

£1 / £2 solidarity price

socialistparty.org.uk



# the Socialist

Issue 1352

22-28 January 2026

formerly **Militant**



# THE BOSSES' SYSTEM MEANS CRISIS FOR US

## FIGHT FOR SOCIALIST CHANGE

**The relentless grind of a rising cost of living goes on. And Donald Trump is threatening to turn up the dial.**

He has threatened an additional 10% tariff on goods destined for the US from its northern European 'allies', including Britain, and to increase that to 25% if the US is not

able to 'purchase' Greenland by June. European leaders have threatened to retaliate.

Capitalist institutions like the IMF warn of a potential "spiral of escalation" in which "there would be no winners". But if Trump, Keir Starmer, and the rest of the world's capitalist leaders get their way, the working class would definitely be the biggest losers. They would tighten their squeeze on our real pay, threaten our jobs, and come for more brutal cuts to our services.

So far, the world economy has

avoided an immediate crisis and a steep downturn, but the raw ingredients are there - including high levels of debt and asset bubbles. And Britain is especially vulnerable. Even without an acute economic crisis, for the working class, the cost of living grind goes on, in Britain and in the US.

Something else Trump and Starmer have in common is their deep unpopularity. Trump's actions in Venezuela and now over Greenland will not fundamentally change that. In fact, the brutal

anti-immigration ICE raids, including the shooting of an anti-ICE activist in Minneapolis, are provoking further struggles. Trade unions in the state of Minnesota are preparing for coordinated protest strikes.

And in Britain, no number of U-turns will change Starmer's fortunes. His early attacks on pensioners' winter fuel allowance, disability benefits and initial refusal to remove the two-child benefit cap cemented in the minds of millions that his is a government acting for the bosses against the working class. It is shown

by his maintenance of an enormous crisis in local government services, education and the NHS. And trade unionists have been fighting back in all of those areas.

Millions will use May's elections in local councils, Wales and Scotland to express their hatred of this government. The Socialist Party is fighting for the strongest possible anti-cuts, socialist stand. It can point the way towards the working class having its own mass party - one which doesn't make us pay for the crisis of their system.

**TORIES' 50% ANTI-STRIKE BALLOT THRESHOLD REMAINS >>> p5**

**SOCIALIST NATIONALISATION >>> p8-9**

**IRAN AFTER JANUARY'S BRUTAL REPRESSION >>> p12-13**

# the Socialist

formerly **Militant**

Issue 1352  
22-28 January 2026

### DO YOU HAVE NEWS FOR US?

The Socialist is written, read, sold and bought by ordinary workers, trade unionists, young people and Socialist Party members. We want you to write for the Socialist.

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

### CONTACT US

editors@socialistparty.org.uk  
020 8988 8777 - ask for the editors

### DEADLINES

Friday before publication, or Monday morning for urgent news, unless otherwise agreed with the editors.

The Socialist goes to press on a Tuesday night. We publish online on Wednesday and in print on Thursday.

### SUBSCRIBE

to the Socialist for weekly working-class news, analysis and fighting strategy [socialistparty.org.uk/sub](http://socialistparty.org.uk/sub)

- Paper subscription £6 a month, or £8.50 including Socialism Today
- E-subscription £4 a month, or £7 including Socialism Today

### SOCIALISM TODAY

our monthly Marxist magazine [socialismtoday.org](http://socialismtoday.org)  
Paper sub £3.50 a month, e-sub £3.30

### SOCIALISM: THE PODCAST

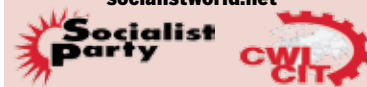
available on all podcast platforms

### FOLLOW US

Instagram @SocialistPartyCWU  
YouTube - Socialist Party  
Twitter @Socialist\_Party

### SOCIALIST PARTY

The Socialist is the weekly newspaper of the Socialist Party, the England and Wales section of the Committee for a Workers' International [socialistparty.org.uk](http://socialistparty.org.uk) [socialistworld.net](http://socialistworld.net)



### BOOKS AND PAMPHLETS

Left Books: Marxist classics and Socialist Party publications available online at [leftbooks.co.uk](http://leftbooks.co.uk)

### OUR NEWSPAPER TEAM

<b>Editor of the Socialist</b>	<b>Editorial staff</b>
Josh Asker	Scott Jones
<a href="http://socialistparty.org.uk">socialistparty.org.uk</a>	Ian Pattison
Mark Best	Paula Mitchell
<b>Circulation manager</b>	Mark Best
Rachel Cox	

ISSN 1366-9621  
Published by Socialist Publications,  
PO Box 1398, Enfield EN1 9GT  
Registered as a newspaper at the Post Office  
Printed by trade union labour at Reach Printing Services

Militant issue 1: October 1964  
The Socialist issue 1: 7 February 1997

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

# Scottish budget means a continuation of underfunded public services

## Build a socialist election challenge for Holyrood

**PHILIP STOTT**  
SOCIALIST PARTY SCOTLAND EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The Scottish government's pre-election budget – the 19th since the Scottish National Party (SNP) won power at Holyrood (the Scottish parliament) in 2007 – did nothing to alter the crisis of underfunded public services and deep-rooted poverty in Scotland.

Amid projections of a £4.5 billion shortfall in spending by 2030, finance secretary Shona Robison continued with the SNP's tried-and-tested approach of 'pass the parcel' with Westminster austerity. Despite the headlines of over £60 billion in day-to-day spending, the reality is that austerity remains a permanent feature.

Because of a shortfall in expected tax income compared to that budgeted for, spending is being cut by £480 million compared to assumptions made last year. This half-a-billion reduction means cuts to planned investment for 2026-27.

Shona Robison is also aiming for £1.5 billion in efficiency savings at the cost of at least 11,000 jobs. Trade unions will be forced onto the offensive on pay and threats to jobs and services as a result.

Local government asked for £16 billion for its revenue budget; it got half a billion less. Unison Scotland responded: "This budget fails local government. Scotland's councils have already borne the brunt of many years of cuts, and this budget fails to give them the investment they urgently need to deliver the essential services our communities rely on."

"Social care staff will continue to be paid pennies above the minimum wage despite doing skilled, demanding and emotionally tough work. This lets down those receiving care and does nothing to improve recruitment in a sector on its knees."



Trade union protest at Holyrood by EIS-FELA trade union SOCIALIST PARTY SCOTLAND



Shona Robison (left) and John Swinney (right) in a Scottish Cabinet meeting in 2024. SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT/CC

The demand for further cuts to budgets at local government level in February-March must be resisted by councillors with a fighting no-cuts policy.

### NHS crisis

Scotland's NHS has more than 600,000 people on waiting lists. This budget does little to tackle the ongoing crisis. Plans for 'walk-in GP clinics' to lessen the impact of a chronic lack of GP services in Scotland were dismissed by doctors' union, the British Medical Association (BMA) Scotland, which said: "We know walk-in centres used elsewhere in the UK have not demonstrated good value for money, and we remain unconvinced that this model will have a significant impact on reducing

demand on other services, including GP workloads."

The Royal College of Emergency Medicine stated: "Time after time, the reality in our A&Es has got worse, not better, despite claims from the government that the NHS has been on 'the path to recovery' in recent years. We are seeing more and more patients waiting alone on trolleys in hospital corridors for hours on end, getting sicker and being put at risk of harm."

### Provisions not enough

Scotland's declared housing emergency will remain just that – an emergency. With a paltry target of 36,000 "affordable homes" by 2031, barely half of what is required according to a recent report into housing provision, the housing scandal will continue.

It's the same with higher and further education, both of which have been through years of cuts, job losses and the axing of courses. The limited extra money going into colleges and universities will not stem the flow of cuts.

With an eye to making headline-grabbing announcements, Robison announced an increase in the Scottish Child Payment (SCP) to £40 per week for families with children under one year old from 2027. That falls to £27.15 on their second birthday, because, as every parent knows, the cost of bringing up children falls dramatically when they reach the age of two!

With 24% of Scottish children living in poverty, the self-described "game changer" of the SCP has had a limited effect because of its low level and the overall state of the Scottish economy, where low pay and paltry benefits are widespread.

### Tanking economy

The budget was delivered amid a tanking capitalist economic performance. Scotland's economy grew around 1.0-1.2% in 2024, but growth slowed in late 2024 and early 2025, with forecasts for 2025 generally around 1.0-1.1%. Economic performance has fallen off a cliff since the Great Recession of 2008. Over the period of 2000-2007, growth was 2.4%, falling to 0.7% from 2008-2019.

Those paltry growth figures underline that there is no solution for the working-class majority under the capitalist profit system. A typical household in Scotland from the wealthiest 10% has £1.3 million in total wealth, compared to just £7,600 for the poorest 10%, while the richest 2% of households own more wealth than the bottom 50% combined.

Delivering a so-called mansion tax for higher-value council tax homes and taxing private jets in 2028 won't shift the dial on record inequality.

With neither Labour nor the Scottish Greens opposing the budget, it's essential that a socialist solution to this capitalist crisis is made available. The Scottish Parliament elections in May offer a platform for socialists and trade unionists to make the case for public ownership, no-cuts budgets, full funding of public services, wealth redistribution and socialist planning.

Socialist Party Scotland calls on Your Party (YP) to mount as wide a socialist challenge as possible for Holyrood. The Scottish YP conference on 7-8 February is a vital step in that preparation, and we'll be attending to help argue for such an election stand.



Nigel Farage GAGE SKIDMORE/CC

# Farage's Reform welcomes Tories with open arms

**MARK BEST**  
SOCIALIST PARTY NATIONAL COMMITTEE

The establishment insider's outsider, Nigel Farage, spent the week burnishing his party Reform UK's credentials as a party that will be safe for the very richest in society.

On Monday 12 January, former Tory chancellor Nadhim Zahawi announced that he was joining Reform as the country needs a "glorious revolution". Zahawi, whose career in the Tory party was marred with stories surrounding investigations into his tax affairs, is reportedly worth up to £100 million. The idea that he has any idea what it's like for working-class people struggling to get by is laughable. He shares that in common with Farage, who has earned over a million pounds on top of his MP's salary from his twelve 'second jobs'.

Then on Thursday, Tory leader Kemi Badenoch sacked her shadow justice secretary Robert Jenrick for preparing to defect to Reform. He also turned up sitting alongside Farage at a press conference later that day. Jenrick's career has shifted from support for David Cameron and 'Remain', to Boris Johnson, Liz Truss and now Farage's Reform. He has presided over the decades-long austerity that has ravaged our communities, public services and infrastructure. He now says "Britain is broken", as if it has not been broken by him and his Tory mates.

These defections hammer home the reality of Reform. As much as

they attempt to paint themselves as rebels, how can any anti-establishment party welcome so many Tory MPs and former ministers? It shows that, in power, Reform won't act in the interests of the working class, but will continue to represent the interests of the super-rich bosses and attempt to divide workers against one another to maintain their position at the top of society.

