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Issue 1359 | 19-25 March 2026 | formerly Militant

WE WON'T PAY FOR TRUMP'S WAR

LET'S BUILD A SOCIALIST ALTERNATIVE TO ALL THE WARMONGERS

CALLUM JOYCE
SOCIALIST PARTY NATIONAL COMMITTEE

In less than three weeks of war, thousands have been killed and no less than 14 countries have been subject to bombing and missile fire. Workers and poor people across the Middle East will be wondering where the next bomb might drop - at their local hospital, at home, or at their children's school?

How long the horror will continue to unfold is not clear, but the impact of this war will be felt long after the bombs have stopped dropping. The full effects to the world economy haven't yet been felt, but the disruption will be another blow to the already teetering, rotten capitalist system that increasingly has nothing to offer but poverty, starvation, and war.

Already in Britain petrol prices have begun to increase as companies try to prevent a potential hit to their profits. It is only a matter of time before they attempt the same with the costs of household electricity and gas as well. These are the same companies which made over £420 billion in three years during the cost-of-living crisis - money that could have been used now to keep bills down and invest in infrastructure, rather than lining the already overflowing pockets of shareholders. Only big business could look at the rubble and gore in the Middle East and try to find their next source of profits.

Working-class people in Iran, Israel, the US, or here in Britain have nothing to gain from this war but death, destruction, and an increasing squeeze on our living standards. Keir Starmer stated recently in the House of Commons: "No matter the headwinds, supporting working people with the cost of living is always top of my mind." That would be a little easier to believe if his government hadn't spent the last two years trying to cut benefits, break strikes, and hold down wages!

The only way workers can really defend ourselves is by organising to fight against the bosses' onslaught - taking strike action, protesting against war and Labour's austerity, and campaigning against any attack in our communities, workplaces and campuses. We could demand pay that rises with the cost of living, the immediate nationalisation of the energy companies along with all the other profiteering monopolies, free good quality public transport, and more.

Joining the stand of anti-war, anti-austerity Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) candidates in the local elections on 7 May is another key step to oppose Starmer's war and austerity agenda and to fight to build a genuine socialist alternative.

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formerly Militant

Issue 1359
19-25 March 2026

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

MIDDLE EAST WAR - THE WORKING CLASS WON'T ACCEPT BEING MADE TO PAY



Starmer invited Trump for a state visit in 2025 PHOTO: NUMBERIO/CC

WHAT WE THINK

Devastation mounts in the Middle East. US and Israeli bombs strike cities in Iran daily, retaliatory strikes are returned. Meanwhile, southern Lebanon faces yet more escalation from Israeli strikes and ground invasion too; hundreds have been killed and hundreds of thousands forced to flee. Murderous violence against Palestinians, including in the West Bank, continues.

As in all wars, it is the working class and poor that suffer hardest, and it will be them that are asked to pay.

After plunging the region into war - in doing so bypassing the crumbling world capitalist institutions like the UN and without even a vote in the US Congress - Donald Trump has asked for other world powers to join a "team effort" in reopening the Strait of Hormuz, through which one fifth of the world's oil supply travels.

Blocking the Strait with drone attacks on vessels, as well as with the threat of laying mines, is being used by Iranian forces as a strategy to try to exert maximum pressure on the world economy and on US imperialism.

US decline

So far, help on the scale asked for by Trump - "whatever it takes" - has not been forthcoming. Britain has so far declined to send warships, but agreed to send 'mine-hunting' drones. Whatever the scale of international coordination there ends up being, what is being played out for all to see is the reality of the relative decline of US imperialism, no longer an overwhelming dominant force that can dictate terms internationally.

Only 29% of Americans 'approve' of US military strikes against Iran. Trump's actions are provoking fractures and splits in his own Republican party, and he continues to register record levels of unpopularity. In Britain, prime minister Keir Starmer has tried to use the conflict to present himself as being at odds with one of the only people more unpopular than him in Britain - Trump.

Of course far from strident defiance, after a brief delay, Starmer has given Trump permission to use US airbases in Britain for 'defensive' strikes against Iran – in reality, to launch bombers laden with huge missiles. The British military is involved alongside US forces and others in operations in Iraq and elsewhere. And now the mine-hunting drones.

After the immediate outbreak of war, echoing Trump's criticism of Starmer as being 'un-Churchillian,' Reform leader Nigel Farage described him as "pathetic", and Tory leader Kemi Badenoch accused him of indecision and of cowardice, calling for Britain to join in striking Iran.

Tory and Reform U-turn

Less than a week later, both had U-turned. A motivating factor was no doubt the looming economic consequences of the war linked to the huge anti-war mood in society. A majority of Brits, including a majority of Tory and Reform voters, polled as being opposed to joining the US-Israeli offensive.

The economic effects of the conflict will ultimately continue to drive Starmer's unpopularity and political instability.

There is a lot of uncertainty about the course and duration of the war. But whatever its course, even the current level of disruption to world oil markets will have big consequences.

The 400 million barrels of oil released onto the world market by the 32 big capitalist powers that sit on the board of the International Energy Agency - more than double the size of its previous biggest-ever release after Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine - has so far not been enough to bring oil prices down.

Inflationary pressures

Despite those measures, and even if disruption to the Strait is relatively short-lived, the war will exert an inflationary pressure on the world economy. It is likely to stall the process of central banks pegging down their interest rates, and could lead to rises. And all this in what was already a volatile world economy with high levels of government debt and borrowing costs, and overinflated bubbles.

Pre-war, the British economy was stagnant with rising unemployment. In her Spring Statement to Parliament, just as the war was beginning, chancellor Rachel Reeves spoke of falling inflation and interest rates. No more. The working class will be asked to pay for the capitalist system's war and crisis, again.

Acutely aware of just how unpopular that will be, the Labour government has made mealy-mouthed criticism of energy bosses, warning about 'price gouging.' All while stopping well short of raising the question of energy nationalisation, which was Labour Party policy less than ten years ago when Jeremy Corbyn was leader (see opposite).

The government has announced a £53 million package to ameliorate spiralling energy costs for those with oil heating (just 3% of households in England and Wales). The measures are extremely modest - well short of the measures taken by previous Tory governments for example. But already a spokesperson for the right-wing think tank the Institute for Fiscal Studies has said: "What worries me is not, is this very expensive? It's the precedent it might be setting for the future."

It is likely that the government will come under pressure to announce further future measures too, which the capitalist class can be prepared to temporarily accept in order to try to buy stability. Capitalist governments' responses to the Covid-19 pandemic proved that they can be prepared to spend way beyond what we are usually told is possible in order to stabilise and save their system.

The measures taken then, and in the immediate aftermath of Russia's wholescale invasion of Ukraine when energy prices also surged, were not enough to prevent a devastating cost-of-living crisis – and they didn't prevent the eruption of the biggest strike wave in a generation.

In fact, government announcements that it is taking measures to address the cost of living can spur workers to demand pay rises to meet the rising cost of living. For example, the millions of public sector workers in the NHS, local authorities and schools.

Starmer's unpopularity

Starmer remains one of the most unpopular prime ministers ever. Even before taking office, he had already had his 'Iraq moment' over his support for the Israeli state's siege on Gaza. As a consequence, big sections of Muslim workers broke with Labour leading to the election of four Independent MPs plus Jeremy Corbyn.

Now, less than two years later, most voters will be going to the polls in May's elections motivated to punish Starmer's Labour, over any number of issues. The effects of this war will only deepen the crisis Starmer faces, and so too the crisis facing the capitalist class.

The May elections do present an important opportunity, in thousands of councils seats including in most of the major cities in England plus the Welsh and Scottish parliaments, to put forward a working-class, socialist stand against austerity and war. To give that stand the biggest profile possible, join Socialist Party members in standing as part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition.

Socialist Party says

- **The trade unions should call a weekend demo uniting the struggles against war, racism and austerity**
- **Students and youth get organised in schools and campuses and protest to fight for a future free from war**
- **Fight to build a new mass workers' party that stands for socialism and internationalism, including by building for the widest-possible stand of socialist anti-war, anti-austerity candidates in May's elections against all the warmongers**
- **Capitalism means war. Fight for socialist change - nationalise big business and the banks under democratic working-class control to carry out a socialist plan of socially useful production to meet the needs of all**
- **Fight for a socialist world, including for a voluntary socialist confederation of the Middle East, with full rights for minorities**

How to stop 'price gouging'?
Nationalise energy!



Protest against the rising cost of living during the 2022-23 strike wave PHOTO: PAUL MATTSSON

HELEN PATTISON
SOCIALIST PARTY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The economic impact of the US-Israel war with Iran has begun to be felt around the world. Oil prices rose to a four-year high of over $120 a barrel and fluctuates hour by hour as the war goes on.

Keir Starmer is clearly worried that rising inflation will make his government even more unpopular as families struggle with the cost of living. Just minutes into a recent press conference about the war with Iran, he was already talking about the cost of living in the UK. Chancellor Rachel Reeves was also forced over the last few days to meet with petrol company bosses and warn them against potential "price gouging".

But Starmer and Reeves have been in office since 2024, since then their government has forced though sweeping austerity, determined to make the working class pay for the crisis rather than the bosses. This latest crisis of oil prices will be no different.

The £53 million scheme being put in place for people who use oil for heating, who have been hardest hit by price increases, is welcome for those who will be impacted. But it essentially means the government will continue to prop up the profits of the energy companies, by subsidising the cost to consumers.

It is clear when Reeves and Starmer talk about 'price gouging' they only mean very limited circumstances, such as reports of heating oil suppliers cancelling orders to boost prices or petrol prices being increased far beyond wholesale prices. In general though, both Starmer and Reeves accept that prices must rise during this war and subsequent economic shocks, and their government will fight to defend the profits of British capitalism.

