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the Socialist

Issue 1360

26 March - 1 April 2026

formerly **Militant**



BUILD THE SOCIALIST OPPOSITION

TO REFORM AND STARMER'S LABOUR

The Socialist Party says

- Unite the struggles against racism, austerity and war – trade unions must lead
- For working-class unity against racist division – fight for jobs, homes and services for all
- Unions must lead in building a new mass party of the working class
- Fight for socialist change and an end to war - in Britain and internationally

READ WHAT WE THINK: HOW TO STOP REFORM AND THE RIGHT – TRADE UNIONS MUST LEAD PAGE 3, AND MORE PAGES 2-6

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

'Fighting austerity is how we smash racism'

Why I'm standing for TUSC in May's elections

IMRAN HUSSAIN
TUSC CANDIDATE FOR LEYTON

As we take to the streets to march against racism on 28 March, trade unionists and campaigners know that the threat from Reform UK and the far right is growing. But we also know that racism doesn't exist in a vacuum. It breeds in the fertile ground of capitalist austerity, poverty, and the deliberate destruction of our communities.

That is exactly why I am standing in May's local elections as a Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) candidate for Leyton ward of Waltham Forest in east London.

For years, establishment politicians have passed down devastating cuts, leaving working-class people fighting over crumbs. When people can't get a doctor's appointment or a council house, right-wing populists step in to falsely blame migrants and refugees.

To defeat Reform and the racists, we have to cut off their political oxygen. We do that by fighting for the resources our class desperately needs.

In my campaign in Waltham Forest, I am arguing for a fighting socialist alternative. I am demanding absolutely no cuts to public services and jobs. Instead of managing decline, we need councils to set people's budgets based on real needs,

created through assemblies of residents and trade unions - that councillors are held accountable to. To tackle the housing crisis that divides our communities, I am campaigning to ensure 100% of new homes built on public land are council-owned social housing.

Councils can fight back

Anti-racism must also be backed by concrete action in the town hall. If elected, I will fight to end council complicity in immigration raids. I will also push the council to fund and facilitate anti-racist, anti-hate crime bystander and self-defence training.

I am standing for TUSC because I know these demands cannot be delivered by councillors alone simply sticking to a policy of cuts and council tax rises. When we refuse to make cuts and instead choose to spend on people's needs, we know the government will try to intervene. As a TUSC councillor, I won't hide in the council chamber. I will actively rally residents, trade unions, and community organisations to resist the imposition of cuts through protests, direct action, occupations, and strikes.

The workers' movement is the greatest anti-racist force we have. By fighting together for jobs, homes, and services, we can smash the divisive lies of the far-right and build a socialist future!



Socialist Party members fight racism across the country MARY FINCH

Donate to boost the socialist fight against the right

ISAI MARIJERLA
SOCIALIST PARTY TREASURER

There is no doubt that far-right ideas and divisive policies need to be challenged and defeated. Crisis-driven, war-ridden capitalism needs divisions and exploitation to survive.

It's not only the far right that stirs and promotes racist and divisive policies. All the establishment parties, including Labour, use divisive policies to shift the blame away from them and the bosses they represent. But let's be clear: it is their system that is the root cause of the multiple crises we face.

Socialists push for maximum unity of the working class and young people. Workers from all backgrounds have more in common with one another than with billionaires and capitalists. We share collective struggles

and are stronger united. The working class is the force in society that can end this profit-driven capitalist system.

The Socialist Party has been campaigning for a mass trade union-led movement against racism, the far right and divisive policies. Our members in the trade unions have pushed for and won support at TUC Congress that it should lead a movement 'for jobs, homes, not racism'. Such a struggle can unite the working class in a struggle against the real enemy.

Divide and rule is an age-old tactic used by the ruling class to divide the working class so that they can maintain their power and their system. The solution is clear - we need a socialist society run by the working class in the interests of the majority. If you agree, join us today. And donate today to fund the fight for socialism.

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Bus drivers have gone on strike in Waltham Forest in the last few months LONDON SP

HOW TO BEAT REFORM AND THE RIGHT TRADE UNIONS MUST LEAD!

WHAT WE THINK

An injury to one is an injury to all! That basic idea of trade unionism is bringing union members to the streets in big numbers on the 'Together Against the Far Right' demonstration on 28 March. Organising to change a situation where there is growing fear of racist attacks is part of what trade unions must do.

The next step for trade union members is seeking discussion in union meetings, committees and conferences. How can our unions organise to stop the electoral rise of Nigel Farage's Reform UK? How can unions cut across the ability of Tommy Robinson to mobilise his Unite the Kingdom protests? How can the trade unions unite the struggles against racism, austerity and war and offer an alternative when Farage and Robinson present themselves as the alternative to the capitalist establishment parties?

In 2018, the Trades Union Congress representing millions of trade union members passed a motion on 'challenging the politics of hate' which included a commitment to "launch a Jobs, Homes, Not Racism campaign to unite the wider trade union movement and to campaign effectively against the far right". Making this a reality is an urgent task for our unions, the main mass organisations of the working class.

The absence of the trade unions entering the debate in that way helps Farage and Robinson and Co to appeal to people's anger. The Starmer government is hugely unpopular. Having won a 'landslide' in the general election - in reality with a historically low vote share, and with fewer votes than Labour won with Jeremy Corbyn's anti-austerity manifestos in 2017 and 2019 - Labour is now polling at about 16%! That is because it has continued with austerity and failed to improve public services or living standards. This collapse in support is the inevitable result of Labour's role, like the Tories, of seeking to defend the interests of the capitalist class - and making the working class pay.

That is what lies behind, for example, the watering down of the Employment Rights Act with no date given by which the 50% strike ballot turnout threshold will be abolished. What was billed as a 'New Deal for workers' has been whittled down through 'consultation' with big business.

But these Tory anti-union laws are an unaffordable cost to workers who need to fight for pay rises amid Trump's latest bump to inflation. Our

movement needs to demand their immediate repeal. We got a taste of our own power to do so when unions defeated the Tory government's attempts to restrict strikes with minimum service levels in 2024 - by threatening to escalate strike action.

That followed the strike wave of 2022-23 when workers of all backgrounds were on picket lines, together winning pay rises the Tories had no intention of giving. At that stage the most prominent voices representing workers were not the likes of Farage but actual workers' leaders. Trade union leaders were on the television saying, 'the working class is back! 'Join a union' became one of the most searched for terms. Solidarity and united action were to the fore.

The working class had never gone away. The Covid inquiry has 'found' what we all saw clearly in the pandemic - that the huge efforts of workers in the NHS and across society were what kept things going. What was 'back' in 2022 was a more widespread understanding that the working class had to act collectively to defend itself against the attacks by the bosses and their representatives.

Working-class unity

Capitalism means economic exploitation of the majority by a tiny minority, accompanied by the repression and division necessary to maintain such a system. Workers have a collective interest in ending capitalism. The working class has the potential power to do that, flowing from our class's role in the production process. Our shared collective experience also contributes to building solidarity, cutting across the ideologies of capitalist division.

The defenders of capitalism have always used racism and division in defence of maintaining the rule of a small minority. Capitalist politicians are prepared to whip up nationalism, for example to justify their wars, waged in the interests of the profiteers, never the working class. The divisive rhetoric of Farage and Co is therefore able to appeal to ideas that have been promoted by various institutions of the capitalist establishment for centuries.

If the trade unions follow up this demo with a wider call for a mass march uniting the struggles against racism, austerity and war as part of a sustained strategy on the theme: 'No to austerity, make the rich pay! Workers' unity not division - jobs, homes, and services for all, not racism!' it would have an immense appeal and would help cut through the racist lies.

Labour stokes racist division

Like the Tories, the Labour government has shown that minority rights are not secure in a society in which a capitalist elite relies on scapegoating



Trade unions can organise stewarding at demos against the far right, as Hull trades council did IAIN DALTON



If the trade unions follow up this demo with a wider call for a mass march uniting the struggles against racism, austerity and war as part of a sustained strategy on the theme: 'No to austerity, make the rich pay! Workers' unity not division - jobs, homes, and services for all, not racism!' it would have an immense appeal and would help cut through the racist lies

in attempting to preserve their rule. Starmer and his ministers have stoked the fire with policies and arguments that add fuel to fear that immigration and asylum seekers are a threat to living standards.

Trade unions must respond to these attacks too. For example, transport union RMT has been campaigning against the Home Office's changes to work visa rules which threaten the jobs and futures of hundreds of rail staff. In Minneapolis, workers defended their colleagues from the ICE migrant raids and that organised solidarity showed how

mass workers' action will be key to fighting Trumpism.

Trade unions can also be central to preparing to defend our communities when far-right groups, emboldened by the anti-migrant rhetoric, threaten to march in local areas. This should include compiling a list of volunteers from each union. From this list, stewards and a chief steward with experience could be drawn on each occasion the union movement deems necessary. Such a model could also be organised on a national level to defend working-class protests against attacks by far-right thugs and the police.

Councils

But stewarding is certainly not the limit of what trade unions need to do in local areas. Where Reform UK lead councils they have shown that behind the radical rhetoric they play from the same hymn book of making the working class pay - hiking up council tax and cutting public services. Public sector union UNISON reports a 200% increase in membership among council workers who found themselves under a Reform administration after last May's elections.

Building trade union density in every area, whichever party is

implementing austerity, can cut across Reform's ability to find an echo. The trade union elections are an opportunity to elect leaderships who offer a fighting strategy (see page 7), making it clearer to workers why they should join.

May's elections

For trade unions to actually have a say over local policies, they can stand candidates in the local elections who could act democratically under the direction of the trade unions with a no-cuts position.