### No alternative

People looking towards Reform as some sort of alternative to the rest of the establishment parties need only look at their record in power in local councils. Instead of fighting against Keir Starmer's government to provide the services and build the council houses people desperately need, Reform-led councils have behaved the same as all the others. Council budgets being published now come with the maximum council tax rises, service cuts, and are barely distinct from budgets proposed by Labour, Tories, or Greens when in power. They are all doing central government's bidding, implementing austerity instead of standing up for local residents and fighting for the resources we need.

The growth in support for Reform reflects the massive vacuum that exists in society – workers lack a mass party that represents our interests and one in which we have a democratic

say. To oppose the bosses, their divisive ideas and to take the wealth and power back into our hands, we need to get organised. Discussions within trade unions on the necessary steps for our class to establish our own political voice are ongoing. To get involved in that fight, and to put to bed a system which puts profit over the interests of the vast majority of us, join the Socialist Party today.



Robert Jenrick UK GOVERNMENT/CC

# Bogus crackdown on child benefit fraud

## Take the wealth off the super-rich instead!

**ALEX SAMPSON**  
PLYMOUTH SOCIALIST PARTY

HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) confirmed this week that, after thousands of families were unjustly stripped of their child benefit, its controversial benefit fraud detection system has been fixed.

The system, which was supposed to stop child benefit to people who left the country and did not return within eight weeks, was found to be deeply flawed. In a move reminiscent of the Post Office Horizon scandal, bosses at HMRC thought that the risk of errors was "remote" and pushed on with its implementation.

In fact, of the nearly 24,000 families penalised in this way by HMRC, 71% have been shown to be errors. So far, only 5% of cases identified have actually been identified as fraudulent claims. That is nearly 15,000 families who had their child benefit stopped, causing undue stress and financial pressure, especially for families in Northern Ireland as the system failed to take into account the people travelling via the Republic.

The government says that this system is essential to tackle fraud and

will recoup around £350 million over five years. At the same time, it is doing nothing about the £1.9 billion annual tax gap between what the wealthiest members of society pay and what they should be paying. And that's before we even consider the appalling tax loopholes for multinational corporations. Benefit fraud is a drop in the ocean in comparison, but once again governments look for the easiest targets – working-class families.

The billions that could be recouped from tax evasion by the super-rich would pump much needed extra finance into the public purse, which could be used to properly fund our NHS, social care, schools and many other services that benefit us all, but Sir Keir Starmer lets his fat-cat business allies hoard millions and millions.

Such people should not be able to influence public policy for their own interests, while increasing the suffering of the working class in an attempt to claw back small amounts of money under the guise of efficiency. We must break from the rule of the rich and work to build a socialist society which works to benefit us all, not the ultra-rich bosses.



RAAC MARCO BERNARDINI/CC

# NHS funding now before the roof falls in!

Cheap Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC), concrete filled with bubbles, was used in hundreds of public buildings before it was deemed unsafe following roofs caving in. In 2023, hundreds of schools had to close to make them safe and some hospital ceilings and roofs are still literally being held up with props. The wait to replace them will go on, a report has warned.

All workers deserve to go to work not worrying if they are working in unsafe buildings and patients should not have to risk further injury by going to hospital for treatment.

The NHS urgently needs a gigantic injection of funding, not least to allow treatment to take place, in the first place, in a safe place!

unsafe. And during this time, already stretched and slashed NHS funds are having to be used to stop them collapsing and carry out maintenance. By the end of 2025, the seven hospitals will have required more than £500 million to prevent structural failure and simply to keep them from creating more NHS patients, or worse.

All workers deserve to go to work not worrying if they are working in unsafe buildings and patients should not have to risk further injury by going to hospital for treatment.

The NHS urgently needs a gigantic injection of funding, not least to allow treatment to take place, in the first place, in a safe place!

## Fund our NHS, train its staff!

IAN PATTISON

ENFIELD AND LEA VALLEY SOCIALIST PARTY

After attacking resident doctors for striking over pay and funding, health bosses have U-turned, saying the strike was a good thing!

Why the U-turn? Health bosses say that senior staff – who cover for younger resident doctors when they strike – are more confident and quicker to discharge patients.

Even on BMA picket lines, striking doctors have told me the same. But the whole point is resident doctors are still learning and training. If it was only senior consultants running hospitals everyday, the NHS would collapse.

And health bosses are wrong. There's a massive training crisis in the NHS.

Ambulance wait times, for example, mean paramedics can spend entire shifts sat in a car park, waiting to get their patient into A&E. They then don't get trained seeing more complex cases. This spirals into fewer qualified paramedics, increasing ambulance wait times further.

One student paramedic said: "All too often I have shifts which start and end in a hospital car park. Uncomfortable patients will be asked the same questions and subjected to the same assessments, blurring the line between learning and simply irritating a patient, and depriving students of opportunities to practice core clinical skills."

The Financial Times (FT) newspaper has bragged that on Christmas Day, the NHS bed occupancy rate was 81.2%, below the safe threshold of 85%. But at the time of writing it's 92.1%!

Other problems persist. The FT points to worsening ambulance response times. They're still falling well short of the NHS's safe level target. And the number of people waiting over 12 hours at A&E is the most ever – over 40,000 again in December.

Resident doctors are striking to save the NHS, to make sure it is properly funded and staffed.



## Your Party CEC election



PHOTO: MADDIE ROONEY

**N**ominations for Your Party Central Executive Committee (CEC) elections closed on 16 January. The Socialist Party wrote to those in the interim leadership of Your Party – the Independent Alliance MPs including Jeremy Corbyn, and Zarah Sultana – on 7 January, asking for clarification on the rules for the election, and whether or not they should be interpreted as excluding members of the Socialist Party being able to stand. So far, at the time of publication, the Socialist Party has not received a response. Read 'Letter to Your Party from the Socialist Party' at [socialistparty.org.uk](http://socialistparty.org.uk)

Consequently the Socialist Party Executive Committee agreed to Dave Nellist and April Ashley putting themselves forward in regional seats, to seek the required 75 'endorsements' from individuals to appear as candidates in the election. However, on 19 January, Dave and April received an email from Your Party Returning Officer Andrew Jordan informing them that they have been judged ineligible to stand. Appeals have been submitted.

We publish Dave and April's statements.

### April Ashley

I am a member of the National Executive Council (NEC) of public sector union UNISON, which has over 1.3m members. First elected to the NEC in 2009, I was re-elected as the female black members' rep in 2025, topping the poll with 28,792.

I have worked in local government in Southwark since 1994, in housing and now adult social care. I have been a UNISON member throughout those 32 years campaigning on pay, pensions, funding cuts, and for a fighting union that stands for members and a socialist alternative.

My union branch roles have included steward, housing convenor, Black members officer, and assistant branch secretary. In 2020, I was the first Black person to become UNISON Branch Secretary in Southwark. Our branch won against private profiteer Veolia on workloads.

I also play a leading role in Southwark Trades Council, as secretary previously and now chair.

I have fought for a political voice for the working class, standing as an anti-austerity, socialist candidate in elections at local government, London Assembly, and general election levels.

I am a lifelong anti-racist and solidarity campaigner, in the 1980s organising in the South Africa Labour Education Project and the movement against apartheid; then the Youth Against Racism in Europe protests following the murder of Stephen Lawrence and the campaign that confronted the British National Party in the 1990s, closing down their headquarters; protesting

### Dave Nellist

West Midlands County Councillor (Labour), Coventry South East - 4 years, 1982–1986  
MP (Labour), Coventry South East – 9 years, 1983–1992  
City Councillor (Socialist Party), Coventry, St Michael's ward – 14 years, 1998–2012  
Current national chair, Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC)  
Member, Unite (and antecedent unions), 52 years and the Socialist Party.

- When MP, only took skilled worker's wage, as calculated from union figures across 10 Coventry factories – donated half MP's salary to labour movement causes;
- one of first MPs to introduce Private Members Bill for a national minimum wage;
- led successful parliamentary campaign to extend Disability Living Allowance, benefiting parents of 4,000 severely disabled babies;
- parliamentary spokesperson for All Britain Anti-Poll Tax Federation;
- awarded Backbencher of the Year 1991;
- when MP, spoke at 1,500 public meetings and each year in top 10% of Labour MPs' voting records.

Expelled by Labour in January 1992 over promise to follow Terry Fields MP to jail by refusing to pay Poll Tax (later widened to 'bringing the Labour Party into disrepute' by association with Militant Tendency).

Narrowly lost seat in the 1992 general election – winning 10,551 votes.

After Parliament, worked five years for local solicitors on debt and welfare advice; including winning cases that resulted in the release of jailed poll tax nonpayers.

Until retirement in 2017, worked 20 years for Citizens Advice, Coventry.

*Dave says: "Conference decisively rejected a ban on dual membership. Jeremy and Zarah have consistently said Your Party will be different, fully controlled by its members. Let members vote for whom they want on the CEC - no bans decided in secret!"*

*"My immediate priority on the CEC will be to work to put trade unions at the heart of building our new party – and to campaign for the widest anti-austerity and anti-war challenge in the 2026 elections."*

PHOTO: PAUL MATSSON

against the English Defence League in the 2010s; building Black Lives Matter; and today organising Windrush solidarity campaigning in UNISON.

I am a Socialist Party member. I am aware that Your Party rules are currently being interpreted to say that candidates can't be a member of another national political party, but I and others believe this doesn't apply to the Socialist Party which supports Your Party and its aims.



PHOTO: MARY FINCH

# TORIES' 50% ANTI-STRIKE BALLOT THRESHOLD REMAINS

- Scrap all anti-union laws
- Fight for a new workers' party



## WHAT WE THINK

**"A** landmark day for millions of workers", is how the general secretary of the Trades Union Congress (TUC) Paul Nowak greeted Labour's Employment Rights Act receiving royal assent on 18 December.

The Labour government proclaims that the vast majority of the Tories' 2016 Trade Union Act is being repealed. What it doesn't put in its press briefings is that the most restrictive aspect of that legislation, the undemocratic 50% strike ballot turn-out threshold, remains.

### A long way short

The reforms in the Employment Rights Act are a long way from the already limited policies Labour adopted in its pitch to win unions' favour ahead of their 2024 general election victory. Since, policies have been subject to 'review' and 'scrutiny' by panels with big business bosses and a whole series of obstructions from the unelected House of Lords. The government's own impact assessment of the legislation as it stands now puts 'cost to businesses' at 80% less than under previous assessments of the unamended bill.

In fact, had it wanted to, the Labour government with its 160+ seat majority could have passed emergency legislation on day one of office, abolishing not just the 2016 laws, but all the anti-trade union laws on the statute books. Their ability to pass laws so quickly was shown when, in April 2025, parliament met on a Saturday to take government control of Scunthorpe steelworks to cut across the threat of industrial sabotage by billionaire owners.