£125bn
in profits made by energy giants since the pandemic in Britain alone

What they don't talk about is the huge transfer of wealth from the poorest to richest which continues today. Particularly the surge in profits garnered by the energy companies. Since 2020, the energy giants have made £125 billion in profits from the UK alone. Unite the Union's research found that the UK's biggest 350 companies reported 73% higher profits in 2022 than in 2019, before the pandemic.

Starmer's other policy is that we move to being more "self sufficient", producing energy with nuclear power and renewables in the UK. That way, energy costs wouldn't be as hard hit by global markets. But even today, electricity prices are set by the global cost of gas, despite the fact that electricity is increasingly producing by renewables. Simply moving production to the UK while leaving energy in the hands of private companies won't stop them chasing the highest possible profits.

Instead, we call for the energy companies and their vast profits to be nationalised as the only way to drastically bring down bills, with compensation paid only to those with genuine proven need. Instead of being siphoned away, their profits could be used to massively increase investment in safe and clean energy production. Democratic workers' control and management of production could offer people genuine security and lower all our bills.


PHOTO: IAN S/CC

Nationalise Scunthorpe steel

The government has spent £377 million in nine months to keep privately owned British Steel's Scunthorpe site operating, according to the National Audit Office. Spending is expected to reach £615 million by June and, if it continues at current rates, it could exceed £1.5 billion in 2028.

Alasdair McDiarmid, assistant general secretary of Community, the trade union that represents workers at the site, has rightly said that "the government made the right decision to invest", saving jobs and steelmaking. But the cash at the moment is a loan to the Chinese company Jingye Group which owns British Steel with no set budget, repayment schedule or end date.

British Steel is named after the previous nationalised company that existed before the disaster of privatisation which has led to the loss of primary steelmaking at Port Talbot, for example. The government should nationalise the new company with compensation only on the basis of proven need, not for the profiteering bosses, and under workers' democratic control and management, to safeguard jobs and steelmaking and ensuring that the millions are well spent and kept in government hands.

Mandelson files another blow for Starmer

THOMAS BUTLER
LIVERPOOL NORTH SOCIALIST PARTY

Revelations of the depth of former US ambassador Peter Mandelson's relationship with convicted child sex trafficker and financier Jeffrey Epstein hit the headlines after the release of thousands of emails on 30 January. It looked like it might have been the knockout blow for the staggering Keir Starmer, as questions of why he appointed Mandelson as US ambassador, given his links to Epstein were common knowledge at the time. Starmer survived the immediate political threat of the scandal after members of his cabinet eventually gave him their public support. He did have to jettison his political advisor and Mandelson mentee Morgan McSweeney, and promise to release files relating to Mandelson's appointment.

The first release of the Mandelson files on 12 March shows the fallout from this scandal continues. Included in this release was that Mandelson genuinely believed he was entitled to a payoff after being removed from his role in public office! He asked for a payout of over half a million pounds – the government negotiated him down to £75,000 – how will he survive?!

Lords like Mandelson receive tens of thousands of pounds while ordinary working-class people face a spaghetti of legal conditions to even receive a penny if hounded out of their job involuntarily.

It is often the Conservative Party that is associated with misconduct, scandals and sleaze. However this has shown yet again that there is very little to separate Starmer's New Labour Mark II and the Tories. They both stand for the interests of the bosses and are prepared to use any dodgy connections they have to cosy up to leaders like Trump.

What is needed is a genuine democratic mass workers' party to challenge the rotten establishment. A party in which the likes of Mandelson would not even get a sniff at an influential position as workers would democratically choose their own representation. Unlike the Labour Party's undemocratic top-down nature, in which it is now known that Starmer was warned of Mandelson's links with Epstein but still went ahead with his appointment.

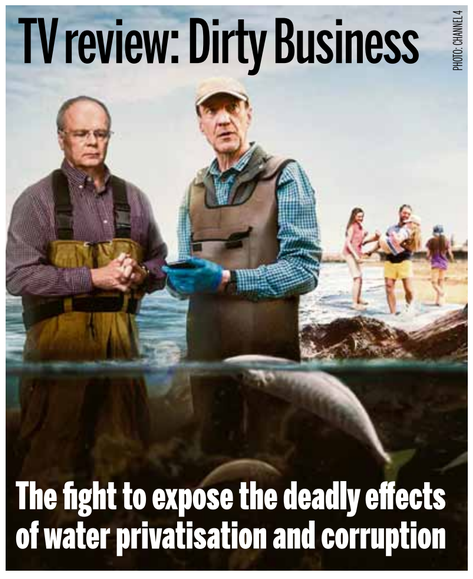
There is more to come out from this scandal with more documents to be published in the coming months after the police finish their investigation of Mandelson for misconduct in public office. It further reinforces that, as he is wedded to the rotten capitalist system, Starmer's government will continue to stumble from crisis to crisis. We need a real alternative for the working class, armed with a socialist programme.

Join the fightback
JOIN THE SOCIALISTS
- Visit **socialistparty.org.uk/join**
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to find out more today!


PHOTO: NUMBER 10/CC

TV review: Dirty Business


PHOTO: CHANNEL 4

The fight to expose the deadly effects of water privatisation and corruption

HELEN HARRIS
SWINDON SOCIALIST PARTY

This gripping three-part docudrama on Channel 4 starts on a summer's day on a Devon beach during the holidays in 1999. Happy families are shown playing in the sand and surf in bright sunshine like any other day. It wasn't a day like any other for the Preen family who were there with their two daughters. It was the day their younger daughter Heather accidentally landed in a raw sewage puddle discharging from a South West Water pipe illegally dumping onto the Blue Flag beach. She contracted E. coli O157, a particularly virulent form of the bacteria which is frequently in sewage. 12 days later, little Heather was dead.

This is just one example of the human cost of privatisation and deregulation, where every safeguard is stripped away in the name of removing bothersome regulation as a barrier to profit making. The indifference of company and regulator, which sees a child's death as unfortunate collateral damage around which the communications are managed and blame deflected, is staggering. The Environment Agency didn't test the water until a month later despite repeated reports of dumping and severe enteritis cases reported by the local GP at the time.

In 2016, neighbours Ash Smith and Professor Peter Hammond, who live on the Oxfordshire river the Windrush, formed WASP - Windrush Against Sewage Pollution. They had observed their previously crystal-clear river turn brown, opaque and dead with sewage dumping. With their complimentary skills and tenacity, Hammond, an expert in 'machine learning,' and Smith, a former police officer who caught bent coppers in the London Metropolitan Police, produced extensive reports using systematic sampling and the water companies' own data sets, showing the phenomenal scale of the illegal sewage dumping along the River Windrush.

Through the use of Freedom of Information requests and the help of brave, frontline workers who put their livelihoods at risk by acting as whistleblowers from the water companies, the series plots the scale of illegality throughout the whole water industry.

It reveals systemic corruption of the regulator, the Environment Agency, which established an 'operator self-monitoring policy' that allowed the water companies to monitor and report their own spills. Failure to do so was not prosecuted despite the ability to do so. Polluting was profitable with billions of pounds being taken out in dividends while almost no investment was put in after Thatcher privatised the companies in 1989. The revolving door between regulator and water company management proved so attractive, and the relationships so skewed, that enforcement was impossible.

The purchase of Thames Water by Australian bank and asset manager Macquarie Group, or the 'Vampire Kangaroo,' in 2006 marked a severe decline in compliance. Assets including land and pumping stations were sold off for shareholder benefit while the treatment facilities, pipes and test systems fell apart though age and lack of maintenance.

There could not be a clearer tale of how corporate capture of government and regulators lead to catastrophic failures of public and essential services and the consequences for ordinary people who rely on those services to keep them and their families safe.

The clear remedy is to take back water under democratic public control renationalised with no compensation for fat-cat shareholders, only on the basis of proven need to prevent further damage to health and the environment. The series is a must watch and is available on Channel 4 now.

MPs squabble over fairness of student loans

Socialists say scrap fees, cancel all student debt, take the wealth off the super-rich

ADAM HARMSWORTH
COVENTRY SOCIALIST PARTY

The student debt crisis is back in the news after MPs launched an inquiry into Labour's decision to freeze the repayment threshold for over 5 million graduates on Plan 2 loans.

Plan 2 loans were created by the Tory-Lib Dem coalition government in 2012. Under the Plan 2 terms, graduates earning over a certain salary threshold pay back 9% of their income above that amount, chasing a debt that increases by at least RPI inflation. In November, chancellor Reeves fixed the threshold at £29,385 until 2030.

Labour is trying to shove more graduates stuck on low incomes into making repayments on loans that are impossible to pay off.

The 'concern' from sections of the establishment couldn't be less genuine. Sir Nick Clegg, who co-led the Con-Dem government that trebled tuition fees after he pledged to oppose them, has called the system a "mess". His solution is just to reverse some decisions made after he lost the election in 2015, but keep graduates stuck in horrendous debt.



Nick Clegg (centre) with Con-Dem coalition partner David Cameron, leaders of the government that trebled tuition fees PHOTOS: OFFICE OF NICK CLEGG/CC AND PAUL MATTSSON

In the Financial Times, Cambridge University's new chancellor Lord Chris Smith (Tony Blair's first culture secretary in 1997) criticised the high interest rates and the low repayment thresholds. But rather than consider if the tuition fees his government introduced were an abysmal idea, he instead argues that too many young people are going to university! So much for Blair's "education, education, education".

The National Union of Students (NUS) meanwhile has launched a petition merely calling for "fairer terms" on student debt. So far 12,676 students have signed. The NUS should be mobilising tens of thousands of students to fight for free, fully funded education.