This would be a step forward in the building of the new mass workers' party we need, independent of all the rotten capitalist elites and fighting for a socialist programme: for power to be taken out of the hands of the major corporations and banks that dominate the economy, so society can be run democratically in the interests of the majority, based on planning and cooperation, instead of the poverty, environmental destruction, and war of profit-before-all-else capitalism.

Trade unions taking steps to create such a party would massively build the confidence of workers to stand up against racist division and austerity and its capitalist authors - and offer a positive alternative.

Join the fightback JOIN THE SOCIALISTS

- Visit socialistparty.org.uk/join or call 020 8988 8777
- or text your name and postcode to 07958 032071

to find out more about joining us today!



PHOTO: MILITANT LEFT

Unions leading the fight against racism in the North of Ireland

Interview with **Carmel Gates, General Secretary of the Northern Ireland Public Service Alliance (NIPSA)**, and a member of Militant Left (sister party of the Socialist Party)

NIPSA is an Irish trade union of 47,000 members. Health workers, education workers, civil service workers and more. The left has a majority on the union executive.

Since I got elected in 2021, we've grown from 39,000 members. That is largely as a result of the campaigning work we have done. From 2022 until 2024 every section of the union was engaged in industrial action. When workers see unions take action and see what unions do, they join. The union has grown, built on a programme of struggle and taking the battle to the government. That included the first ever public service general strike in January 2024, which succeeded in winning extra money for the Northern Ireland budget.

NIPSA's fighting stance has given members the confidence to take the lead on fighting racism.

Union stewarding

Trade unions are the only organisations that can organise workers and organise them safely, and so NIPSA put forward a proposal to have trade union-trained stewards on demonstrations to ensure that counter-protests against the racists are well organised and safe. If the trade unions lead, with stewards who are properly trained, then we can drive the racists off the streets.

Our action has been in response to the racist activity that has grown in the North since the summer of 2024, when a group went on a rampage in Belfast. They were attempting to march to the mosque to attack it and, although they didn't get there, they did attack businesses and shops on the way.

We called on the rest of the trade union movement to engage and be part of the counter-demonstration that day. Many individuals did turn out and as the campaign went on, more trade unionists did mobilise.

We used that experience to bring a motion to the Irish Congress of Trade

Unions (ICTU) Northern Ireland conference in November 2024, that it should organise a trained group of stewards who would be ready and able whenever the racists took to the streets. The motion was passed.

We made that call because we learned from the work that we've done previously. In the North of Ireland during the 1980s there were sectarian killings, and families forced to move out of their area. 'Militant' called for trade union defence. For united, democratic defence of workers and communities.

We need to fight on the things that give rise to racism. Significant poverty has affected a whole layer of working-class people who now feel they have been left behind. People are without homes, without jobs, and without proper services. Unless we take up those issues then there is fertile ground for racists to blame refugees and migrants.

Workers' party

Building a working-class political alternative is also part of the fight against racism. A meeting in August 2025 brought together trade unionists to begin a discussion to establish a new working-class political voice.

Because of sectarian divisions, that task has always been difficult. Nonetheless, we have always called for workers' unity and socialism. What we do know is that 3,000 people signed up to the Labour Party in the North when Jeremy Corbyn was leader. Those 3,000 haven't gone anywhere, and more and more young people are now very disillusioned with 'politics' and sectarianism. I believe there will be a thirst for a new party based on workers' unity and socialism.

In fact, 'For workers' unity and a socialist economy' was the backdrop and the slogan of NIPSA conference 2025. It's now in the NIPSA constitution. Through our role in the union we've normalised the language of socialism so much that when we have the privilege of speaking on behalf of members in the media, the presenters often joke to us, 'So when you are you going to mention a socialist economy!'

This interview was first published in the Socialist issue 1332, August 2025

Trade unionists: fight for your union to lead in forming a new working-class party



PHOTO: BIRMINGHAM SOCIALIST PARTY



DAVE NELLIST

Initiator of the petition 'Time for trade unions to take the lead in forming a new working class party', former MP (1983-92) - expelled by Labour for refusing to pay the Poll Tax, and chair of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition

Sharon Graham, general secretary of my own union Unite, said it, at a rally in support of striking Birmingham bin workers facing fire-and-rehire attacks from a Labour council: at this May's elections, "Labour will be decimated. And it's not hard to see why!"

The May 2025 local elections showed that, with Labour attacking the working class and continuing the squeeze on funding for our public services, Reform UK is becoming a significant beneficiary of working people's anger.

In response, 40 leading trade unionists - current and former elected members of trade union executives, presidents and general secretaries - came together as founding signatories for a petition, 'Time for trade unions to take the lead in forming a new working class party'. The existence of such a party would cut across the ability of Nigel Farage and Reform to pose as representing 'working people', when in fact their policies and rhetoric sow divisions among the working class, attempting to weaken our collective strength.

In July 2025, a Zoom meeting open to all the trade unionist signatories brought together over 1,000 union reps and activists - including Jeremy Corbyn and Zarah Sultana. No more than a few weeks later, 800,000 had

signed up to support their call for a new party.

Since the summer, groups of trade union activists from the respective unions have been meeting to discuss the specifics of how best to fight for the next concrete steps towards the working class having its own party, within the democratic structures of their own unions. In most cases, that has included raising motions to union conferences taking place this summer.

In Unite, for example, several regions have passed motions up to the Executive Council that the rules conference scheduled for 2027 be brought forward to this year, in order to be able to reassess the union's Labour Party affiliation. In Unison, changes to the law governing unions' political funds opens up the opportunity to debate at conference how that money can best be spent to fight in members' interests. And in CWU, a special discussion is tabled for the conference to discuss the union's relationship with the Labour Party.

Trade unions organise over 6.5 million workers in Britain - together, they are potentially the biggest organised force in society. A new party, formed by the trade unions, would help to organise that force to fight for the working class - for fully funded services, decent pay to keep pace with the rising cost of living, and an end to war.

That would sweep the rug from under Reform and give a real expression of united working-class strength to take the fight to the super-rich bosses.

If you are a trade unionist wanting to fight for a new party of the working class, get involved in campaigning as part of Trade Unionists for a New Party: linktr.ee/TU4NewParty



A new union-led party would sweep the rug from under Reform and give a real expression of united working-class strength

Get involved



PHOTO: SOUTHAMPTON SOCIALIST PARTY

Help get socialism on the ballot paper in May

Around 5,000 council seats are up for election on 7 May, including every seat in London. There are elections to the Scottish and Welsh parliaments too.

Help get socialists on screens

If a set of candidates for a party registered with the Electoral Commission exceeds a threshold of 840 candidates, it qualifies for 'fair media coverage'. That means the chance for a socialist electoral broadcast along with participation in regional debates and discussion shows on TV and radio, and national news coverage of a manifesto launch.

Which is why the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC), which the Socialist Party is part of, has put the call out for candidates to help achieve that threshold. TUSC

The first 200 candidates are ready to go... and you?

So far, just under 200 candidates have been approved by the TUSC steering committee. An appeal has been made to various other existing socialist organisations to step up to the plate too. But time is tight, the deadline for nominations paperwork to be submitted to local councils is 9 April.

If you are an anti-cuts fighter, a trade unionist, anti-war protester

Starmer's Labour. They also represent an important opportunity to get socialist ideas out there, and a chance to point in the direction for what the trade unions should be doing - forging a new party of the working class, one which can cut across the rise of Reform and the far right.

could be a banner which brings together those currently planning on standing anti-war, anti-cuts independents, various socialist groups, and Your Party activists. Candidates simply commit to the 'six TUSC guarantees', including opposing all cuts to council services and fighting all forms of oppression.

Without breaking through the media blackout, even the best local results risk being buried in the 'others' column while Reform and the Greens claim the 'alternative' narrative.

- and want to help get socialism onto the ballot paper and our screens in May - apply to join the TUSC stand: tusc.org.uk (The next opportunity to submit a candidate application to the TUSC steering committee is 28 March)

Read the report from the TUSC steering committee in full at tusc.org.uk

Greens must pledge no cuts to services!



PHOTO: NIKKI WEERAKOON

DEAN YOUNG
LIVERPOOL SOUTH SOCIALIST PARTY

Green Party leader Zack Polanski's first speech on his economic programme, given on the 18 March, declared that "we live in rip-off Britain". It tapped into the rightful anger millions of young and working-class people feel at an unfair system that enriches those at the top. While our lives have got harder, the number of billionaires in Britain has gone up from 15 in 1990 to 154 today.

He correctly attacked the austerity programmes of successive governments since the 2008 financial crash and the privatisation agenda which predates this. He pointed out that from 2010-20, 27.5% less funding in real terms had been given to local authorities across the country. The responsibility for decades of attacks on the working class lies on the heads of politicians from all the pro-capitalist parties, from Tories to New Labour.

In his speech he put forward policies that, in comparison, would be a shift of wealth towards working-class people. He proposed a wealth tax, rent controls, building council houses, insulating homes properly, nationalising the crumbling privately owned water companies, keeping and strengthening a windfall tax on energy companies, increasing capital gains tax to hit the rich and setting aside approximately £8.4 billion to prevent a rise of up to £300 per household for our energy bills.

There are over 800 Green councillors and 41 councils in which Greens take part in the leadership of. Many of these policies could be implemented now by a Green council. And after May's local elections, there are likely to be more Green councillors. Imagine the impact that Green councillors could have by making a stand and refusing to implement more austerity, use borrowing powers and reserves and build a mass movement to win the resources needed for the services



Imagine the impact that Green councillors could have by making a stand and refusing to implement more austerity

we deserve. This would include mass council house building programmes and repairs of existing housing to get rid of mould and damp. Green councils could use landlord registers and enforcement powers against exploitative landlords and private tenancies unsafe for their inhabitants.