In fact, the government has set no date for the 50% threshold to be abolished. Further 'consultation' with big business is being discussed, there is also the suggestion that it will be linked to the establishment of the ability to vote electronically in strike ballots – something that can also be used to push the issue back further.

Undoubtedly, on top of a willingness to bend backwards for big



PHOTO: PAUL MATSSON

business, Labour's delays are also motivated by a desire to continue to use the Tory laws as a bulwark against workers' struggles.

Starmer's Labour is hated by wide sections of the working class. Add to that the accumulated frustration at the ongoing, grinding rise in the cost of living, and squeeze on funding for day-to-day services in the public sector.

The requirement for 40% of members in key parts of the public sector to vote in favour of a strike, an additional barrier on top of the 50% turn-out requirement, has been scrapped. Why one and not the other? Because, while a potential obstruction to strikes, in the ten years it has been in law, the 40% requirement has never prevented a major nationwide strike. The 50% threshold, however, has.

The government would love to get through another round of

below-inflation, unfunded public sector pay deals, with the 50% threshold still in place. Although it is also true that the misleading headlines that 'the Tories 2016 anti-union laws are now gone', can plant seeds in a layer of workers' heads that there are now fewer legal barriers in the way of fighting back. The government's growing list of U-turns lay bare its weaknesses too.

### Unions debate Labour relationship

As discussions in the trade union movement develop in advance of this year's conference season, the issue of unions' relationship with Labour is heating up – fuelled by workers' own experiences of a Labour government attacking our class.

One of the ways trade union leaders will try to keep heat out of that debate is to point to the Employment Rights Act. They will point to it as an example of what can be achieved with a government that is at least willing to be in the same room as the trade unions. It has to be pointed out, however, that this is a government equally willing to try to carry out attacks on trade union members. A stark example being Birmingham Labour council's brutal 'fire-and-rehire' attack on its bin workers, assisted by the Labour government, its commissioners in the council, and by the courts.

A whole series of union leaders are now making the demand for an employment rights bill mark two, with the aspiration to include in it measures removed in its first iteration. But what forces will fight for it in parliament?

### Starmer's successor

Such is Starmer's unpopularity, and the fact that it will inevitably be written large in the May local election results, the capitalist media is in constant speculation about who will replace him as Labour leader and PM. Whoever it is, and whenever it comes, it is likely that his successor will pitch to the left, including trying to lean on support from sections of the trade unions, including with pledges to strengthen union and workers' rights.

But how would a new Labour leader, especially one able to win support of the required 80 MPs from an overwhelmingly Blairite Parliamentary Labour Party, be any more steadfast in standing up against the demands of big business?

Trade unions taking even modest steps towards independent political representation would in fact have a far bigger effect tipping the scales in the direction of the working class.

That Unison members have elected a new general secretary who in the election pledged to review the union's relationship with Labour, and that multiple regional bodies in Unite have put the issue of a special conference to do similarly onto the agenda of its Executive Council, shows the pressure that is there from members.

It is vital that the unions put central the demand to repeal all the anti-union laws. It is also true that their existence didn't stop the 2022-23 strike wave from being the biggest in a generation. At several points during those struggles, union leaders were forced to reject offers, and continue action, reflecting the fighting mood of their members.

On the question of political representation, and on the extent to which they are prepared to organise industrial struggles against Starmer's Labour, union leaders will act under pressure too. Part of the application of that pressure is the struggle in the structures of the unions for a fighting programme and strategy, and for leaderships prepared to carry it out.

## 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!



## UCU further education strike

Members of the University and College Union (UCU) at 17 colleges took part in nationwide strike action from 14-16 January, fighting over pay, funding and for national bargaining.

### WM College, London: '0% does not add up'

On the first day of the strike, around 40 people joined the picket line at WM College, an adult education college. We have been offered no pay rise, and face funding cuts. We were visited by Unison and Unite members and UCU general secretary Jo Grady.

Members decided to picket from 8-11am, so that those who could only get along later could join in. We set up a WhatsApp group so that we could exchange ideas on what slogans we were going to shout, to share lyrics for trade union songs we would sing, and to organise who was bringing cakes and coffee!

Loads of members brought their homemade placards, including '0% pay rise does not add up' and 'Fund adult education now'. One member had painstakingly made a replica of the front of our college building and a huge pair of scissors out of cardboard, to highlight how funding had been cut.

We recruited new members to the union. No new pay proposal has yet been made by the college, and there are no announcements to reconsider funding from the government. Members know that we will need to take further action to win our demands.

DAVID KAPLAN, UCU REP, PERSONAL CAPACITY

### Liverpool City College: Working conditions 'unsustainable'

Members on the picket line at Liverpool City College told us that their pay and conditions as a minimum should be brought up to those in education like schoolteachers. There is also a key issue of workload, where there is an increase in student numbers but no increase in teaching staff. Restrictions on taking leave was also an issue. Members mentioned about being brought in over the holiday period to cover, in some cases, non-teaching work.

Some members also have to monitor student absenteeism and are asked to contact pupils at home, which many felt was not appropriate for a teaching role.

They are all dedicated staff and want to do their best but are restricted by the increased pressures they are being put under. One striker described working conditions as "unsustainable" and workloads as "unmanageable", resulting in a negative impact on students' experiences, especially for students with special learning needs.

THOMAS BUTLER, LIVERPOOL SOUTH SOCIALIST PARTY

### City of Portsmouth College: Pay cuts while bosses give themselves bonuses

"Management here say they are 'aspirational'. We want a work-life balance where we don't use food banks, worry about paying our bills, or supporting our kids. We care about what we do and we want fair pay and decent working conditions, not aspirations!"

These were the angry words of a striking National Education Union (NEU) member at Portsmouth Sixth Form College on day three of their successful strike against an imposed pay deal.

Action was being taken alongside UCU members at Highbury College and North Harbour Construction Training College.

Trades lecturers are now doing their own admin, after jobs were cut. UCU strikers spoke of how members were joining the union, angry at the refusal of management to enter into negotiations.

Students gave their backing to the strike, which raised the morale of everyone taking action.

NICK CHAFFEY, SOCIALIST PARTY SOUTHERN AND SOUTH EAST REGION

### Windsor College: Insulting pay offer

The CEO had the nerve to request that the strikers move their picket away from the front of the building, which they quite rightly refused to do!

I spoke to one of the pickets who pointed out some of the problems



Portsmouth SOUTHERN SOCIALIST PARTY

### New College Swindon: Concessions won

At New College Swindon, we received a last-minute offer from management the Friday before strike action was due to take place.

In September, a member of the Senior Leadership Team quite literally laughed at us for suggesting caps on class sizes, evening and weekend working etc. Yet, by January, the threat of strike action had won these things.

However, there was still no movement on pay, with the 3% offer being

they are facing, while enduring year-on-year pay erosion. They were originally offered an insulting pay rise of 0.84%, which was then increased to an equally inadequate 1.7%.

Extra pressures come from increased class sizes while, at the same time, there is a lack of support staff due to vacancies not being filled.

NEIL ADAMS, READING SOCIALIST PARTY

### Truro: 'Privatisation means it's dog eat dog, and we're left with the scraps'

At Truro and Penwith College, science support worker Michelle Franklin told us that, armed with a chemistry degree, she started eleven years ago. "When I started, I was paid £4,000 more than minimum wage. Then pay scales started to be squeezed, and now we're at minimum wage." A 2% imposed pay increase will take her marginally above minimum wage.

"How can we talk to students about career opportunities and making their way, when they see how we're treated?"

Ian Hyland, chair of the UCU branch, said that in the 1990s, "they effectively privatised the colleges. Then it was dog eat dog, with colleges competing, and we were left with the scraps."

He also pointed out that the college spends millions on "shiny new buildings" but can't pay staff a decent wage. "When I started in 2010, the pay gap with schoolteachers was £2,000. Now it's £10,000."

Seventy staff were made redundant at the end of the last summer term.

ROB ROONEY, CORNWALL SOCIALIST PARTY



Duncan (left) supporting the picket line in Truro SOUTHWEST SOCIALIST PARTY

below even what the bosses' Association of Colleges recommends for this academic year.

The offer was well-timed by management to give us little chance to discuss. There were mixed feelings. 62% voted to accept the offer, with the remainder still wanting to go out on strike.

Although I and a significant minority still thought we could have won more through striking, we should celebrate these concessions. Our task now is to use this victory to build the branch in preparation for further battles in the not-too-distant future.

SCOTT HUNTER, SWINDON UCU, PERSONAL CAPACITY



WM College LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

### Keep fighting – but build for national action to win on funding and national pay bargaining

SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBERS IN UCU

We welcome the national coordinated strike action across the FE sector and that UCU has put demands on Starmer's government, including for national bargaining.

However, we have to recognise that this action was not on the scale it could have been, and it is large-scale national action that is required to win the demands of the union's 'New Deal for FE' campaign.

The leadership grouping around general secretary Jo Grady and her supporters on the Further Education Committee (FEC), who currently hold a majority, have repeatedly undermined the campaign. They delayed the ballot until November and action until January, then voted against a motion from Socialist Party member Duncan Moore to reballoon those branches who were close to meeting the turnout thresholds.

This created a long period in which branches could settle with their individual employers and drop out of the national coordinated action. While we celebrate the wins made by these branches, and recognise the potential of even the threat of strike action to win concessions from employers, we also have to recognise that winning

national bargaining and beginning to challenge the sector-wide erosion in pay and funding requires serious national action.

#### What next

We must support those 17 branches still on strike to win the best possible settlements for this academic year. The current timeline put forward by the leadership – first a consultative ballot on whether to continue and then waiting for an FEC meeting on 6 February – is unacceptable. The union must call further strike dates urgently and present a serious strategy to win these disputes. If the leadership will not act, then those branches still out should discuss naming their own strike dates in maximum coordination with each other.

For the next pay round, Socialist Party members will argue for an aggregated national ballot of FE colleges with a view to balloting in June and being strike-ready in September.

The current disaggregated ballot overcame the undemocratic 50% turnout threshold on a national basis. This can be done again, if there is a serious lead from the top.

#### We need a fighting leadership - Re-elect Duncan Moore

This will be stronger if we also campaign for a serious, fighting leadership of the union in the National Executive Committee elections that open on 30 January, and a left majority on the FEC, to replace endless delays and piecemeal action with a coordinated national fightback. That includes re-electing Duncan Moore to a UK-elected FE seat.



Duncan (left) supporting the picket line in Truro SOUTHWEST SOCIALIST PARTY

## PCS elections 2026: What's at stake

DAVE SEMPLE  
PCS VICE PRESIDENT 2024-25, PERSONAL CAPACITY

It has been almost a year since Keir Starmer's government announced its plan to cut 15% or £2 billion from the staffing budgets of civil service departments. That means a minimum of 40,000 jobs cut and a knock-on impact to devolved government in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Government departments are under attack. The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office has announced 25% job cuts. The Cabinet Office has announced 30% job cuts and privatisation. Pay and conditions are under systematic attack across most employers, including the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), the largest government department, which has not even utilised all the money made available as part of the civil service pay remit, let alone met a claim of 10%.