University education is in crisis. Fees have risen while maintenance grants have been scrapped, yet universities are making cuts and still not balancing the books. 68% of students now work while studying, and food banks are popping up in uni buildings to support impoverished students.

The government can find money for war and backing US imperialism in a heartbeat, but is relying more on students, graduates, and university workers to keep higher education afloat.

The Socialist Party and Socialist Students are championing the fight for free education, and taking money off the super-rich to fund our universities – for funding not fees. Join the socialists fighting for a decent future for higher education!

Big Oil CEOs in line for massive pay rises

Capitalism means climate chaos, fight for socialism



£5,000,000,000
Expected profits for Shell and BP due to the current war in the Middle East

SAM MORDEN
TYNE AND WEAR SOCIALIST PARTY

The bosses of two of the largest global oil companies are getting a hefty pay rise - emblematic of rotten capitalism. Shell's CEO Wael Sawan is getting £13.8 million, up 60% on the previous year. Not to be outdone in staggering rises, BP's new boss Meg O'Neill is getting more than double the pay of her predecessor at £11.7 million.

These two companies, like their counterparts in the industry and the capitalist system of which they make up an integral part, preside over an ecological and climate disaster unfolding on a local and global scale.

Oil companies have for decades applied pressure on governments and politicians to – initially – bury the science around man-made global warming driven by greenhouse gas emissions. When that became impossible, they worked to water down as much as possible any measures that might impact their profit margins or ability to exploit natural resources. This has left its mark in the trail of failed climate initiatives, from the Kyoto Protocol of 1997, or the 1.5°C target set at Paris in 2015. Its current incarnation is the "Drill, baby, drill" rhetoric from Donald Trump, prompting even more fossil fuel extraction in the US and across the world.

Oil pollution is more than just the effects of its burning. In Nigeria, much of the Ogoniland region is left poisoned by Shell's exploitative practices, with the company repeatedly scuppering clean-up efforts and avoiding responsibility. The Deepwater Horizon oil spill caused by BP in 2010, the worst environmental disaster the US has faced, has caused significant lingering damage to the area, some of which science is only beginning to uncover.

It's time to end this global terror. Capitalism is incapable of solving climate change – an issue of its own making – in an equitable fashion, if at all. Only through a democratically planned economy, through socialism, where the energy companies and all like them are nationalised with compensation only on proven need, can we begin to free ourselves from this existential threat. We could take the billions poured into oil and gas subsidies, along with the profits that go to shareholders and bosses, and plough that into transitioning to environmentally friendly renewable energy sources without making the working class of any country pay the price.

Reform's Tice tax avoider

"We're the workers' party," says Reform leader Nigel Farage – himself an ex-banker. His deputy Richard Tice meanwhile, has avoided hundreds of thousands of pounds in corporation tax, according to the Times. This leader of a 'workers' party' owns £33 million worth of property assets through a company listed in Guernsey to avoid tax. How patriotic!

"All Britons should do their best to pay the minimum tax possible," Tice said. Is that why councils run by his party have been hiking council tax for ordinary people?

A party of the working class, acting in the interest of the working class would do the opposite: freeze council tax, unfreeze the income tax thresholds and tax the super-rich to fully fund our services – at the very least!


Richard Tice and Nigel Farage
PHOTO: HOUSE OF COMMONS/CC

Taking the fight for a new party into the trade unions

Starting with a 1,000-strong 'Trade unionists for a new party' meeting hosted by former Labour MP Dave Nellist in July last year, groups of activists in trade unions have being meeting and discussing the way forward in the fight for working-class political representation. These meetings have resulted in the drawing up of motions to take into union meetings. Here, two activists in the GMB and Unite were inspired to move these in their branches and have reported how it went.

'Trade unionists for a new party' meetings, reports and motions can be found at: linktr.ee/TU4NewParty

Unite: Overwhelming support - 83%

I had long discussed getting involved in my workplace trade union Unite with Socialist Party members. I had joined the 'Trade unionists for a new party' Zoom meeting in July with Dave Nellist. I had also been following things through the Socialist Party's Unite caucus. In August last year, I went to my first workplace union meeting.

I work for a large insurance company, which falls under the finance and legal sector, and has staff across the country from Perth to Southampton. The union branch meetings aren't typically very political, so when I sent a motion to discuss Unite's affiliation with the Labour Party, I was very apprehensive and totally unsure of how this would pan out.

At that first meeting, the main topic discussed was the portion sizes in the canteen! I'll be honest, I was thinking: how do I go from this to the motion?

Turns out it wasn't a branch meeting as such (just Sheffield members) and the branch hadn't had a motion in 15 years, so nobody really knew what to do with it. The branch secretary kindly went away to understand the process.

The local rep is a Green Party member and was very enthused that a political motion was being brought forward, and was quick to volunteer in seconding the motion.

So when the actual all-member branch meeting came around, the process was fully understood by all involved and was a first for all. With the help of Alex, a local Socialist Party member and trade union activist, and my local rep I was able to prepare a statement on reasons why the motion should be supported.

The motion passed in full with 83% voting in favour, I was overwhelmed with the level of support the motion received with many members messaging to say thank you for raising this motion and that they wholeheartedly supported it.

The local rep has even reached out to ask me to help with a motion he wants to bring on environmental issues!

Subsequently, the regional committee in Unite rejected the motion, but again fellow Socialist Party activists were on hand to help me understand and formulate a response.

The point is, I would never have had to the confidence or knowledge to have taken this motion to my branch without benefits from discussion and guidance within my Socialist Party branch and the wider party. It was refreshing to see the political appetite within my workplace!

CLAIRE WRAITH
SHEFFIELD NORTH WEST SOCIALIST PARTY

"It was refreshing to see the political appetite within my workplace!

PHOTO: PAUL MATTSSON





PHOTO: PAUL MATTSSON

GMB: 'Nobody can argue with that!'

My trade union, GMB, is the second biggest donor to Labour after Unite, yet the Labour Party does not represent us. Labour is in power, yet austerity is continuing and Socialist Party members have been working inside the trade unions to open up the question of political representation for our class.

On 21 January, I went, for my second time, to the union reps meeting of my retail sector branch, this time hoping to get a motion passed and put forward to GMB Congress about political representation.

I felt very nervous and was about to chicken out because I didn't know the correct procedure, because I didn't know the other members yet, and because I thought that there would be pushback from the union officials. However, as this would be the last chance to put forward the motion before the deadline for congress motions, I finally decided that the only thing was to 'just do it'.

At the beginning of the meeting one of the officials said: "Has anyone got any motions for congress, then?" I stepped forward with the motion in my hand. The officer looked at me quizzically because at the only other meeting I had attended I hadn't said a word. I thought I had better say something, so I said: "It's about political representation. Basically it's about 'why are we paying our political fund to Labour for them to do us in?'" Nobody can argue with that!

So I read out the motion and was expecting some questions, debate or pushback. Instead, everyone agreed with it and quite a few members expressed strong support for it and even delight in it! All my worrying had been for nothing. The officials, to my surprise, didn't say anything against it (although I suspect because they know that the regional apparatus will find a way to reject it).

From this experience I learnt that:

1. Our socialist ideas are actually popular, it's just that people haven't heard them yet and therefore we need to boldly take every opportunity to put our ideas forward

2. I am a big chicken but there is nothing to be afraid of. The worst thing that could have happened is that they would have voted it down and thought I was too radical. I hope that I will feel bolder next time.

3. One shouldn't wait until one is 'ready' but should 'just do it.'

4. Being a member of a party like the Socialist Party allows us to achieve more than we could alone (which I knew intellectually before, but now I had experienced it). I benefited from discussions and encouragement, and the fact that Socialist Party GMB members discussed among ourselves and with other activists in the union to draw up a draft motion.

CAROLE SASAKI
LANCASHIRE SOCIALIST PARTY

'Why are we paying our political fund to Labour for them to do us in?' Nobody can argue with that!

Unite Executive reduces payments to Labour Party

Vote for campaigning, socialist candidates in the Executive elections

SUZANNE MUNA
UNITE EC MEMBER, PERSONAL CAPACITY

Unite the Union's Executive Council met in March during the week that marked exactly one year since the start of all-out action in the bitterly fought and ongoing Birmingham bin strike.

The strike was triggered when the council announced its intention to equalise bin workers' pay downwards, following equal pay claims from women workers elsewhere in the council. This announcement ran completely contrary to the intention of the Equal Pay Act, which took effect at the end of 1975 and was self-evidently aimed at raising the pay of women, not reducing that of comparator colleagues.

If the proposal had been left unchallenged, it would have given a green light to other councils in particular and other employers in general, encouraging them to engage in a race to the bottom and render this key protective legislation impotent.

The dispute has also put the relationship with the Labour Party under renewed strain. The Unite policy conference in 2025 coincided with a threat by the Birmingham Labour council to fire the bin workers and rehire them on new pay rates, worth around £8,000 less in some cases.

It resulted in more than 800 conference delegates voting to suspend the Unite membership of then-Labour deputy leader Angela Rayner and the Birmingham Labour councillors in protest at the role they have played in the negotiations. Crucially, it also compelled the union to discuss its relationship with Labour. The vote was virtually unanimous, with only five delegates, mainly from the United Left group, abstaining. This sent a powerful message of support to the strikers, and an equally impactful warning shot across the bows of Labour.

Unite, like many other major trade unions, is affiliated to the Labour Party. This means that it makes payments to the party coffers, and it means that the union cannot support candidates in constitutional elections representing any other party – our choices are to support the Labour candidate or none.

