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the Socialist

Issue 1354 | 5-11 February 2026 | formerly Militant

CUT RENTS BUILD COUNCIL HOMES!

RACHEL COX
OXFORD SOCIALIST PARTY

Rents just keep on cranking up. The price of almost everything else does too.

In many cities, rents are on average well above 30% of a worker's income. In reality, many pay closer to 60%. Too often homes are overcrowded and have damp and mould, and all the health risks those bring.

Meanwhile, council housing waiting lists stretch for years, even for those who qualify for priority access. Most can't even get on. One in fifty Londoners are homeless, living in temporary accommodation and waiting for a council home or an alternative.

What is needed is huge public investment in building high-quality council homes, an end to right to buy, and democratic rent controls.

The Labour government has pledged to increase money for its 'Affordable Homes Programme', and says it aims for 60% of homes built under it to be for 'social rent'. How about 100%, and guaranteed by work done directly by government and councils, rather than through grants and cheap loans to big business developers?

The government has also baked in above-inflation rent increases for 'social rent' tenants for ten years. How about no rent increases?!

And to top it off, the threshold for how much housing benefit claimants can get has been frozen again, like it was under the Tories, while rents continue to climb.

All of the establishment parties stand with corporate landlords and big business construction companies instead of workers and young people. We need a party that fights for investment to meet need rather than for profit.

Local councils have powers which could be used to bring down rents, employ teams to monitor housing quality and mandate repairs, and launch mass council house building programmes. Thousands of councillors will be elected in May, including to every single seat in London.

We need councillors who will fight to freeze rents and build council homes, who will use their position to help mobilise struggles and demand Starmer's government coughs up the funding our communities need.

Help us build the broadest possible, anti-austerity, socialist stand in May. Help us fight for a new mass working-class party and for socialist change.

THOUSANDS CONTINUE ANTI-ICE PROTEST IN MINNEAPOLIS ▸▸▸ p11

YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT ▸▸▸ p8-9

GREENS MUST PLEDGE NO CUTS TO SERVICES ▸▸▸ p5

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Issue 1354
5-11 February 2026

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

Labour betrays WASPI women

Take wealth off super-rich for the pensions we deserve

JANE NELLIST
COVENTRY SOCIALIST PARTY

Pat McFadden, Labour Work and Pensions Minister, reaffirmed on 29 January the government's decision to deny financial compensation to the 3.6 million women affected by changes to the state pension age.

The Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman had previously found maladministration over the handling of communications to these women and ruled in 2024 that they should be compensated financially.

This would have meant a payment of between £1,000 and £2,950, despite the fact that many women had actually lost many thousands of pounds.

This group of women, known as the WASPI women (Women Against State Pension Inequality), has campaigned for years, arguing that they were not given adequate notice when their retirement age was raised from 60 to 65 (and later 66).

As one of the women that falls into this group, like millions of others, I never received any official letter about these changes. For many women, it has left them in a dire financial crisis at a time when they should be looking forward to retirement.

Pat McFadden callously argued that it would cost between £3.5 billion and £10.3 billion, and said it would be an "unjustifiable use of taxpayer money".

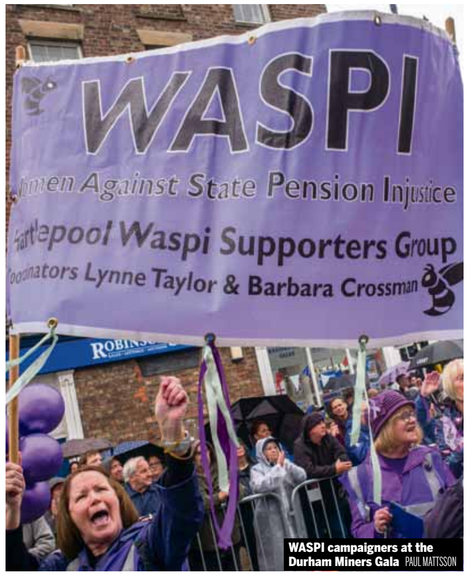
How disgraceful when, at the same time, the government has recently committed to increase defence expenditure to around 2.5 % of GDP by 2027, with ambitions to go higher in the next parliament, up to £74 billion total in the coming years.

So plenty of money for warfare but not for the many women who have been left in poverty due to these brutal decisions.

For the 1950s-born women who are denied dignity in old age, this is a real betrayal. Especially as many on the Labour front bench voiced strong support for WASPI women whilst in opposition.

What is certain is that WASPI women are not going to accept this quietly. This campaign is by no means over.

We are a rich country; there is plenty of money to provide decent pensions and benefits as well as well-funded public services, which we all rely on. But that wealth is in the hands of big business and the super-rich. What is lacking is a political force to ensure that wealth is used to provide living pensions, decent public services and the jobs and homes that we need. We need a party that will stand with the majority of us against the super-rich bosses – a mass party of the working class with a socialist programme.



WASPI campaigners at the Durham Miners Gala PAUL MATTSSON



Protest last year against Labour's attempts to attack disabled people's benefits LONDON SP

Poverty in the UK

BILLY JONES
GLOUCESTERSHIRE SOCIALIST PARTY

The UK is the sixth-richest country in the world, and yet one in five people living here are suffering from poverty, a recent report by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation shows.

This poverty rate has been stagnant since the 2008 financial crash, proving that almost two decades of austerity and cost-cutting have done nothing to raise the living standards of working-class people. In fact, the only real change is that the numbers of those suffering from 'deep poverty' and 'destitution' have risen.

The Labour government attempts to portray itself as tackling child poverty, including a plan to finally scrap the hated two-child benefit cap later this year (for the reality see 'Child poverty – Labour worsens cost of living' at socialistparty.org.uk). But while they pay lip services to this, they are mounting attacks on other vulnerable groups in society.

The upcoming Timms Review will measure the 'sustainability' of the Personal Independence Payment (PIP) scheme for disabled people. PIP is already infamously difficult to get onto, yet here is an attempt to make these very important benefits even harder to obtain.

Having a disability comes with increased costs, such as for specialised equipment needed to live independently, and often limits the number of hours you can work. Instead of facing this fact, the government is trying to pretend that disabled people don't exist to excuse further cuts.

But the figures show that working-age adults with disabilities are twice as likely to be living in poverty, and those on benefits are three times as likely. So much for a life of luxury on the dole!

> **Finally, the poverty rates of people claiming different income-related benefits are much higher than the national average poverty rate. [...] it demonstrates that benefit rates are frequently not sufficient to enable recipients to escape poverty. Indeed, the basic rate of Univeral Credit is close to destitution thresholds**
>
> Joseph Rowntree Foundation poverty report

Instead of punishing vulnerable people who need help meeting their needs, we need a complete overhaul of the system. We need a benefits scheme that actually lifts people out of poverty, a real living wage that makes going to work worthwhile, and an end to cuts to important public services which establishment political parties have all pushed through.

Help fund the fightback
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socialistparty.org.uk/donate

College students:

Fight for the education we deserve

ALEX GERROLL
MANCHESTER SOCIALIST PARTY

Across the country colleges face government funding challenges, falling educational standards, and declining pay for staff. 37% of colleges will operate a deficit in 2026, up from 16% in 2011 according to the Institute for Fiscal Studies. College teacher pay has fallen in real terms over the same period, as inflation has consistently outpaced wage growth they are now paid 18% less than they were in 2011.

As wages have not kept pace with higher living costs, many college workers have to take second jobs or face financial hardship, all while trying to maintain teaching quality. Between 2011 and 2020 spending per student fell 14%. This reduction has affected teaching resources, library access, lab equipment, and student support services.

Austerity is being administered to both colleges and students, making it impossible to maintain educational standards. In my own college, even routine purchases like paper require a two-week approval process – a small but telling example of how austerity has reshaped everyday educational provision. Students are subject to safeguarding regimes that often limit our autonomy without meaningful participation in how those rules are designed or implemented.

All of these factors contribute to a suffocating college experience for a lot of young people. Not to mention the pressures on the teachers to perform in these conditions, barely surviving themselves. Workers organised in education unions, including the University and College Union (UCU), taking collective action, as has happened in many colleges across the country this year already, can win better working conditions and higher wages.

To fight back against these pressures, students need to collectively organise too. Getting in touch to help set up a Socialist Students society at your local college is a good first step if you have an interest in affecting change and finding like-minded people. You will be able to receive support from Socialist Students, which brings together groups from across the country as well as your nearest university Socialist Students branch.

If you want to find out more, come to Socialist Students' annual conference, this year being held at University Place, University of Manchester on 14 February.

Socialist Students says:

- **Fund our education, take the wealth off the super-rich! We need the resources necessary for the education we deserve and for the pay and conditions our lecturers need**
- **We need fighting democratic student organisations that can mobilise students around actions to fight for our education**
- **For democratic control of our education, with curriculums, policies and how schools are run decided democratically by representatives of students, staff and the local community**



Socialist Students organising college walkouts against Donald Trump's visit LONDON SP

Socialist Students Conference 2026

Organising the student fightback for socialist change!



Saturday 14 February 2026
University Place @ University of Manchester
176 Oxford Rd, Manchester M13 9PL

FIND OUT MORE:

Socialist Students Conference 2026


Liz Kendall visits the new AI Growth Zone at Cardiff University, the number of jobs is not set to grow! DEPARTMENT FOR SCIENCE, INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY/CC

Only workers' control can stop AI jobs threat

ADAM HARMSWORTH
COVENTRY SOCIALIST PARTY

"I want to level with the public. Some jobs will go." That is what Labour's technology secretary Liz Kendall admitted in a speech on the increased use of artificial intelligence (AI). Under Labour, unemployment has risen to 5.1% and youth unemployment to 15.9%, and now, while promoting AI investment, they promise it will cost jobs.

Kendall's speech follows concerns raised by London mayor Sadiq Khan about AI, and a new study by investment bank Morgan Stanley suggesting that Britain is already losing more jobs than it is generating from businesses turning to AI.

Looking at UK companies using AI for at least a year, the study found companies were more productive, but that they had net job cuts of 8%. That rate is higher than any other major economy. The surveyed companies also said they were more likely to cut jobs requiring 2-5 years' experience, hitting young workers even harder. No wonder so many workers are worried AI will take their jobs – the current trend suggests it's a real possibility.

UBI?

Labour's investment minister and millionaire Lord Stockwood has floated the idea of universal basic income (UBI) to ease the burden placed on workers of an economy shifting to AI. UBI is often promoted by some on the left hopeful it would provide a decent living standard under capitalism.

This Labour government already has an abysmal record of continued austerity and taking money off pensioners, students, benefits claimants and more to save money and keep 'the markets' placated. Even if under pressure Labour were to introduce UBI, it would be at an abysmal rate and could easily be cut whenever Labour needs to squeeze workers further. UBI is effectively an organisational solution to a political problem; a re-organisation of welfare like UBI won't convince Labour to cough up more money.