This turn in direction now with Polanski as leader would be a welcome change from Green council administrations so far that have made cuts, leaving residents with worse services and higher council taxes. As in Brighton previously and now in Bristol, where last year the Green council enacted £50 million of service cuts and increased council tax just as previous Labour administrations did. (See 'What is the Greens record in office?' at socialistparty.org.uk)

Polanski could signal that he supports a bold, anti-austerity stance that aims to, as he said in his speech, "re-balance the scales" in favour of the working-class majority by instructing all Green councillors to vote against austerity. That's why we are backing a petition, launched by leading trade unionists, calling on Polanski to do just this. Both trade unionists and Green Party members have been signing. In Liverpool, the deputy leader of the Green councillor group signed it at the Liverpool Trade Union Council's 'People's Budget' conference.

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



Sign online

'Greens must pledge no cuts'

www.change.org/p/greens-must-pledge-no-cuts-to-services

An elected Executive member of the National Education Union argues for what trade unions should be doing

LOUISE CUFFARO
NATIONAL EDUCATION UNION EXECUTIVE MEMBER,
PERSONAL CAPACITY

Backed by all the trade unions and with a lot of funding from our own union, the 'Together' march should be an opportunity for trade union members, ordinary workers and their families, alongside community organisations and socialists, to demonstrate against austerity and racism. It should be a rallying cry for all of us to call for candidates in local (and future general) elections, and support those who are coming forward to stand, who pledge not to carry out any further austerity cuts, to actively campaign to return the NHS, education and social services from all forms of privatisation (including academisation, supply agencies, private SEND schools and so on) to the public sector.

We must fight Starmer's austerity through action, and we need to fight for our own political representatives – people who stand for workers, from the ranks of the trade unions and ordinary community organisations.

That is how trade unions stand together against austerity, wars and racism.

However, as the biggest education union, we are donating thousands to set up a new alliance called 'Together', along with individual celebrities and charitable organisations, marching in the name of 'Love, hope and unity', rather than demanding the TUC and all the unions take a lead.

'Homes, jobs and services, not racism!'

Our messaging, on banners and leaflets, flags and merchandise should be 'Homes, jobs and services, not racism!'

Posters, hoardings and press releases in the names of our unions and the TUC can explain that it is not migrants and asylum seekers, homeless people, or disabled people, that are underfunding our NHS, our education and social care systems. It is past Tory and Lib Dem governments and the current Labour government that enrich big business and more and more billionaires, by continuing to let them run our once-nationalised public utilities: transport, water, gas and electricity, many aspects of the NHS, education and 'social' housing.

It is important for empowering the ordinary workers and their families that we lead in our trade union names and put forward positive and clear political demands that answer the needs of all.

Trade unions can also help take security on counter-demonstrations seriously, with trade union stewarding. Many NEU and other trade union members have vast experience to share and train others. The unions which are funding and supporting demonstrations can organise and publicise that, which would be enormously reassuring when people have concerns about the far right and their demos. Maybe each union could

design day-glo jackets with the name of their union loud and proud, and slogans about racism!

This is not about 'hate and love', 'some people are nice and kind and others are not'. Especially at times of war and austerity, the bosses and those with power want to divide us so that those who are suffering blame each other instead of those who have the power and money!

It is about governments that support billionaires and big business, and wage war or support those that do, to the detriment of ordinary working-class people everywhere who are worried for the future, for themselves, their children and grandchildren.

It is about the main political parties that do nothing but prop up a world in which the rich get richer and the poor get poorer, and millions across the world suffer tyranny, war, poverty and starvation.



It is important for empowering the ordinary workers and their families that we lead in our trade union names and put forward positive and clear political demands that answer the needs of all

I have raised several times as an NEU Executive member that the vast amounts of money being donated by our union (£450,000 so far) should be under our control, as the elected leaders of our members.

Of course campaign organisations and famous individuals like Sir Lenny Henry and Paloma Faith should be there and are welcome alongside the trade unions, but the trade union movement should not be handing over our members' money and authority in exchange for only non-political messaging.

In the NEU we are balloting on teacher pay, funding and workload, to 'Save Education'. For most of our members this has not been clearly linked to the demo. We are in danger of not leading our members, or people more generally, and especially the young people that we teach.

The demo must uphold the traditions of the working class. We want our demands on the banners and posters; yes, music and speeches by famous people, but also ordinary trade union reps and community campaigners who stand for a fightback.

We want collective action with other unions, to inspire and lead politically in action, to win back jobs, homes, public services!



Louise addressing a picket line during a strike at Avenue School, Newham PHOTO: JAMES IVENS

nationalshop stewardsnetwork conference 2026

Saturday 27 June 11am-4.30pm

Workers fight back - 20th anniversary conference: 'We won't pay for the crisis!'

Conway Hall, 25 Red Lion Square, Holborn, London WC1R 4RL, £10 attendance fee
shopstewards.net - email us: info@shopstewards.net



Workers unity against the far right

The far right are again trying to whip up racist division by scapegoating refugees and migrants. The National Shop Stewards Network calls for the unions to play a leading role in opposing this offensive, which will only weaken our movement in the interests of the employers.

We call on the TUC to implement the policy passed at its 2018 Congress, to launch a campaign of 'Jobs and homes not racism.'

Being right is not enough – we need to organise!

NICK HALSALL

The working class is angry, and we have every reason to be. Wages are squeezed, housing is broken, public services are crumbling, and the rich still come out on top.

On the substance, the left is correct. It is right that wealth is created by workers and captured by capital. It is right that poverty, insecurity and social breakdown are not accidents, but the result of political and economic choices. It is right that the bosses use racism, nationalism and scapegoating to divide people who should be fighting together. It is right that ordinary people need collective organisation and political power of their own.

So why does the left keep losing? The answer is not that the working class has stopped caring about politics, nor is it that the right has somehow discovered solutions to the crises people face. The answer is that being correct is not enough. The left can tell the truth about society and still fail if it can't turn that truth into organisation, credibility and power.

That failure has many forms. Labour, the party founded to represent the working class, no longer acts for us. It speaks the language of 'restraint, stability and responsibility' far more fluently than it speaks the language of class, exploitation or struggle. It still wants working-class votes, but not working-class presence. It wants the support of unions,

but not the disruption that comes when workers actually fight.

That is why its relationship with parts of the workers' movement has become so strained. A party that keeps workers at arm's length when they are in struggle cannot seriously claim to represent us.

But Labour is only part of the story. The wider left has also failed, and that failure has been costly. Too many projects have been launched with big claims and weak roots. The working class looking for a serious political home do not see confidence in this.

The left often mistakes moral clarity for political strength. It assumes that exposing injustice and telling the truth is enough. But politics doesn't work like that. Our opponents are not defeated just because we have the better analysis. They are defeated when we build forces capable of challenging them in workplaces, communities, unions, campaigns and elections.

People need a political vehicle for their anger. If that anger is not organised around class, solidarity and collective struggle, it will be organised around resentment, nationalism and blame.

The populist right doesn't grow because it has answers for working-class people. It grows because it knows how to occupy the vacuum. It takes real grievances and redirects them away from bosses, landlords and the system itself, and towards migrants, refugees and anyone else



PHOTO: GARRY KNIGHT/CC

who can be turned into a scapegoat.

The Greens may appeal to some people alienated by Labour, and they may take better positions on climate, civil liberties and other important issues. But they are not a socialist answer rooted in working-class power. Their politics too often rest on moral appeal, and a broad progressive coalition that softens the central fact of class conflict. For socialists, that is not enough. What is needed is the politics of power, organised labour, class independence and confrontation with capitalists.

If the left wants to stop losing, it has to stop imagining that correctness will save it - it must build! That means organisation in workplaces and communities. It means unions that fight, and political structures that back them. It means a party that belongs to its base instead of managing it from above. It means class politics that can resist establishment pressure.

Being correct matters. But winning requires organisation. And without organisation, the vacuum will always be filled by those most willing to exploit anger, fear and despair.

The battle over Unite's direction has real political importance. The Executive Council elections will matter not just for the union itself, but for the wider left. They will help decide whether or not Unite continues along a path of greater militancy and conflict with Labour. For anyone serious about rebuilding the left on working-class lines, what happens inside Unite matters.

● Nick is branch secretary of Unite Hinkley Point C Construction Branch SW/8257, writing in a personal capacity

Bow bus drivers strike for first time in decades

PETE DICKENSON

TOWER HAMLETS SOCIALIST PARTY AND TOWER HAMLETS UNITE COMMUNITY

Drivers at the Bow bus garage in east London, members of Unite, have finished a solid four-day strike. According to the pickets, the nearly 500 workers at the garage are being made to work long shifts covering extremely busy routes through central London with insufficient breaks.

They told us they are driving up to 12-hour shifts. This is leading to high levels of fatigue, a danger to the drivers and the public.

The Stagecoach management have refused to act, leading to the first strike at the depot in decades, according to pickets. I have lived nearby for nearly 50 years and it is the first strike I can remember there, a sign of how high anger is against management.

The picket lines were very well supported throughout and the mood was militant. Support from local Socialist Party members was

received warmly.

Apart from the fatigue issue, drivers are complaining about the high-handed attitude of Stagecoach. They told us that the company has cancelled leave days at short notice and forced staff to take leave when they don't want to, for example in January.

A message of support from Sharon Graham, Unite general secretary was well received. There was also strong support for renationalisation of London buses. The drivers hoped that management would respond to the strike by making an offer, but are ready to take further action.