As the anniversary of the Birmingham bin strike arrived, the Executive Council was asked to agree a proposal to reduce the amount paid by Unite in respect of affiliation. Unite pays over £1.4 million annually in affiliation fees alone (occasional discretionary payments are also made, for example during elections). This is more than any other union, and almost twice the amount that Unison pays, despite an equivalent number of members. To mark a year of indefinite strike action, the Executive agreed to reduce the fee payment by £580,000 to £900,000.

This action marks just one step in fulfilling the wishes of members in relation to the Labour Party, but the big test is yet to come. At recent Unite rules conferences, it is traditional for amendments calling on disaffiliation from Labour to feature on the agenda. Historically, none have gained sufficient support from delegates to pass, but last year's policy conference was an accurate indication of the scale of disillusionment with Starmer's Labour.

But the role of United Left at that conference shows what is at stake in the Unite Executive Council elections. Ballot papers go out on 23 March. Socialist Party members are standing on the left 'Workers Unite - Back to the Workplace' slate that supports Sharon Graham's manifesto.

The newly elected Executive must have on its agenda the need to open up the much-needed discussion in the union on our relationship with Labour. The next scheduled conference is not for another sixteen months, but that is too long to wait. Better to set the timetable for a special rules conference to break the link with Starmer's party and discuss building a real political alternative for workers.



PHOTO: MARK BEST

Unite court fine 'will come out of Labour fee'

As we go to press, Unite has responded to being fined £265,000 by the High Court, after Labour's Birmingham City Council took out a legal injunction against the union during the long-running bin dispute, for what it claims are breaches of the injunction.

Unite general secretary Sharon Graham said: "Unite will not allow these workers to pay the price for the council's failings in their pay packets. Instead of using Thatcher's anti-union laws to injunct the picket line and stop lawful protest, the council should honour the deal scoped out at Acas. They walked out of the room, said they would be back with the deal in writing, and never returned. Rather than resolving the dispute, Birmingham City Council's own figures have confirmed they have spent £33 million pounds of Birmingham residents' money trying to break the strike. It won't be broken - these workers are fighting for council workers everywhere". "Every single penny" of this fine, says Sharon, "will come out of Labour's affiliation fee", the money the union pays to the Labour Party. But this provocative move by Starmer's party shows the need to head off further attacks on the union's finances by getting union candidates on the ballot paper at election time, starting this May.

The elections to Unite's Executive Council are crucial: the industrial and political approach of the union is at stake, with its status as a militant union on the line.

Candidates to vote for to maintain and extend Sharon Graham's manifesto include:

- Suzanne Muna - standing for re-election to the South West regional seat
- Len Hockey - London and Eastern
- Tanis Belsham-Wray - Community, Youth Workers and Not for Profit
- Dave Walsh - Construction, Allied Trades and Technicians
- John Williams - LGBT+
- And the candidates on the Workers Unite slate: backtotheworkplace.org/executive-council-candidates/
- The election runs 23 March to 27 April

Space still there for a wide socialist challenge in May – if we act now!

As anticipated, the first full meeting of Jeremy Corbyn and Zarah Sultana's Your Party central executive committee (CEC) held on Sunday 8 March agreed "a targeted strategy for the English local elections", with only a limited number of candidates using the official Your Party name on the ballot paper.

But the meeting also agreed to support other "independent socialist and community electoral initiatives". To get support, candidates will need to campaign for "No-cuts People's Budgets; Defence of public services; Democratic local government; Strong trade union involvement; [and] Opposition to austerity imposed by central government", as the CEC Local Government Briefing Paper explained.

So while the CEC did not adopt the goal of Your Party being the registered party that reaches the Ofcom 'fair media coverage' threshold, it left the space open for candidates (including Your Party members) using one of the TUSC descriptions on the ballot paper to do so, on precisely such a fighting programme and with a clear socialist banner. If the threshold is reached, Jeremy Corbyn and Zarah Sultana will be offered the chance to feature in the media opportunities that TUSC would then be entitled to.

The possibility of getting a visible socialist presence in the national political debate around the May elections remains. But only if socialists act now!

The deadline to send in requests to use one of the TUSC descriptions is Saturday 28 March, with an application form available online. Visit tusc.org.uk

TRADE UNIONIST AND SOCIALIST COALITION

TUSC AGAINST CUTS

tusc.org.uk

IRAN – OPPOSING BOTH IMPERIALISM AND REPRESSION

ROBERT BECHERT
COMMITTEE FOR A WORKERS' INTERNATIONAL

The onslaught against Iran, soon followed by Israel's renewed war in Lebanon, has witnessed another round of lying and hypocrisy from the imperialist powers.

For a second time in less than a year, Netanyahu and Trump have started a war during a pause, not a breakdown, in negotiations with Iran.

Other imperialist powers have criticised this "war of choice" not from a principled viewpoint but because they view it as an unnecessary step which opens great dangers for them on many fronts domestically, regionally in the Middle East, and globally.

This division is why Trump has, so far, failed to form a coalition of imperialist powers to provide warships defending shipping in the Persian Gulf and Strait of Hormuz. The other powers fear being dragged into a longer and extremely hazardous conflict, and do not want to suffer casualties, which would be unpopular, in helping Trump sort out his "war of choice".

But this war is not unique, it is the latest in the long series of imperialist military interventions and wars in the Middle East. For years, different imperialist powers, particularly the US, Britain and France, have sought to control the region by force, sanctions and bribery. This history plus the cynical way this war was started, and the bloody background of the over 75,000 killed by Israeli action in Gaza, has contributed to majorities in many countries, including in the US, opposing this war.

Continuous imperialist hypocrisy

Facing worldwide opposition to starting this war, the Trump and Netanyahu administrations have combined to seek to justify their actions on the basis of the repressive and brutal character of the Iranian regime.

Netanyahu regularly speaks of the "terrorist regime" in Iran, yet it is clear that he does not condemn all 'terrorists'. His attitude to the right-wing and bitterly anti-Palestinian terrorists of 'the Irgun' is very different. The Irgun was the armed wing of the 'Revisionist' Zionists who fought both the British colonial authorities and Palestinians in the 1940s. The 'Revisionists' originally argued for an Israel that included Palestine and what is today Jordan, dropping their demand for Jordan after the 1967 war.

Nearly 80 years ago, the Irgun blew up the King David Hotel, then the British military headquarters in Palestine, killing 96 people. Sixty years later, Netanyahu attended the 2006 celebration of that attack. Netanyahu's attendance was not surprising as Begin, Irgun's leader, was one of the co-founders in 1973 of the movement that later, in 1988, became his party, Likud. The holding of the 2006 celebration led to the British Ambassador to Israel stating: "We do not think that it is right for an act of terrorism, which led to the loss of many lives, to be commemorated". Maybe this year Netanyahu will miss any 80th anniversary celebration.

The British Ambassador's complaint was only because Netanyahu and co were celebrating a terror attack that had British casualties. Britain and most other imperialist countries are effectively silent on the Gaza massacre, considering it a 'justified' response to 7 October, or now on Israel's latest invasion of Lebanon - of which one objective is the ethnic cleansing of Muslims from the southern part of that country.

Significantly, Trump does not make any mention of democracy in regard to Iran. Obviously that would not be welcomed by the Arab regimes neighbouring Iran as none of them are democratic. They are mostly vicious dictatorships run by semi-feudal rulers with restrictive nationality rights and immigrant labour, often working in semi-slave conditions. Saudi Arabia is an absolute monarchy without any pretense of democracy. While the UAE holds some elections, they are only for half the parliament and, most significantly, the rulers of the seven emirates themselves choose the members of their emirate's electoral college who officially 'elect' the parliamentarians.

While not mentioning general democratic rights, all the imperialist powers fall back to justifying themselves on the basis of the repressive character of the Iranian regime and hoping to whitewash the past and present policies of themselves and their allies.

What is also significant is that when leaders like German chancellor Merz and British prime minister Starmer say that they will not join in the US-Israeli attacks on Iran, they do not call for the attacks to stop.