Democratic control

We can only resolve the threat AI currently poses to workers by changing who actually controls AI technology and its implementation. Under capitalism, profit trumps everything else. A company brings in AI to replace workers or uses it to squeeze even more work out of existing staff, and the state leaves the unemployed with as little income as it can get away with.

But many can see the real possible benefit of AI. If software can reliably do tasks that workers are currently doing, then those workers could enjoy a shorter working week. But that won't happen under capitalism.

In a socialist economy, the working class would have democratic control over where and how AI is introduced and used. AI, like all technological advances, could be used to make our work easier and shorten the working week with no loss of pay. But to make that possibility a reality, we have to fight for socialist change to stop AI becoming another part of capitalism's chaos.

Come to a Socialist Party meeting near you

The Socialist Party has regular meetings in towns and cities across the country.
To see the nearest meeting visit:
- **socialistparty.org.uk/events**

TRADE UNIONISTS FOR A NEW PARTY

With Labour governing in the interests of the capitalist bosses against the working class, the trade unions' relationship with Labour and the need for a new party is on the agenda. Groups of trade unionists have been discussing how to press the issue in the structures of the unions, initiated by a Summer 2025 petition 'Time for trade unions to take the lead in forming a new working class party'. The following are reports from recent meetings



PHOTO: ADAM HARMSWORTH

Communication Workers Union

CWU ACTIVISTS

Activists from across the Communication Workers Union (CWU) met to discuss next steps in the campaign for the union to consider how it can achieve a political voice. This campaign developed from the Trade Unionist For A New Workers' Party campaign and petition launched last year.

Across the CWU, there is a frustration about our union's continued support for the Labour Party, which has attacked the working class just like the Tories. The CWU spent over £400,000 on affiliation fees to the Labour Party and gave over £170,000 to Labour MPs before the general election, according to its 2024 accounts.

Model motions raised at branches last year called for the union leadership to "Launch a union-wide consultation about the best use of the union's political fund, including the question of funding candidates outside the Labour Party who support CWU-agreed policy."

However, many activists faced bureaucratic hurdles when attempting to raise this motion.

To help us overcome this, when raising model motions for conference, we will be campaigning at CWU workplaces to let members know about our aim to disaffiliate from the Labour Party at this year's conference, and encouraging members to attend the branch meetings where our motions will be put to a vote.

While disaffiliation is clearly seen as an important step among left activists, there's also more that needs to be done to make sure the CWU puts its money towards political representation that supports the interests of its members and the wider working class.

The meeting agreed to a strategy of putting forward multiple separate model motions including calling for a cross-union political conference, branch control of political funds, and for the union to work with a united front of political representatives of the working class outside of Labour.

The deadlines for submitting motions and confirming delegates is in early March so it'll need a short and sharp effort in February. But we plan on building for a public meeting closer to the deadlines to bring together those who have shown support for the campaign and to kick off the second phase - getting branches to vote to mandate their conference delegates to support our motions.

GMB

GMB MEMBERS

On 21 January, activists in general union GMB, the UK's third largest, met online to continue our discussion on how we build support across our union – one of the largest trade unions affiliated to the Labour Party, with a Starmer-supporting leadership – for a new party of the organised working class, based on a socialist programme.

Our first meeting was last August, where we agreed a 'model' motion on political representation and agreed to try to get it carried in our individual branches.

The model motion condemns the Labour government's attacks on the working class; recognises that New Labour's austerity is fuelling support for Reform and the far right; argues we need alternative political representation for the organised working class based on an anti-austerity, anti-racism and anti-war programme; and agrees that such a party has the best potential to defeat the rise of the far right. The motion instructs the leadership to consult GMB members on our union's relationship with the Labour Party, and the possibility of backing candidates from other political parties who support GMB policies.

At our meeting on 21 January, an activist explained that their branch had just passed the motion and will now submit it for debate at the GMB's annual decision-making Congress in June. The motion was passed unanimously and enthusiastically by members for whom Labour is a dirty word.

Other activists also reported on the deep hostility to Labour in their local areas. One longstanding rep highlighted previous, unsuccessful attempts to argue for alternative political representation which had been defeated by their regional bureaucracy.

The meeting understood that we will experience opposition from the leadership. However, the model motion has now been passed in several branches, across three different GMB regions, with support slowly growing.

The actions of Starmer's Labour government are also contributing, forcing a layer of previously loyal GMB Labour members to turn from the party in disgust at its austerity policies and racist attacks on migrants and refugees.

A number of activists present are involved in Your Party, and shared their efforts to build Your Party locally, including trying to prepare an electoral challenge for the council elections in May.

One attendee to the meeting was a GMB member who had joined Your Party and, on the basis of the discussion they heard in the meeting, agreed to move the model motion at their branch.

The debate was friendly, comradely and serious. All who spoke were clear of the need for a political alternative, and committed to working to achieve this, within GMB and beyond. It is recognised that these efforts must be part of a broader attempt to build a democratic, organised grassroots left in GMB, to hold our leadership to account.

These meetings will be held regularly from now on.



PHOTO: ROGER THOMAS



PHOTO: HUGO PIERRE

Unison

HUGO PIERRE
FORMER UNISON NEC

The pro-Keir Starmer agenda of defeated Unison general secretary Christina McAnea came to an end on Friday 23 January.

The incoming general secretary, Andrea Egan, has stated that she will fight Labour's attacks, and wants to review the union's political link with Labour. She herself was expelled from the Labour Party for the crime of liking a message on social media.

On 19 January, Unison members had met online in a second 'Unison for a new party' meeting, to discuss how to take forward the fight for a new political voice that best represents our members' interests at the next National Delegate Conference (NDC). Andrea was invited to the meeting but unfortunately wasn't able to attend.

Members discussed two model motions for branches for NDC. One was aimed at changing all the rules relating to the political funds, to put them under the control of the whole membership as one fund, rather than the two Unison has at present. The existing Labour link fund is controlled only by those that contribute to it – which is only 16% of the union membership - and who are also members of the Labour Party.

The second motion called for a review of Unison's political funds by all sections of the union, to come back with recommendations of how best the union could back only candidates representing Unison policy, including those that stand outside of Labour.

During the meeting it was raised that under the new Employment Rights Act union members will automatically be opted into a union's political fund. Given that Unison has two political funds, this raises new questions about how these will operate. It was agreed to also draft a model resolution for NDC linking this to a review of the union's political link.

Many in the meeting expressed their anger at the way the current political representation arrangements are completely undemocratic. There was also a discussion about the difficulty in changing the arrangements, with the possibility that the NDC may not even be able to discuss these motions if branches send them, because the right-wing dominated Standing Orders Committee would rule them 'out of order'. Therefore a wider campaign for the conference was discussed.

Members also expressed their frustrations with the 'Your Party' bans and restrictions, viewing it as a missed opportunity to start a new party based on the working class. However, members concluded that fighting for Unison to change its political fund rules was the best way forward, to open up the potential for this huge union to play a leading role in fighting for a working-class political voice.

GREENS MUST PLEDGE NO CUTS TO SERVICES!

• Petition calls on Polanski to make no-cuts stand

The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) all-Britain steering committee has welcomed a new petition launched by leading trade unionists calling on the Green Party leader Zack Polanski to mobilise his party in the struggle against local council austerity.

The petition – launched by 20 current and former members of trade union executives – makes an opening appeal to Zack "to ensure that in this year's local council elections no candidate shall appear on the ballot paper on behalf of the Greens who has not made a public commitment to vote against all cuts and closures to council services, jobs, pay and conditions should they be elected as a councillor on May 7th".

Sign online
c.org/r55nStyRBm

These are the first set of elections being fought since Zack Polanski won the Green Party leadership last summer denouncing the 'system rigged for the rich' – and, with local public services still facing an unbearable funding squeeze, opposing all further cuts and closures should be a no-brainer.

As the petition says, while "we cannot expect Sir Keir Starmer's Labour Party, the Lib Dems, the Tories or Reform to join the struggle to defend local public services… we should not expect anything less from those who have spoken against the establishment's austerity agenda".

The trade unionists' petition further asks that Zack Polanski "instructs all current Green Party councillors to make the same commitment for future council budget-making meetings, including in the 40-plus local authorities where the Greens are presently part of the council administration". The Greens do have a substantial presence in local government and if their hundreds of councillors were to take such a stand - and a protest movement organised to back them up - who could categorically say that Starmer and the chancellor Rachel Reeves wouldn't be forced into another U-turn?

The central battle remains to get the trade union leaders to build on the heroic resistance of those like the Birmingham council bin-workers fighting wage cuts and poorer services, but a widescale councillors' rebellion would open up a new front. That's why the trade unionists' petition to Zack Polanski deserves all our support.

TRADE UNIONIST AND SOCIALIST COALITION
TUSC AGAINST CUTS
tusc.org.uk



But can councillors resist the cuts?

The main argument made by councillors from the establishment parties for why they 'reluctantly' go along with the devastation of local public services is that it would not be 'legal' for councils to resist. Firstly, that's not a good argument from those who say they are 'fighting the system' - only not now apparently, and not in their local town hall in defence of public services! But also, it is just not true.

Since its inception, TUSC has pioneered an anti-austerity strategy of councils using their prudential borrowing powers and reserves to set needs-based budgets as part of building a mass campaign for proper government funding for local services, explaining exactly how that was possible. Not by ignoring the legal requirement for a council to set a 'balanced budget' each year before it is able to spend money or issue council tax bills, but by formally 'balancing' it by the use of borrowing powers and reserves.

What powers councils have and how they could be used to this end has been detailed in previous TUSC documents, including the 55-page briefing Preparing a No Cuts People's Budget, available from the TUSC website. What is very relevant is that the alternative budget amendments moved by TUSC-supporting councillors and explored in this briefing were not recommended by council finance officers when they were presented – but they were not ruled as 'illegal' either. There really is no excuse for any councillor to go along with local austerity policies.

The latest developments on local council funding and the law were addressed in a TUSC discussion document arguing for a clear anti-austerity stance in the 2026 elections from any candidates selected by the newly formed Your Party (see 'Ideas about the next local elections' at tusc.org.uk). But the same points apply to Green Party candidates too.

It is clear that local austerity will not be defeated by votes in the council chambers alone but by combining such defiance with building a mass movement. But it is also absolutely clear that austerity definitely won't be defeated by councillors voting for it!

Green Party members protesting against cuts under the Tory-Lib Dem coalition government in 2012
PHOTO: PETE BIRKINSHAW/CC

TUSC candidates and the petition

The TUSC national election agent, Clive Heemskerk, also welcomed the petition as a means to help clarify where there should or should not be TUSC candidates contesting seats in the 7 May elections.