Grievance is not in short supply across government employers. The Office for National Statistics, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), Ofgem, Met Police, British Library, Houses of Parliament, the Department for Environment, Farming and Rural Affairs (Defra) and other areas are fighting on a mix of pay, office closures, job cuts and inflexible approaches to hybrid working.

It is also almost a year since the Public and Commercial Services Union (PCS) conference carried motion A383, which instructed the Left Unity/Democracy Alliance majority National Executive Committee (NEC) to build a serious campaign capable of winning on jobs, pay, conditions and the myriad other issues.

Valiant members and reps have been waging battles with all of these employers and more. Yet they are being left to fight on their own, each in their own silo, with no attempt to coordinate or widen the disputes.



PHOTO: ROB WILLIAMS

On the contrary, the leadership dumped any pretence of building a campaign, arguing that there is no mood. Odd, since there are numerous areas across the union beating the undemocratic turnout thresholds and striking in their thousands. Even more odd, since the DWP, the largest group in the union, beat the threshold in their indicative ballot on pay and has now moved to a statutory ballot.

#### We need a leadership with backbone

It is crucial that we elect a union leadership that is not only committed to carrying out union policy, but has the backbone to build the campaign necessary to win for members, and stop the rot of cuts, low pay and poor working conditions which is creeping at an ever-increasing speed.

Not least because also pending is an announcement on civil service pay for 2026. Labour took office in 2024 on a pledge to "respect" the civil service, but has given the lie to this with persistently below-inflation pay awards, resulting in real-terms pay cuts for most civil servants: 4.5% in 2024, 3.25% in 2025. More pay cuts are on the way.

In April, the entire NEC of PCS will be up for election.

This is an opportunity for members to replace a leadership that has spent the last year asleep at the wheel. A leadership more interested in praising Labour's weak Employment Rights Act as "a new era for UK workers" than fighting to overturn the oppressive anti-union regime in government departments.

Socialist Party members, as part

### Members in many areas are fighting valiantly, but are being left to fight on their own

## Vote 'yes' in DWP ballot

PCS members in the DWP (the Department for Work and Pensions) are being balloted for strike action on pay from 19 January to 23 February. BLN supporters are working hard to turn out a 'Yes' vote and smash the 50% threshold imposed by the anti-trade union laws, disgracefully kept in place by Keir Starmer's government.

DWP workers desperately need a pay rise. 30,000 will be on minimum wage for the fourth year in a row in April, and close to 50,000 are not far behind them.

Vote 'Yes' in the ballot to fight on pay, and demand that the union's Group Executive Committee, currently controlled by the 'Left Unity' group that also has a majority on the National Executive Committee, takes action on hybrid working, job cuts, office closures, Saturday openings, staffing and workloads.

#### PCS in DWP needs a fighting leadership

DWP PCS activists at the BLN conference were clear about the need for a fighting trade union leadership at both DWP group and national level. Reps were determined to mobilise the anger of our members behind the strongest possible 'yes' vote in the delayed pay ballot.

There is an appetite to fight to address understaffing and the crushing workloads our members are working under, and to win access to hybrid working for all staff. The Left Unity approach to just campaign on one issue at a time does not resonate with members who are facing the full range of attacks from management.

If you are fed up with the pressure in our DWP workplaces, then work with us to build a strong 'yes' vote, but also crucially build the campaign for the election of a fighting leadership in our union with candidates on the left slate supported by the BLN.

● Read full report at socialistparty.org.uk

## Starmer and bosses' media team up against education workers' right to protest

SHEILA CAFFEY AND MICHAELA WILDE  
NEU EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERS FOR THE SOUTHWEST, PERSONAL CAPACITY

National Education Union (NEU) members, parents, students and the local community were not pleased that Damien Egan MP was invited to speak at Bristol Brunel Academy in September. Worries over his voting record, public comments to constituents, and his support for the genocide in Gaza were all raised as reasons why it was not appropriate for him to visit.

This would be a place where he could put forward his views unchallenged, and students and staff would not be allowed to question or respond to his policies, affiliations or political support.

The visit was cancelled by the school due to this pressure, citing safeguarding as their reasons.

Damien Egan was quiet at the time, but months later has decided

to release an attack on the union branch, and several national media stories have been run, attacking individuals and the branch. It was even raised at Prime Minister's Question Time, leading to Keir Starmer saying that there would be an investigation into the school and that people 'would be held to account'. Ofsted arrived in the school with only a couple of hours' notice the next day.

At a time when it is claimed that there is no money to fund resources and the staff that are desperately needed to support and teach children and young people, there is apparently money to fund ten Ofsted inspectors to be photographed walking into the school to show the vigorous nature of Starmer's holding education workers to account.

Less than an hour later, half of them left quietly (with no media photos) as they weren't needed. These will have been paid for a day's work, taking money from frontline

services - simply for Starmer's photo shoot.

Education workers have always raised criticisms of Ofsted and its political nature has been clear in the past when used to push schools to become academies or to remove school leadership teams that aren't liked.

However, this is the first time that a prime minister has clearly used it to punish workers and to try and enforce political rhetoric. This will lead to individuals chosen to 'carry the can' and potentially be disciplined or fired, pressurising workers to 'put up and shut up', rather than organising around legitimate concerns.

All workers should have the right to whistleblow and raise issues in their workplace, without being open to public and political attacks. Preventing this right, and using Ofsted and the media as political attack dogs to punish workers, is an issue that the whole trade union and workers' movement should publicly expose and mobilise against.

of the Broad Left Network (BLN) in PCS, will be standing candidates. We are arguing for a coalition of the left, standing on a programme capable of winning for members, to defeat the current Left Unity/Democracy Alliance leadership.

Branch Annual General Meetings begin from late January. Every branch will have the opportunity to debate a serious industrial and political strategy to fight Labour's cuts, and to nominate a fighting national union leadership.

To all those reading this who are as yet undecided, perhaps suspicious of factions in PCS: if you are determined to fight back for our members, we urge you to nominate BLN-supported candidates and join us in the struggle to build a fighting, democratic union.

### JOIN THE SOCIALISTS

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

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

NICK HART

SOCIALIST PARTY NATIONAL COMMITTEE

Capitalism is a failed system. That's becoming increasingly clear to anyone paying through the nose for privatised housing, utilities and transport, seeing the real value of their pay packet shrink yearly, or watching the rapid pace of climate breakdown or the descent into further conflicts internationally.

No wonder then that a range of opinion polls show an increasingly favourable view of socialism among people in Britain. Or that there is such enthusiasm for a left-wing political alternative to Starmer's Labour – shown by the initial 800,000 who signed up to support Jeremy Corbyn and Zarah Sultana's Your Party.

At recent rallies of Your Party supporters, Zarah spoke to this layer of people when she has said: "We're done begging for crumbs off the table. We're taking the lot... nationalising a few industries isn't enough. We need democratic control of the economy by workers!" And "we need to nationalise the entire economy."

We agree! Over the years, the Socialist Party has consistently raised the need for a fundamental transfer of economic power away from the super-rich capitalist class to the working class – the ones who work to produce the wealth in the first place. But what would this look like, and how can we make it happen?

When given the chance to expand on what having "the entire economy under the control of workers" would mean in practice, Zarah has been less clear.

In an interview on the BBC, she elaborated: "When I talk about nationalising our economy, I'm talking about the commanding heights of our economy. I'm talking about the utilities, energy, rail, buses, telecoms, mail... We also have to look at other forms of democratic ownership in our economy. That means workers' cooperatives, that means community land trusts, that means public banking, that means a national welfare – or a wealth fund that workers and our communities control."

#### Alternate models?

While on an LBC phone-in, she briefly referenced as models to copy: the Asian Tigers (where a large amount of state intervention in the economies in South East Asia led to a capitalist boom in the 1990s); Germany (where worker representatives are invited to sit on company boards alongside their bosses); and Latin America (where a series of leftist 'pink tide' governments in the 2000s and 2010s carried through an expansion of welfare states, notably among them Hugo Chavez in Venezuela).



**Workers in each workplace could collectively decide how best to organise the working day, people and resources, to both improve their own conditions and productivity and to benefit wider society**

What unites these vastly different examples is that, in each of them, capitalism has remained intact. Major industries, banking, land and natural resources have largely remained in the hands of wealthy shareholders. They have been subject to the vagaries and storms of the global and national capitalist markets, and when economic crisis has hit, it is the working class which has been forced to suffer in the form of falling living standards.

#### Capitalist nationalisation

Within living memory, in Britain there was public ownership of the steel, coal and shipbuilding industries at different points in the decades following WWII, alongside utilities, mail and railways. However, they were run along much the same lines as the private companies that came before them, with highly paid bosses looking to extract the maximum amount of work for the minimum level of wages.

Because the workforce themselves didn't have day-to-day control and oversight of the running of these industries, they were subject to a tug of war over pay, jobs and working conditions. This led to struggles and strikes in the nationalised industries, most notably in the miners' strikes for fair pay in 1972, and against pit closures in 1984-85.

In Britain today, partial renationalisation of the railways through Great British Railways is under way. It's welcome that private train operating companies will no longer have their profits subsidised by sky-high passenger fares. However, bosses and shareholders of contracted-out cleaning and rolling stock companies will carry on laughing all the way to the bank. And, given the Starmer government's record so far in starving other public services of funds, there's no guarantee that publicly owned railways will have the necessary investment to become more affordable or reliable.

Removing the profit motive could

stop the short termism, and driving down of wages and driving up of prices, that we see all the time under capitalism today. But allowing nationalised industries to be run simply as businesses that happen to be publicly owned wouldn't realise the full benefits of state ownership.

#### Co-ops

Some, including Zarah, have also raised the idea of worker-owned co-operatives as a way of organising the economy alternative to either private or state ownership. Doubtless a lot of workers would be more motivated to find ways to improve their output by the prospect of increasing their take-home pay or reducing the working day, rather than simply enriching their boss or shareholders further!

But in the medium-to-long term, a workers' co-op that found itself in competition with other businesses in its sector could see itself squeezed out of the market due to large privately owned companies having greater ability to sustain short-term losses while undercutting the competition on price – as happened to the Co-op Group of food stores in the UK in the second half of the 20th century.