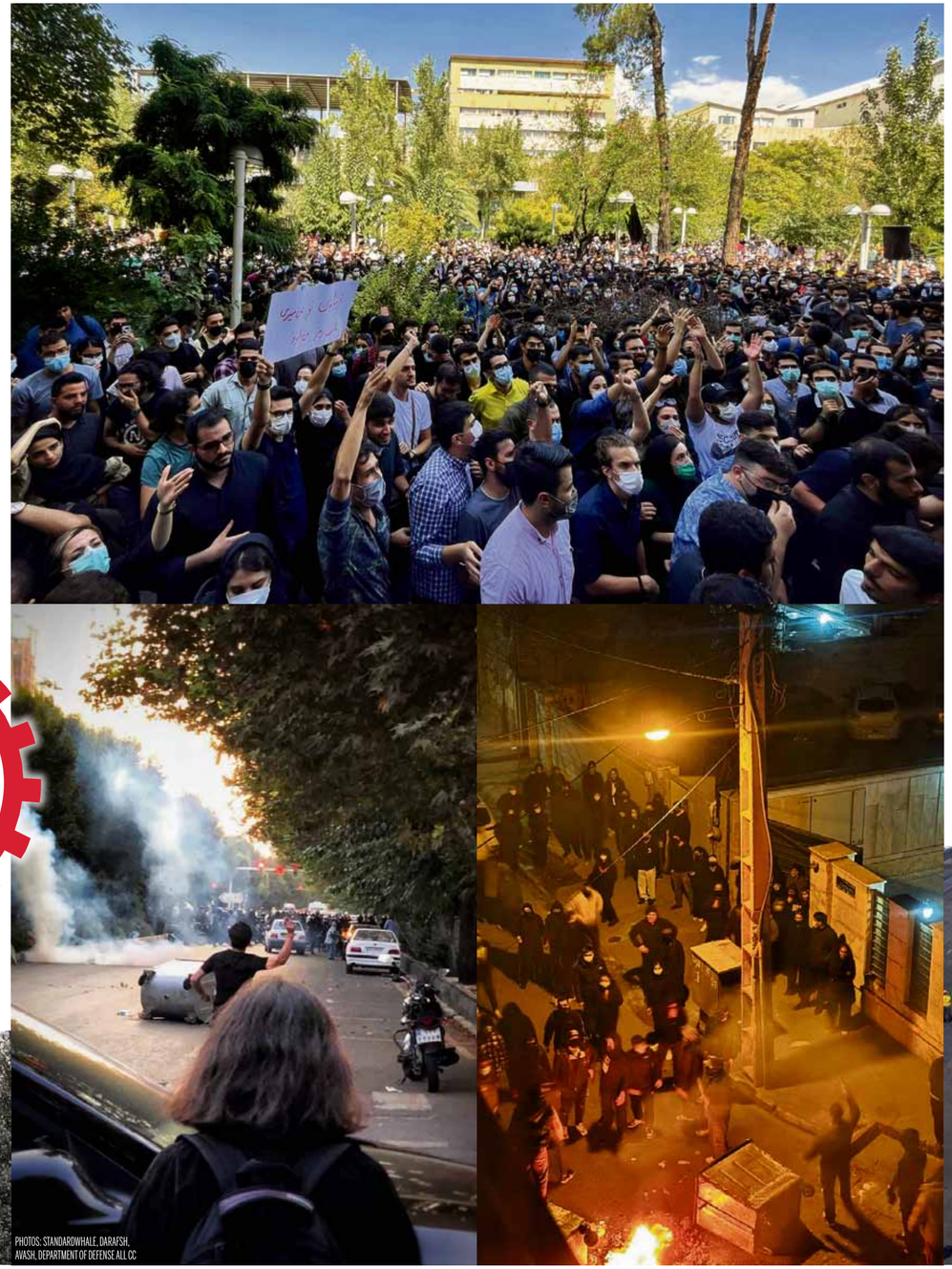
During last June's Israeli-US war on Iran, Merz blurted out the truth that the bombing was "the dirty work Israel is doing for all of us", adding that he had "the utmost respect for the Israeli army and the Israeli leadership for having had the courage to do this [bombing]". The fear now of Trump's capitalist critics is that he launched into this war with no idea where it could lead.

Now frightened of the spreading consequences of the war and worried about the war's unpopularity within the US itself, Trump, despite his talk of 'winning,' is desperately looking for allies from amongst countries he recently hit with increased tariffs.

The inter-imperialist debate and divisions on this war are significant but do not mean that the motives of those members of different ruling classes opposing Trump can be ignored. These divisions reflect both national rivalries and divisions over tactics, not principles.

CWI cit-clo
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





PHOTOS: STANDARDWHALE, DARAFSH, AVASH, DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE ALL CC

How to oppose the war

Socialists' opposition to this war is because it is an attempt by the Trump faction of US imperialism to remove an obstacle to its plan for the Middle East and to limit the role its rivals, starting with China, can play in the region. In effect, the aim would be to turn back the clock to when Iran was one of its main allies in the Middle East. As co-leader of the Russian revolution Leon Trotsky explained when Italy invaded Ethiopia in 1935, imperialism does not play any progressive role and its defeat in a colonial adventure can undermine its rule. Although Trump's regime is not fascist, it is increasingly authoritarian and it could be fatally undermined by the failure of its Iranian "little excursion".

However, there has been long-standing debate on whether solidarity campaigns should comment on the situation within countries that come under imperialist attack.

Many just say that slogans like 'Stop the war' or 'hands off country X' are enough. However, on their own, these say nothing about the situation within Iran itself.

The imperialists, both those for and against this war, present themselves as opposing the oppressor regime in Iran but, as we have shown, do not even consistently stand for democratic rights.

The workers' and socialist movement should be very clear in opposing the capitalists' hypocrisy and showing that it stands in solidarity with the struggle against repression in Iran, alongside supporting those fighting against capitalism in Iran and internationally.

Without this being done, not only it is easier for imperialism to confuse the anti-war movement but also it helps the monarchist pro-Shah movement with its false claim to stand for democracy.

But some on the left argue that as Iran is under attack from a major imperialist power, it is enough to oppose and even imply that activists living in imperialist countries should not say how they think that struggles in oppressed nations under attack can be conducted. Such an approach runs against the whole history of the socialist movement being an international one of equals and genuine collaboration. Socialists have always sought to learn lessons from each other's experiences and the study of the past, particularly of big class struggles and revolutions, as an important part of preparing for future upheavals.

Some just simply say that 'the task of dealing with this regime is the task of the Iranian people, and the Iranian people alone'. That is of course true for socialists, but what does it concretely mean today?

The issue facing Iranian revolutionaries today, apart from survival in a war situation, is a programme that combines opposition to the imperialist attack with opposition to the regime.

Despite its 'revolutionary' phraseology, the Islamic Republic is fundamentally a counter-revolutionary regime. The Islamists' counter-revolution in Iran after the 1979 revolution was not restoring the Shah but imposing its own dictatorial and capitalist-based rule. Rapidly, the Islamists began concentrating power in their hands and limiting debate while the 1980 US-backed Iraqi invasion of Iran aided the regime's consolidation during the subsequent eight-year war.

This was helped by those sections of the left, like the Tudeh party, that were in coalition with the Islamists, until they were crushed in the early 1980s. Today, while the Islamic Republic still has a basis of support, recent semi-free elections in Iran have shown that the regime does not have majority support.

At the present time, both as a result of the crushing of the protests earlier this year and the impact of the US-Israeli attack, it is very difficult for opponents of the regime who are faced with surviving both the imperialist attack and the regime's repression. Clearly at this moment there are limited possibilities for activity, but that will change in the future.

> **The workers' and socialist movement should be very clear in opposing the capitalists' hypocrisy and showing that it stands in solidarity with the struggle against repression in Iran**

The task today is to combine opposition to imperialism, particularly challenging illusions in the capitalist 'democrats', and also to the Islamic oppressors who use the banner of religion to justify authoritarian rule.

Socialists would argue that the key to defeating imperialism lies in breaking with capitalism in Iran through the establishment of a democratically based workers' government, a government which could appeal to workers, the oppressed and those seeking change in other countries to follow their example. This would be the basis for ending imperialist wars.

Right now there is the horror of war which poses its own questions like food, shelter, health and later reconstruction. But there can be no doubt that when, not if, there is a decisive change in Iran - through the collapse, overthrow or split in the regime – there will be an enormous struggle over what happens next. Already different forces are preparing. Some forces, like elements in the US and Israel, are backing the monarchists, although Trump is right, for once, as he doubts their popularity and prefers an 'internal' movement.

Socialists must also prepare with a clear programme, building roots in the working class and oppressed and learning from previous revolutions, in Iran and internationally, the need to avoid the trap of joining pro-capitalist governments and how to win majority support for socialist revolution.



UCU leaders avoiding the fight needed – socialists campaign for serious action

MARCO TESEI
UCU NEC MEMBER, PERSONAL CAPACITY

The National Executive Committee (NEC) of the University and College Union (UCU) met on Friday 13 March. Incredibly, despite the existential funding crisis in post-16 education and the two national ballots that have been run in recent months in both higher and further education (HE and FE), this was the first NEC meeting since 7 November.

The anger of post-16 education workers is at boiling point, shown by a whole number of bitter local disputes against job cuts and closures. At UCU Congress in May 2025 both sectors voted overwhelmingly to ballot for national strike action. With a serious centrally led ballot campaign and the leadership's genuine will to win for 120,000 members, this could have become a major national showdown with Starmer's government over funding.

Instead, despite an overwhelming vote for action, the ballot in HE missed the Tory 50% turnout threshold (disgracefully still in place after 20 months of this Labour government). In her report to the NEC, Grady acknowledged that some members did not have confidence in the leadership's strategy and therefore decided not to vote.

In FE, members were balloted on a disaggregated basis, which meant that although over 90% of members voted for action and the threshold was beaten nationally, only 32 of England's over 200 colleges won mandates and, beyond a few local wins on pay and workload, FE's key demand for a binding national bargaining framework remains unmet.

Yet at the March NEC, the urgency of the situation was evaded in general secretary Jo Grady's report.



UCU members at Essex university are fighting 400 job cuts and the complete closure of the Southend campus - one of many battles over huge cuts at universities all round the country ESSEX SOCIALIST PARTY

Instead of a plan for how to take our fight forward, we were offered a dry overview of the sector's dire state, as if there's little we can do about it! Her only stated strategy is to continue to lobby ministers and local MPs, and hope that the new cross-party parliamentary group she recently set up - without NEC knowledge and whose membership is still largely unclear - will deliver results.

Political representation

On political representation, I asked about last year's Congress motion 63, which called for UCU to explore alternatives to Labour and invite Jeremy Corbyn and other pro-worker MPs to the NEC. Grady said that Corbyn had been invited but was unavailable, while Zack Polanski had been invited to UCU Congress instead. As if to say: 'I consider that job done now.'

The reference to Polanski, along with UCU's fringe meeting at the last Green Party conference, suggests a shift in Grady's political positioning. Until recently covering for Labour, she is now dismissive: "Starmer's living on borrowed time". Are she and her supporters (who hold a majority on the NEC) now pinning hopes on the Green Party as a future saviour of post-16 education? Or are they using it as a means by which to try to avoid working with other unions to take steps towards a party based on the working class, that fights in workers' interests?