PHOTO: CHRIS NEWBY

SAMANTHA ERIN

TOWER HAMLETS SOCIALIST PARTY

I joined Unite strikers at the Bow bus garage picket line. Bus drivers made a strong stand against poor working conditions. Drivers told us about long shifts, in some instances seven days a week, with short breaks each

day of around 30 minutes if drivers are lucky. We also heard about recent surplus worker drivers are asked to do by their bosses with no extra pay.

We stand with the Bow bus garage workers for fair and humane working conditions with decent breaks and pay.

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:

● 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/

● Suzanne Muna - standing for re-election to the South West regional seat has been elected unopposed

● The election runs 23 March to 27 April





Cuba squeezed tighter under Trump blockade

SCOTT JONES

"I think I can do anything I want with it," said Donald Trump on 16 March. It being Cuba which, since the revolution in 1959, has resisted the efforts of a dozen other presidents to do just that, but Trump feels able to say so because of the perilous state of things on the island.

Localised power cuts are not rare in Cuba, with its ageing electricity infrastructure, and they have increased since the Covid-19 pandemic which hit the economy, and the tourist industry it has become reliant upon, hard. But to have not one but two national blackouts in just the space of a week recently – three in the space of a month – is unprecedented.

Events are moving at double speed and are worse than even the 'special period' endured in the 1990s following the collapse of the Soviet bloc and its economic and material support.

The current crisis has been sparked by the removal from power by the US of Venezuela president Nicolás Maduro on 3 January. Long-time ally Venezuela had been supplying Cuba with around 35,000 barrels of oil a day, which stopped the same day.

The existing decades-old US blockade of Cuba, ramped up by Trump, is making it difficult for Cuba to replace all that fuel, as shown by

total collapses of the national grid, plunging all 10 million Cubans into complete darkness, even Havana's famous streets and the Malecón waterfront.

Russia has promised some fuel, the 'Nuestra America' convoy, a flotilla of aid leaving Mexico, is expected to arrive soon and a group of left-wing activists and international organisations have arrived in Cuba bringing some basic supplies and solidarity.

35,000 barrels of oil a day which Cuba received from Venezuela ended with the kidnapping of Nicolás Maduro

But these will not be enough, and the prospect of 'talks' and 'deals' between Cuba and the US has been raised, possibly involving Raúl Rodríguez Castro, the grandson of former president and brother of Fidel, Raúl Castro.

These talks could follow a similar path to the limited thawing and agreement that took place between Castro senior and Barack Obama during his

presidency but given Trump's rhetoric and his 'Donroe' doctrine foreign policy of seeking dominance in the Americas, it seems clear that a completion of the capitalist counter-revolution in Cuba is the likely aim.

Cuba has survived crises before and resisted the laws of gravity in many ways since the early 1990s to survive as a planned economy and deformed workers' state, continuing as a reference point for those looking for an alternative to capitalism. As the current crisis worsens, a restless mood among the Cuban people is developing, with more discontent being shown on the streets.

We defend the Cuban revolution and its gains, and the struggle for democratic rights by the working class, poor and youth in Cuba is crucial. A full debate involving the working class and mass of the population to create an emergency economic plan to deal with the crisis is urgent.

Limited 'workers' parliaments' were convened in the 1990s, which should be repeated and go much further to oppose and build an alternative to the increasing threat of capitalist restoration, and to fight for genuine workers' democracy and a socialist planned economy in Cuba which is more urgent than ever.

This movement, defending the gains and winning new ones, fighting alongside the working class and youth who are increasingly moving into action all over the world, could build a real socialist alternative to capitalism, its wars, poverty and chaos. And this movement, taking inspiration from the Cuban revolution, while learning its lessons, can win.

● **Read more: 'Cuban protests – what do they represent?' and 'Cuban revolution at 60: defend the gains and fight for workers' democracy' at socialistparty.org.uk**
 ● **Buy Cuba: Socialism & Democracy by Peter Taaffe, £8 and Che Guevara – Symbol of Struggle by Tony Saunois, £4 available at Left Books – the bookshop of the Socialist Party. Visit leftbooks.co.uk**

PHOTO: JORGE ROYAN/CC



War on Iran escalates, with global consequences



An American destroyer firing a Tomahawk missile as part of Operation Epic Fury PHOTO: PUBLIC DOMAIN

Trump's 48-hour deadline for Iran to re-open the Strait of Hormuz was scheduled to expire at 00:00 GMT on 24 March. Hours before, Trump postponed the deadline by five days citing negotiations. Minutes after that, Iranian regime spokespeople denied any talks had taken place. This analysis of events by secretary of the Committee Workers' International, **Tony Saunois**, was first published 19 March 2026 at socialistworld.net

The war launched by the Donald Trump and Benjamin Netanyahu axis has plunged the world into its deepest state of turmoil since the 1973 oil crisis. It is a war aimed at recalibrating the relations in the Middle East in Israel's favour, and also in the broader economic and geo-strategic interests of US imperialism.

Following the genocidal war against the Palestinian people and the slaughter in Gaza and the West Bank, the renewed war on Iran has unleashed further horrors on the peoples of the Middle East, particularly in Iran and Lebanon. One million people have been displaced in Lebanon and about three million in Iran, with thousands slaughtered. The Israeli regime, when ordering evacuation notices in some Lebanese areas, made clear that Christians could remain and that Muslims must flee, reflecting its approach.

Iran has suffered a 'shock and awe' apocalyptic bombardment more than three times the size that was unleashed on Iraq in 2003. Israel has invaded southern Lebanon and has

occupied 10% of the country - part of Netanyahu's objective of establishing a 'Greater Israel'. This is in line with the openly stated objective of his party, Likud, to establish "between the Sea and the Jordan" river only "Israeli sovereignty".

The Gulf states, ruled by feudal dictators, developed as the 'safe haven' for the global elites in recent decades. But this has been greatly destabilised by the war. Bahrain could be threatened with a massive crisis, and other Gulf states further destabilised. This can result in protests and movements breaking out. Protests already took place in Bahrain immediately after this war started, resulting in the regime banning all protests and widespread arrests. Significantly, Saudi forces were sent into Bahrain to repress the movement of its sizable Shia population.

Global energy supplies have been thrown into 'crisis management', especially with the closure of the Strait of Hormuz. This threatens to have devastating consequences on the Asian and world economy, probably tipping it into recession should the war continue, as seems likely. It has allowed Vladimir Putin to cash in from the rising price of oil and gas, which has allowed him to bolster the Russian economy and his war machine. Putin's position on the battlefield is also strengthened, as the US is militarily focused on the Middle East. Nor is Trump engaged in forcing Ukraine-Russia negotiations, according to Ukraine's leader, Volodymyr Zelensky.

Geopolitical relations have exploded into even more intense conflicts and clashes. The clash between European capitalist powers and the US has also been sharpened and become more polarised. China is emerging further strengthened globally. US imperialism is currently being increasingly isolated and weakened due to the war. Political crisis and polarisation has deepened, especially in the US, where the Trump regime is now in crisis.

Geopolitical relations have exploded into even more intense conflicts and

of Iranian leaders, at regional and local level, are often more determined and driven ideologically, making the conflict even more unstable. The assassination of leaders of Hamas and Hezbollah by Israel in the past has not destroyed those organisations. Israel is attempting to seize control of everything south of the Litani river and has destroyed the bridges crossing it.

Three weeks into the war have revealed the limitations of US imperialism's power, including its military strength. Symbolically, the US aircraft carrier sent to Iran, USS General Ford, has been temporarily withdrawn to Greece following a fire and failure of the onboard sewage system!

Firepower alone is not enough to effect regime change. As the German Field Marshal, Helmuth von Moltke, put it in 1870: "No plan survives the first encounter with the enemy", a lesson Trump and Netanyahu are learning the hard way. The price for their actions, however, is being paid for by the masses of the Middle East. Incredibly, according to the news reports, when the danger of the Strait of Hormuz being closed by Iran was raised by Trump's advisers, he dismissed it, saying the military would have to deal with the problem. Yet, as is now crystal clear, this is not so easy. Trump's appeal for Nato forces to escort tankers through the narrow Strait have not been taken up by any western capitalist power. The French retired three-star general, Michel Yakovlev, described joining in a military operation in the Iran war as like buying a reduced ticket to board the Titanic after it had already hit the iceberg.

Now the war has escalated further,

with Israeli attacks on the Iranian South Pars gas field which it shares with Qatar. In response, Iran has hit the largest liquified natural gas facility in Qatar. According to commentators this has resulted in serious damage that will take months to repair. These events have sent global gas and oil prices soaring. It will trigger an upturn in inflation in most countries. This follows US attacks on military installations on the crucial Iranian Kharg Island. Trump has thus far avoided attacking the oil refinery itself. Yet his regime is looking at trying to take control of it and has mobilised more troops to go to the area.

Boots on the ground?

The failure of Trump's attack to thus far bring about the desired result may drive him to put some boots on the ground in special operations to try and seize the Kharg Island oil refinery. The same goes for Iranian uranium. Such operations are fraught with massive difficulties. Yet the increasingly crazed Trump regime could attempt such interventions. Once on the ground, further clashes or interventions could not be excluded. Trump cannot simply withdraw and leave with his prestige and that of US imperialism intact.

The problems encountered by such operations are illustrated in Southern Lebanon where Israeli troops are involved in armed clashes with Hezbollah forces. Weeks of intense bombardments by Israel have not dislodged Hezbollah fighters in Al-Khiyam and elsewhere. Israel has amassed four brigades and columns of tanks ahead of an expanded ground invasion of Lebanon.

The adventure launched by Trump and Netanyahu in attacking Iran has massively deepened the polarisation in the US and driven home a crisis for Trump. The resignation of Trump's top security adviser, Joe Kent, the Director of the National Counter-Terrorism Center, over the Iran war illustrated the cracks and divisions that are opening within the Trump regime. Kent is an extreme right-winger, with an antisemitic record. Yet together with leading MAGA supporters, like Tucker Carlson, he opposes Trump's war on Iran.