"All candidates appearing on the ballot paper using one of the TUSC descriptions in May will have no difficulty in making the commitment asked for in the trade union petition", he said. "It is a requirement of standing to agree to TUSC's six candidate guarantees (see 'Local elections core policies' at tusc.org.uk) - the first one of which is to 'oppose all cuts and closures to council services, jobs, pay and conditions, and the privatisation of services or their transfer to social enterprises or arms-length management organisations which are the first steps to their privatisation.'

"The six guarantees are the minimum commitments candidates make. They can bring other issues to the fore of their campaign if they wish, as the TUSC model means that it is the individual candidate who is in control. But you can't use one of the TUSC descriptions on the ballot paper unless you commit to the six guarantees as a minimum.

"This May TUSC has agreed that we will not be standing against Your Party candidates and, if there are Green councillors or candidates who sign the trade union petition to Zack Polanski, we will not stand in competition with them too. We can't know in advance what position Zack will take on the petition's call – we would very much welcome the Green Party throwing its councillors into the battle against austerity but that will very probably not be his stance – but if a prospective Green candidate is prepared to sign the petition that's a better indication that they might resist the pressure for cuts from the council officers (and their less determined fellow councillors) than any amount of verbal 'opposition' to austerity in general.

"Of course, it is true that petitioning Green and Your Party candidates to take a stand is not the same as trade unions having their own candidates running, directly subject to the democratic accountability of the union members. It puts the working class and its organisations in a similar position to where we were at the end of the 19th century, without a party of our own and seeking out individual 'friends of labour' to articulate workers' interests.

"That's why TUSC will be stepping up its support for the campaign in the trade unions for them to take the necessary measures to establish their own political voice; including by encouraging as many trade unionists, socialists and working-class community candidates as possible to stand in May's elections – alongside Your Party and genuine anti-austerity Greens".

NEU exec prepares to fight Labour austerity in education

DAN WARRINGTON
NEU EXECUTIVE MEMBER, PERSONAL CAPACITY

At the end of February, the members of the National Education Union (NEU) will be asked to vote in a national indicative ballot on funding, workload and pay, in what is the most ambitious national campaign the union has embarked upon since 2023.

The decision to ballot, finalised by the National Executive in January, comes in response to a brazen attempt by Starmer's Labour government to reinstate austerity measures in education.

The NEU will ballot all members within state education (both teachers and support staff) for the first time since 2022, in a campaign to "Save Education".

Socialist Party members on the exec have worked hard, with allies, to win agreement for a strong campaign that brings together education workers in a fight for funding and over workload as well as teacher pay.

Labour's cuts

The ballot announcement comes on the heels of the government's submissions to the School Teachers' Review Body (STRB), which provides government with non-binding recommendations on teachers' pay and conditions. This year, the government has tasked the STRB with making a recommendation for the next three years.

The government's evidence to the STRB pushes for a 6.5% teacher 'pay rise', spread unevenly across the three years and without additional funding, being paid for instead from existing school budgets. Not only would this likely result in teachers' real-terms pay cuts due to inflation, but the lack of additional funding would put intolerable strain on school budgets already cut to the bone by one and a half decades of austerity.

Redundancies would be the only way that many schools would be able to make ends meet, with school support staff likely to take the brunt. The government evidence acknowledges this, calling on schools to "optimise deployment" of support staff!

Workload

It gets worse, as the government also asks the STRB to review the long-standing limit on teachers' working hours, known as 'directed time'. The government's own evidence shows that teachers work on average more than 50 hours per week (with many far exceeding this), yet it is clearly the intention of government to make even longer working hours easier to implement.

In short, the government's offer for education workers appears to be work harder and longer for less, with the ever-present threat of redundancy as a means to keep workers disciplined. It is the worst government submission to the STRB since Covid and would see education plunged further into austerity, which will inevitably lead to bigger class sizes, a loss of experienced educators and, ultimately, worse education for children.

We can win

But the experience of the 2022-23 strike wave shows that we can take on governments and win. The NEU teacher strikes of 2023 saw a hostile Tory government under Rishi Sunak almost double its offer on teacher pay and school funding after only seven days of national action. More could have been won if the education unions had held their ground.

Now, Starmer's Labour government offers nothing to workers beyond more of the same. Workers are fed up with paying for capitalism's crises and the memory of 2023 is still fresh.

A united nationwide campaign by teachers and support staff can deliver a huge first step in challenging austerity. However, to win long-term success trade unionists must be ready to build political power, to present an alternative to Labour, Reform and the Tories, by standing and backing candidates committed to returning funding to public services.

Fight racism and austerity together

LOUISE CUFFARO
NEU EXECUTIVE, PERSONAL CAPACITY

The NEU exec in January agreed to make a very large combined donation of £350,000 to the new 'Together Alliance' and Stand Up to Racism.

It is essential to combat racism and fight to undercut support for the right-populist Reform UK and far-right groups. Socialist Party members in the NEU have long argued that the trade unions should be at the front of that struggle.

I spoke in the discussion on this item to stress that it is vital that spending on such a scale should be accountable to the elected lay leadership of the union.

I anticipated that this union money would be spent on the national Together demonstration on 28 March for 'Love, Hope and Unity,' and then on leaflets for the May elections saying 'don't vote Reform.'

TUC demo against austerity

But I pointed out that the TUC (Trades Union Congress) agreed back in September that it would call a national demonstration against Labour austerity. That's what this 28 March demonstration, supported and funded by the unions, should be. That would have a much greater effect on undercutting Reform than simply talking about 'love.'

Vote for who?

And in the elections – saying 'Don't vote Reform' means therefore vote for who? The main parties are collapsing in support because they are destroying people's lives through austerity. We can't ask people to vote for that.

We should use our union's money to encourage our members to stand and back candidates that commit to not make more cuts, and instead fight for funding, jobs, to cut rents etc. That would be much more effective than just saying 'Don't vote Reform.'

The TUC agreed in 2018 to campaign on 'Jobs, homes, services, not racism.' What we spend our money on should lead with those trade union, anti-austerity demands.

General secretary Daniel Kebede thanked me for these important points. We want serious and ongoing accountability.

> **What we spend our money on should lead with trade union, anti-austerity demands**



PHOTOS: BIRMINGHAM SOCIALIST PARTY



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Victory in West Midlands schools strike

TED WOODLEY
BIRMINGHAM SOCIALIST PARTY

National Education Union (NEU) members working for Arthur Terry Learning Partnership (ATLP) schools in Birmingham, Coventry and Staffordshire have scored a stunning victory.

It's not often that workers secure a total capitulation from the bosses. But in this case it appears that NEU members have not only forced ATLP to reverse all of the proposed job cuts, but the leadership of the trust have resigned en masse.

The chief executive and chief financial officers have stepped down, along with the trust chair and vice-chair. The union has also been strengthened, with committees agreed to be set up in every school, and a reported doubling of membership from 400 to 800 in the course of the dispute.

Nicky Downes, former NEU executive member, who has been building support for the strike in Coventry, said: "The victory at ATLP will send ripples across Coventry schools. Heads and CEOs know that the NEU will be fighting for negotiating bodies in Trusts and better working conditions for all staff. We will not rest until there's an end to the siphoning-off of funds centrally to pay CEOs and senior leaders exorbitant wages."

Jane Nellist, also a former national executive member from Coventry, said: "This victory against the threat of more than 100 redundancies at over 24 schools demonstrates the widespread anger of education workers across the country over the lack of funding and increasing workload."

Scrap academy system

This should add further strength to education workers' and community demands that the government scrap the parasitic academy system altogether and return all schools to local democratic control, so that every penny is spent on education rather than bonuses for fat-cat bosses.

A striking teacher told us: "It gives me and my colleagues great comfort to know that there were members of the Socialist Party and public fighting with us and offering support. It meant the world to know this."

Brum bins 'mega picket' against 'Tories in red ties'

BIRMINGHAM SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBERS

On Friday 30 January, trade unionists descended on all three Birmingham bin depots for the third 'mega picket' called by 'Strikemap' since the strike of bin workers against the Labour council began in January last year.

The workers have been out indefinitely since March, and agency workers employed by Job and Talent joined the action on 1 December over bullying and harassment.

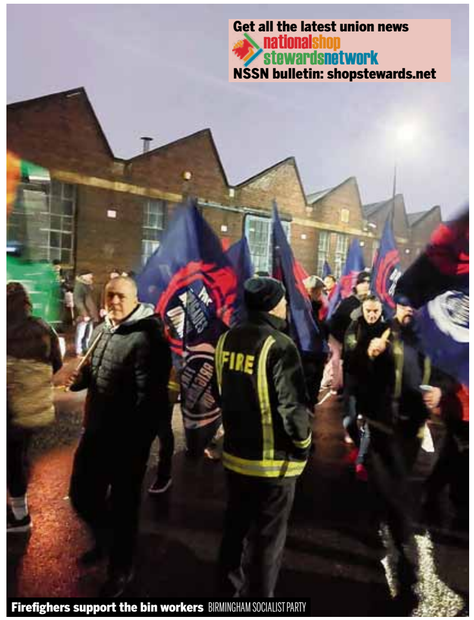
The battle started over a brutal £8,000 cut to pay, and has evolved into a class principle. On one side the workers; on the other a local Labour council, government-appointed commissioners and Labour central government. The resolve of the workers has not faulted. Each striker we spoke to, without hesitation, said they would stay out until the end.

Despite the early start and cold, wet weather, supporters came far and wide, from Sheffield to Wales, London and more.

Depots closed

The threat of mobilisations outside the gate was enough to get the remaining agency workers stood down for the day and collections postponed. The council was forced to close the depots.

Thirteen months into their strike action, the strikers at **Perry Barr** were appreciative of everyone who attended.



Firefighters support the bin workers BIRMINGHAM SOCIALIST PARTY

Seeing the depots shut down as a result of the solidarity action provided a morale boost, especially as the court injunction still prevents them from picketing directly outside the depots.

Zack Polanski: What would Green councillors do?

Speakers included Zack Polanski, leader of the Green Party. Zack commented on the cost of living and how this has affected all workers, but didn't explain what Green Party councillors would do, and left the picket straight after his speech, giving strikers no opportunity to ask him. No speaker commented on the looming local elections - the first in four years for Birmingham - and the opportunity to provide a no-cuts working-class alternative at the ballot box.

The best speeches came from the local reps. Mike Masters gave an impassioned speech about how, if reballoted, his colleagues would still vote for strike action.

Strikers talked about the personal impact of this strike. It has brought them closer together: colleagues who would not normally see each other every day on the job have now been standing shoulder to shoulder on the picket for months.

At **Smithfield** the mood was optimistic, especially following the successful school strike (see facing page). Labour MP John McDonnell called for workers to hold Labour to account with the council elections coming up - without saying how - but strikers criticised him for staying with the party.