Following Grady's expression of enthusiasm for the Together 'Love, Hope and Unity' march against the far right on 28 March, which - without NEC discussion - UCU is supporting, Socialist Party member Duncan Moore asked whether she had reminded the TUC General Council of its September congress resolution to name the date for an anti-austerity demonstration. That would have a greater effect on undercutting support for Reform and winning the funding we need. A motion proposed by Duncan instructing her to propose a date to the TUC had been agreed overwhelmingly at the November NEC.

Grady did not answer the question, but instead dismissed it, saying the TUC definitely wasn't an organisation that would confront the government. But the TUC organises over six million workers with huge potential power and its leaders must be kept under pressure. Which other organisation does she think has the same power to confront the government? This again is the avoidance of a serious struggle.

How much UCU has donated to Together has not been revealed to the NEC – we will be demanding full oversight by the elected lay leadership of donations and how they are spent, including that the demands of the Together Alliance should be trade union demands.

For branch reps like me, who work tirelessly and know in our bones that members are ready to fight, this unwillingness to lead the massive fight that is required to save post-16 education is deeply frustrating.

Keep up pressure for a serious struggle

But reps should not lose heart. The fighting mood in HE and FE cannot be held back indefinitely, and continuing austerity will only intensify it.

We have to keep arguing that it is only nationwide collective action that can achieve our demands. In FE colleges, where localism has long dominated, this is crucial. This must go hand in hand with developing a new layer of fighting branch reps who are also willing to stand in UCU national elections and give a lead.

Cwm Taf health visitors step up strike action

DAVE REID
SOCIALIST PARTY WALES SECRETARY

Health visitors working for Cwm Taf Health Board, members of Unite, have voted to extend their month-long strike for fair pay for a further two months, determined to win the banding which is theirs by right.

Health visitors play a vital role in supporting the parents of new-born babies and ensuring children have a good start to life.

In a process that began in 2021, health board bosses signed an internal job grading which matched them as Band 7, acknowledging a Masters qualification. But the board has ignored their own job description, costing many of the workers £9,000 a year.

So after being stonewalled for five years, the health visitors started strike action on 23 February.

The health board has tried to pass the buck to the Welsh government, and the Labour-led Welsh government claims it is purely a matter for Cwm Taf. But the reality is that they should both sort it out. This is an issue that affects all health visitors in Wales, and the Welsh government must ensure that they all are on the correct pay band.

As John Williams, standing for election to the LGBT seat on Unite's Executive Council, speaking at the strike rally at the Senedd, pointed out to applause: "One phone call to the health board from the First Minister or health secretary could give health visitors fair pay."

The workers have attempted to organise meetings with Jeremy Miles, the health secretary, but Miles has hidden away. He closed his surgery rather than meet the union reps and he claimed he was too busy to meet them at the Senedd. But the health visitors gathered outside the Senedd chanted: "Jeremy, Jeremy where are you? Are you hiding? Shame on you!"

Eluned Morgan, Labour First Minister, prioritised women's health in her International Women's Day address, and in her acceptance speech in 2024 she promised to be "a listening First Minister. I will listen to all… not just to those who have the most power". But she has avoided hearing the women health visitors.

All this shows the hollowness of the 'social partnership' promoted by Welsh Labour and the tops of the TUC Cymru (Trades Union Congress in Wales). The first meetings to discuss banding started under the partnership process five years ago and have produced nothing. Scottish health visitors won Band 7 pay in 2017!

But Cwm Taf health visitors are ready to fight. Unite the Union has backed them all the way and Cardiff Trade Union Council has mobilised support from other unions. The workers will lead the May Day march through Cardiff on 2 May.



SOCIALIST PARTY WALES

- Messages of solidarity: jodie.evans@unitetheunion.org
- Donations to the hardship fund:
Account Name: Unite Cwm Taf Health Board Branch 1051
Sort Code: 608301
Account: 20106942
Reference: Your Branch Name

RMT members on London Underground fight imposition of compressed working week

Tube train drivers on London Underground who are members of the RMT union are preparing for strike action from 24 March.

Tube bosses want to introduce what they describe as a 'four-day week', but the union is exposing that in reality it is five days of work compressed into four. London Underground claims the new arrangements will be voluntary but has refused to give any guarantees about that, and is imposing the change.



RMT on strike at Hainault, east London MARTIN REYNOLDS

RMT regional organiser Jared Wood was interviewed by Eddie Nestor on BBC Radio London:

"It's not voluntary, this is the problem. When we've said to London Underground, 'Does that mean that anyone that's not currently working the new arrangements can carry on on the old ones, wherever they work, whatever line they're on?' they say they can't answer that. When we say, 'Would you be able to move locations in the future without giving up your right to your current arrangements?' they say they can't answer that. When we say, 'Will new workers who get the position of train operator be able to do the existing arrangements?' they say they can't answer that.

"So actually, while they're using the word 'voluntary', when you dig into it there's nothing voluntary about it. It will have significant impacts on people who try and remain on their existing terms."

Fight for genuine shorter working hours

RMT members on London Underground have won significant victories recently. In 2024, the threat of strike action won an extra £30 million towards pay. In February 2025, a huge victory was won defending pension rights, and in November, strike action won a three-year inflation-proof pay rise.

But the union then pledged to continue fighting for a shorter working week. Tube workers work 24/7 every week of the year. Extreme shifts and night shifts leave workers exhausted and affect health and life expectancy. The RMT campaigns for a shorter working week, more annual leave and, on trains, a four-day week, with no productivity strings and no loss of pay. But this new timetable from the bosses is not any of these things and its imposition must be fought – a fight which will be stronger if it is joined by the other tube unions too.

The RMT has announced six 24-hour strikes, each starting at midday. See rmt.org.uk/news/rmt-launches-tube-strike-action-over-imposed-four-day/ for details

RMT protests privatisation in Northern Rail



YORKSHIRE SOCIALIST PARTY

IAIN DALTON
SOCIALIST PARTY YORKSHIRE

RMT members held a protest on 16 March outside a meeting of Transport for the North against outsourcing in Northern Rail. The company outsources station staff, cleaners and security guards to a number of companies, including Carlisle Support Services, ISS and Amulet.

The RMT has a long-running dispute with Carlisle Support Services, owned by Tory donor Lord Ashcroft. The company refuses to negotiate over pay, holding many workers on the lowest-possible pay and zero-hour contracts.

Transport for the North is a statutory body made up of 20 transport authorities, business representatives and rail bodies.

But of the predominantly Labour-run authorities represented, only mayors Steve Rotheram (Liverpool City region) and Andy Burnham (Greater Manchester – who sent a deputy) supported the protest.

Labour promised 'the biggest wave of insourcing of public services in a generation'. Northern Rail is directly owned by the Department for Transport, so what's the delay?

As one supportive passer-by commented, "This government hasn't done a lot of things they said they would".

Trade unions should only be supporting elected representatives that follow through on trade union policies, such as ending outsourcing. The RMT should initiate a conference to discuss the crisis of working-class political representation, taking the lead as it did under late general secretary Bob Crow.

2026 NSSN Conference: Workers Fight Back
20th anniversary conference: 'We won't pay for the crisis!'
Saturday 27 June Conway Hall, London
nationalshop stewardsnetwork
shopstewards.net

Nominations close for PCS elections – the race is on to win a fighting leadership

MARION LLOYD
PCS NEC MEMBER

The race is on for who will lead the PCS union in the coming year, as the National Executive Committee (NEC) nominations have closed. The candidates supported by the Broad Left Network (BLN – in which the Socialist Party participates) have won up to 67 branch nominations, compared to those received by the outgoing majority Left Unity/Democracy Alliance, whose nominations have reduced right down to 58 and less.

Nominations for outgoing president Martin Cavanagh have plummeted from 71 last year to only 56 this year. This can only be interpreted as further disengagement from reps and members on the ground to a leadership that is not prepared to fight on the key issues that matter.

The elections in April are a chance for PCS members to vote for a serious fighting and democratic leadership. This is crucial if we are to respond effectively to the attacks from Starmer's Labour government against the workers he promised to "respect" when he took up office.

PCS organises workers in the civil service and outsourced government contracts. Thousands of jobs continue to be cut across UK government, with knock-on impacts in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office is moving forward with its plan to lose 25% of jobs, as is the Cabinet Office which has announced a 30% reduction. Other areas are following suit and, coupled with attacks on pay, conditions and office space, that "respect" has been in short supply.

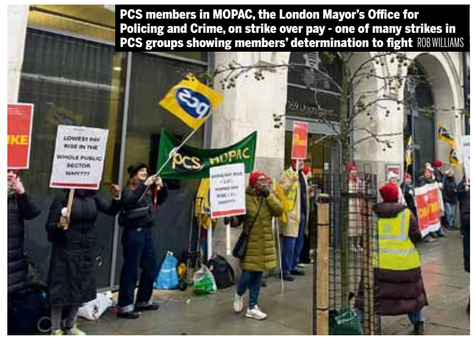
Strikes continue to break out right across the union, including in the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, the Palace of Westminster, Ofgem and the Office for National Statistics.

And most recently we have the disgrace of our pensions administrator being moved to Capita - laying on open display the impact of privatisation on service delivery and workers alike. Coupled with the movement of our payroll from French giant Steria to Capita, not only have no lessons been learned, but it also exposes the lie that Starmer's Labour would herald 'the biggest wave of insourcing in a generation.'

What has been the response to all of this from the current PCS Left Unity/Democracy Alliance NEC? Despite the carriage of motion A383 at PCS conference last year, which instructed the NEC to build a serious campaign on jobs, pay, conditions and the other many issues we are facing, the silence has been deafening.

The increasing numbers of disputes across the union have been left to fight in isolation rather than being coordinated and used as a platform to launch a badly needed national campaign capable of winning. This lack of activity cannot continue.