Trump won the US presidential election promising an end to US foreign wars. Unleashing the war on Iran has undermined sections of Trump's domestic support. There is overwhelming opposition to the war. For the first time, US imperialism has embarked on a war when a majority of the population oppose it from the start. Trump is threatened with significant losses in the US mid-term elections in November.

The Trump regime has increasingly adopted Bonapartist methods. He is concentrating more and more power into the presidency. The president has signed off 225 executive orders in his first 14 months in office and Congress has passed only 49 new laws. This compares with Biden signing 162 and Obama 276 - during the full term of their presidencies. Other measures introduced by Trump and Republican-run states amount to an attack on democratic rights and gerrymandering. The 'Varieties of Democracy Institute', based at Gothenburg University, has concluded that the US has a "most severe magnitude of democratic backsliding". It argues that the US is moving faster to "autocracy than Hungary or Türkiye".

Previous checks and balances have

been weakened or in some cases marginalised. Fearing the mid-terms in November, Trump even threw out the idea of "cancelling the elections", which he later dismissed as a joke. Yet it reveals his mentality. Trump cannot cancel the elections legally but may attempt something 'illegally'. He has already raised the idea of 'nationalising' the election process, meaning the federal government takes control. In some areas of the US, counting machines have already been taken for 'examination'. The ground is being prepared by the regime to disrupt, destabilise or challenge the results. Deployment of ICE and other forces to voting stations to intimidate voters is also being discussed.

This does not mean that Trump's regime will get away with all of this. The mass movement that erupted in Minneapolis against the deployment of ICE illustrated the conflicts that can erupt. However, it means a serious political and social battleground is opening up in the US in 2026. The Iran war has greatly intensified this.

Should the crisis from the Iran war dramatically worsen, the turmoil unfolding in the US and divisions opening up in the Republicans and MAGA mean that at a certain stage attempts to remove Trump could be made. This could involve an impeachment attempt or invoking the 25th Amendment. This requires the vice president and a majority of the cabinet to declare the president unable to discharge his powers and duties. This seems unlikely at present but such a development could not be excluded at some point, especially with a worsening of the global crisis flowing from the Iran war.

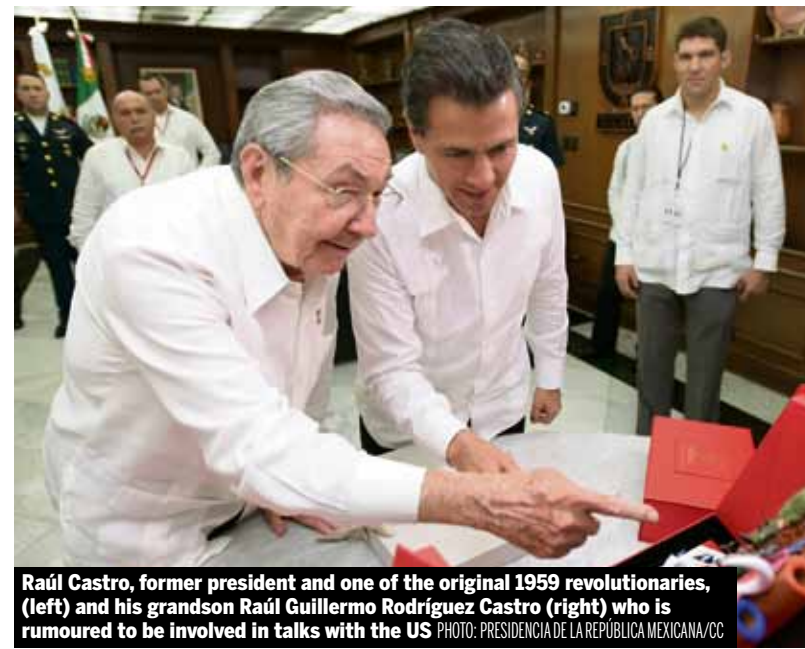
How the war against Iran will unfold is uncertain. However, it is certain that the Middle East will be less stable and further conflicts and upheavals will take place. This latest war reflects the new age that capitalism is now in. It is an era of increased imperialist rivalries and wars. The need for a democratic socialist alternative social system is the only road that can end the nightmare for the masses. The challenge is to build a movement that can realise this goal.

Unite against terror, racism and war

With escalating imperialist aggression comes the increased threat of terrorist attacks. The antisemitic arson attack on Jewish charity ambulances in North London is a horrific example.

The Socialist Party completely opposes all forms of individual terrorism, above all that which targets ordinary people. The North London arson attack and other similar attacks do nothing to advance the struggles against war, imperialist aggression or for national self-determination - instead they assist the ruling capitalist class fostering divisions between sections of the working class. They are also used to justify further state repression against protesters, including against the workers' movement.

● **Read more 'After synagogue attack: Build mass working-class movement against war and terror' from October 2025 at socialistparty.org.uk**



Raúl Castro, former president and one of the original 1959 revolutionaries, (left) and his grandson Raúl Guillermo Rodríguez Castro (right) who is rumoured to be involved in talks with the US PHOTO: PRESIDENCIA DE LA REPUBLICA MEXICANA/CC

TUC young workers conference – more militant than its leaders

JOHN WILLIAMS
DELEGATE FROM UNITE WALES YOUNG MEMBERS
COMMITTEE

As a first-time delegate, it was great to see other first-timers and many young people who were active in union branches and trades councils, including taking leading positions, attending this TUC (Trades Union Congress) young workers' conference. It was reported that there were nearly 200 people in attendance - the biggest ever!

The chair's opening comments laid bare the worries of young people today, which hit home to all attendees. How young people are losing faith in the future, and feeling there's nothing they can do about it. The under-organising in industries like hospitality. The threat of Reform and the far right. "Conditions are as bad as they ever have been."

Employment rights

Both the TUC President and Assistant General Secretary stated their view that the Employment Rights Act, though not perfect, is a transformative piece of legislation. They failed to make the points that I did in my speech later on - that the Tory anti-union 50% turnout threshold for strike ballots is still in place 20 months into Starmer's government, despite promises to repeal it. The promised bans of fire and rehire and zero-hour contracts have been scrapped.

It was astounding that they didn't talk once about any of the attacks the Labour government has inflicted or tried to inflict on the working class over the past two years. Both warned about the threat of Reform UK but, listening to their speeches, you wouldn't get the impression that Starmer's austerity policies are rolling out the red carpet for them.

There were many good motions, such as one on "Tax justice for young workers". I spoke on this and highlighted the austerity over the past 16 years that has taken away from young workers' living standards. The refusal of UK governments to nationalise industries like Tata steel, allowing 2,000 jobs to go, or energy. The Labour government is considering scrapping equalising the minimum

wage. I argued to tax the rich and for nationalisation; for full funding of public services. "For that we need a workers' government, fighting for a socialist society."

Birmingham bins

I used the opportunity to support the Birmingham bin workers, and said it wasn't a coincidence that it was a young worker who moved the emergency motion at last year's Unite the Union policy conference to debate its relationship with Labour, in response to the Labour council's brutal pay cuts and strike-breaking efforts.

Other motions discussed the scandal of outsourcing, which has increased under this Labour government, protecting migrant workers from racist policies, and raising

awareness of neurodivergent workers. The motion that will be sent to the TUC from the young workers conference will be on the housing crisis affecting young workers, demanding the Labour government does things like re-introduce rent controls.

What was clear was a real militancy from young workers who were not afraid to criticise the Labour government. The overall mood of the conference that young workers have to organise and re-energise the trade union movement - put pressure on the leaders, and fight to be leaders ourselves!

• John Williams is standing for election to the Unite Executive Council for the LGBT seat - page 7



Above: John speaking at conference
Left: Campaigning to organise in hospitality
PHOTOS: SOCIALIST PARTY



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Kings College London Unison strike against bosses who 'don't lobby for more funding'

AYSHA
UNISON MEMBER

Unison members at King's College London voted by 89% to strike. The first two days of strike action took place on 10-11 March, and a further two days on 25-26 March.

The annual pay award for higher education institutions is negotiated with UCEA (the University and Colleges Employers Association), which stated in 2025 that the pay award of 1.4% was to 'work towards a resolution in ... a struggling sector'.

The crisis in higher education has manifested faster and more aggressively than university bosses had anticipated, and the subsequent scramble that we are now seeing has the largest impact on the institutions' workers and fee-paying students.

The announcement that Edinburgh University (ranked fifth in the UK) would be making over £140 million in cuts, resulting in up to 1,800 job losses, sent shockwaves across the sector, that a major Russell Group institution could be in such financial crisis.

In September 2025, the announcement of Greenwich and Kent University merging to form a 'super-university' was marketed as a success but is a clear indicator of Kent floundering, and will undoubtedly result in significant losses of jobs and student provision.

King's College London has just completed its new strategy development process, which recognises its dependence on international students to prop up its finances, and plans to improve 'efficiency' through reducing non-academic costs.

This will have the largest impact on professional services staff, but no communication suggested that this would mean real-terms reductions in pay.

King's leaders have accepted UCEA's 1.4% pay award across all grades, while inflation - before the Middle East war - sat at 3%, despite their own recognition of their significantly more favourable financial position. It shows their understanding of their economic vulnerability, and a willingness to let the staff pay for it, while doing nothing to lobby or pressure for more funding from the government.

The atmosphere on the picket line was hugely positive, with workers from all sections of the university turning out to support one another. King's employs a significant number of BAME staff, almost 30%, who are massively overrepresented at the lowest grades which will be most impacted by this pay award.