From the early hours, **Atlas** depot in Tyseley had a determined and confident picket line. A strong contingent from the Fire Brigades Union joined the picket, reinforcing the growing cross-union backing for the action. Regional secretary Billy Holland told the bin workers: "We won't be told to know our place. We know our value, we know your value to society, and we won't be bossed around by the Tories in red ties up at the council house".

Dave Nellist: Workers should stand in 'bin strike election'

Speakers included Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition chair and former Labour MP Dave Nellist, who called on trade unions to use their collective strength to back the dispute. He stressed the importance of turning solidarity on the picket lines into organised political and industrial pressure until the workers' demands are met.

Dave got one of the biggest cheers of the day when he said: "If we can't rely on establishment parties to deliver jobs, wages and services for working-class people, we have to build something new. Let's try and find workers, like bin workers and their families, to stand and make the election on 7 May the 'bin strike election', and get rid of Labour cutters."

UKSBS bosses feeling pressure: 'Pay us what we have earned!'

DESDEMONA STOTT

It is a time of year known by many workers in the public sector: the pay award. Its naming is perhaps ironic, as the 2026 'award' in the civil service is a measly 3.25% pay increase, with an extra 0.05% allegedly on offer if asked for by department tops, to help shore up the wages of those in lower-salaried jobs. This follows years of pay freezes and caps.

This is felt sharply in UK Shared Business Services (UKSBS). Out of all the entities under the umbrella of the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT), UKSBS workers are paid the lowest of all.

Insult

While waiting for the so-called awards, colleagues who are on Band B - the current minimum wage - are relying on government assistance to make ends meet, mainly Universal Credit. The fact they must resort to this while working a 37.5-hour week, often more, is insulting.

UKSBS workers are knowledgeable and hard-working. Since 2020, the company has taken on numerous high-profile contacts, and the main benefits workers have reaped are increased rates of sickness, higher staff turnover - leading to knowledge being lost - and appallingly little in return financially, while the retirement age has risen to 68. The workers are not happy.

The DSIT group in the civil service union PCS, with Socialist Party member and Broad Left Network supporter Marion Lloyd as president, has not stood idle. Alongside numerous internal meetings, a wider online call was held. Members setting out their own circumstances and how difficult it is to put food on the table were near to tears. Many were angry with the stance that their employer was taking, of platitudes about how fantastic their work is, but nothing in terms of the concrete reward that is required to drag people out of poverty.

A number of departments within UKSBS have moved employees to Band C. While this is a partial solution, it is still not a fair wage for the work and is soon to become a starvation wage itself. Band C staff are often compelled to take on work that should be Band D.

Bosses say no

Tensions reached a crescendo when the Senior Leadership Group held a hybrid 'Town Hall' for the Swindon Polaris House office. The app was clogged with questions about pay and worries about the operational future. Some people only felt bold enough to share their concerns anonymously. Staff were calling for clarity and quick action, and asking for more than the additional 0.05%.



PCS members are having to fight several different government employers (above, at the British Library). A national campaign is needed ROB WILLIAMS

The workforce's trust of the management is measured at 52%, down even further from last year. The workers ask: "Will you pay us what we have earned?" The bosses say, "No!"

The UKSBS Board (which includes representation from DSIT) has been directly lobbied, a petition launched and already well supported, and further meetings with the employer are due to take place. If we do not make satisfactory progress then we will consider moving towards an industrial action ballot to win more.

Nominate candidates for PCS National Executive Committee who will fight job cuts, the pension crisis and austerity pay

£2 million cuts to civil service staffing budgets were announced by Starmer's government last year. At least 40,000 jobs are at risk. In the upcoming national and group elections, Socialist Party members are standing candidates as part of the PCS Broad Left Network (BLN), alongside other activists who want a leadership that is committed to building a national campaign.

Nominations are open till 5 March. Please nominate the BLN-supported list:

President
Bev Laidlaw (DWP)
Vice Presidents
Ellie Clarke (CO)
Rachel Heemskerk (DWP)
Dave Semple (DfE)
Hector Wesley (HMRC)
NEC members
Eilonwy Awen (HMRC)
Fiona Brittle (Scottish Government)
Josh Chown (Home Office)
Abi Clark (DWP)
Ellie Clarke (Cabinet Office)
Gemma Criddle (HMRC)
Joe Dale (MHCLG)
Chris Day (National Archives)
Pippa Evans (House of Commons)
Angie Foggett (HMRC)
Andrew Fry (Scottish Government)
Christian Goulart McNerney (Ofgem)
Chip Hamer (Sport England)
James Hawthorne (Ofwat)
Rachel Heemskerk (DWP)
Craig Hodgson (DWP)
Reece Lawton (DWP)
Bev Laidlaw (DWP)
Vijay Menezes-Jackson (DWP Edinburgh, Lothian and Borders)
Liat Norris (MOJ)
Puck Oseroff-Spicer (Security Industry Authority)
Rob Ritchie (Sopra Steria)
Jon-Paul Rosser (HMRC)
Dave Semple (Dept for Education)
H Sheridan (HMRC)
Pete Smullen (HMRC)
Gary Spencer-Guney (MHCLG)
Hector Wesley (HMRC)
Katrine Williams (DWP)
Bobby Young (HMRC)

Jack: 'this isn't just a personal struggle'



PHOTO: SIMCITYWORK/CC

After leaving university as a graduate, I expected that getting work would be difficult, but I didn't realise how discouraging and competitive the process could feel in reality. I applied for lots of roles and waited for responses, but most applications didn't lead anywhere. In many cases I didn't even receive a rejection, just silence. Eventually, the first job that actually replied to me and invited me in was a kitchen porter role. They offered me a trial shift, and because I needed income and didn't want to keep waiting, I took it.

While I was grateful to have work, I still wanted to find something that felt more suited to me as a graduate, or at least something that used more of my skills. When I began looking for other opportunities, I quickly noticed that so many roles required at least a year of experience, even for entry-level positions. This left me feeling stuck, it is hard to gain experience when you aren't being given a chance to start in the first place!

After a while, I widened my search and started applying for more standard retail and customer service jobs, thinking that would be easier. However, even those roles were extremely competitive. I attended an interview for a temporary job where the recruiter said she was interviewing people all week just to fill a one-month contract, which made it clear how many applicants were fighting for very limited work.

The most frustrating part has been the lack of communication. Even after interviews, I've often had no follow-up at all. Seeing friends my age go through the same thing, applying for months and receiving only rejections, has made me realise this isn't just a personal struggle, but a wider issue affecting many people.

Join the fightback

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Youth unemployment

NO FUTURE UNDER CAPITALISM, FIGHT FOR SOCIALIST CHANGE!

DEAN YOUNG
LIVERPOOL SOUTH SOCIALIST PARTY



PHOTO: MARY FINCH

There is a serious youth unemployment crisis emerging in Britain. On the surface an overall unemployment rate of 5.1%, whilst rising, seems relatively low. However scratch beneath the surface and it becomes clear that unemployment rates are significantly higher for young people under the age of 25.

This was acknowledged by the Labour government when Chancellor Rachel Reeves pledged Labour will "abolish long term youth unemployment", at the September 2025 Labour Party conference. Fat chance of that!

Stories of graduates leaving 18+ years of education, having done everything by the book, yet not being able to find secure work (or indeed any work at all!) are commonplace. According to government reports released in November 2025, the unemployment rate for 16 to 24-year-olds is 15.9% - 729,000 people.

To put that into perspective, the number is considerably larger than the membership of the Labour Party during its peak with Jeremy Corbyn as leader. The 15% figure is also significantly larger than the overall unemployment figure of 5.1%. Youth unemployment is up 103,000 on the year before. Almost a million (946,000) are 'NEET' - meaning not in employment, education or training – with 500,000 16 to 24-year-olds actively searching for work and not able to get it, according to a TUC report (September 2025).

> **Application after application, an obscene average of at times hundreds for just one entry-level role**

As a 22-year-old recent graduate having recently finished a Masters degree, I too very much understand the emerging crisis from personal experience. Application after application, an obscene average of at times hundreds of applicants for just one entry-level role. Finally getting an interview and realising you are competing with other workers with at times decades of experience who are being forced to look for entry-level work themselves!

This does not suggest a healthy economy and labour market. The diagnosis is that British capitalism is deeply sick, and incapable of providing for the working-class majority. If you get an interview, after much stress, you then often realise that is not the final hurdle. There's another hoop you need to jump through after that. It is frustrating, demoralising and, frankly, radicalising.

If you are fortunate enough to get a job there's no guarantee it is a secure job. Zero-hour contracts run rife. People are forced to work multiple jobs just to get by. Another pledge Labour promised was to deliver a so-called 'new deal for workers.' That has been repeatedly watered down after 'consultations with business,' with as yet no ban on zero-hour contracts, and no full workers' rights from day one.

With insecure working emerges a different crisis to unemployment, underemployment. Universal Credit is used by workers to top up poverty wages from bosses. 327,000 16 to 24-year-olds claimed Universal Credit in December 2025 (up 31,200 from December 2024). Over 700,000 university graduates are now out of work and claiming benefits, according to the Centre for Social Justice.

This bleakness undoubtedly will have, and is already having, the effect of making young people look to more radical ideas. If you can't get a job, are saddled with tens of thousands worth of student debt for life and dealing with zero-hour contract exploitation, it is inevitable you will be angry! Blairite former Home Secretary David Blunkett warned in the Guardian newspaper in September 2025 of the threat of a "lost generation". The greatest threat to capitalist politicians like Blunkett is this new generation of young people will be lost for capitalism and more open to socialist ideas.

The Labour government has only been in office for less than two years and is already hated. When asked to rank the most important issues to them, young people's (16-29) top three answers were: cost of living, health care and housing affordability. The top three contributors to anxiety: financial worries, work pressure, job insecurity and unemployment. (John Smith Centre). Keir Starmer's Labour government is not only failing to address these issues – the problems are getting worse under it!

A significant number of the 800,000 who initially signed up to support Jeremy Corbyn and Zarah Sultana's Your Party in summer 2025 will have been young people enthused by a left-wing alternative to Starmer's Labour. Likewise, big sections of young people will be enthused by new Green Party leader Zack Polanski's left-wing rhetoric.

The majority of young people angry and wanting change, workers and students, have not joined the Greens or Your Party. Most are watching on from the sidelines waiting to see what party, if any, is capable of fighting for them. Young workers and students desperately need a mass workers' party, with trade unions' collective power at its heart, to fight against poverty wages, unemployment and underemployment. As does the working class as a whole.

The trade unions in Britain organise over 6 million workers, of all ages and from all backgrounds. They should be to the fore in the fight against rising youth unemployment. The Socialist Party calls for a trade union struggle for a £15-an-hour minimum wage with no age exemptions, as a step towards a real living wage; for the abolition of zero-hour contracts; and for a mass public jobs creation programme.