Choice in this election is clear - one that wants to mobilise the membership to win, or one that has demonstrated its will to do nothing.



PCS members in MOPAC, the London Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime, on strike over pay - one of many strikes in PCS groups showing members' determination to fight ROB WILLIAMS

- Vote for the BLN-supported candidates in the upcoming national and group elections. The voting for the NEC runs from 16 April to 8 May; group elections 23 April to 13 May.

Joining the Socialist Party – my route to standing by my politics



Adam (left) campaigning with the Socialist Party BILLY JONES

ADAM HERRINGTON
GLOUCESTERSHIRE SOCIALIST PARTY

I've always thought: "I'm not as involved in politics as I should be."

I've always held strong opinions and beliefs, but have never had a movement, protest, or party to stand behind – only a vague, but very justified hatred of every government I've lived under.

I wanted to find a group reflecting my politics, that was involved in action locally. After meeting the Socialist Party last year at an anti-racist counter-demonstration against the far right, that they helped to organise, I found they fit exactly what I was looking for.

Even as a new member, I immediately felt able to throw myself into local activity, such as meeting with the Gloucestershire phlebotomists, who recently ended the longest strike in NHS history (see 'Phlebotomy under threat at Gloucestershire hospitals' at socialistparty.org.uk). Socialist Party members in the county, and Socialist Party members in the workers' Unison trade union across the country, helped campaign and raise awareness for these important workers from the beginning of their strike.

Class struggle

In Socialist Party meetings, we discuss current events, and are given space to share our opinions. I feel I have a better grasp of important news stories week-to-week as they are happening. Our conversations are rooted in working-class struggle, and driven by socialist politics.

Another valuable part of joining the Socialist Party, which I hadn't even accounted for, is constantly meeting people of different ages, who have all kinds of stories and experiences. The number of people I've met is amazing. I feel much more comfortable introducing myself to people now.

My political activism has gone from listening to Chumbawamba on my own, to directly feeling part of an active political group. Not discounting how much of a bop 'Tubthumping' is! Getting involved, and standing behind what you believe in, to my mind, is definitely worth it.

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

Students ask: 'How can we stop this war?'



ADAM POWELL-DAVIES

ADAM GILLMAN
SOCIALIST STUDENTS

Socialist Students organised a campaign stall opposing Donald Trump's war in the Middle East at KCL uni in central London. Lots of people queued up to take leaflets, hungry for ideas on how to stop this devastating conflict.

There were lots of conversations on why this war is taking place. A lot asked questions: "Why is there more war around the world? How do we fight back against it?"

We pointed out that capitalism is in crisis, the links between universities and weapon manufacturers, and the need for fully publicly funded free education.

Getting organised

We said how young people can organise on campus to protest against war, for full funding, and to demand universities open their financial books to workers and students. We raised other issues we face – tuition fees, high laundry fees, and the need to fight for a socialist alternative.

This got more young people interested in our ideas, and had people looking and asking for leaflets, our petition, and our Socialist paper.

At our London Socialist Students meeting opposing the war in the Middle East, there was enthusiasm to go out and find young people angry at the war, and to build a fightback on the campuses.

Young people are angry at this war, and all the chaos of climate change, attacks on our living standards, and the capitalist chaos that blights our future. So let's find these students, and build a socialist alternative against war and capitalist chaos.

- socialiststudents.org.uk

Leicester victory – defend the right to campaign



Leicester Socialist Party defiance stall STEVE SCORE

HEATHER RAWLING
LEICESTER SOCIALIST PARTY

We are celebrating a victory over Leicester Labour council. Last April, the council introduced a controversial Public Spaces Protection Order, covering the whole of the city centre inside the inner ring road.

The ban claimed it was aimed at prohibiting anti-social behaviour, like riding e-bikes in pedestrian areas. But tagged onto the end, was a clause banning 'amplification and stall tables'.

Whilst some other left groups looked for ways to circumvent the ban, Leicester Socialist Party saw this ban for what it was – an attack on our democratic right to campaign effectively.

We discussed how we would oppose this ban. We drew up a strategy to include local trade unions and other campaigning organisations, and organised together to hold 'defiance' stalls.

Fined

On 31 May last year, Socialist Party members were campaigning against Labour council cuts. I was reluctantly asked by a street warden to take down our stall table – I have been campaigning with a stall table for over 30 years. When I refused, I was issued with a Fixed Penalty Notice that came with a £100 fine. I wrote to the council refusing to pay, pleading not guilty, and sought legal advice.

Our stand attracted media attention that put the Labour council in a poor light. We have had support from far and wide, including the trade union councils in Peterborough and Nottingham, even trade unionists and activists in other countries.

By the beginning of this year, having not been summoned to court, it became clear that the council wasn't confident that they would win their legal case against me.

Defiance

We held a joint defiance stall day and issued press releases, which again attracted media attention. The council backed down, and withdrew the fine.

However, they still claim that you have to apply for a licence to hold a stall. Your Party supporters did just that to have a stall to mobilise for the anti-far right demonstration in London on 28 February.

They were told a weekday stall for a charity would cost £110, a weekend stall £500, and given options on where they could hold the stall. Also, they would need to submit Public Liability Insurance, and a risk assessment. It would be cheaper to pay the fine!

This is totally unacceptable on many fronts. Often, we have held stalls at very short notice in response to something in the news, like war, Black Lives Matter, Me Too, trans rights, and Labour austerity.

Other councils are looking to Leicester to implement similar bans. We will continue to hold stalls in the city centre, that enables us to discuss with the public, and build opposition to wars, austerity, and oppression.

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Southampton socialists challenge Labour austerity

CATHERINE CLARKE
SOUTHAMPTON SOCIALIST PARTY

None of the major capitalist political parties have answers that resonate with the working class of Southampton. All they push is division, fear, hatred and war.

Our Labour council recently proudly stated that it is on the road to financial recovery. But it also increased council tax by another 5%. The Greens voted with Labour in support of this 5% increase.

Socialist Party member Nadia Dita stood as a Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) candidate in Bevois ward in the 2024 council elections. Nadia won 884 votes, coming second to Labour.

It remains a significant challenge to Labour in our city. And Nadia is now standing again.

We have been knocking on doors. The local community remember our influence in saving St Mary's Leisure Centre, and the Venny adventure playground.

Imagine what we could achieve with a socialist councillor in the chambers.

Bevois will get more media exposure due to Nadia's vote record in 2024. We want to use that platform to inform people that there are TUSC candidates across the city, making the same socialist, anti-cuts stand.



Nadia campaigning with the Socialist Party and Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) in the 2024 election NICK CHAFFEY

OUR PROGRAMME SAYS:

- Oppose all cuts
- Freeze council tax and rents
- £15-an-hour minimum wage
- Full school funding
- Free school meals for all
- Re-open city-wide, council-run, youth centres, with mental health provision included
- A low charge or free municipal bus service, particularly for young adults and women to have safe transport at night, and to reduce car usage
- Build council housing to high health, safety, and environmental standards
- Reestablish free council waste collection of bulky items

As part of the campaign, we have been building support among activists from the local government unions – Unite, Unison, and GMB - as well as other school and university unions.

We fight for fully funded and publicly owned services. We also need a council 'works' department, that will actually provide jobs and apprenticeships for young people, repairing and building houses and youth centres, and fixing potholes.

There is some capital spending from the local council budget on parks. But no jobs are being created.

In Southampton in 2012, Coxford councillors Keith Morrell and Don Thomas were kicked out of the Labour Party when they stood against cuts, and opposed the closure of their local Oaklands Swimming Pool.

In 2013, their amendment to the council budget said council reserves and borrowing powers could meet the £15 million deficit – negating the need for cuts. But the Labour mayor ruled it out, preventing any debate.

Keith and Don's anti-austerity budget proposed collaborating with other anti-cuts councils to force the government to reverse cuts. Councils, with the backing of the unions, would have been a force to be reckoned with, forcing the Tory-Lib Dem coalition of the time, to retreat and provide the necessary funding.

We're fighting to win back the £750 million stolen from our Southampton communities since 2010. If you have a spare weekend, come and join us on the doorsteps of Bevois to get socialist Nadia elected. You will receive a very warm welcome!

We took our People's Budget to Enfield Labour council

JOHN DOLAN
ENFIELD AND LEA VALLEY SOCIALIST PARTY

Enfield campaigners held a People's Budget conference in north London on 22 February.

Enfield Council has over £75 million in reserves, plus is trumpeting an extra £203 million 'Fair Funding Review' money – the majority comes from raising our council taxes. But still Enfield Labour council is planning £12 million of more cuts!

The event was supported by the local trades union council, the Socialist Party, the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC), Enfield Community Independents (ECI), and Your Party supporters. Local Socialist Party member Oscar launched the conference.

Catherine explained how council cuts are making life even more difficult for disabled people. The Labour council is planning to kick 1,500 disabled people off the Enfield housing waiting list.

Nick, a housing worker at Enfield Council, spoke about rogue private landlords. Taylan from the 'Kurdish and Turkish Electoral Alternative' called for democratic control of the council to help achieve our needed housing rights. Taylan is standing in the elections to challenge the council.



Lobbying the council with the People's Budget demands ENFIELD & LEAVALLEY SP

Paul from Unite the Union housing workers branch gave an informative presentation on housing, detailing the current shortfall. He pointed the way forward – rent freezes for council tenants, wider rent control, and mass building of council homes. Paul is standing for the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition in the Enfield council elections.

Right2Thrive campaigns against youth unemployment locally. Colin detailed its damaging effects.

Khalid from Enfield Community Independents said that council cuts are not necessary. Enfield Council was the master developer for housebuilding at the new Meridian Water estate. This alone could have solved the local housing crisis.