There was large representation from cleaning and security staff on the picket line. Security staff have been campaigning to have stools and



seating returned to them, after King's leadership made the decision to remove seating for staff who often work 12-hour shifts, in favour of what they deemed to be a more 'professional' appearance!

And the same can be said for the pay award - sneaking through a pay cut wrapped up in the suspiciously horse-shaped packaging of a 'pay-award' will only lose King's the support of its staff, who are essential for the delivery of services to our students.

Fighting these changes now gives us the confidence to fight against any and all changes that King's leaders hope to implement under the guise of 'efficiency', sacrificing staff while never making a sacrifice of their own, despite earning up to 16 times that of their employees.

Get all the latest union news

with the NSSN bulletin shopstewards.net

NEU conference meets at critical time

SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBERS IN NEU

NEU conference meets as we face a huge crisis in education. 20 months into Keir Starmer's Labour government, austerity in education is continuing, and trade union rights are still not restored.

Socialist Party members at NEU conference will be saying: We need national action, and a new political voice - a party based on the working class with socialist policies!

National action

All members of the NEU, both teachers and support staff, are voting in a national indicative ballot on funding, workload and pay. Labour is pushing for a 6.5% teacher 'pay-rise' over three years and without additional funding.

Not only will this likely result in real-terms pay cuts, but will put intolerable strain on school budgets already cut to the bone. Redundancies are inevitable, with support staff likely to take the brunt.

A strong turnout in the indicative ballot is essential, but it has to be the first step. Education workers have had enough. We need a united nationwide campaign by teachers and support staff to challenge austerity in education.

Fight for funding – including for SEND

After more than a decade of austerity, schools are forced to deliver more with diminishing resources. Schools face a £600 million funding gap. A recruitment and retention emergency compounds the stress on an already exhausted workforce.

There is an increased reliance on private for-profit supply agencies, which drain over £1 billion from the system annually. SEND is in crisis, with increasing reliance on private provision.

What we need is a fully funded, community education system that puts workers and students before profit. Our union must lead the fight! The TUC agreed in September to call a national demo against Labour austerity - the NEU must fight for the date to be set.

End privatisation and academisation

The Labour government's white paper confirmed an ambition for every school to be part of an academy trust. Instead of reversing the fragmentation and privatisation pushed by previous governments, Starmer's government is set to deepen it.

Academies remove schools from local democratic control and place them under unelected multi-academy trust boards, able to 'top-slice' school budgets, taking money centrally while staff and students face cuts. Education workers have repeatedly been forced to fight back.

The NEU opposes academisation, but must make returning schools to democratic local authority control a central national campaign. This has to go alongside a campaign to properly fund local councils.

Support staff – we need maximum unity

At the end of February, hundreds of

NEU members gathered at a special conference and voted to begin recruiting unorganised support staff (see 'NEU support staff: Campaign for unity between unions, not division' at socialistparty.org.uk).

Currently two-thirds of support staff in schools do not belong to any union. Socialist Party education workers argue to work with the other main support staff unions - on the ground in our schools, our local trades councils, and with the elected national executives of each union getting together to organise a fight for the thousands of unrepresented support staff.

Supply

The NEU's 'agency rip-off' campaign outlines the way private agencies are fleecing schools. The pressure on the government has resulted in a new overseeing body that will cap agency fees and force schools to choose the cheapest option - but when agencies want to keep their profits high, this will lead to further degradation of pay and pension access.

We need a strong fightback linking supply staff with contracted staff. We also have to put pressure on local councils to bring supply back in-house.

Trade unions must lead against racism, war and austerity

By the time we get to the conference, many NEU members will have marched on the 'Together' demonstration. Socialist Party members will continue to argue that the trade unions should lead a fight against austerity and racist division, not just to mobilise big numbers - which is important - but to unite workers from all backgrounds to fight together. The TUC agreed back in 2018 to campaign for 'Jobs, homes and services, not racism' - it needs to get on with the job.

We need to take the lead in building a political voice that genuinely stands up for workers, to undercut support for Reform with socialist policies. That is important because in the May elections 'Together' will want NEU donations to produce leaflets that call on people not to vote Reform.

But who should people vote for?

The NEU should support those, like the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) candidates, who pledge not to make cuts, and to campaign to end privatisation. And NEU must urgently discuss with other unions how we can build a genuine anti-austerity, anti-war, anti-racist political alternative with socialist policies.

Join our fringe meeting!

12.45, Tuesday 31 March
Churchill Suite, DoubleTree by Hilton Brighton Metropole, Kings Road, BN1 2FU. Close by the conference venue

Hear from:

- Sheila Caffrey, Exec member
- Rob Williams, Socialist Party trade union organiser

Hot food provided - donations welcome



Above: Access Creative College
Below: Brick Lane School
PHOTOS: HUGO PIERRE



Access Creative College strikers win

HUGO PIERRE
TOWER HAMLETS SOCIALIST PARTY

National Education Union (NEU) members at Access Creative College in Tower Hamlets have taken 13 days of strike action since January, against poor pay, excessive workload and working conditions. There were also big problems with safeguarding for staff and students.

As an independent college, staff often feel that their main job is to encourage students to join and then to make sure they stay - they can feel more like sales reps than responsible for teaching and students' learning.

The course offer is mainly creative, but many students come with low levels of maths and English and need to increase their grades. The NEU reps explained that the college put a heavy workload on those teaching maths, timetabling them to do 28 hours face-to-face teaching and sometimes nine-hour days. There were also inexplicable variations in pay between staff with the same workload and experience, sometimes of thousands of pounds a year.

To start with there were only a couple of NEU members, but they quickly went from three to 30. There were so many problems, with no bargaining structure at all, and coming together was the best way to find solutions.

When negotiations broke down they asked the NEU for a strike ballot. Their main demands were for a pay structure that mirrored teaching scales in a state sixth form, proper holiday entitlements, a workload agreement, health and safety, pensions, and union recognition.

The action was really cohesive even though most had never been on strike before. They got organised quickly. The NEU strike pay also kept everyone together, as well as support from the branch and local activists. Going into the last round of negotiations they also issued notice for a further round of action.

The strike won most of the aims, including a substantial pay rise for many with a proper pay structure, increased holiday pay, a limit on the number of face-to-face teaching hours, and a proper structure for discussing health and safety. This was enough to settle the dispute. The issue of union recognition was not won this time but they are hoping this will be achieved - as they said, in many ways this is just the start!

Brick Lane Independent Special School strike

TOWER HAMLETS SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBERS

Teachers and support staff at Brick Lane Independent Special School began a five-day strike on 18 March.

The private equity-owned school faces criticism for reportedly moving profits offshore. Staff say long talks with the National Education Union (NEU) have not yet delivered fair pay, better sick policy or union recognition.

Support staff report working an extra hour each day compared with those at the borough's state special schools, yet still earn below the London living wage. They also have short break times and take on extra duties, including writing student reports, behaviour reports, safeguarding concerns, delivering clinical structured and unstructured group or 1:1 activities, dealing directly with parents and carers, and sometimes taking part in legally required annual reviews for children with Education, Health, and Care Plans (EHCPs).

According to NEU rep Maria, staff are paid for only 39 working weeks plus five weeks of statutory holiday, even though most cannot secure other work during school breaks. Spread across the year, their pay falls short of the national living level, despite working in central London, with no extra allowance for all the extra SEN responsibilities.

The picket line on the first morning was lively and determined. One teacher shared that even experienced colleagues earn less than the rate for Inner London schools, with no extra SEN allowance or travel support. She said that after covering monthly costs and transport, enjoying simple things like a holiday or a day out has become nearly impossible.

Strikers drew strength from the recent victory at Access Creative College.

JOIN THE SOCIALISTS

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

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



15,000 people say end Coventry hospital 'tax on the sick'

● Scrap hospital parking charges

COVENTRY SOCIALIST PARTY PRESS RELEASE

Coventry Socialist Party is handing over a massive petition to the Labour council and NHS board. The Coventry Socialist Party petition to end parking charges at University Hospital Coventry and Warwickshire has passed 15,000 signatures, as car park profits soar to £9.7 million.

Adam Harnsworth, the petition's organiser, said: "These signatures have mainly been collected by the Socialist Party campaigning almost every week across the city. Petition sheets have been taken into local workplaces to collect signatures, including hospital wards. We also gained 760 signatures for change.org."

On 24 March, we presented our petition to a full meeting of the city council, calling on councillors to support the campaign, and use their position to demand change.

It was handed in by Your Party councillor Grace Lewis. She spoke in favour in the council chamber.



And on 2 April, at 9am, we will present our petition to the next hospital board meeting. Coventry Socialist Party has been

campaigning for years to end the parking charges at the hospital. The car park is run by ISS Facilities, under a privatised PFI contract.

The overhead costs of running the car park were just £425,582. But ISS made £9.7 million profit on top. Adam added: "We have spoken

to thousands of people who are disgusted with the parking charges at our hospital. We have met patients and visitors who have struggled with the costs, including relatives of terminally ill patients, who have been forced to cut short the time they have left with their loved ones.

"We have met staff who struggle with the costs, especially combined with their low wages. Some told us they quit working at the hospital because it was cheaper to take a pay cut and work elsewhere."

Staff without a pass, working just three shifts a week, would pay £2,106 every year. A staff pass costs £684 a year, still a horrendous price to pay at your own workplace.

There is no excuse to make profit from a hospital car park, especially in a cost-of-living crisis. We, and the 15,000 who have signed our petition, demand the PFI contract is ended, and the hospital car park is made free of charge. This is the case already in most of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

We encourage the hospital trade unions to note the public support for this demand and take it up as part of their industrial campaigns. A combative approach by the unions could force an end to the PFI contract and to the charges at the hospital car park.