The Labour government has announced its Youth Guarantee, including a promise of six months' government-funded, paid work for 18 to 21-year-olds who have spent over 18 months on Universal Credit. This will be available to a tiny minority of those facing under- and unemployment. There are no details on what pay and conditions these workers will have guaranteed, and there is no promise of a job at the end of it.

A previous Tory government predecessor. The council implemented an urban regeneration programme that created unionised jobs, good-quality apprenticeships with a job guaranteed at completion. The council built thousands of council homes as well as parks and community centres. By mobilising mass support in the city, including through the trade unions, millions of pounds was won from Margaret Thatcher's government in Westminster.

There is nothing to stop councils today taking the same approach. The three main trade unions representing council workers have policies calling for councils to set no-cuts budgets.

The Greens, for example, have over 800 councillors and are part of administrations in over 40 local authorities. Unfortunately so far, those councils have followed the logic of the capitalist establishment and carried out austerity cuts. Zack Polanski should instruct those Green councillors to take a fighting, anti-austerity position (see page 5).

In Liverpool and elsewhere around the country, Socialist Party members are playing a role helping to organise people's budget meetings. Events to draw up council budgets based on need, those should include measures to properly tackle the youth unemployment crisis. In the 1980s, Liverpool won millions from Thatcher the 'Iron Lady'; imagine what would be won from multiple councils demanding money from 'tin man' Starmer!

In May's elections, we are fighting for the widest possible stand of candidates on that anti-austerity basis, demanding that the super-rich are made to pay for their own crisis. We call on the trade unions to lead the process of fighting for a new party of the working class, and for it to fight for socialist change.

The crisis of youth unemployment is not unique to British capitalism. Youth unemployment levels across Europe include: Spain (25%), France (19%), Sweden (24%), Greece and Italy (both 21%). This displays clearly a failure of the capitalist system to offer any sort of future for young people internationally. That is what is behind the political polarisation and radicalisation of young people around the world. It underlines the need to fight for socialism - a system based on public ownership and working-class democratic control, with production planned to meet need not profit - in Britain and internationally.

> **It displays clearly a failure of the capitalist system to offer any sort of future for young people internationally**

workfare scheme forced people in receipt of Job Seekers' Allowance to work for their benefits or face sanctions. Workfare was used as free labour by big-business employers as well as to undercut the pay and job security of their waged workers. Socialist Party members as part of the Youth Fight for Jobs campaign fought against this.

Trade unions should be demanding that any government-funded scheme ensures trade union conditions and rates of pay, as well as a permanent job guarantee at the end.

Rather than the government handing over cash to big business, unions should be demanding mass investment in public works to meet need. For example, to develop green technology and to address the huge shortage of affordable housing.

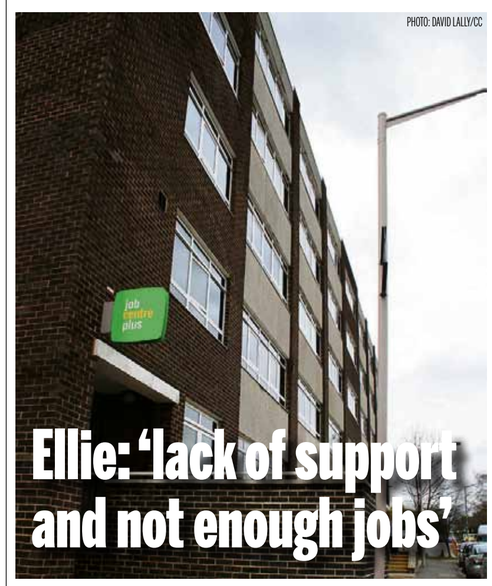
In Liverpool in the 1980s, the city council's Labour administration was led by Militant, the Socialist Party's

The Socialist Party says:

- **Young workers organise! – join a trade union and fight for workers' rights**
- **End zero-hour contracts - guaranteed hours for all and flexibility on the workers' terms not the bosses'**
- **Build a trade union struggle for a minimum wage of £15 an hour, with no exemptions, as a step towards a real living wage**
- **All apprenticeships must be with trade union-agreed pay, terms and conditions, and a guaranteed job on completion**
- **Start a mass programme of socially useful and environmentally sustainable public works, on trade union conditions**
- **Demand councils set no-cuts, needs-based budgets - make the super-rich pay**
- **Unions must build a new mass workers' party to fight on our side against the bosses**
- **For a socialist planned economy based on public ownership and working class control and management, to meet need**
- **Fight for socialist change in Britain and internationally**



PHOTO: DAVID LALLY/CC



Ellie: 'lack of support and not enough jobs'

As a care leaver, I received Universal Credit immediately on turning 18. After passing my A-levels, I did not get much support looking for jobs or applying to university.

After a gap year, eight months of a university course and having to drop out due to a lack of support, I was forced to move house six times in two years, and twice to a new area. I never knew where I would end up next.

I have tried to get help from 'support workers' and job centre work coaches. One charity helped me write a CV using AI, which wasn't even to an acceptable level!

I'm looking for work, despite all the hurdles. But there is not a lot in general, and there is not a lot I could apply for. I applied to two bookshops, one gave me an interview, the other turned me down as I hadn't worked in one before. For now, I have my eye on Waterstones which hires baristas for one month at a time.

Bristol charity workers strike: Wellbeing of users and of staff are linked

TOM BALDWIN
SOUTH WEST SOCIALIST PARTY

60 striking Unison members and their supporters rallied outside the offices of mental health charity Second Step in Bristol last week. They'd struck for four days over the preceding two weeks, but management's intransigence has forced them to step up the action. The rally marked the first of six consecutive days of action.

One of the reasons for the strike is pay. The story will be familiar to many workers: another below-inflation pay offer was the straw that broke the camel's back after years of real-terms pay cuts. Management claims there isn't the money to pay more, but refuses to open its books for the union to check that claim.

Bosses say they want to prioritise the wellbeing of service users, but workers were clear that their own money worries make it harder to support people effectively. One explained that the issue isn't isolated but is related to the wider model of charity funding, where services are delivered on behalf of councils but without the security of long-term funding.

The other issue on the table is union recognition. Managers made promises about this over a year ago, but are yet to deliver. A last-minute proposal was made in the run-up to the strike, but on worse terms than had previously been promised, which weren't acceptable to the union. Workers explained that the managers seem to be in favour of trade unionism, but only when it happens elsewhere!

Staff feel differently though, and the union has recruited more members during the dispute. One obstacle to people joining has been Unison's affiliation to Labour, with activists having to reassure people that they could opt out from giving them any money. That's not holding the strikers back though – the union is determined to keep building, keep fighting and win for their members.



PHOTO: TOM BALDWIN

Vote to reject Morrisons pay stagnation



PHOTO: RICHARD SUTCLIFFE/CC

USDAW ACTIVIST MEMBERS

For a second year running, Morrisons private-equity owners are refusing their hard-working employees a basic pay rise above minimum wage.

Since their takeover in 2021, owners Clayton, Dubilier and Rice (CD&R) have been asset-stripping Morrisons and squeezing workers.

Morrisons was the first major UK supermarket chain to reach £10-an-hour pay – albeit at the cost of giving up the annual bonus – but since then pay has stagnated.

Twice, Usdaw union members have voted to reject poor pay deals that were recommended by their union negotiators.

Now, Morrisons have told Usdaw they are "unable to make an offer at this time"!

For the first time, Usdaw's negotiating body has voted to reject this and has raised the possibility of industrial action. Members in all stores, distribution and manufacturing covered by the national agreement will be balloted from 5 to 23 February. Socialist Party members and Usdaw Activist supporters call on all Usdaw members to vote to reject this non-offer.

Company bosses blame the increases in employer National Insurance contributions. The real reason is linked to the billions of pounds of debt that CD&R loaded Morrisons up with as part of their purchase of the company. They have launched a £1 billion cuts agenda, making workers pay the price.

Staffing levels

Staffing levels in the Morrisons Daily convenience chains have been pared back to minimal amounts, with staff often lone-working. To add insult to injury, staff are also being told they need to be 'more flexible'!

Socialist Party members working in Morrisons have reported a great deal of anger. But some members are concerned about what the union will actually do, believing that management has been emboldened by the lack of a challenge from the union tops previously.

The leadership must now put themselves on a war footing and prepare members to win the ballots necessary to take strike action. The regional reps meetings that are taking place are a good first step. But other measures should also be considered, such as workplace meetings, and rallies of Morrisons workers and supporters, including outside Morrisons head office in Bradford. Tactical questions to boost impact, such as disaggregated ballots and some targeted action, will need to be democratically discussed.

The whole of Usdaw must be rallied behind Morrisons workers, whilst also reaching out to Unite members in Morrisons distribution and manufacturing.

We must demand of Usdaw's Keir Starmer-supporting leadership that it demands the removal of the Tory 50% turnout thresholds immediately.

The serious threat of strike action in Morrisons would send a warning shot to all the supermarket bosses who have so far been able to pay low wages despite the substantial profits workers generate.

Oppose Labour's visa attacks

WHAT'S YOUR VIEW?
editors@socialistparty.org.uk

If your loved one is being cared for in a care home, in a nursing facility, or by in-home carers, the Home Office's proposed changes to skilled-worker visas should worry you.

The government brought foreign care workers to the UK after the pandemic, because the social care system was failing. Few would choose a job in the care sector - with its low wages, lack of respect for its workers, long hours, unappealing shift patterns, and mentally, physically, and emotionally taxing work - if other jobs are available.

Many care homes are reliant on foreign workers, even making up the majority of staff in many care facilities. So what will the government do if the foreign workers who prop up the care sector have to leave? How many care homes in the UK would be forced to close their doors if even half of their foreign workers resigned? If those care homes closed, where would the elderly and ill people who live in them go?

Yet this danger threatens. Under the current rules, a worker on a Health and Care Work visa must work for their sponsor employer for five years before they are able to apply for settled status. Under the new rules, they would be required to work for their sponsor employer for 15 years, three times as long, before becoming eligible for settlement.

This is a danger to all workers. Precarious work is bad for workers, wherever they are from - if you have a dispute with your boss and don't have the protection of a strong union, you could lose your job. A migrant worker could lose their job, and then the entire life which they've worked hard to build in this country. This dependency shifts the balance of power between the whole workforce and the employer. Even as the Labour government is passing the Employment Rights Bill, it is undermining workers' rights!

The primary reason the Home Office has given for this change is a "negative fiscal impact" produced by "low-skilled" migrants. The argument is that over their lifetimes, low-paid workers get more from education, health and pension services than the income taxes they pay. However, according to the Migration Advisory Committee, this is similar to the 'negative fiscal impact' of a similar locally born worker. This ignores the enormous social contribution care workers make, let alone the billions in profits many generate for the bosses of privatised care services!