Socialist Party members said Enfield Labour council could provide the necessary services to lift all people out of poverty, and give us secure homes to live in.

The meeting drew up a demands list, from the issues raised at this conference, and agreed to present it to the Labour council budget-setting on 26 February.

This campaign will carry on up to this May's full council elections – TUSC and ECI are standing anti-austerity candidates – and will continue beyond this to fight for the services we need.

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:

CWI CIT

WORK, PENSIONS AND BENEFITS

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

PUBLIC SERVICES

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

ENVIRONMENT

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

DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS

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

SOCIALISM AND INTERNATIONALISM

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

Do you agree? Join the fightback!

JOIN THE SOCIALISTS

- Visit **socialistparty.org.uk/join**
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to find out more today!



Help fund the fightback!

DONATE TODAY **socialistparty.org.uk/donate**



Socialist Party members protesting against war AMNON COHEN

Donate so a socialist message can cut through capitalist chaos

NICK CHAFFEY
SOUTHERN AND SOUTH EAST SOCIALIST PARTY SECRETARY

The horror of war and all its consequences are sharpening the outlook of millions of workers and young people. They are questioning the establishment politicians and their parties. The May local council elections loom on the horizon in Britain.

Support for the capitalist parties of war and austerity is collapsing. Britain's two parties of government came third and fourth in the Gorton and Denton by-election.

Is it any wonder? Fuel prices rocket, adding to the unbearable squeeze on workers and young people's pockets. Politicians seek support for increased military spending, while cutting pay and funding for schools and the NHS.

Labour will suffer a crushing defeat in the May elections. But the divisive racist and reactionary ideas of Reform are threatening to fill the political vacuum.

Oxfordshire firefighters have begun their strike ballot to fight job cuts and station closures.

Trade union members seek fighting leaderships that will effectively defend and improve jobs, pay and working conditions. We are taking that fight into the trade union elections, where Socialist Party members are standing in Unite, Unison, and PCS. Our member Duncan Moore has already been re-elected to the University and College Union (UCU) executive.

£24 billion cut from vital council services since 2010, over one million jobs cut in that time, and thousands of youth clubs and libraries closed. 100 companies on the stock market pay out £70 billion in dividends to a handful of shareholders every year.

No wonder support for socialist ideas is growing. No wonder 800,000 showed an interest in the launch of a new workers' party last year.

We face tremendous opportunities to inspire workers and young people, with a fighting socialist programme to oppose war and continued austerity to deliver jobs, a living wage, free education, homes, and fully funded services for all.

The mass demonstrations against war in Gaza, the one-year indefinite strike of Birmingham bin workers, and the election of the anti-war MPs and Jeremy Corbyn at the 2024 general election, show that workers and youth are prepared to fight back, and are looking for an alternative.

Financing our campaigns over the next eight weeks in the council elections and Unite the Union elections, producing thousands of leaflets and posters, organising our public meetings across England and Wales, is vital to rapidly build support for our socialist message.

We appeal to all our readers to donate, and ask others to do the same. On every campaign stall, when we sell the Socialist at work, or a drink with your mates – when we meet those who support our message, be bold and ask for a donation.

Every £1, £5, and £10 adds up. What we all do together is how we reach the challenging targets we set ourselves, and to rise to the challenge in front of us.

Fund the fightback

DONATE TODAY

- Visit **socialistparty.org.uk/donate**
- or call **020 8988 8777**
- or make cheques payable to Socialist Party, PO Box 1398, Enfield EN1 9GT

SOCIALIST PARTY FIGHTING FUND

AREA	£ RECEIVED	£ TARGET	Q1: JANUARY-MARCH 2026	DEADLINE: 31 MARCH 2026
Eastern	1,957	1,300		151%
North West	1,751	1,200		146%
West Midlands	3,226	2,700		119%
Southern & SE	2,787	2,400		116%
Northern	917	800		115%
London	4,743	5,000	95%	
South West	1,692	2,100	81%	
Yorkshire	2,086	2,650	79%	
Wales	1,756	2,400	73%	
East Midlands	1,118	2,050	55%	
Other	3,532	2,400		147%
TOTAL	25,566	25,000		102%

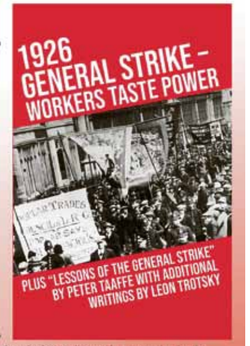
A new book to mark the centenary of the
1926 GENERAL STRIKE

A new publication from Mentmore Press:
1926 General Strike - Workers Taste Power by Peter Taaffe RRP: £14.99

On the centenary of the 1926 General Strike, Mentmore Press is proud to be republishing this thoroughly researched and inspiring history of what its author, Peter Taaffe, describes as "the most important event in the history of the British working class".

Originally published to mark its eightieth anniversary, this book provides a vivid account of those nine historic days. It demonstrates the breadth and power of the movement, from the North East to South Wales, from Scotland to London.

This centenary edition also includes additional material first carried in a 1970s Militant pamphlet, including articles written by Leon Trotsky as part of debates within the Communist International on the correct application of the 'united front' tactic during, and after, the 1926 General Strike.



But this book is much more than just a history book. It also raises important questions for trade unionists to discuss, in preparation for the mighty battles that will inevitably break out again. When is it correct to call a general strike? As a '24-hour' or indefinite 'all-out' action? How can rank-and-file union reps ensure they are not let down by less determined leaders? How can the mistakes made by the fledgling Communist Party back then be avoided in future?

The best way to commemorate 1926 is to learn those lessons.

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Mentmore Press

MAY DAY GREETINGS 2026

Celebrate international workers' day and mark the 100th anniversary of the 1926 general strike. Send the Socialist solidarity greetings





- For prices visit **socialistparty.org.uk/mayday**
- 20% discount deadline 30 March 2026



Why we're voting 'no' in the BT consultative pay ballot

SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBERS IN CWU

Members of the Communication Workers Union (CWU) in BT have been voting on a pay offer of 4.1% for those earning under £30,000 per year, and for those earning over that, a 3% increase. Socialist Party members have advocated rejecting the deal.

The pay increases are to be consolidated and pensionable. Previous years have seen unconsolidated lump sums make up the respective offers.

But this deal does nothing for younger members on grades that were launched through the 'Workforce 2020' agreement. Ostensibly brought in to save jobs, its real effect has been to undermine the previous terms, which was really its aim.

We now see this generational divide on the shop floor. Younger members are increasingly resentful that they often do the same work alongside older worker teammates but for less. Plus they see their future pension affected by how the pension fund investment behaves in an increasingly volatile free market.

And although the deal has a positive uplift for those earning under £30,000, it still leaves many members short as rents and energy costs rise – especially as Trump's Middle East war threatens to send these costs even higher. Rather than 'inflation-busting' as the union negotiators would like us to believe, at best this would be treading water, at worst a pay cut.

Also, especially in Openreach, home-working has been reduced for many and outright withdrawn for some.

The background is BT's plan to make savings year-on-year to 2030. To date, £900 million has been saved by 'natural attrition' - around 17,800 mainly older workers left the workforce in 2025, while there were only 11,000 new hires, all on 'Workforce 2020' terms.

A push to develop Artificial Intelligence and automation and remove human intervention is well underway. BT is reported to be on track to reduce the workforce from 90,000 to 20,000 by 2030. Part of this reduction is the embedded use of contractors, accelerating the pressure to reduce headcount and pay. Profit before tax was £1.3 billion.

The CWU should be preparing for determined action on pay. We should demand that BT's accounts, including the costs and returns of contractors, are opened up for CWU and lay-member inspection.

CWU should demand that BT is renationalised, alongside other telecom companies, with compensation based on proven need only, and with the full involvement of the workforce to develop a truly national integrated telecoms industry to meet the needs of the entire population, not major shareholder profits.

The ballot ran between 5 and 18 March.



BT workers on strike in 2022 PAUL MATTSSON

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the Socialist
Issue 1359 19-25 March 2026 formerly Militant

CUT RENTS BUILD COUNCIL HOMES



SEAMUS SMYTH
EAST MIDLANDS SOCIALIST PARTY

Millions are trapped in a housing system that prioritises landlords' profits over people's needs.

For decades, councils have sold off council homes and neglected to replace them. Public land has been surrendered to private developers.

UK households spent a record £226 billion keeping a roof over their heads last year, with housing costs rising by 41% in just five years, according to a report from Savills. In 2025 alone, £112 billion was spent on rent, including £81 billion to private landlords – a big chunk of it will have come from the government in the form of housing benefits.

The bill for private renters has risen 27% over five years. Tenants face constant rent increases or eviction as landlords chase more cash.

As of March 2025, around 1.34 million households in England were on local authority housing waiting lists. Many more are not even allowed to join or are arbitrarily and unfairly removed.

A council serious about addressing the housing crisis could immediately begin a mass council house building programme, built by properly paid workers under trade union agreed terms. Existing powers to compulsory register landlords would be used to set fair rents based on local incomes rather than market rates. Landlords could be made to keep homes to a decent and safe standard.

By taking the approach of deciding council policy based on what working-class communities need, and beginning to carry those policies out, a campaign could be mobilised with support from tenants groups, trade unions and working-class communities to demand proper funding from this weak Labour government.

Starmer's Labour is continuing the austerity started by the Tories. Where we live in the East Midlands, anger at the establishment politicians has led to Reform winning the leadership of councils. None of those councils are fighting to cut rent and build council homes. The same is true for councils where Green councillors are part of the leadership too.

In the May elections we need candidates who put forward the policies and the kind of fight that is needed to fix the housing crisis. Socialist Party members will be standing as part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition, pointing towards the new mass party of the working class that we need.

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

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