#### Socialist planning

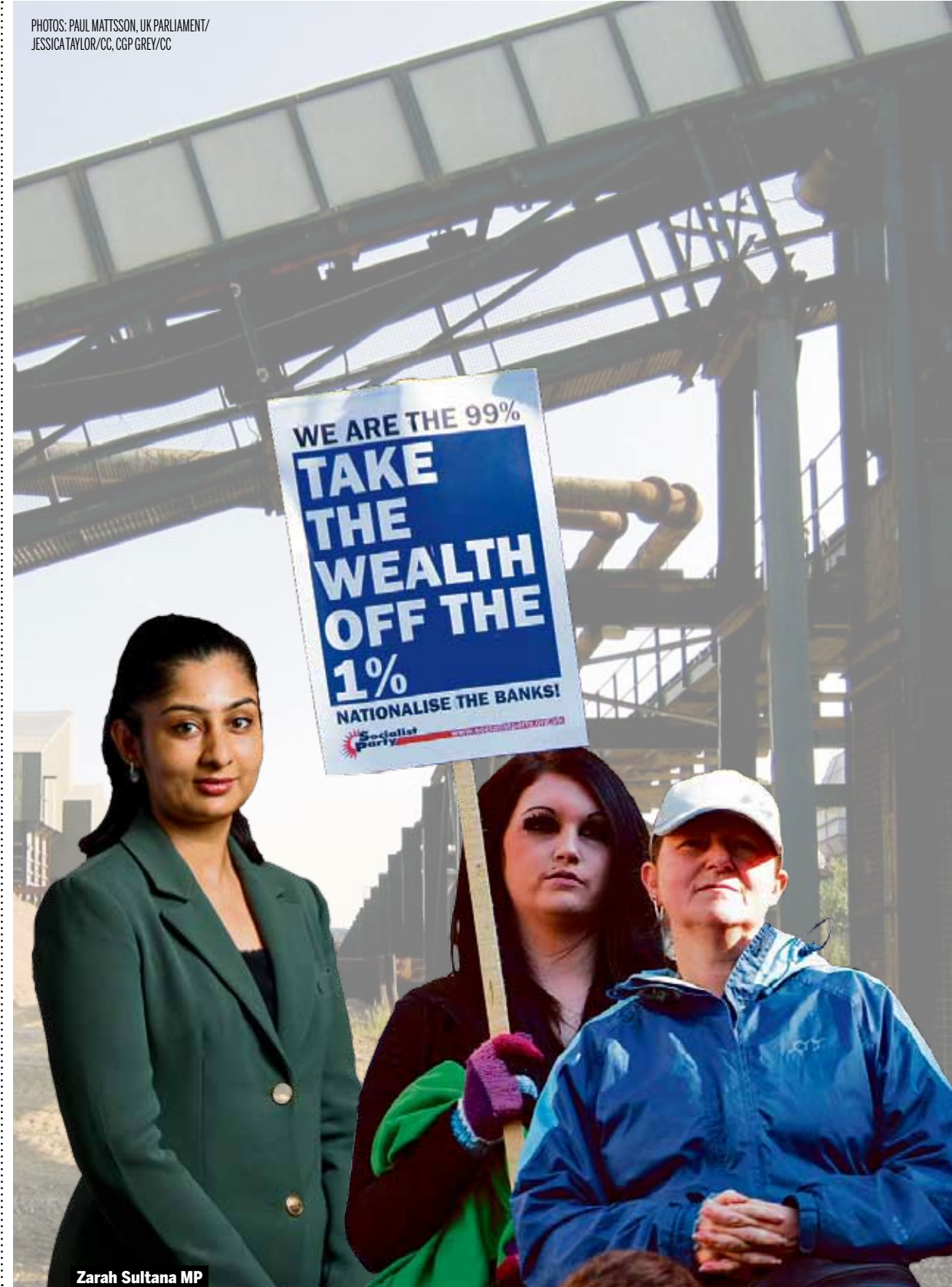
Rather, socialists advocate for a system where planning predominates. This would allow for investment in people and technology where it's needed, not just where capitalists can see easy returns. It would also eliminate a lot of the inefficiencies created by the free market – such as the wasted effort of engineers in competing companies developing essentially identical TVs, jeans, or any number of consumer products, and workers to produce and distribute more than is likely to ever be sold before getting replaced by next year's model.

But without the 'supply and demand' of the free market, how will the planners know what people need and want, and the best way to go about giving them it?

Rather than people just following orders from on high while they are at work, workers in each workplace could collectively decide how best to organise the working day, people and resources, to both improve their own conditions and productivity and to benefit wider society, not just the bottom line. In itself, this could unlock a

# 'NATIONALISE THE WHOLE ECONOMY?'

## A Socialist Party member responds



PHOTOS: PAUL MATTHEWSON, UK PARLIAMENT/JESSICA TAYLOR/CC, CCP GREY/CC

Zarah Sultana MP

lot of efficiencies that are currently ignored when workers suggest ways of improving things to their boss!

Workforces, their trade unions, the wider community and government could then elect and delegate committees to oversee and plan publicly owned industries for the benefit of all, rather than vested interests.

#### Small businesses

Socialists, including Zarah Sultana, often get asked if this means that we should nationalise every last corner shop, food kiosk or pub?

As it is, many small businesses, from tied pubs to franchised corner shops and takeaways, to family farms, already find themselves beholden to large suppliers or buyers who can name their price. Meanwhile complete independents get squeezed out by corporate competitors who can use economy of scale and financial reserves to undercut them on price and placement.

A socialist government could offer these small businesses access to the preferential credit, research and other advantages enjoyed by their larger competitors, while allowing them to keep their individual character and family ownership.

In return, the main thing that would be asked is that workers would be paid a fair wage with trade union representation, and that these businesses participate in the general plan for the sector, that includes them taking proper care of their workers, the community around them and the environment.

#### Compensation

As Zarah has said, nationalising just a few industries isn't enough. The

### Come to a Socialist Party meeting near you

The Socialist Party has regular meetings in towns and cities across the country.

If you would like to participate:  
 • [socialistparty.org.uk/events](https://socialistparty.org.uk/events)  
 • Or text 07958 032071 with your name and postcode.

Socialist Party calls for at a minimum the top 150 large companies and the banking system that dominate the economy in Britain to be taken into public ownership.

But wouldn't it cost too much to buy out all the shareholders of the large monopolies?

That's why socialists call for compensation of shareholders only on the basis of proven need – for instance pension funds or working- and middle-class people who have parked their savings in stocks and shares. Although, as of 2022, pension funds held only 1.2% and individuals (including likely some much less in need) held 10.8% of publicly listed shares in UK companies.

An act of parliament could establish public ownership of these companies in law, but it would be another thing to establish it in reality. Large investors in the newly nationalised industries would seek compensation or their companies back, including by attempting to use the courts, as happened when Northern Rock was nationalised in 2008, for example.

#### Workers' action

The working class is the overwhelming majority in Britain; on the basis of mobilising its full power, any attempts by the capitalist class to undermine a socialist programme of nationalisation would not be able to succeed. The working class would play an active role in taking over the running of industry, and to replace the current machinery of government, and the UK's legal system based on property rights established by medieval barons, with one which recognises the working class's rights to own and control the collective fruits of its labour.

This process was carried through to its most successful conclusion in the October revolution in Russia in 1917, which established workers' control over production at the coalface and through the first workers' government. In living memory, the revolutionary processes in France in 1968 and Portugal in 1974 saw workers take over the running of their factories on their own initiative.

If the UK assets of Amazon's retail arm were taken into public ownership tomorrow, the workers in the fulfilment centres could continue to pack and dispatch orders with the sales collected through a clone of the website under the democratic management of the workforce. Bezos could then stamp his feet and demand his property rights all he wanted, but the real assets – the warehouses, track, trucks and inventory – would be in the hands of the people.

But surely a socialist Britain couldn't survive on its own? It's true that the offshoring of manufacturing from Britain and many other Western nations over recent decades would mean that a planned economy on socialist lines would at least initially involve importing many essential goods from abroad. But this is all the more reason to build links with socialists in



**The working class is the overwhelming majority in Britain; on the basis of mobilising its full power, any attempts by the capitalist class to undermine a socialist programme of nationalisation would not be able to succeed**

other countries, and to make appeals for the working class internationally to struggle against their own ruling capitalist classes.

#### Working-class party

What is key to fundamentally changing the world we live in for the better is the involvement of the working class on a mass scale. If the economy should be run by the working class, then it needs its own party. That's why it's a mistake that Zarah and others have dismissed the idea of trade unions, organisations bringing together six million workers, being able to affiliate and have a direct democratic role in shaping the programme and campaigning approach of Your Party.

Socialist Party members raise the idea of a new workers' party encompassing the trade unions as the main organisations of the working class, not just because this could provide the boots on the ground and a mass base along with the kind of democratic oversight that Your Party has so far lacked. But also because this kind of mass party would provide a space where ideas on how society and the economy should be run can be developed and debated.

Alongside this, working-class people struggling together to win improvements to their lives under capitalism as it exists today can help them develop confidence that more fundamental change is possible. Even on a basic level this can be seen on nearly any picket line, when, taking time out from the normal routine of work and away from bosses' prying ears, workers end up discussing ways in which their workplace and the world in general could be run better!

Many others developing an interest in socialist and revolutionary ideas will be grappling with the same questions Zarah has raised. To discuss further about how socialism would work in practice, and help build a force that can make it happen, get in touch to find out how you can join the Socialist Party.

## WHAT THE SOCIALIST PARTY STANDS FOR

This manifesto sums up our main demands on the different issues that face the working class.

It outlines what is necessary to begin the process of achieving a socialist society, in Britain and internationally, able to meet the needs of humanity and to protect the planet.

- Visit [socialistparty.org.uk/WWSF](https://socialistparty.org.uk/WWSF)
- Or purchase a physical copy from [leftbooks.co.uk](https://leftbooks.co.uk)



## Join the fightback JOIN THE SOCIALISTS

- Visit [socialistparty.org.uk/join](https://socialistparty.org.uk/join) or call 020 8988 8777
- or text your name and postcode to 07958 032071

to find out more about joining us today!



# Socialists get Cardiff student union to oppose cuts



JAMES SCOTT  
CARDIFF SOCIALIST STUDENTS

In December, I helped to get a motion passed into Cardiff University Students Union policy, mandating it to lobby the university to 'open the books' to its finances, stop academic cuts by using its hundreds of millions of pounds of reserves, and campaign against cuts.

Cardiff University announced 400 job cuts in 2025 to fill a supposed

£30 million deficit in its budget. Job cuts have since been reduced to 286, thanks to campaigning from trade unions, academics, and students.

Socialist Students' president candidate Aris Prevost voiced these demands in the student union (SU) election last spring. He gained 340 votes, however, did not win.

Not to be put off, Socialist Students successfully backed me in the autumn SU elections this academic year, and I was elected to the

Student Senate, the SU's policymaking body.

Our anti-cuts motion was passed by Senate, with 88% of the vote – mandating the elected full-time sabbatical team of the student union. Another three motions are due to be voted on by Senate in February.