Croydon trade unionists tell Greens and Labour - 'we can fight cuts'



Privatised leisure centre workers in Croydon striking against pay cuts when Labour ran the council. MARK THOMAS

BERKAY KARTAV SOUTH LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

Croydon Council has issued Section 114 notices three times since 2020, prohibiting anything other than essential expenditure. Like many other councils, it is in financial crisis.

The hustings organised by the local trade union council was an opportunity to question Croydon mayoral election candidates about their stance on cuts, and how they will oppose them.

Council tax hike

Labour's Rowenna Davis was aware of her party's unpopularity, and tried to distance herself from the national Labour Party, saying: "Starmar is not on the ballot paper". She didn't talk about the previous Croydon Labour council that made cuts, or explain why the Labour group abstained on Tory proposals to hike council tax by 15% in 2023.

Green councillor Peter Underwood is also standing for mayor. None of the candidates addressed the elephant in the room - how will they stop the cuts?

Socialist Party member Deji Olayinka was one of the first to ask a question. He said: "We've had a 33% tax hike since 2023. Every council

service has faced cuts, job losses, and austerity. But Zack Polanski has said he's against austerity.

"The mayor and councillors could fight back, setting needs-based, no-cuts budgets. That stand, alongside a protest movement - like the Militant-led Liverpool council ran in the 1980's - could get the funding Croydon needs to cancel the debt and end austerity.

"Here's my question. Last week, Ben Goldstone emailed Pete Underwood, and other Green candidates, asking you to sign a petition, publicly promising to vote against cuts to services and jobs, and to not increase our council taxes.

"You didn't sign it. Will you now sign this petition?" Unfortunately, Pete said he won't sign the petition. He said he can't pledge not making cuts or not increasing council tax, as he is legally tied. This is not true.

Pete said it was an unfair system, and the government has underfunded councils. But that is precisely the reason the audience was asking if Croydon Greens, alongside others, will take the fight to central government, by setting no-cuts, needs-based budgets, and demanding the money from the Labour government.

Underwood also said councils

should work together. But the petition he refused to sign also called on Polanski to instruct all Green Party councillors to make the same commitment, including in the 40-plus local authorities where Greens are part of the council administration.

Both the Labour and Green candidates said they are members of a trade union. Ben Goldstone, a delegate to Croydon Trades Union Council from Unite, reminded both that campaigning for a no-cuts budget is the union policy of Unite, Unison, and GMB.

What is there for young people?

Khamisi Green, a young worker and Socialist Party member, spoke about devastating cuts to youth services, and lack of opportunities for young people in the borough.

With the existing candidates saying they will pass on austerity in Croydon, and refusing to fight the Labour government, then we are working alongside other trade unionists and socialists in the borough to put forward a fighting alternative to win the money and resources our communities need. So Socialist Party member Ben Goldstone is standing as the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) candidate for Croydon mayor.

● Help get socialism on the ballot paper in May by standing as a TUSC candidate



Obituary - Don Thomas's stand inspired many



NICK CHAFFEY SOUTHAMPTON SOCIALIST PARTY

We are sad to hear the news that Don Thomas has passed away. Don joined the Socialist Party's predecessor Militant in the 1980s, and later the Socialist Party when, alongside Keith Morrell, he refused to vote for Southampton Labour council's cuts budget in 2012.

Labour's cuts included plans to close Oaklands Swimming Pool in Don's Cxford ward. With the support of Unite and Unison council worker union branches, Labour's proposed closure was defeated, the pool was refurbished, and remains open to this day.

In 2013, Don and Keith presented a legal, balanced, no-cuts budget to the Southampton Council budget meeting, demonstrating that the proposed strategy of using council reserves and borrowing powers to defend jobs and services by the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) met the legal requirements to be included in the official budget papers.

Labour councillors didn't agree, and voted to remove it from the budget meeting, to the uproar of council workers, and Don and Keith's supporters in the public gallery.

Voters in Cxford, however, didn't back Labour. They voted to return Keith, then Don, to the council as

anti-cuts councillors in 2014 and 2015. Don's daughter Tammy was then elected as the third anti-cuts councillor for Cxford in 2016.

The stand that Don and Keith took inspired many locally, and others around the country, who backed the fight against brutal Tory austerity being carried out by Labour councils.

Don's stand will remain as a legacy to his courage and determination to defend the interests of working-class people, and stand by his socialist principles, and the huge popular response their stand gained.

We send our condolences to Tammy, all Don's family, and his great friend and comrade Keith.

● Sheffield students protest against war on Iran

Socialist Students Sheffield organised a demonstration against Trump and Netanyahu's bombings and imperialist escalation in the Middle East. This is the first demo we've

organised. From this, we got the contact details of several people interested in Socialist Students.

Our campaign started following our International Women's Day discussion, which focused on the 'Women, Life, Freedom' movement in Iran, following the brutal murder of Mahsa Amini by the regime's 'morality police' in 2022.

We promoted our event on social media, had a dedicated leafletting

session, as well as attending another student-led demo on campus. We held the protest at the lunchtime rush outside our student union building.

This protest reached different students compared to our previous campaigning. We're organising more events and campaigns to grow our presence on campus.

TILDE RESARE SHEFFIELD SOCIALIST STUDENTS

York students protest against sexual harassment



Anna from York St John Socialist Students on the protest against sexual harassment, with Socialist Party/Socialist Students supporters

YORK SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBERS

Students at York St John's University protested against sexual harassment, after a number of recent incidents in the student union bar.

As indicated by a number of students who spoke, these incidents are but the tip of the iceberg. To loud chants of "shame", students spoke of even worse incidents of sexual harassment and rape on campus, where they have felt let down by the university and its provision of student support.

As several speakers said: "We're paying almost £10,000 a year to be subjected to this". Socialist Party member and York St

John student Anna spoke to the protest, raising a number of measures that could improve campus safety, including improved lighting, increasing funding to student support, and more.

And key to implementing that would be ending the marketisation of universities. That means they are starved of funding, as well as ensuring that such measures are under the democratic control of elected representatives of students and campus trade unions.

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



Young trade unionists and socialists saying 'no cuts' to the Labour council. LIVERPOOL SOCIALIST PARTY

Liverpool unions pressure Green and Your Party councillors to oppose cuts

BECCA BAYMAN AND DEAN YOUNG LIVERPOOL SOCIALIST PARTY

Liverpool Labour council has voted to cut £57 million from public services, including £20 million adult social care cuts.

Liverpool Socialist Party played a key role helping organise the trade union council's 'People's Budget' conference on 21 February. At this, dozens of delegates from trade union branches and community organisations unanimously voted for an alternative budget, proposing:

- 5,000 council house building programme
- Opposing 5% council tax hike
- Reversing all cuts

A delegate from a Unite the Union construction branch, Larry Bowles, said it was inspiring that so many young delegates led on the 'People's Budget' proposals.

Lobbying Labour council

40 young trade unionists and socialists lobbied the town hall on budget day, 3 March. Socialist Party member Conor O'Neill spoke about youth unemployment and precarious working. A local anti-cuts activist talked about the campaign to save a local library.

Dave Walsh, Liverpool Trades Union Council president, pointed to the example of the Liverpool councillors in the 1980s, who led the campaign that beat Margaret Thatcher's Tory government cuts. Green councillor Martyn Madeley and Your Party councillor Alan Gibbons also spoke.

During our February 'People's Budget' meeting, both councillors had said they supported the proposals. Martyn from the Greens signed the trade unionist petition, which calls on Zack Polanski to ensure that Green Party candidates will only appear on the ballot if they publicly commit to voting against all cuts.

Martyn voted for our 'People's

Budget' at the meeting, after we answered his concern about unelected council officers opposing our anti-cuts proposals. Alan from Your Party agreed to present our alternative budget to the council.

However, after the meeting, both wrote to say that they would not be supporting the 'People's Budget'. When it came to the budget day lobby, both praised the 'People's Budget'. A Socialist Party member chairing the anti-cuts rally asked the Green's Martyn to vote against Labour's austerity budget, proposing:

In the council chamber, only Your Party and Greens voted against Labour's budget. The Greens have previously only abstained.

The Greens voted for the Your Party amendment to save a local library. But it was a mistake for two of the Your Party councillors to not use their right of reply, after an hour of slander by Labour councillors. The other Your Party councillor, Alan Gibbons, was undemocratically denied the right to speak in reply.

What's our alternative?

In the council, the Liberal Democrats attacked Labour, without putting forward an alternative. This shows the importance of us having a concrete alternative. It was a mistake that none of the Your Party or Green councillors presented our alternative 'People's Budget'.

Unelected council officers might not see our People's Budget as 'credible'. However, the working-class would get behind our proposals.

Moreover, proposing a 'People's Budget' in the council chamber, would put Labour councillors on the spot ahead of next year's all-out council elections - forcing them to publicly vote for or against building 5,000 council homes.

This is not the end of the People's Budget campaign. We will keep opposing the cuts. And we've set foundations for the 2027 local elections.

For democratic control of social media – nationalise!

TOM BALDWIN
SOCIALIST PARTY NATIONAL COMMITTEE

Social media use among young people has been under the spotlight recently. Last year, Australia became the first country to ban its use by under-16s. This month, MPs rejected bringing the same policy to Britain but did vote to give government ministers the power to implement wide-ranging restrictions, without reference back to parliament.

A recent poll showed that as many as four in five adults backed a ban, with worries including harmful content, grooming and online bullying. However, opponents of a ban included the children's charity NSPCC, which argued it would leave children unprepared for online life and would drive them to less regulated and potentially more dangerous sites instead.

A review of scientific research on the effects of social media on the mental health of young people revealed contradictory findings. Some online behaviours, including excessive use, were found to be very damaging. But other studies found positive effects in making young people more connected with one another.

It is impossible to develop a one-size-fits-all policy to balance these varying aspects of social media use among children. As with most technology, it is not wholly good or bad – its effects are determined by who owns and controls it, and for what purpose.

Big business

Social media is big business, owned by filthy rich billionaires. Among the most-used platforms, Facebook, WhatsApp and Instagram are all part of the Meta group, owned by Mark Zuckerberg, the sixth wealthiest person in the world. X, formerly Twitter, is owned by the world's richest man, Elon Musk.

On this basis, the internet is not the liberating place it was once claimed to be. Social media does not simply put users in direct contact with one another, their interactions are controlled by colossal corporations which exist first and foremost to make a profit.

The money to be made is astronomical. Users' data is collected in order to target advertising. In 2025, advertising income from social media overtook that from traditional media for the first time. More than half of all worldwide advertising revenue came from just five giant tech companies. Meta made over \$18 billion in just one quarter of last year, despite multi-billion-dollar spending on AI investments.

Maximising profit from advertising means maximising user engagement. It is in the interests of the social media firms to make their platforms as addictive as possible, in spite of the possible damage that this causes users. Research has shown that the drive for profits leads to either polarisation or bias in the content that users are shown. Many readers will have noticed they now see less from their friends and more sponsored content where there is money to be made.



PHOTO: PUBLIC DOMAIN

Capitalism has long found ways to promote unrealistic expectations as a way to generate a consumer market – for example, promoting unrealistic body expectations to women and girls. By collecting data about users' habits, interests and search history, it is possible to tailor ads to exploit a users' specific insecurities or anxieties, for example.

The corrosive effects of the profit motive are impossible to avoid on the basis of private ownership. We cannot trust that the social media firms will do enough to protect children voluntarily. For example, the media regulator Ofcom estimates that 86% of children aged 10-12 have social media accounts, despite most sites requiring users to be 13.

A blanket ban on under-16s using social media would be difficult to enforce. One in five Australian teens were still using platforms like TikTok two months after their ban was implemented. A UK law mandating websites to introduce stronger age checks for people accessing adult content, including pornography, resulted in a surge in the use of Virtual Private Networks (VPNs) which can circumvent laws of this nature.

Tackling the social media firms by law carries other challenges too. They are not just a source of wealth, but of enormous influence. Estimates for the number of people that regularly use social media reach as high as two thirds of the world's population.

Facebook alone reports three billion monthly users. On average, social media users spend over two and a half hours a day on sites.

While the main reason people give for using social media is still to connect with family and friends it is also increasingly looked to for news and information. More than half of Brits aged 16-34 now use social media as their primary source of news. Last year that tipping point was reached across the whole of the US population.



While it remains in the hands of super-rich capitalist owners, social media will not be able to be under the democratic control of the working-class majority

Despite attempts to portray themselves as such, no news source is impartial. Each present events from a particular point of view. The Socialist is proud to be a paper that promotes the interests of the working-class majority, we don't hide our political leanings – they're right there in the name of the paper!

Most news outlets make a pretence of objectivity, while in reality reflecting the outlook and interests of their billionaire owners. This is the truth of

the capitalist myth of the 'free press'.

Social media is no different. Algorithms govern what content is pushed, enhancing some points of view and diminishing others, all under the overall control of its super-rich owners. This is displayed in the crudest possible way in the existence of 'Truth Social' - Trump's own social media platform. Many more people will have experienced the change in content they are likely to be shown on 'X' since its takeover by Elon Musk.

The fact that profit, or indeed for owners to build a platform for promotion of their own ideas, are the top priorities for social media owners, will always run contrary to the objective of striving to protect young people from harm online.

While it remains in the hands of super-rich capitalist owners, social media will not be able to be under the democratic control of the working-class majority. Nationalisation is needed. But that is not to simply argue that the reins should be handed over to governments also acting in defence of the capitalist system.

For example, TikTok is owned by a cohort of investment firms, but that includes a Chinese state-owned firm with a 1% 'golden share' – giving it the ability to outvote all other shareholders on certain issues. But that element of potential government influence does not give the working class a democratic say over how the technology is developed and used.

The Socialist Party stands for nationalisation under democratic workers' control and management to allow for nuanced decisions on how social media is developed and used, making use of what is positive while seeking to overcome the dangers.

Nationalisation would allow for the algorithms to be open to inspection, for example using the existing expertise of tech workers organised through their trade unions. Without the drive for profit, harmful advertising could be excluded and platforms could be run with the primary objective of facilitating social connection.

Rather than news posts from those paying the highest price, or with algorithms having a tendency to promote the most polarising posts, political views could be represented in proportion to their support in society as determined by the popular votes in elections - a system far more democratic than the domination of billionaires that we see today.

Addressing the harm billionaire-owned social media can cause young people is important, and nationalisation is a key demand. But we have to fight more broadly for a decent and safe future for young people. For decent homes, jobs and services – and for socialist change to bring an end to the capitalist system which promotes and reproduces divisive and reactionary ideas, and which brings war and environmental destruction. Join us in fighting for socialist change!

YOUR VIEWS

We asked young Socialist Party members what they think of proposals to ban social media.

• **What's your view? Email editors@socialistparty.org.uk**

I think that a social media ban would be dangerous for young people because it would remove the ability for young people to interact with each other and build relationships in the modern world. It's increasingly harder for people my age to find spaces that are welcoming, affordable and safe so social media is really the best option for communicating.

I understand that social media has negative effects on young people's mental health and development but that is, in my opinion, due to the poor management of the platforms. A better measure would be to regulate these companies and fight against the way they exploit the people who use them.

JACK

I think, while it would be a massive change for young people in Britain, a social media ban would be a net positive. I've been online for most of my life, I posted my own video for the first time when I was about 8 and it was because I was so obsessed with the online creators I saw - I totally thought I could be like them!

I started posting regularly when I was 11, I had a cosplay account where I lip-synced to songs dressed as anime characters. I was lucky enough to be mostly accepted by people around my age and did not engage with the dangerous side of being a young girl on the internet.

I was younger than a lot of my peers and often got into petty fights and upset myself over the actions of people I didn't know. My overexposure in youth ended up coming back to bite me when I started getting bullied at school, girls would screenshot these videos and share them around to mock me.

In regards to child safety and protection I think a bill is one of the best ways to do it.

Alt-right content has been on the rise through the internet and unfortunately it's aimed at young boys. Since the release of the Epstein files, there's been a rise in jokes about the situation and ironic songs using terms referring to 'Epstein' and 'the island' as casually as any other slang. There's a point at which it stops being satire and starts promoting a system that undermines the reality of capitalism and the cruelty of the 1%.

Social media is also used to push overconsumption as the new chic, acting like a £1,000 beauty and skincare routine is the only way to achieve beauty and acceptance. To a bullied young girl with bad skin, consumerism felt like the only way for the ostracisation to stop.

There is an idea that social media is the new pamphlet and can be a way for young people to learn about socialist ideas. But it can just as equally be a way to do the opposite. Social media owners are incentivised to increase their profits.

It's my opinion that the social media ban would be actively anti-capitalist - pulling impressionable young people away from a consumerist mill and hub of alt right ideas. Without AI-generated videos of angry people of colour or falsified news stories, we allow people to think for themselves and act in the world on their own accord.

ELEANOR



PHOTO: PAUL MATTSSON



WHAT WE STAND FOR

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

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

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

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

WORK, PENSIONS AND BENEFITS

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

- Agribusiness to be taken into democratic public ownership. For a food processing and retail industry under workers' control to ensure that standards

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- 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.

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- 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.

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.

- 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.

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WE WON'T PAY FOR TRUMP'S WAR



MEHR NEWS AGENCY/CC

Fight for socialist change to end war, destruction and poverty

OSCAR PARRY
HACKNEY AND ISLINGTON SOCIALIST PARTY

Tump and Netanyahu have unleashed devastation in the Middle East. Following the ongoing genocidal war against the Palestinian people, the renewed war on Iran has unleashed further horrors. US and Israeli bombs strike Iran daily, with retaliatory strikes returned. Lebanon has been partially occupied by Israeli troops. Millions of civilians have been forced to flee the terror raining down from missiles and bombs, with thousands killed. The office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights has reported that missiles have hit 500 schools in Iran.

The Iranian regime has struck back and blocked the Strait of Hormuz, through which one fifth of the world's oil supply travels. This is their strategy to exert maximum pressure on the world economy. This impacts not just global energy prices but also food production, pushing up prices for petrol, food, electricity and heating.

Capitalism globally is a system of war and crisis; capitalist powers fight against each other but are united in their attacks on the working class. As in all wars, it is the working class and poor who suffer the most. This latest round of economic disruption is another blow to an increasingly moribund capitalist system that offers no future to the vast majority of humanity but poverty and war.

There is a lot of uncertainty about how long the war will last, but even if disruption to the Strait is relatively short-lived, the war will exert inflationary pressure on the world economy, stalling central banks from cutting interest rates. UK government bonds are heading for their worst month since the historic rout that led to the ousting of former prime minister Liz Truss. Keir Starmer, the most unpopular prime minister in history, is now letting Trump use UK bases to attack Iran. He will undoubtedly seek to implement further austerity measures to address the economic crisis, while energy companies rake in billions in profits.

We won't accept being made to pay for the bosses' wars with our lives and our living conditions. Workers must organise to fight back: strike action, protests against war and austerity. We demand pay rises to keep pace with the cost of living and the nationalisation of energy companies. May's elections present an important opportunity, in thousands of council seats, 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.

WHAT WE STAND FOR: THE SOCIALIST PARTY'S MAIN DEMANDS >>> see column on p15



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