workers in education fighting against cuts and low pay, and build a united movement to make the super-rich pay for the funding we need?
- Why are so many student unions not on our side? And how can students build democratic student organisations that actually fight in our interests?

If you are a student or student/youth organisation that wants to be part of this discussion, get in touch and register your interest in attending here: [socialiststudents.org.uk/socialist-students-conference-2026/](http://socialiststudents.org.uk/socialist-students-conference-2026/)



Scan to register:

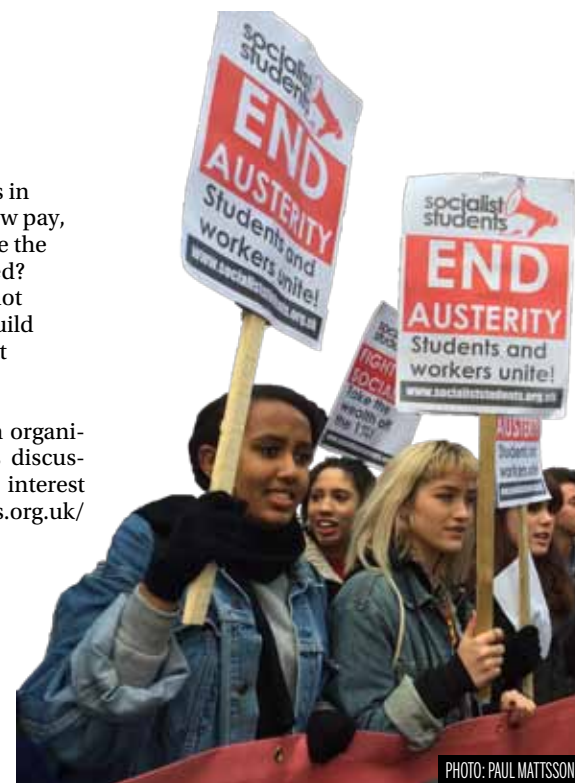


PHOTO: PAUL MATSSON

WHAT WE STAND FOR: THE SOCIALIST PARTY'S MAIN DEMANDS >>> see column on page 8



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