Join the student fightback  
**JOIN** socialist students  
[socialiststudents.org.uk/join](http://socialiststudents.org.uk/join)

# Swansea youth oppose Trump's global wars

SWANSEA SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBERS

"I want to sign that petition. Trump thinks he's 'king of the world', and he can do what he likes'. That was the response of a young college student within one minute of setting up our Socialist Party campaign stall on 17 January.

Swansea city centre can be notoriously quiet in January, with people with little money about to donate to our campaigns after Christmas. But we had a cracking stall, with lots of young people stopping to speak to us

about campaigning to 'Stop Trump's global wars'.

College, uni students, and young workers were angry at Trump's war-mongering. And his authoritarian use of ICE troops to kill and attack local protesters and ordinary workers. Some said they were socialists, while others weren't sure, but wanted to find out more about our ideas and programme.

What can we do about Trump, and how do we stop this happening over here? Young people are understandably worried about war, dictatorial

leaders like Trump causing global havoc, and their own future under capitalism.

Our Socialist Party stalls play a vital role in highlighting these issues. But, more importantly, they offer a socialist solution, urging young people to join our party.

Like what you've read?  
**SUBSCRIBE TO THE SOCIALIST**  
[socialistparty.org.uk/subscribe](http://socialistparty.org.uk/subscribe)

# Obituary: Jimmy Hackett – Liverpool '47' councillor

ROGER BANNISTER  
LIVERPOOL SOCIALIST PARTY

We are sorry to learn about the death of Jimmy Hackett, one of the 47 socialist Liverpool councillors who took on and beat the Thatcher government in the 1980s, gaining additional financial resources for the city. In what was a surprise at the time,

Jimmy was elected to the council by defeating the leader of the Tories in Warbreck ward. From that moment, he was resolute in his resolve to see the struggle through.

Jimmy will be remembered by all who knew him for his sense of humour and sharp wit, and will be missed. Condolences to Jimmy's family and friends.



# Herts workers and students unite against racism

Socialist Students conference 2026

Saturday 14 February 2026, University of Manchester

Register here:



MORGAN TRITTON  
HERTFORDSHIRE SOCIALIST STUDENTS

Stevenage Socialist Party and Hertfordshire Socialist Students joined a collective of local organisations opposing racism, marching through the town, under the banner of 'Herts Not Hate'. We were responding to rising anti-refugee and anti-migrant action in Hertfordshire, where several temporary accommodation hotels are located.

As we build for the Socialist Students conference on 14 February in Manchester, Herts Socialist Students is focused on strengthening links with organised workers locally, and highlighting the role students play in community action.

I spoke at the rally on behalf of Herts Socialist Students. I also shared the success of a recent sit-in by two Herts Socialist Students in defence of a Gazan university applicant, who had initially been unfairly denied an offer. As a result of the action, the university met our demands, and the applicant has now been offered a place at the University of Hertfordshire.

The speech by Morgan Tritton, Hertfordshire Socialist Students

Students of Hertfordshire and the workers of Hertfordshire, fighting together against austerity, war, and all forms of oppression.

Higher education is in crisis. And Labour's answer is just to push the costs onto us – the students and staff, while the rich get richer.

So, Socialist Students is saying we want to take the wealth off the super-rich, and put it to use. Fund education properly, abolish tuition fees, cancel student debt, and bring back real maintenance grants that rise with inflation.

And make education a public right, not a privilege or a big business.

We've shared this message of 'Funding Not Fees' across campus.

And, in the last year, we have got considerable backing from the students. Starting with just four [Socialist Student members at Herts] last year, we're now at nearly 100.

Our major campaign in the last year has been to end sexism and violence against women on campus. By ensuring prevention, training, and awareness is in place. But also signposting and support for victims is properly funded.

We passed a motion in student council to fight for this. But the university has responded with apathy and even refusal to back down from their non-compliance in providing quality anti-harassment and sexual misconduct training to all students.

# Coventry's People's Budget

ADAM HARMSWORTH  
COVENTRY SOCIALIST PARTY

Socialist Party members have been helping Your Party supporters build for this Coventry People's Budget conference on 17 January. We contacted trade union branches, community organisations, and charities to invite them.

Socialist Party campaign stalls promoted the conference, and we supported Coventry Your Party stalls doing the same. Reaching out to the working class in this way is crucial to establish a force in the elections that is fighting to restore services and to connect with the working class.

The conference itself, attended by more than 60 people, delivered a fantastic set of proposals to drastically improve people's lives. The Socialist Party's Dave Nellist and Coventry Your Party councillor Grace Lewis introduced the discussion, explaining how Coventry's Labour council is still making things worse for us in the city (see below). Coventry Your Party MP, Zarah Sultana, spoke too.

There were so many ideas from the floor, by the end of the conference, four flipchart pages were filled!

Public sector workers called for decent parental leave for all council staff, along with a four-day week and £15-an-hour minimum wage. A parent proposed 'baby boxes' with provisions for all new parents, and free schools meals for all children, throughout the entire year.

## Underfunded

A teacher called for restoring and fully staffing our libraries and extending their opening hours so all workers can access them. The teacher and others referred to the horrendous underfunding of schools, while strikes are ongoing in the city about exactly that.

Several speakers lamented the housing crisis, and demanded licensing of landlords, rent controls, and the acquisition of empty homes and land hoarded by developers, and for a mass council house-building programme. Alongside that, building and improving homes with insulation and solar power to ensure energy efficiency.

These measures would also contribute to fighting climate change, along with a properly funded, publicly owned transport network that could include buses, trains, park-and-ride schemes, and trams to vital services, like the local hospital.

That is only a portion of the proposals. It showed that people want far more to improve their city. That's certainly more than Labour's plans and tax rises on workers, likewise from Tories and Reform.

The next step is to boil down four pages of brilliant ideas into an anti-austerity socialist programme to take into May's council elections. All 54 seats are up for election. The Socialist Party is calling for the widest possible stand on a programme to fight for the working class of this city, instead of the super-rich.

The conference also discussed how the council chamber can be a vital voice for other causes. When



Anti-cuts protest in Coventry COVENTRY SOCIALIST PARTY

Dave Nellist was a Socialist Party councillor, he used his position to support the protests against the Iraq War and the Israeli state's attacks on Gaza at the time. He also backed the 2010 student demonstrations against tuition fee rises and opposed cuts to grants for college students.

Today, elected positions could be used to support the campaign to end parking charges at the hospital, build opposition to the Israeli state's genocidal attacks on Palestinians, demand socialist nationalisation of transport and energy, and more.

## The truth behind Labour's funding 'boost' for councils?

DAVE NELLIST, COVENTRY SOCIALIST PARTY

The background to our People's Budget conference was the Labour government's funding announcement for English councils for 2026-27. For the first time in many years, Coventry Council is not proposing further cuts. The two local Labour MPs called government's funding a "fantastic" £180 million boost over three years.

But all is not what it seems. Only part of the £180 million is new national funding. £77 million (43%) is locally raised. A third – £58 million – will be raised directly from Coventry residents, via a 5% council tax increase in each of the next three years.

Another portion will be eroded by inflation. Consumer inflation reached nearly 4% by the end of 2025. But inflation in local authority

services, such as social care, was twice as high, further reducing the impact of government funding.

A further proportion will be spread across Coventry's rising population, which stood at 396,000 last year, and is expected to reach 412,000 by the end of the three years.

Since 2010, Coventry has lost £1.6 billion in central government funding – an annual average loss of £100 million. The recent Labour government announcement does nothing to restore the funding cut by austerity.

Coventry Council's staff has been cut from 14,000 in 2010 to 5,000 today. We've lost libraries, youth and community centres, youth workers, park wardens, street cleaners, and staff handling housing benefits and council tax support.

Coventry, once the richest working-class city in the country, now has 14 food banks, but not enough social workers to address the problems in the city. There is a need for better, cheaper bus services, and a mass programme of building new council housing.

Finally, this 'new money' is not government generosity. Most of it is reallocated from other local authorities.

£2.1 billion has been cut from the budgets of 186 local councils, so that Coventry and another 160 councils are said to have an increase. Socialist candidates in the May council elections should loudly demand the restoration of the money stolen from local authorities over the past 16 years.

And together with local trade unions, be prepared to mobilise people to fight for that money to come from central government, not stolen from other local authorities.



Green Party leader Zack Polanski BRISTOL GREEN PARTY/CC

# Greens quizzed on council cuts

## Bradford – council tax hike

IAIN DALTON  
SOCIALIST PARTY YORKSHIRE

Hundreds of people attended meetings in Yorkshire recently addressed by the Green Party's new left-wing leader Zack Polanski.

In Bradford, up to 400 people heard him rightly criticise Labour councils for continuing to implement austerity, and not criticising Keir Starmer's continued squeeze of local government finances.

But what was his alternative? He promised Green councillors would speak out against austerity. But when it comes to action, they "will manage the finances as best as they can".

Bradford's five Green councillors showed what this meant in practice at the council's last budget-setting meeting. Compared to the Labour council's 9.99% council tax increase – the largest in the country – the Greens proposed 9.5%, which still would be one of the largest in the country.

Working-class people should not be made to pay for the costs of the crisis of capitalism, through cuts to services and increased charges and taxes. At the meetings, Socialist Party members argued that if Green councillors want to fight austerity, they should instead come together with trade unions, community groups, and socialists in people's budget conferences to discuss how to fight for resources our communities need.

Green councils could use reserves and borrowing powers, on a temporary basis, to set legally balanced no-cuts budgets, whilst building mass campaigns to fight for the funding our cities need.

Green councils could use reserves and borrowing powers, on a temporary basis, to set legally balanced no-cuts budgets, whilst building mass campaigns to fight for the funding our cities need.

Green councils could use reserves and borrowing powers, on a temporary basis, to set legally balanced no-cuts budgets, whilst building mass campaigns to fight for the funding our cities need.

Green councils could use reserves and borrowing powers, on a temporary basis, to set legally balanced no-cuts budgets, whilst building mass campaigns to fight for the funding our cities need.

## Nottingham – no-cuts budget

GARY FREEMAN  
NOTTINGHAM SOCIALIST PARTY

The Green Party held a public meeting in Nottingham on 10 January.

At it, the main speaker was recently elected Green Party deputy leader Mothin Ali.

In Nottingham, the only councillor to vote against the last two budgets of cuts and job losses was Shugufah Quddoos – first as a Labour councillor (she was suspended the next day), and then as the only Green councillor.

She is a member of Nottingham Save Our Services Steering Group. Nottingham Save Our Services (NSOS) was initiated by Nottingham City Union and the local Trades Council with support from other trade unionists and community activists.

We drafted a no-cuts, costed, budget amendment reversing the cuts for 2025-26 and reinstating services cut in the previous budget. We raised how this would give time to build a mass campaign with the union's at the city council, community groups and more widely, to fight for the necessary funding.

It was funded by using some of the usable reserves (Nottingham had £256 million as of the end of the 2024-25 financial year, with over £60 million unearmarked). But the Lord Mayor, who chairs the council, wouldn't take it!