Government officials are ostensibly making an attempt to encourage British workers to take up care-work roles. The extent of this attempt seems to be a "fair-pay agreement" for social care in England. The 'fair pay' plan would not come into effect until 2028, long after the proposed changes to the Health and Care Work visa. The efficacy of the plan is untested and uncertain, and it is entirely irrelevant to the care sector outside of England. There is no equivalent plan in process for the rest of the UK. Once again, Westminster has introduced policy which completely ignores the needs of the people. We must all loudly protest against the proposed changes, and protect the services our elderly and infirm so desperately need.

MINA FRASER

Tens of thousands march again through Minneapolis against ICE and state repression

AN EYEWITNESS REPORT

Once again, tens of thousands participated in a march through downtown Minneapolis on 30 January, as part of a 'shutdown' against ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) and state repression. Over 300 actions were planned across the country.

This time, wrongly, there was less official labour union backing than for the 23 January protest. The initiative came from young people, the student unions in Minnesota universities, schools and colleges, including the Somali students' organisation. Significantly this did not mean workers did not participate. Committee for a Workers' International (CWI) reporters spoke to workers on the demonstration from education, construction, transit, nurses and retail who had either left work early to demonstrate or had made sure they had taken the day off.

A lot has taken place since the first day of action on 23 January. The capitalist press and the establishment in Minnesota have attempted to claim the situation is calming, especially since the brutal execution of union member and anti-ICE activist Alex Pretti, and the removal by Donald Trump of Border Patrol boss Gregory Bovino. 30 January shows there is still a furious mass mood in the city and the wider state to remove ICE completely and take the fight to Trump's agenda. Big business CEOs waded in locally and nationally to urge 'de-escalation'.

All week in Minnesota, protests continued. These included nighttime demonstrations at hotels where ICE agents are accommodated. The morning of the 30 January saw hundreds demonstrate at the Whipple building detention centre, used by ICE, pushing past barriers put up by the National Guard who were sent in by Democrat state governor Tim Walz after Pretti's killing. Students organised walkouts from campuses in the days leading up to the "shutdown". A vigil for Pretti saw thousands of union nurses attending. Hundreds protested outside Democrat senator Amy Klobuchar's office demanding she act against funding for ICE.

The politicisation and scale of organisation against ICE is also present if you go by transit across the city. Most independent businesses, and even a few chains, have "ICE not welcome here" posters, mainly giving advice on what to do during an ICE raid.

Although there has been talk of a different approach and even a "eventual drawdown plan" under Trump's new henchman Tom Homan (who was responsible for deportations under Barack Obama), ICE raids are continuing, as is repression with the full cooperation of Democrat-controlled local police forces. There have been mass arrests of protesters and of the press. There is discussion that Homan will draw up a database of anti-ICE activists and groups.



PHOTO: ISG

> **The labour movement still has an opportunity to take the lead and really take on ICE and the Trump regime behind them**

Unions

The union leaders nationally and locally are missing an opportunity to take the lead of this radicalisation, despite the term 'general strike' being used by a wider layer. The unions were even less visible on the 30 January demonstration despite the enthusiasm of their members. On 23 January, there were workers' organised shutdowns and walkouts of a small number of local workplaces like art centres but also some Starbucks outlets and part of the Target retail workforce. On 30 January, the CWI took part in pickets and sit-ins in a number of Target stores across the city; these were organised by union activists and left groups.

As well as 'ICE out now' and anti-racist slogans, the march saw a variety of ideas present. a section of the demonstration carried a 'US Constitution' signed by marchers, raising the issue of attacks on democratic rights. Banners were present that said a war was being waged on the "real values of America and Minnesota".

The issue of how to organise self-defence is also being raised by activists. It was clear there was a turnout from outside the city. There were homemade signs saying rural and small town Minnesota also opposes ICE. The city's suburbs and bigger Minnesota urban areas, including Rochester and Willmar, have also been scenes of conflict with ICE.

The labour movement still has an opportunity to take the lead and really take on ICE and the Trump regime behind them, the openness and enthusiasm among big layers if harnessed could strengthen the workers' movement. This means organising and giving confidence to workers to overcome anti-strike laws and contracts, and really take action against the bosses and the state. City-wide and national general strike action is possible if prepared for and seriously discussed and the working class, youth and sections of the middle class have shown willingness to struggle since the ICE operation from December. This would include the formation of democratically elected committees, through emergency mass meetings, in every area and workplace of unions, union members, rapid response groups, students unions and all who want to collectively fight back.

Independent Socialist Group (ISG) and CWI activists got an enthusiastic response to our leaflets and the new issue of Socialism Today, the ISG's newspaper. Our material clearly raises the need for a new party of the working class and youth rather than anger and energy being funnelled into the Democrats and Republicans and the need for workers, students and youth to link the fight against ICE to the crisis of the cost of living under capitalism, fighting for a socialist programme.

The Committee for a Workers' International (CWI) is the international socialist organisation which the Socialist Party is affiliated to. The CWI is organised in many countries. We work to unite the working class and oppressed peoples against capitalism, and to fight for a socialist world.
socialistworld.net

SOCIALISM TODAY



Monthly magazine of the Socialist Party

February issue includes...

- **Behind Trump's imperial disorder** The Trump administration's kidnapping of Venezeulan President Nicolás Maduro and his wife has been swiftly followed by the ramping up of Trump's demands for the US control of Greenland. The editorial looks at what lies behind Trump's naked colonialism.
- **The real Chávez legacy** Following the US action in Venezuela, Socialism Today reprints an article by Tony Saunois that was first published in April 2013 following the death of Hugo Chávez, Maduro's predecessor, which draws up a balance sheet of his legacy and that of the 'Bolivarian revolution'.
- **Revisiting Corbynism and its lessons** The annual Socialism weekend in November included a discussion, led by Clive Heemskerk, on the lessons of Jeremy Corbyn's leadership of the Labour Party.
- **Assessing the 'fascist' Meloni government** What is the character of Giorgia Meloni's coalition government in Italy? Is it fascist as some left groups claim, asks Christine Thomas?

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Campaign to save Caerphilly libraries in July 2025 PHOTO: NIKOKI WEERAKOON

Caerphilly libraries: Campaigners demand council reverses closure decision

MARIAM KAMISH
SECRETARY CAERPHILLY TRADES COUNCIL (PERSONAL CAPACITY)

In scenes of pandemonium, the chair of Caerphilly Council's Joint Scrutiny Committee shouted me down, demanded I leave the podium, and threatened to have me thrown out of the council's 2026 budget meeting.

I had called on councillors to break ranks and table a motion to overturn last year's decision to close ten local libraries. But the chair claimed the issue wasn't in this year's budget. Pointed in the right direction by rebel councillor Brenda Miles, I'd proved otherwise. But the chair refused to hear the arguments.

I hadn't thought we were living in a Trump-style dystopia – not yet! Maybe I'd been wrong!

The chair suspended the meeting. He sent a proctor up to the public gallery to reason with me. Then, he stormed up there himself for a nose to nose.

Our ten threatened libraries are still open - thanks to our campaign's relentless efforts. It's not hard to see why the council is afraid of us. Why they've cut the consultation period this year from three months to just three weeks!

In the recent Senedd by-election, Labour lost one of its safest seats and the top issue on the doors was the libraries. It's time they wake up – before next year's council elections – to give the libraries a reprieve and stop wasting money fighting us in the courts.

This has never been about money! Caerphilly Council has the largest reserves in Wales. The campaign calls for a legal, needs-based, no-cuts budget. We're looking to help organise a people's budget meeting. Meanwhile, we renew our challenge: there's no shame in listening and changing a bad decision. No Cuts! No Community Asset Transfers! No Closures! Keep our libraries open and in the public sector!



Cllr Brenda Miles PHOTO: BEN PATEL

Rebel councillor

Rebel councillor Brenda Miles made Caerphilly history last May by voting against plans to close ten local libraries. Labour suspended her and threw her off committees. Since then, she has marched with us, joined our campaign, assisted in building a case for a Judicial Review and spoken at our protests. Brenda says the council is not fulfilling its obligations under the 1964 Libraries Act.

Southampton unions discuss how to fight cuts

JAMES GRETTON
SOUTHAMPTON SOCIALIST PARTY

Hampshire's reorganisation plans alone would "threaten over £60 million in new cuts", Southampton trades council (TUC) chair and president Maggie Fricker warned, introducing a TUC meeting in Southampton on 31 January. Khalid Sidahmed, a speaker from Portsmouth's TUC, critiqued Labour's broken promise to end austerity, calling their devolution plans "decentralised austerity" without necessary funding.

The Fire Brigades Union (FBU) in Hampshire has been fighting against cuts, including by lobbying Hampshire County Council. FBU Southern regional secretary Mark Chapman reported the impact of austerity on fire services. 12,000 firefighters have been removed from the frontline since 2010, leaving communities vulnerable. For example, on the Isle of Wight, which only has four engines for the island. Mark characterised these cuts as "no longer theoretical, they are measurable" and called for mobilisation against these threats to public safety.

Southampton has seen a series of anti-migrant protests organised by the far right and consistently opposed, including by the trades council. GMB Southampton secretary Ali Haydor echoed Khalid's warning that austerity legitimised scapegoating and racism, which has targeted migrants, Muslims and South Asian workers. Politicians have weaponised racism to advance their careers and target communities, as evident in ICE's terrorising of Minneapolis in the U.S. Ali also criticised the current minimum wage as "dismal" and unfulfilling for a dignified life.

The consensus among speakers and contributors was clear: fighting austerity remains a top priority for the workers' movement, and international examples have demonstrated the need for workers' mobilisation and revitalising jobs and services. As Maggie noted, 2025 saw numerous general strikes, including in Italy against the Meloni government's complicity in the Palestinian genocide, in Belgium against austerity and pension reforms, and in Greece twice over reduced labour protections.

The meeting resolved: "We need a campaign in Southampton to fight for government funding of the jobs and services our communities need, and to unite against racist division" and that, "in line with Unite the Union's policy we, 'call on the Council to set legal, balanced, no cuts, needs-based budgets'."

Anti-austerity councillors could play a key role. Your Party campaigner David Cowley has declared his intention to run in the Shirley by-election on 26 February, and has applied to do so as part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition. Socialist Party members support this and are continuing to campaign for Nadia Ditta's election in Bevois ward for the local elections on 7 May.



Hampshire FBU and Southampton TUC campaign against cuts PHOTO: SOTON SP

'Young people need a future!'

Waltham Forest Trades Council discusses youth campaigns

LINDA TAAFFE
WALTHAM FOREST SOCIALIST PARTY

'Young people need youth services', 'Youth workers need jobs', 'Re-open all closed services', 'Young people need a future!'

Under these headlines a Waltham Forest Trades Council (WFTC) public meeting was held about the dismal prospects facing young people; and how the trades council can take this matter up in a big way.

To start, the floor was given to two Unite London bus drivers from the local Stagecoach company, who've been embroiled in disputes with their management for quite a while now, for victimising union reps and creating a toxic culture. Their Unite organiser was unfortunately in Bangladesh – but that didn't stop him. He joined in on Zoom. You can't keep a good man down! The room gave them all a big round of applause, and pledges to be there at the next picket.

Oisin Mulholland, a Unite the Union activist in the union's youth section, and standing for a place on its Executive, said he will not accept this situation quietly. He outlined how, as a start, Unite could call a cross-London youth campaign initiative. Another young speaker, Aisha, described what life is like for young people, especially for those becoming socially isolated and resorting to screens. She also mentioned the maternity hospital where she was born had been closed down for lack of custom!

Young people just can't afford to have kids themselves; plus, of course, the skyrocketing rents, that drain more than half their wages - if they have a job - forcing them to go to live with parents well into their thirties.

Then, speaking about council cuts to youth services, President of the trades council Nancy Taaffe recalled that when she was young in the 1980s, the words "I am a 1 in 10" - the figures for youth unemployment at the time – were put into a pop song by UB40. Now, those figures are a drastic 1 in 7 and very little is out there publicly on this scandal.

A good number of young people, and parents of young people, added their comments from the floor, spelling out the very same situation in every sector. Deji Olayinka from Croydon made a contribution pointing out the shocking increase in youth violence in his borough. He described the devastation caused on children and young people by austerity, and outlined how we need to link young people with trade unions in a united struggle.

From the floor also, it was noted that we have so many statistics it's time to draw a line in the sand and fight back! "The local Labour council just passes on austerity exactly like they did under the Tories. We in this room could do a better job. That's why we want to stand for council in May, starting now with an appeal to join with us as fighting campaigners."

So, the meeting ended on a high note. We have our work cut out. We have no choice but to fight for a socialist change.

Build solidarity with Lea bus drivers

On 6 and 7 February, bus drivers at Lea Interchange garage in east London will be out on strike again against bullying management.

Hundreds of workers have stood on the picket lines on the two previous two-day strikes.

As well as visiting the picket lines in numbers to bring our support to the Unite members, Socialist Party members and Waltham Forest Trades Council have been working to spread solidarity, including organising teams of pensioners to leaflet buses and spreading the word around other workplaces. Unite reps spoke on the platform of the recent trades council public meeting.

Stagecoach bosses are under pressure, but are upping their aggressive tactics to try to undermine the strike.

Waltham Forest Trades Council has issued the following notice around London trades councils.

Urgent appeal to all Stagecoach drivers: Do not cross the line - support the drivers at Lea Interchange

Stagecoach drivers at Lea Interchange (Waltham Forest/Hackney) are currently in a bitter dispute against bullying, victimisation of reps, and union-busting. Unite the Union represents nearly 400 drivers at the depot, who have stood rock solid on the picket line.

The management tactics

We believe management is preparing 'Birmingham-style' aggressive tactics. They are attempting to hire external drivers and use 'loan drivers' from your garages to break the strike and starve the Lea drivers back to work.

We ask you for solidarity:

1. Refuse voluntary loan work: If you are asked to volunteer to transfer to Lea Interchange – say no. Do not do the dirty work for the bosses. They are paying you to break your own colleagues.
2. If you are "ordered" to transfer: Do not just accept it.

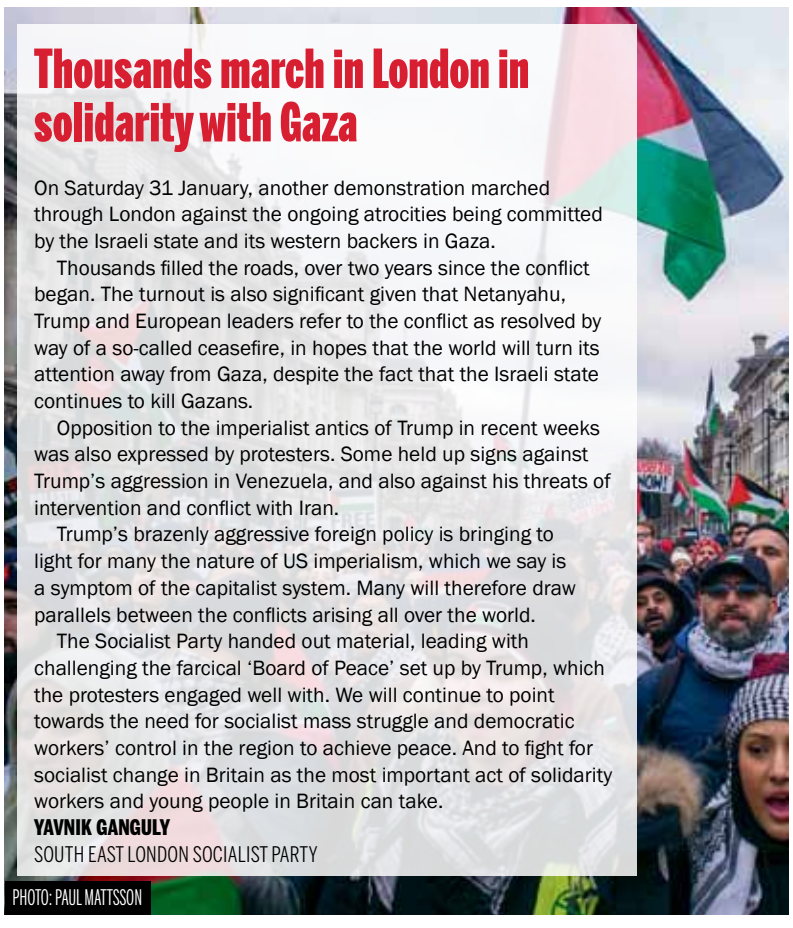
- Call your Shop Steward (reps) immediately
- State that you have safety concerns about crossing a hostile picket line
- Demand a full written risk assessment before moving
- Do not undermine the dispute
- A victory for Lea is a victory for you
- If they break the union at Lea, they will come for your garage next

Show your support:

- Send messages of solidarity to the Lea Interchange Branch: Branch secretary: shahid.fazil@unitetheunion.org and Branch organiser: muhsin.manir@unitetheunion.org
- Visit the picket line: Next dates are Feb 6, 7, 20, 21, the address is Lea Interchange Bus Depot, 151 Ruckholt Road, E10 5PB
- Emergency hardship fund: Unite LE254 Lea Interchange branch, Unity Trust bank, 60-83-01 20060855, ref: [your name/organisation]



Barts health workers visit the picket line



Thousands march in London in solidarity with Gaza

On Saturday 31 January, another demonstration marched through London against the ongoing atrocities being committed by the Israeli state and its western backers in Gaza.

Thousands filled the roads, over two years since the conflict began. The turnout is also significant given that Netanyahu, Trump and European leaders refer to the conflict as resolved by way of a so-called ceasefire, in hopes that the world will turn its attention away from Gaza, despite the fact that the Israeli state continues to kill Gazans.

Opposition to the imperialist antics of Trump in recent weeks was also expressed by protesters. Some held up signs against Trump's aggression in Venezuela, and also against his threats of intervention and conflict with Iran.

Trump's brazenly aggressive foreign policy is bringing to light for many the nature of US imperialism, which we say is a symptom of the capitalist system. Many will therefore draw parallels between the conflicts arising all over the world.

The Socialist Party handed out material, leading with challenging the farcical 'Board of Peace' set up by Trump, which the protesters engaged well with. We will continue to point towards the need for socialist mass struggle and democratic workers' control in the region to achieve peace. And to fight for socialist change in Britain as the most important act of solidarity workers and young people in Britain can take.

YAVNIK GANGULY
SOUTH EAST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

PHOTO: PAUL MATTSSON

Reenergised by Your Party and Polanski, my questioning led me to join the Socialist Party

WILLIE WOODLEY
BIRMINGHAM SOCIALIST PARTY

I had been interested in politics for several years, and always considered myself to be left wing. I aligned with the Labour Party under Jeremy Corbyn, and even held out hope that Keir Starmer's election in 2024 would finally bring improvements to people's living standards.

I was also excited by what I read about global left-wing movements; Syriza in Greece, Podemos in Spain, Die Linke in Germany, Bernie Sanders in the USA, and left-wing leaders in Latin America. However, the excitement dissipated when I learned that these movements were on the decline.

Podemos and Syriza had both moderated their programme in government, crushed by the capitalist establishment. After Sanders failed in his bid to be Democratic candidate for President, he channelled the enthusiasm for him into endorsing the uninspiring big business-oriented Hillary Clinton.

I was disillusioned by these events. How could the left, with the grassroots on its side, the huge numbers of campaigners and the electoral success, still fail?

Zack Polanski's bid for the Green Party leadership, combined with the announcement of Your Party, re-energised me and many other socialists and working-class people. However, seeing the patterns abroad made me question if these movements would last to finally bring improvements to the working class.

The annual 'Socialism' event, hosted by the Socialist Party, had several speakers delivering opening talks, including about the Green Party, Your Party and Zohran Mamdani. The people attending the talks had a chance to contribute and voice their opinions.

The experience of being at Socialism 2025 motivated me to attend the open meeting of my local branch of the Socialist Party. The people at the meeting were welcoming, wanted to hear my views and answered any of my queries. Soon after, I joined the party because I realised it offered a serious working-class oriented approach, which was an alternative to the cycle of retreat and compromise I have seen so many times.

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Leicester Kurdish solidarity

Around 150 of Leicester's Kurdish population met at the city's clocktower to demand liberation for Rojava. The protest was lively with a family atmosphere and young people in the lead. They marched through the streets chanting 'Stop supporting ISIS' and 'Free Rojava, free Kurdistan'. Local Socialist Party members went along in solidarity, proudly carrying copies of The Socialist with reports of similar protests elsewhere in the country from the previous week.

TESSA WARRINGTON

PHOTO: LEICESTER SP

Socialist Party

WHAT WE STAND FOR

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

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

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

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

WORK, PENSIONS AND BENEFITS

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

PUBLIC SERVICES

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

ENVIRONMENT

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

DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS

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

SOCIALISM AND INTERNATIONALISM

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

Do you agree? Join the fightback!

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Nigeria: Despite arrests and repression, struggle against forced evictions will continue



Makoko residents at a previous demonstration outside the Lagos State House of Assembly
PHOTO: DSM

Hassan Taiwo Soweto, a leading member of the Democratic Socialist Movement (DSM, CWI in Nigeria) and spokesperson of #EndBadGovernance Movement Lagos, was arrested on 28 January at the Lagos State House of Assembly, with other protesters. The protest was organised by residents against the demolition and forced eviction of Makoko, Oworonshoki, Owode Onirin and other poor communities in Lagos. The following is a statement issued after Hassan Taiwo Soweto and Dele Frank (Arole Fela) were released on bail.

The Youth Rights Campaign (YRC) confirms that Hassan Taiwo Soweto, leading member of the Democratic Socialist Movement and spokesperson of #EndBadGovernance Movement Lagos, and Dele Frank (Arole Fela) have been granted bail today, 29 January, and their matter has been adjourned to 11 March.

We appreciate the overwhelming solidarity and pressure mounted by comrades, civil society organisations, and well-meaning Nigerians who demanded their immediate release.

However, we must make it abundantly clear to the Lagos State Commissioner of Police, CP Moshood Jimoh, that the struggle against forced eviction, land grabbing, and state repression in Lagos State will continue. No amount of intimidation will silence us.

We strongly condemn the brutal assault carried out by CP Moshood Jimoh on Soweto personally. Soweto's clothes were torn, his glasses broken, shoes seized and, while restrained, blindfolded with remnants of his torn clothes. This was the reason why, when in court today, Soweto was barefoot and in his underwear.

This attack on peaceful protesters is an attack on democracy itself and represents conduct wholly unbecoming of a senior police officer. We are however not surprised by the violent conduct of the CP. He has a long record of repression and abuse of power.

Let it be known: nothing shall discourage us. Activists and organisations involved in this campaign remain resolute and unwavering in the struggle against tyranny, forceful eviction, land grabbing, and all attempts to criminalise peaceful protest.

An injury to one is an injury to all. The struggle continues.

Israel-Palestine: 10,000s demonstrate in Sakhnin against the criminal gangs and the government

The following is extracts by **Uri Bar Shalom Agmon**, from the Socialist Struggle Movement (SSM) in Israel/ Palestine, for the full article see socialistworld.net



PHOTO: SOCIALIST STRUGGLE MOVEMENT

A mass mobilisation of Palestinian citizens of Israel took place on Thursday 22 January as part of a Day of Rage in protest at an all-time record in the number of Arabs murdered amid the crisis of gun violence within the community - a crisis nurtured by policies of institutionalised crime.

The Day of Rage must not be allowed to become a one-off 'release of steam.' The struggle must continue to be built against Netanyahu's ultra-right government of blood and for the eradication of anti-social crime, poverty, and discrimination.

Around 50,000 people marched along Sakhnin's main road all the way to the Yuvalim junction, near the Misgav police station. According to some estimates, this was the largest demonstration by the Arab-Palestinian public within the Green Line since 2019. A demonstration was also held in Rahat, and several additional protest vigils were organised at other locations - including a cross-national vigil initiated by members of Socialist Struggle Movement (SSM) on the Tel Aviv University campus.

Thousands in Sakhnin shouted against crime, the racist police, and the government: "Netanyahu, you're despicable, Arab blood is not cheap", "My people are free, my people have decided, crime will not pass", and also "The people want to topple crime" - echoing the popular slogan from the revolutionary wave in the Middle East and North Africa in 2011, "The people want to topple the regime". Some protesters also chanted: "The police are the source of the problem" and "A criminals' police", along with more general slogans of the struggle against the national oppression of the Palestinian people.

A team from SSM took part in the demonstration and chanting, spoke with protesters, and distributed placards with the words: "General strike! Against crime, racist police and poverty", "Crime, massacres and repression - bring down the government of blood, the occupation, and rule of capital".

At the time of writing, 20 Arab-Palestinian citizens in the 1948 territories [the land that became Israel in 1948] have been murdered since the beginning of 2026 - almost one murder per day on average. This marks a further worsening of the epidemic of killings, after 252 Palestinian citizens of Israel were murdered last year - an unprecedented number, set in the midst of the war of annihilation in Gaza and the massive displacement measures in the West Bank. The dehumanisation of Palestinians does not stop at the Green Line. Combined with the economic and social crisis, it further increases bloodletting, certainly in the eyes of the police tops appointed by Security Minister Ben-Gvir.

Strikes

The mass demonstration in Sakhnin followed two days of strike action in the city, which began on 20 January, at the initiative of local business owners who launched a commercial strike, alongside a decision by the parents' committee to shut down the education system. Sakhnin municipality initially opposed the parent committee's decision, but quickly reversed course under public pressure and announced that it would join the strike.

The local initiative filled the vacuum left by the High Follow-Up Committee for Arab Citizens of Israel, the leaderships of the established parties among the Arab-Palestinian public, and the leaderships of the workers' organisations - and it spread rapidly. Under pressure from below, the countrywide Arab schools parents' committee declared a shutdown of the entire education system in Arab localities, and the chair of the Follow-Up Committee, Jamal Zahalka (a former Balad party leader) announced that a countrywide strike would take place on Thursday.

Unlike many protest strikes declared by the Follow-Up Committee, which often amounted to a symbolic commercial shutdown and the closure of some municipal institutions and parts of the education system, the strike included additional initiatives aimed at expanding its impact so that it would be felt beyond the Arab localities. Hundreds of doctors and pharmacists from Sakhnin - many of whom also work outside the city - organised in WhatsApp groups to strike, despite receiving no backing from the leaderships of their representative unions, and arrived at the demonstration as a bloc wearing their work uniforms.

Ibrahim Othman, a striking pharmacist from Sakhnin who took part in the demonstration, told us: "The pharmacists' organising began yesterday. We organised in the evening, and within a few hours it was decided that we would strike. All the pharmacists working in Sakhnin and outside Sakhnin joined this protest. It started in WhatsApp groups. It came from below."

At the same time, lawyers, engineers, and significantly some construction workers in the city also took part in the strike - although the scale is not yet clear. Protesters blocked the entrances to Sakhnin during the day, to strengthen the strike, and according to some reports many workers stayed home and did not go to work.

The chair of the Sakhnin parents' committee, Fadi Tarad, told SSM activists that the Afifi Group bus company, which operates the city's public transport, also halted its services under pressure from the parents' committee.

What next?

After the demonstration, party representatives, the leadership of the Follow-Up Committee, municipalities heads and political activists convened in the Sakhnin city council building to discuss the next steps. It was decided that the shutdown of the education system in Sakhnin would continue on the Saturday (a school day in the city). The chair of the Follow-Up Committee, Zahalka, proposed holding a large demonstration in Tel Aviv soon, although initially the statement issued after the meeting did not include any concrete announcements regarding the continuation of the struggle.

During the meeting in Sakhnin, pressure was placed on the leaders of the four political parties based in the Arab-Palestinian community within the Green Line - Hadash/al-Jabha, Ta'al, Balad and the United Arab List - by some activists and attendees in the room to commit to running together in the next election on a single list, based on the view that such unity is necessary to advance the struggle. The party leaders signed a commitment in principle to promote such a list, although it remains unclear whether they will ultimately reach agreement on running jointly.

However, the years of the Joint List's existence in the past - and even more so the role of the United Arab List under Mansour Abbas, who joined the capitalist occupation government of Bennett-Lapid - have provided a clear warning sign against the idea of such an electoral bloc between forces from the left and the right, which in itself cannot deliver the desired results. The alignment of forces that is needed is one capable of strengthening a strategy for building a mass struggle around a left-wing platform of radical reforms, as part of a fight to end discrimination and eradicate poverty through socialist change.

The current strike organising and the mass demonstration in Sakhnin have, on the one hand, exposed the lack of direction of the leaderships of those parties - which, generally speaking, do not advance a clear strategy for shifting the balance of forces in the struggle. On the other hand, they have given expression to some of the pent-up anger among a large layer of the public that is ready to fight to end the crisis and achieve real change in living conditions.

The rapid organising of workers in the healthcare system for strike action, within a short time, points to the need to apply pressure on workers' committees and on the leaderships of the trade unions to take concrete steps and join the struggle, particularly through strike action, in an effort to succeed in shutting down key sectors of the economy in a way that disrupts 'business as usual'.

Efforts to effectively expand actions that disrupt the economy will also need to be combined with continued cross-community public explanation work, organising to broaden strike-enforcement pickets, and, decisively, mobilising sections of organised labour so that strike action is implemented in a generalised manner, also without any dependency on the consent of employers - most of whom, sooner or later, will not willingly accept damage to their profits.

It is positive that the trade union organisation Power to the Workers and the Social Workers' Union issued basic solidarity statements supporting the strike. But active steps are needed to shut down workplaces with the demands to end enforced poverty, national oppression and crime. Massive pressure 'from below' can also push the right-wing bureaucratic leadership of the General Histadrut trade union federation to take organisational steps - and left-wing political coalition Hadash/al-Jabha, which holds positions within the Histadrut, including the leadership of regional branches, must also apply pressure in this direction - and help harness the weight of organised labour as part of a broader struggle against the entire agenda of Netanyahu and Ben-Gvir's capitalist government of death, and for profound change in the daily reality of life.

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The **Committee for a Workers' International** (CWI) is the international socialist organisation which the Socialist Party is affiliated to. The CWI is organised in many countries. We work to unite the working class and oppressed peoples against capitalism, and to fight for a socialist world.

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Reject a lifetime of debt

FIGHT FOR FREE EDUCATION

JAMES TAYLOR
BIRMINGHAM SOCIALIST STUDENTS

On top of a cost-of-living crisis now. Students' futures are of a lifetime of debt. As graduates, money will be taken from our wages monthly, and still the mountain of debt is likely to keep growing.

And to make things worse, in the Autumn Budget, the Labour government froze the threshold at which graduates have to start repaying their student loans. Graduates who make over £28,470, not much over minimum wage, will lose 9% of their income above that to repay student loans.

This is a clear breach of Labour's 2024 manifesto pledges not to raise taxes on 'working people'. In fact, this policy is a regressive tax in disguise. Students with wealthier parents can pay tuition fees up front and thereby avoid ballooning interest rates, while working-class students are left with debt for life.

Chancellor Rachel Reeves claims this system is "fair and reasonable". Is it fair that due to the threshold freezes by 2030, graduates working full time on the minimum wage will have to pay?

This is another in a number of attacks on students by this Labour government. In November 2024 they raised tuition fees from £9,250 to £9,535. Maintenance loans have failed to keep up with inflation, with food prices and especially rent going up. There are profits to be made in charging extortionate rent for sub-par student accommodation.

Universities are increasingly unable to cover their costs, with whole departments being closed around the country. Instead of funding education properly, the government is dipping deeper into the pockets of graduates to put a plaster on the situation.

Successive governments – Labour and Tory – are serving the interests of the capitalist class at the expense of workers and young people. Unsurprisingly, this has made the government deeply unpopular among students, many of whom are looking for a political alternative. Socialist Students fights to build campaigns against university cuts and fee hikes. We will be planning the fightback at our national conference in Manchester on 14 February. If you want to fight for free and fully funded education and to scrap student debt you should attend.



MARY FINCH

Socialist Students Conference 2026

Organising the student fightback for socialist change!



Saturday 14 February 2026
University Place @ University of Manchester
176 Oxford Rd, Manchester M13 9PL

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

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