I put that approach to Mothin and those at the meeting, calling on him and Green leader Zack Polanski to instruct Green councillors across the country, including where Greens play a role in council leaderships, to put forward no-cuts budgets and fight for the necessary funding.

Mothin's reply? "That's a lazy question." He went on to say that they couldn't, that they haven't got the money. He said it makes no difference what "colour" the party is running the council.

Actually councils do have short-term spending powers, and could play a role in helping to mobilise mass campaigns to demand money from what is a weak and unpopular government.

There are no council elections in Nottingham this year. We will continue to fight for a new workers' party, and as part of that, councillors who are prepared to fight for the funding our communities need.

# IRAN AFTER JANUARY'S BRUTAL REPRESSION

ROBERT BECHERT  
COMMITTEE FOR A WORKERS' INTERNATIONAL

Once again, Iran has seen a brave mass movement against hardship, oppression and a rotten elite. Thousands have been killed. The turn of the year saw a new upsurge of resistance against the impact of an economic downward spiral, and opposition to dictatorship met with a new wave of repression by the often-brutal theocratic Iranian regime. The exact casualty numbers are yet unknown but reports of those killed start at over 3,000, overwhelmingly protesters and bystanders. Ali Khamenei, Iran's unelected 'Supreme Leader', cynically blamed the protesters when he spoke on 17 January of "several thousand" being killed. The numbers arrested seem to be over 20,000.

The regime's ferocity can only be understood against the background of an unpopular dictatorial regime ruling a country in economic, social and political turmoil.

The latest protests were the seventh time in eight years that the regime has faced spontaneous movements, albeit in differing sizes, composition and duration. This time, they were triggered by the announcement of the government's 2026-27 budget and the continuing slump in the Iranian currency's value. In a matter of days, protests rapidly spread across the country. The trigger for this spontaneous action was when, on 28 December, traders and workers in Tehran's Bazaar protested, co-incidentally eight years to the day from when protests against an increase in fuel prices broke out in 2017.

Soon this became the biggest protest since the 2022 'Woman, Life, Freedom' movement that erupted after Mahsa Amini's murder while in the custody of the 'morality police'. She was seized for dressing 'improperly'. The end of 2025 and the start of 2026 saw this new movement rapidly develop as students, workers and others joined in the demonstrations. While not initially mass protests, they quickly spread to many cities and towns across the country.

An important factor in Iran's economic crisis is the effects of the sanctions levied by the US in 1987 and then expanded by the United Nations (UN) in 2006, to make Iran halt its uranium enrichment programme. The 2015 JCPOA nuclear deal between Iran and the major world powers led to a cut in some of the sanctions. But then, in 2018, Iran's economy was again hit when

Trump, during his first term in office, increased sanctions as he withdrew the US from the deal. The Democrat presidency of Joe Biden continued this policy. Then last year, Britain, France and Germany led the way in the UN to reimposing the sanctions lifted after 2015.

Currently, inflation in Iran is rampant; in 2025 officially it was 42% overall and 72% for food. Unemployment is formally over 8% but over 20% for young people. But these latest protests were not simply over economic grievances. The powerful 'Woman, Life, Freedom' movement showed that demands for social and political freedom are also key issues for large numbers of Iranians.

A particular factor in Iran's current crisis concerns water supplies. The combined impact of climate change and weak infrastructure has been severe water shortages in different parts of the country. There has been recent discussion of whether a new capital should be built in the south of the country because of the falling water supply in Tehran. A few months ago, the president was talking of evacuating some of Tehran's 10 million inhabitants if a drought did not break. Fortunately, some rain fell but the basic problem remains.

The regime knows it is unpopular, in some senses isolated and rejected by many. In the last presidential election in 2024, under 40% voted in the first round and, of those who voted, over a million spoiled their ballots.

At the same time, the regime does have an ideological basis of support; a religious base mixed in with an 'anti-imperialist' populism. In an attempt to boost its support, the regime has included a recent addition of Persian nationalism. The loyalty of the 'Revolutionary Guards' is partly rooted in belief in the regime's ideology and also a fear that, should the regime fall, members of the Guards and the Basij, the volunteer militia which are formally part of the Guard Corps, would face vengeance.

Internationally, the regime has also become more isolated as what was called the 'axis of resistance' fell apart after the overthrow of the Assad regime in Syria and the massive military weakening of Hezbollah in Lebanon, as well as Hamas in Gaza, following relentless US and Israeli military attacks. The Houthis in Yemen have also taken big blows.

## Tehran's leaders divided

Faced with these problems, and aware of their relative weakness, the Iranian regime's leaders are divided. It is significant that, immediately after the suppression of the



movement, Khamenei called for a halt in criticism of the government's economic policies while admitting, "the economic situation is not good, and people's livelihoods face serious problems".

The Trump administration has been in on-off talks with elements within the Iranian regime and could still attempt to reach some kind of accommodation with parts of the regime, in a similar way to what has happened in Venezuela.

Such a move would help meet the fears of Saudi, Qatari and UAE leaders that, despite their own past clashes with Tehran, a complete overthrow of the Iranian regime now would destabilise the region and could pose threats to their own dictatorial rule. These fears, along with those apparently expressed by the Netanyahu government in Israel,

were factors in Trump not following

through with his threat to intervene if demonstrators were killed. But such arrangements and 'deals' are not permanent or solutions to the underlying issues.

At this moment, it is not yet clear if the regime's success in repressing the protests marks a decisive setback for the opposition, whose effects will last for a significant period. Or are they an important defeat that, however, does not rule out a new movement, in some form, in the not-too-distant future? While events do not exactly repeat themselves, the 2019 killing of up to 2,000 anti-fuel price hike protesters in 'Bloody November' was followed, three years later, by the huge 'Woman, Life, Freedom' movement.

However, to prepare for the success of future movements it is necessary to look at the lessons of past protests.

Iran shows the importance of

spontaneous actions igniting significant protests. This has been the case in the bigger movements against the regime. Such movements can gather momentum and, in some cases, see the development of grassroots organisations. This happened in Sudan a few years ago, with the development of the Neighbourhood Resistance Committees during that country's revolutionary movement against military rule.

Fear of the spontaneous movement widening into a direct challenge to the regime probably led the top leaders in Tehran, possibly after some internal debate, deciding to act rapidly to crush the movement rather than risk waiting to see if it would burn itself out. They could still rely on forces, particularly the Revolutionary Guards and Basij, to fight for them.

In such a situation, it is necessary for the movement to have a strategy

of how to organise itself and to discuss and decide what policies and next steps need to be taken. Ideas can develop from below but in such a struggle, a revolutionary force, a party, is needed to bring together the experiences, argue for a clear programme, and put forward concrete slogans and steps that need to be taken.

This was illustrated in the recent movement in Iran. There were many mentions of the need for a 'general strike', but often these calls were not made specific by starting a real campaign to prepare a strike call, mobilise for it and formulate what its demands should be.

## Reza Pahlavi

In this situation, Reza Pahlavi, the son of the Shah ousted in the 1979 revolution, attempted to take the initiative by calling on workers to

go on strike; a call which did not appear to have an effect. This was linked to the increased presence of monarchists calling for Pahlavi to be recognized as 'leader' of this movement. This was partly the result of a concerted attempt, backed by elements in the US and Israel, to promote Pahlavi. Indeed, for some time now, Reza Pahlavi's supporters proclaim him "Leader of the National Uprising". Yet it is very questionable, as even Trump indicated, how much support Pahlavi has inside Iran, especially given his open support for the Israeli and US bombing campaigns against Iran last year.



**Without breaking from the capitalist system, there can be no permanent solution to the social and economic crises or the defence of democratic rights**

Although it is 47 years since Pahlavi and the rest of his family fled Iran, the brutality of corruption of his father's rule is remembered by many. The fact that his family's power was based upon the intervention of foreign powers strengthens the opposition, both against foreign intervention and the restoration of the monarchy.

However, whether Pahlavi actually becomes a key figure when the Islamic Republic collapses or is overthrown, the current attempt to promote him is an illustration of what can lie ahead. Inevitably after a regime is overthrown, a struggle opens as to which road is taken. For the local capitalists and the imperialists, the key issue is how to ensure the continuation of capitalism and holding back or suppressing movements that can or do challenge capitalism.

In a similar fashion in Iran, the leaders of the Islamic Republic will wish to maintain their power in some form or another, some because they and their families have become rich under this system, others may be more ideologically motivated.

For these elites, controlling and, if required, crushing independent movements, particularly those of the working class, are necessary to achieve their ends. Tragically, this has been shown many times in history. Tunisia and Egypt, the key countries in the 2011 'Arab Spring', are recent examples and warnings of how gains won in the immediate aftermath of the overthrow of a dictatorial regime can be challenged and then lost to counter-revolution.

This is a lesson of all revolutionary movements and why socialist revolutionaries argue against unity with forces that either defend capitalism or who delay taking socialist action until the dim and distant future. Without breaking from the capitalist system, there can be no permanent solution to the social and economic crises or the defence of democratic rights. This does not mean, for example, that socialists would be neutral in a struggle between monarchists and republicans. But while opposing the monarchy's return, socialists would argue for a socialist republic, a genuine and democratic

'republic of the poor', that many Iranians wanted in 1979.

## Lessons of 1917

For socialist revolutionaries, there are many lessons to be learnt from Russia in 1917 during the period after Tsarism's overthrow in the February revolution, which ultimately saw the working class lead the majority of the population to carry through a second revolution in October 1917 that overthrew capitalist rule. That did not come about automatically. The Bolsheviks, led by Lenin and Trotsky, refused to join any government that rested upon capitalism and instead campaigned to win mass support for their programme of socialist revolution. They linked the immediate questions with the need for socialism; a policy summed up by Lenin in his pamphlet 'The Impending Catastrophe and How to Combat It'. They argued for a popular and truly democratic form of rule, summed up in the slogan, 'All Power to the Soviets', which began to be realised in October.

Significantly, the Bolsheviks' refusal to participate in capitalist governments did not mean refusing to fight jointly with other forces against reaction and attempted counter-revolution. In August 1917, the Bolsheviks fought against an attempted military coup alongside supporters of the pro-capitalist provisional government, but still refused to join that government. Two months later, the provisional government was overthrown, and the Bolsheviks came to power.

Today in Iran, there seems to be no socialist party or grouping putting forward such a programme. There are several different left groupings whose programmes include important points, like how to build grassroots popular support, but in general do not concretely raise the question of breaking with capitalism.

One party, the Communist Party of Iran (CPI), published the slogan 'Long Live the Socialist Republic' at the end of its 5 January statement. But this statement was silent on whether they would be prepared to join any form of government with pro-capitalist forces immediately after the Islamic Republic ends. Nor did it clearly pose, as an immediate objective, the struggle to win support for a workers' government that could begin the socialist transformation of society. The danger in this approach was that the CPI saw the socialist republic as a long-term objective after a further period of capitalism. This approach, in a revolutionary period, opens the door to counter-revolution, as witnessed in many other countries.

Some may ask, is such a socialist policy possible? Would a government carrying out socialist measures not be met by furious international opposition and possible interventions? Yes, that is likely, but it also must be seen that all the regional rulers fear both their own population and revolution. That is one reason why they asked Trump not to intervene against Iraq. It is why the new Syrian regime refused to hold genuine elections last October, where all the people could vote.

A genuinely revolutionary government would resist any intervention while appealing to workers, poor and oppressed in neighbouring countries, and indeed worldwide, to follow their example, as a socialist revolution's expansion is the surest way to defeat reaction.

Protests as part of the 2022 Women, Life, Freedom movement  
PHOTO: DARAFSH/CC



## WHAT WE STAND FOR

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

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

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

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

### WORK, PENSIONS AND BENEFITS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### PUBLIC SERVICES

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

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

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

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

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

- Free, publicly funded and democratically run, good-quality education, available to all at any age.

- Abolish university tuition fees and write off student debt, end marketisation, and introduce a living grant. No to academisation. For all schools to be under the genuine democratic control of local education authorities, school staff, parents and student organisations.

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

### 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. For the abolition of immigration law.

- 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)



## Gloucestershire textile workers strike for first time ever



PHOTO: CHRIS MOORE

CHRIS MOORE  
GLOUCESTERSHIRE SOCIALIST PARTY

Unite members at WSP Textiles factories in Stroud and Cam in Gloucestershire have been forced to take strike action for the first time in their history. Negotiations that have been ongoing since spring 2025 have resulted in a derisory pay offer of just 2.35% from the company.

The skilled workforce produces tennis ball felt used by manufacturers Wilson, Slazenger and Dunlop at Wimbledon, the French and Australian Open; and snooker baize that is used in World Snooker Tour tournaments in the UK, USA and China.

On its website, the company calls itself a 'thriving business'. It made nearly £1.4 million in profit after tax and £23 million of revenue in 2024, while its highest-paid director earns nearly £188,000 - yet production line workers earn under £13 per hour.

Mike Hobbs, the regional Unite

officer, explained that the company offered 2.25%, which was rejected. The bosses wanted changes to the notice period, because they have retention problems because of the low pay levels, and in return for the workforce agreeing to this, the company increased the offer by 0.1%! "Members were angry and upset by this insult and balloted for strike action and more are likely."

As one of the pickets said: "We're up for this. Most of us have been here over 30 years and we've only once had a pay rise in line with inflation. We sell to over 40 countries worldwide. The company makes profits year after year, some directors are on over £100,000, with thousands in bonuses. It's a skilled job, we just want a little recognition for our work and to be treated fairly!"

- Send messages of support to Mike Hobbs: [michael.hobbs@uniteunion.org](mailto:michael.hobbs@uniteunion.org)

## Birmingham schools strike: Stop the cuts and end academisation!

BIRMINGHAM SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBERS

Socialist Party members were out across North Birmingham and Coventry to support the strike at The Arthur Terry Schools (ATLP), a multi-academy trust. National Education Union (NEU) members are striking across 20 of the 24 academy schools against a proposed 10% cut to staffing, as the trust attempts to address a £3 million deficit, following a £1 million bailout loan from central government.

Echoing the situation with Birmingham City Council, it's the leadership at the top that has created a crisis, but workers and service users are going to pay the price.

Management admit that no internal financial audit was carried out during the last financial year. The Trust now wants to cut staff numbers - despite finding £1.8 million to pay just four executives!

This situation is just another example of how academisation of

local government schools means there is less democratic oversight of school spending via elected school governors. Academy trustees aren't elected and can't be held accountable. Trust CEOs can receive inflated salaries, with reports of anything between £250,000 - £500,000, which are taken directly from school funding.

ATLP NEU members will be escalating action. Further strikes are planned in January. Ben, the rep at Osborne Primary School in Erdington, told Socialist Party members they are doing this "to protect the children's education".

The strikers were determined and public support evident: parents stopped to say hello and there was constant honking of cars.

We call for academies to return to local authorities and all schools to be under genuine democratic control of trade unions, parents, local community representatives, and school students.

## Newham school strike going strong

HANNAH SELL

National Education Union (NEU) members at Little Ilford School took their third day of strike action on 14 January. The strike was very solid, with teachers and support staff all out, resulting in the school closing. Although smaller than the previous day's picket, it was still huge.

The desperate need to reduce workload, and for staff to have more autonomy to use their skills to provide the best possible education for students, was expressed by picketer

So too was confidence that the strike is having an effect on management. However, there were huge cheers when the NEU assistant secretary emphasised that, until a deal was done and signed off, further strikes would be necessary, starting the following week.

The issue of council underfunding, including cuts to SEND (special educational needs and disabilities) provision, and the rotten role of the 'red Tory' government were also raised by strikers, leading to discussion with some on the need for the trade union movement to have a political voice.



PHOTO: HANNAH SELL

## Hackney phlebotomists' rebanding victory shows 'It's absolutely possible to win'

Phlebotomists on strike in Gloucestershire PHOTO: CHRIS MOORE



BRIAN DEBUS  
HACKNEY SOCIALIST PARTY

Homerton Hospital phlebotomists have scored a stunning victory ten years after seeking rebanding.

They were initially unsuccessful in 2015, but were inspired to try again after seeing a rebanding campaign for Health Care Assistants and Maternity Support Workers run by the Homerton Unison branch in 2024. The branch has now won rebanding and significant back pay for all three groups of workers.

"The first thing to say is that this has been a long time coming," stated Unison steward Callum.

The phlebotomists provided evidence of their duties and boosted their membership to 80% density to show they were serious.

The trust finally conceded after the phlebotomists presented their

evidence and threatened to escalate through balloting to industrial action. The evidence demonstrated that they had been working at Band 3 for years.

As a consequence of the pressure, the Trust moved from an initial offer of one year and two months back pay, to up to four years and four months back pay. The phlebotomists voted by 100% on a 100% turnout to accept.

"As far as we know, that's the second best phlebotomy back-pay deal of its kind in the country," comment-groups of workers.

"We went on to say: "We were determined to get a good result, not just for the Homerton phlebotomists but for the phlebotomists in Gloucestershire too. They've been on strike against Gloucestershire Hospitals Trust for about 300 days. It's the longest strike in NHS history. And what are they fighting for? Exactly the same thing

we just won here at Homerton. But for some reason their Trust has committed itself to breaking the strike and fighting them tooth and nail.

"With this win we want to reaffirm the precedent - set previously in Swansea, Hertfordshire, and Merseyside - that phlebotomists do work at Band 3 and are entitled to back pay under Agenda for Change. Gloucestershire has been the exception to this, not the rule.

"We hope this can also put the wind back in the sails of phlebotomy rebanding campaigns around the country. There's been a lot of nervousness in response to the difficulties faced in Gloucestershire and we want to send a strong signal that it is absolutely possible to win."

- The Gloucestershire phlebotomists have just successfully rebalotted to continue their strike action.

## Mining museum strikers vote to extend action in face of 'farce'

IAIN DALTON  
SOCIALIST PARTY YORKSHIRE

As Unison members at the National Coal Mining Museum for England reach the five-month mark of their dispute over pay, they have resoundingly voted to extend the strike for a further six months if necessary.

The 92% 'yes' vote, on a 86% turnout, shows the strength of feeling against the insulting pay offers that management has put before them, with one offer actually being less for some workers than the offer rejected before the strike began.

Management has now made a further offer - a measly 4p-an-hour increase - but with a threat to investigate and discipline staff who have spoken out during the dispute. Unison regional organiser Rianne Hooley described the offer as "farical", and it was overwhelmingly rejected by a mass meeting of strikers.

Additionally, the Charity Commission has decided to investigate the museum's governance and management. Workers have made demands for Labour's culture secretary, Lisa Nandy, to withhold the museum's funding in order to pressure management to resolve the dispute.

Socialist Party members have raised the need for Wakefield Council, which has already suspended its funding to the museum, to go further and seek to take over the museum. Instead of the current 'rule or ruin' approach of management, it could be run democratically by elected representatives of the trade unions and the wider community.

Like what you've read?

SUBSCRIBE TO THE SOCIALIST

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

## MAY DAY GREETINGS 2026

Celebrate international workers' day. Send the Socialist solidarity greetings

- For prices visit [socialistparty.org.uk/mayday](http://socialistparty.org.uk/mayday) 20% discount deadline 30 March 2026



£1/£2 solidarity price

socialistparty.org.uk



# the Socialist

Issue 1352

22-28 January 2026

formerly **Militant**

# STUDENTS GET ORGANISED!



## Come to Socialist Students conference 2026

**JAMES GRETTON**  
SOUTHAMPTON SOCIALIST STUDENTS

**S**tudent life leaves a lot to be desired right now. Before we even make it to university, tuition fees get hiked year by year. When we're on campus studying, it's under precarious conditions with cuts to resources and staff. When we get home from campus, our housing is untenable, leaving us vulnerable to exploitative landlords. When we graduate, obscene student debt burdens us, and youth unemployment is rising.

And every step of the way, we are onlookers to a world in crisis. Trump's imperialist agenda threatens further conflict and war; it fuels further economic instability which the bosses will try to make the working class and young people pay the price for; the ravaging

consequences of climate change continue to worsen. And here, Keir Starmer's government continues to attack workers and young people. Starmer dined with the King and Trump at Windsor Castle in September, while thousands in Gaza starved.

That is why, across uni campuses, colleges and schools, Socialist Students is fighting back. We are campaigning to defend our education from government and bosses' attacks, and fighting for decent housing, free education and socialist change.

It's clear to see why capitalism is losing favour among younger generations. It is a system which values profit over people, and that concentrates wealth into the few, depriving the many. It offers no promising future for young people.

That's what was behind the initial enthusiasm for Jeremy Corbyn and Zarah Sultana's

Your Party, as well as for new Green Party leader Zack Polanski's 'eco-populist' platform against inequality and injustice.

Socialist Students is an organisation in which students can come together to explore socialist ideas and get involved fighting for them. We organised walkouts of school, college and uni students to protest against Trump's state visit to the UK last year. We have led the fightback for fully funded free education under the Funding Not Fees campaign. We have fought alongside our teachers and other education staff defending jobs and our education. We have taken part in the mass protests against the slaughter of Palestinians in Gaza. And we are part of the fight for a new mass party that fights for young people and workers, and for socialist change.

On 14 February, the Socialist Students

National Conference will take place in Manchester. It will discuss a new constitution to prepare for the road ahead of widespread youth and student struggles and protests.

If you want to fight for your future, for an alternative, this is the opportunity to express yourself and be heard.

Join us at Socialist Students conference!

**Socialist Students conference 2026**

Saturday 14 February 2026  
University of Manchester



Scan for more info: