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WE WON'T PAY FOR TRUMP'S WARS!

● Councils can act on cost of living

● Fight for socialist change

● Support the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition stand

By brutally bombarding Iran, spreading carnage across the Middle East, leading to thousands being killed, Donald Trump has put the cost-of-living crisis back into the headlines. But for most of us, it never really left.

When prices skyrocketed after Putin's invasion of Ukraine in 2022, we were told it was a one-off. But Trump and Netanyahu's war on Iran shows that is not true. Capitalism is a system built on division and exploitation and is now in a time of huge volatility, making new conflicts inevitable. Crisis fuels crisis as capitalist states scramble to secure the interests of their own ruling classes. Bosses are determined to keep their profits high and make us pay for the crisis of their system.

In Britain, the 2022 cost-of-living crisis was met by the biggest strike wave since the 1980s, as millions of workers fought for pay rises. In almost all cases, workers won better deals than employers initially offered. Faced with inflation spiking today, we need to get organised now for the coordinated strike action that can win.

We also have to make the fight political. Capitalist establishment politicians have spent the past decades carrying out cuts and claiming we 'can't afford' social housing, decent education, or a fully funded NHS. But when it comes to war, they're happy to write a blank cheque!

Councils could act to shield residents from the cost-of-living squeeze, for example by allocating support payments to households, through the Crisis and Resilience Fund, to those unable to pay sky-high bills. They could bring down energy bills by subsidising home insulation schemes for existing homes, build high-quality and energy-efficient new council housing, and implement and enforce a landlord register to ensure rented properties are being properly maintained. Bus services could be brought back into public ownership and fares capped. Ending outsourcing would stop the haemorrhage of money to the private sector.

All these examples and more are possible, if councillors have the will to fight for them. They say there's no money? We say the money is there in the pockets of the super-rich - use council reserves and borrowing powers as an interim measure and build a mass movement to demand Westminster settles the bill!

That is the approach that candidates for the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition will take in May. If you want to be part of that fight, join the Socialist Party and get involved!

SCOTT HUNTER
SWINDON SOCIALIST PARTY

COST-OF-LIVING CRISIS LOOMS - NATIONALISE ENERGY, DEMAND COUNCILS FIGHT BACK ▸▸▸ p2-3

TUSC ELECTION STAND: WALES, LONDON, SCOTLAND ▸▸▸ p4,10,13

THE FIGHT FOR A 32-HOUR WORKING WEEK ▸▸▸ p8-9

Middle East war and crisis escalates


PHOTO: PUBLIC DOMAIN

As the Socialist goes to press hours before his self-imposed deadline, Donald Trump has made another characteristically malevolent threat: "A whole civilisation will die tonight", on his social media platform 'Truth Social.' Millions across the Middle East live in fear of US-Israeli airstrikes, and retaliatory strikes from Iran. The situation remains volatile, not least for world oil prices, with economic consequences worldwide.

For up-to-date analysis on events visit socialistparty.org.uk, and the website of the socialist international the Socialist Party is a part of, the Committee for a Workers' International – socialistworld.net

For analysis on the origins and global consequences of the conflict, read 'Iran war: US imperialism's hubris meets reality' online at socialistparty.org.uk, and in the April 2026 issue of Socialism Today.

Build the anti-war movement

The Socialist Party says:

- The trade unions should call a weekend demo uniting the struggles against war, racism and austerity
- Students and youth get organised in schools and campuses and protest to fight for a future free from war
- Fight to build a new mass workers' party that stands for socialism and internationalism, support the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition election stand on 7 May
- Capitalism means war. Fight for socialist change – nationalise big business and the banks under democratic working-class control to carry out a socialist plan of socially useful production to meet the needs of all
- Fight for a socialist world, including for a voluntary socialist confederation of the Middle East, with full rights for minorities

Councils can act to tackle the cost-of-living crisis

Fuel prices rising – make public transport free!

EIRA EKENBERG-JONES
RHONDDA CYNON TAFF SOCIALIST PARTY

The rise in fuel prices due to the war in Iran isn't news to anyone - many working people are now fearing how they'll afford transport and heating as we enter a new period of capitalist instability and conflict. Pro-capitalist political leaders are scrambling to find 'solutions' that will allow the super-rich to keep their economic power and profits intact - including increasing oil drilling and coal mining.

With the increasing fuel costs (and resulting corporate profits), driving will become increasingly unaffordable for many people. However, the cost of public transport isn't much cheaper! The UK has the most expensive public transport system in all of Europe - with London being the most expensive on Earth as of March 2026. I myself spend nearly £130 on public transport travelling to work every month.

Following mass protests, the Pakistan government has announced that public transport will be free for a month. Lithuania has also taken a different approach to this crisis, announcing a halving of domestic train tickets for the next two months. This move aims to ease the financial strain on households, while encouraging a shift to public transport.

£2 a litre
Diesel set to exceed over the next few days

Free public transport here would be a welcome move, but implemented as an emergency measure would not be enough. The Socialist Party calls for a fully nationalised public transport sector with democratic planning, owned and controlled by the working class. This system would allow for consistent and fair working conditions and pay, rebuilding infrastructure like rail lines, stations, and ticket offices, and bringing back hundreds of 'unprofitable' routes, to make our public transport system greener and fit for purpose. Our current system with private companies competing with each other for contracts isn't working for anyone but the rich!

Public transport should be free on every route and for every person, not just during an emergency. Without money being wasted on competing, advertising, or profits, we could run a socialist public transport system, as part of a wider democratically planned economy, that meets the needs of everyone.



PHOTO: JAMES BOWE/CC



PHOTO: STOCK CATALOGUE/CC

ALEX SAMPSON
PLYMOUTH SOCIALIST PARTY

As fuel prices begin to rocket, Labour chancellor Rachel Reeves met with business leaders to offer government assistance to help them keep their transport and energy costs down, in the hope that they won't pass on costs to consumers. Unfortunately, the only trickle-down economics that works is the trickle down of costs.

Meanwhile, low-paid workers are bracing themselves for the impact of vastly inflated fuel and food prices as, while the government talk, petrol has already jumped over 20p a litre and food prices are starting to creep up. One industry body predicts that food inflation could reach 9% this year! This will only get worse the longer the war lasts.

While the Labour government tries to sound as if they are protecting us from the effects of this ill-conceived war, their priority is protecting the profits of companies who already make shed loads of money at our expense, and who will continue to see their profits rise while the rest of us struggle to afford the basic necessities of life.

This crisis shows exactly who this system works for and it is not us. As long as the profit motive is the key driver of the economy, we will bounce from crisis to crisis and it will be the working class who are forced to pick up the bill. We need to remove the profit motive by nationalising the companies which dominate the economy, including power and food - from agribusiness to the supermarkets - and run them democratically for the good of us all.

Councils can act too, for example by providing free school meals for all, including during school holidays, and free public transport (see left). We should not have to choose petrol over food so we can travel to a job that does not pay enough for both. Only a democratic socialist society can provide the decent level of living that we all deserve.

> **We should not have to choose petrol over food so we can travel to a job that does not pay enough for both**

The capitalist system is rigged - fight for energy nationalisation and socialist planning


PHOTO: STARABLAZKOVA/CC

Socialist Party

WHAT WE THINK

For millions of workers, there are bitter memories of the depths of the cost-of-living crisis. For many, it never ended. And so projections for a new round of inflation coming down the track will be met with dread, and justifiable anger. Trump's bombardment of Iran, together with Israeli forces, and with Starmer providing British military assistance, has ignited a deathly spiral of violence and instability in the Middle East. It is also a recipe for a new deep phase of capitalist economic crisis, an active ingredient being rising energy prices.

For most workers in Britain, this is first felt acutely at the fuel pumps. Diesel prices are up 30% since the start of the war, petrol 16%. Many drivers will have already visited forecourts to find pumps temporarily empty. But higher energy prices inflate the price of everything. Food inflation, for example, is projected to reach 9% by the end of the year. For lower earners who typically spend a higher proportion of their income on essentials, this is more keenly felt.

The energy price cap mechanism applied by government energy regulator Ofgem means that heating and gas bills won't dramatically rise in the first instance. However, rises beyond the end of the current three-month period are all but inevitable. So much for Labour's promise to lower energy bills by £300 by 2030.

By pitching his party's local elections stand as bigging up what the government is doing to address the cost of living, Starmer will only provoke more justifiable anger. Especially when the propaganda comes from the mouths of Labour councillors who, like those of all establishment parties, have just voted through yet more council tax, rent and charges rises.

Monster energy profits

During the most recent energy shock in the aftermath of Russia's 2022 full-scale invasion of Ukraine, governments internationally intervened to limit the extent to which bills rocketed. In Britain, the government's Energy Price Guarantee capped bills, although at a still unaffordable level, and essentially subsidising monster profits for energy producers.

The aim was to ameliorate the immediate worse effects of the cost-of-living crisis and prevent working class anger boiling over, with the intention of making us pay for it through further austerity measures in the future. Of course, it didn't save the Tories from being smashed in the 2024 general election, or the biggest wave of strikes in a generation. And it is now a Labour government charged with making us pay with its mantra of 'fiscal responsibility.'

30%
the amount diesel prices are up since the start of the war, petrol is up 16%

Since 2020, energy company profits in the UK have topped £125 billion, according to the End Fuel Poverty Coalition – around double the entire annual government spending on schools. The feeble windfall tax on so-called 'excess profits' has raised just £12 billion since its introduction in 2022.

Two mouthpieces of the capitalist establishment, the Financial Times and the Economist, have stated their opposition to a repeat of elements of price controls which they judge too expensive. Instead, the FT argues for "targeted cash support to the most vulnerable in society while leaving valuable price signals intact". A significant hurdle facing any government attempting that would be the capacity of civil services and local authorities gutted by austerity measures to be able to administer means testing.

So far, the government has limited its measures to direct support for the small minority whose homes use oil heating. That has been administered through local authorities. A Crisis and Resilience Fund already exists to offer support to those in most acute need. It is currently inadequately funded from central government, but a willing council could expand the fund's remit to cover direct support for rising household costs, and mobilise a campaign to demand the government coughs up funding. An approach that Socialist Party members standing in the May elections as part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition are calling for.

The Economist says that, "in 2022 Europe's interventions felt cheap because interest rates and bond yields started the year near zero. Today the cost of debt is much higher." It now costs the UK government 5% to borrow for ten years – the most expensive for any government in Europe.

In fact it was Liz Truss's government which introduced the 2022 Energy Price Guarantee - her 'mini-budget' laid bare Britain's vulnerability to the bond markets, which still remains.

However, it's not simple arithmetic that determines what is deemed affordable and what is not. It cannot be ruled out, faced with the prospect of deep crisis and a threat to their system – particularly a rising tide of workers' struggle, that this government could be forced to make temporary concessions to the working class and can be afforded more wriggle room to do so by 'the markets' and world financial institutions.

After all, government spending during the Covid pandemic showed how what was once deemed impossibly expensive becomes temporarily possible, although the capitalist class will always try and claw back what is given later. Today, desperate to recoup what was given during the pandemic, the Financial Times warns that "the expectation that the state will step in with a bailout each time a price shock arises needs to be curbed".

What both the Covid pandemic and the 2022 energy price shock showed is the complete and utter failure of the profit-driven, competition-fuelled capitalist market to deal with crisis. In both, capitalist states intervened to defend their system, and did so by fuelling huge profits for big business.

> **Why should price controls be prohibitively expensive if the government isn't coughing up the asking price from big energy profiteers?**

Planning

Planning is both absolutely essential and impossible on the scale needed while the major energy companies, big industry, big business and the banks remain in the hands of competing private owners. Why should price controls be prohibitively expensive if the government isn't coughing up the asking price from big energy profiteers?

In public ownership, and under the democratic control and management of the working class, the main levers of the economy could be directed to best deal with crisis, and also to plan investment to meet the needs of the environment while defending jobs. To those who falsely claim such measures would be too expensive – who are they possibly going to convince that compensation is needed for those at the top who have profiteered to the tune of billions for so long? Compensation should only be paid on the basis of proven need, for example to secure the value of workers' pensions investments.

Recent reports have suggested the Labour government is considering nationalising the British Steel plant in Scunthorpe. Between April 2025 and the end of January, £377 million has been spent to keep the plant open, while it remains in the hands of Chinese owners Jingye. The government took operational control (stopping short of nationalisation) of the plant in April last year, with a bill passed through parliament within hours, on a Saturday. It was proof that government can use emergency legislation to nationalise British Steel, and other parts of industry, now.

Despite energy nationalisation being universally popular however, none of the big five parties support such measures. That includes the Green Party, which at its most recent online conference voted to only call for nationalisation of parts of the energy industry that constitute a 'natural monopoly' - the national grid, for example - but not energy producers or retailers. Undoubtedly, huge numbers of those who have joined the Greens in support of Zack Polanski's rhetoric against inequality and the rigged system would disagree.

To deal with the rigged system, including the predatory way in which super-rich speculators profit from wars and economic volatility, and to achieve the necessary planning and coordination to stop climate change needs socialist planning and nationalisation.

Trump's war has set the course for further and deeper economic crisis and pain for the working class. In which the failures of the capitalist system will again be laid bare. Join the Socialist Party to fight for socialist change in Britain and worldwide, as the only way to bring an end to economic hardship and climate catastrophe.

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

SENEDD ELECTION: JUDGEMENT DAY AWAITS WELSH LABOUR

Socialist stand fights for new workers' party



Swansea TUSC campaigning in 2022 SP WALES

DAVE BARTLETT
CARDIFF SOCIALIST PARTY

The Welsh Senedd elections take place this May and while the final outcome is not yet known, one thing is certain: Welsh Labour is facing down the barrel of a gun.

Socialist Party Wales will be presenting a socialist alternative in two seats in Cardiff and Swansea - Caerdydd Ffynnon Taf and Gŵyr Abertawe - standing as part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC). Our five candidates will be the only ones opposing all austerity and campaigning for a new mass workers' party. Even though we don't have the resources of the main parties we will be reaching out to the working class and youth with a clear message that we should not be paying for the current crisis.

The first shots in the Senedd election were fired by the main parties last Autumn when Labour finished third in the Caerphilly by-election with 11% of the vote. In the latest poll Welsh Labour are on 12%, just ahead of the Greens but way behind Welsh nationalists Plaid Cymru on 33%, and Reform on 27%. The Tories would have just one seat and the Liberals wiped out. For a hundred years Labour was the dominant political voice in Wales. Just 30 years ago, half of the safest 20 Labour seats in the UK were in Wales. There was the old saying that votes for Labour in Wales were not counted but weighed!

Welsh Labour have been in control since the Senedd was set up in 1999 but have done precious little to improve the lives of working people. Wales has the worst poverty rates in the UK. The NHS has seen hospital closures and mergers, especially along the M4 corridor, where the vast majority live. The number of beds per head is the lowest anywhere in western Europe. Unemployment is amongst the highest in the UK, as is dependency on welfare benefits.

Year after year, Labour councils have piled on cuts after cuts. Their excuse is "we don't have a choice as the Tories control the budget in Westminster". Maybe they haven't noticed there is a Starmer government now and a Blair/Brown Labour government during its first ten years!

'Anyone but Labour'

It's now got to the stage where the working class is sick to death of Labour and the clear message in this election is 'anybody but Labour'. This contempt extends to all the big parties as the turnout could be barely over 50%.

Otherwise, it's a race between Plaid and Reform. Plaid are the favourites to top the poll but without an overall majority. They are seen by sections of the working class as a left alternative. They will also be the prime benefactor of many voters who see themselves as on the left and want to vote to stop Reform. The Plaid leadership are on record as saying not to expect too much from a future Plaid-led government, and that there will be no moves in their first term to push for independence.

Reform will pick up much of the collapsing Tory vote, and they too will benefit from the anti-Labour mood. A recent poll of those intending to vote Reform said 40% didn't agree with many of its policies but "we need to get rid of Labour". They also disguise their programme, for example on the NHS they say: "We will save the Welsh NHS and slash waiting lists" but they don't mention their support for further privatisation.

Welsh Greens

The Greens could win a dozen seats but are second to Plaid as an alternative to Reform. They do have real support amongst younger voters, many of whom will have been among those signing up to support Jeremy Corbyn and Zarah Sultana's Your Party announcement last summer.

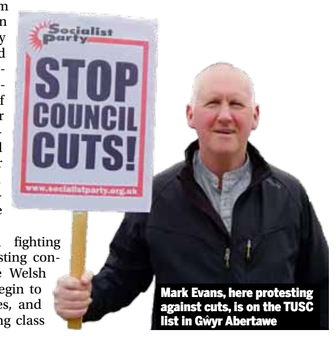
New Green leader Zack Polanski has picked up support by campaigning against inequality and the 'rigged system'. We have made the argument that he should instruct Green candidates and existing elected representatives to take a no-cuts, anti-austerity stand - a change from the approach taken by Greens previously in local councils and in Scottish government. This will be especially important if they become a partner in the next government. Labour could take a backseat after these elections and we could see a coalition of Plaid and the Greens run Wales.

Without taking a fighting stance, using the existing considerable powers the Welsh government has to begin to restore public services, and mobilising the working class to demand money from Westminster, whoever forms the next administration will not fundamentally change Wales for the better.

A mass party of the working class, built around the trade unions on a socialist programme to end austerity would most effectively cut across support for Reform. We had hoped that Your Party could have begun that process, but it is not standing – a huge missed opportunity.

The Socialist Party stand, as part of TUSC, is laying down a marker. None of the establishment parties are for the working class. We need a new mass workers party to fight the real battles coming our way, for and end to austerity, war and a future built on socialism.

- Dave Bartlett is the TUSC candidate in Caerdydd Ffynnon Taf



Mark Evans, here protesting against cuts, is on the TUSC list in Gŵyr Abertawe

Police back far-right agitators over Palestine protest

SAMANTHA ERIN
TOWER HAMLETS SOCIALIST PARTY

On Saturday 16 May the Palestine Coalition has organised a march in London on the anniversary of the Nakba or catastrophe – violent mass displacement of the Palestinians from their land in 1948. Every year this event is supported and attended by Socialist Party members and thousands of others to show solidarity with displaced Palestinians and to raise the importance of linking their struggles for self-determination with the international working class.

This year, Tommy Robinson, the far-right and Islamophobic political activist has arranged a counter-demonstration on the same day.

Responding to this situation, the London Metropolitan Police have shown their true colours. They are supporting arrangements for Tommy Robinson's hate march to go ahead unchallenged and refused the proposed route for the Nakba Day march. Disgracefully, they've allocated all of London's political centre, the whole of Whitehall, Parliament Square and Trafalgar Square, to the far-right protest.

This is not the first time the far-right have tried to push left groups out, and by organising our collective strength we have defeated them. Tower Hamlets in east London is a strongly diverse borough with a high population of Muslim and Bengali residents. We have a strong history of standing with these residents and as residents ourselves, fighting and beating the far right.

On 25 October last year, anti-racists, trade unionists and socialists came together in Tower Hamlets, to organise against Ukip leader Nick Tenconi's far-right mobilisation, part of Ukip's "mass deportations tour". The police banned this demonstration from the borough, in reality to protect the far right from the response of the local community, thousands turned up on the day. However, the ruling for Nakba Day shows the police can in no way be relied on to fight the far right.



Protesting against the far right in Tower Hamlets in 2025 LONDON SP

Not long before then, on 8 October 2025, the 'Pink Ladies' – one of the right-wing groups picketing hotels housing asylum seekers – protested outside Tower Hamlets Town Hall. The council was hearing a motion condemning anti-migrant protests. Again, this was met by a counter-protest, outnumbering the Pink Ladies – and this time led by council workers defending their workplace, through the local branch of their union, Unison.

Organisers of the Nakba Day march are calling on the police to immediately reverse the decision to disrupt the demo, and are preparing to march in central London. Socialist Party members argue that to build the most effective campaign against racism and to strengthen and develop the Palestine solidarity movement, it's vital that trade unions take the lead. 6.5 million workers are organised in the unions, of all different backgrounds, and with the power to bring society to a halt. A trade union campaign against racist division calling for jobs, homes and services for all could undercut the growing support for the far-right.

- Read more on how unions must lead anti-austerity struggle to cut across Reform and the right by searching 'Together: Hundreds of thousands march against the far right' on socialistparty.org.uk

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Police arresting protestors on suspicion of supporting Palestine Action on the day of the Together march against the far right DAVE REID

On 1 April, Ben Jamal and Chris Nineham of Palestine Solidarity Campaign were found guilty of breaching conditions placed on a protest against the genocidal war on Gaza by the police over a year before.

The police had banned marchers from marching on the BBC, the public broadcaster whose coverage of the war has echoed the interests of the British capitalist establishment and their backing of the Israeli state. The pair were fined £7,500 and are appealing the conviction.

New powers granted to the police by the Tories, and strengthened by Starmer's Labour have led to increased restrictions on the right to protest. Even though the ban on Palestine Action was found by the High Court to be unlawful, the police have continued to arrest people for showing support for it, as the Labour government is appealing this judgement.

Attacks on our ability to organise and fight back come from a place of weakness. The Keir Starmer government knows how unpopular it is and how shallow its base of support is, and so relies on repressive measures to try and keep a lid on the simmering anger thousands of people have.

An injury to one is an injury to all. Recent court injunctions against striking Birmingham bin workers' effective picketing show that the laws and courts are not neutral but serve the interests of the bosses.

The trade unions should mobilise and fight for these democratic rights including restrictions on workers' rights, alongside an end to Labour austerity. They should demand the scrapping of all the anti-trade union laws, including the undemocratic ballot thresholds still on the books despite previous Labour promises.

Part ownership mortgages add to housing crisis

Fight for mass council house building and rent controls

DEZZY TAYLOR
SWINDON SOCIALIST PARTY

Rents are skyrocketing, an average renter pays 41% of their income on rent. For many, owning your home and paying a mortgage would be better. Unfortunately, it is harder for people to get on the property ladder if they are unable to put aside money saved due to costs.

The current and previous governments have hailed part-ownership as the antidote to the housing crisis. The scheme sees prospective buyers taking out stakes in property, which can range from 10%, up to 90% in some cases. But the BBC has reported on "wildly unaffordable" part-ownership schemes trapping young professionals.

For a 25% stake, you would have to pay for the mortgage, rent on the remaining 75%, and often a 'service charge' on top. Service charges get hiked up with no warning and with little benefit. In one case, it leapt from £90 to £300 after a leak damaged a property. There is no cap on these charges, they are allegedly required to remain within 'reasonable boundaries'. But there is nothing reasonable about hiking a charge with no clear benefit or choice on the side of the tenant/owner.

Mounting service charges stop tenant/owners purchasing more equity of the home. The hikes in these barely justified fees mean mortgage companies will not lend to them based on affordability, and some who are struggling say they feel trapped where they are.

The shared ownership scheme exists as a sticking plaster solution to the wide-ranging housing crisis. What we really need are new council homes! 'Right to Buy' looms large as the remaining council homes are bought and some are even being demolished. For every council home built, roughly eight were sold in 2025, widening this gulf. We need high-quality and environmentally friendly council homes. Proper insulation would bring down our bills and stop wasting energy.

The Socialist Party fights the right for everyone to have a safe home. For a mass council house building programme that are high-quality, varied in size, and carbon neutral. We also call for rent controls, low-interest mortgages for home buyers, and nationalisation of all privately owned building companies, land banks, and estates, so those valuable resources can be controlled democratically by the working class.

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University workers fight back

University and College Union (UCU) members are starting eight days of discontinuous strike action on 15 April at London Metropolitan University in North London. London Met is reported to be spending £284 million on tarting up its real estate while sacking 120 loyal lecturers – as many as a fifth of academic jobs could go.

In Sheffield, staff at three higher education institutions find they have no choice but to strike. UCU members at the University of Sheffield International College have taken seven days of strike action during February, March and April over a pay freeze.

UCU members at the University of Sheffield have voted for strike action, having already been on strike in November and December over job losses. At Sheffield Hallam, workers are balloting to protect pensions and against job losses.

The fight is also continuing at Northumbria over 'pension theft' and a pay freeze. and the University of Essex over job cuts and the threatened closure of the Southend Campus.



Campaigning in the Unite EC elections

Unite members, including Socialist Party members, have been leafleting at workplaces all round the country for fighting socialist candidates in the Unite Executive Council elections.

DARA FITZGERALD REPORTS FROM WEST LONDON

We leafleted and spoke to drivers at bus stands in West London.

It went quite well. Almost everyone hadn't voted yet, and were amenable to the 'Workers Unite – Back to the Workplace' slate of candidates.

One guy asked if Unite disaffiliated from Labour would we affiliate to something else. We said we need a new workers' party. He said: "Now that's what I'm talking about!"

Some of the branches had nominated the Workers Unite slate. We spoke to drivers from one which had nominated the United Left slate (which is opposing Sharon Graham's manifesto), but some drivers there seem to be annoyed that they weren't told about the election.

A bunch of drivers knew about the elections but still hadn't received ballot papers, so it was well worth doing.



Dara discussing SOCIALIST PARTY

In the elections to Unite's Executive Council, the industrial and political approach of the union is at stake.

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+
- The other candidates on the Workers Unite slate: backtotheworkplace.org/executive-council-candidates

to join Suzanne Muna and four others already elected unopposed. The election runs till 27 April

Manchester mental health drivers strike

CATH TRIBUTSCH
MANCHESTER AND SALFORD SOCIALIST PARTY

Unison members who are mental health service drivers at Prestwich hospital in Greater Manchester have been on a week-long strike for fair pay.

The eleven drivers concerned are solid in their commitment to the strike. Their pay grade had been agreed by management to be increased from band 2 to band 3. This negotiation took place over a year ago.

However, this nationally recognised pay award has now been reneged upon by senior management. As a result, the workers have gone on strike.

Socialist Party members support the struggle of these workers, who deliver a first-rate service for patients and staff alike, free at the point of delivery.

In addition, the Socialist Party demands at least a £15-an-hour minimum wage for all, so that workers like these can be paid a real living wage.



UNISON NORTH WEST FB

Doctors' strike: Streeting's threats stoke the anger





On 7 April, resident doctors in the BMA (British Medical Association) began six days of strike action over pay and jobs. Doctors are standing firm in the face of massive propaganda from the Labour government and right-wing media.

In his determination to defeat the doctors, Labour health secretary Wes Streeting has cut 1,000 training places - that's lasting damage done to the NHS.

"How long do you think it would take to clear the NHS backlog at current rates?" one striking doctor at Bristol Royal Infirmary asked **Tom Baldwin**. The answer was 690 years!

Some of the pickets were facing possible unemployment before the end of the year. For psychiatry, there are 20 applicants for every post, and just eight spots for anaesthetists in the whole of South West England. One striker had started his first year as part of an intake of 80 - six years later, only eight of them are still practising medicine in the UK.

Striking resident doctors on the Leeds General Infirmary picket line described Wes Streeting's withdrawal of specialism training places for doctors as a "scorched-earth policy". They told **Iain Dalton** that the NHS is desperately short of specialists yet this summer doctors are unemployed because they haven't been able to access training to further their careers.

"They can't find the £1 billion they would need for pay restoration, but can find billions to mobilise the armed forces in case they decide to send them to join in Trump's war in Iran."

At Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Birmingham, **David Ellis** reports plenty of support from patients and visitors to the hospital, one of whom told the strikers: "Doctors save lives, you should be on footballers' wages". Doctors themselves said how the threat to cancel the offer of more training places alongside an inadequate pay offer had only stoked anger among BMA members.





From top to bottom:
Bristol Royal Infirmary
Leeds General Infirmary
Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Birmingham
St Thomas' Hospital, London
PHOTOS: SOCIALIST PARTY

NEU conference agrees motions that strengthen the fight

SHEILA CAFFREY
NEU EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBER, PERSONAL CAPACITY

The annual conference of the National Education Union (NEU), involving over 1,000 delegates, has hours of discussion about education over four days - what is going well, what education workers would like more of, and what desperately needs to change.

The biggest debates tend to be around union strategy. The mood on the conference floor was definitely to push the leadership for a stronger national fight than has happened so far.

Workload

For example, it is agreed that workload has to change, but how to tackle it often sees Socialist Party members arguing a different tack to other left groups. We argue that fighting over workload should be included in national action; the current leadership grouping, the NEU Left (which includes the SWP), argues that it is better to win these things school by school. That's fine if you're in a big school with a fighting union group. It's not either/or – Socialist Party members support these strikes and have played a leading role in successful local disputes, but national action improves things for everyone, even if you're the only NEU member in a tiny village school.

However, this year, two members of the NEU Left withdrew from speaking against an amendment that Socialist Party member Sean McCauley moved, which called for national action to protect limits on workload. The amendment pushed for this to be added to our national ballot over pay, funding, job losses and some workload protections, a ballot which is currently at the indicative stage. The amendment strengthened this, and protecting limits on workload would be entirely winnable.

Move to a formal ballot

The fight in the union now will be to ensure a formal ballot for action actually happens, and doesn't just wither away once the indicative ballot closes. This has happened the last two years, with national officers that are unwilling to show decisive, strong leadership against this Labour government.

Our current general secretary Daniel Kebede hasn't led any national strike action and prefers to fight workplace by workplace, where the wins and losses are led by local NEU leaderships - a strategy designed to never end, as it only takes new management in a school for the union to need to fight again. Socialist Party members will continue to push for national action, as the national action in 2023 showed that where there is a lead, members are ready to fight to defend education workers and to save education.

Academies and privatisation

Another significant shift in policy at the conference was moved by Socialist Party member Louise Cuffaro - calling not only for no new academies, but creating a way for them to be brought back into public control. Louise, an elected member of the NEU's National Executive with a history of successfully fighting academisation in Newham, stated clearly that academisation has been the privatisation of schools, allowing inflated wages to line the pockets of CEOs, with right-wing curriculum and policy changes seeping in. Louise called for all academy trusts to be brought back into democratic, accountable local authority control, with all funding to go to frontline services rather than CEOs and reserves. Loud cheers and clapping accompanied the endorsement of this as the NEU's new position.

Supply and agency

The last two motions of conference were on the precarious nature of supply and agency education staff - closely linked to the discussion on privatisation, as private agencies have been able to drive down wages and pensions, to maximise their profits.

Sean McCauley introduced one of these motions, and I brought an amendment calling for campaigns to push local authorities to create local pools of supply staff, with proper wages and pensions, and no creaming of profits from education or education workers. This was alongside a strategy for local bargaining for supply staff, which I am currently developing in the union.

Supply staff are mainly non-unionised and are open to the most exploitative parts of the education system. If union groups in education settings could push union recruitment and negotiate better deals on pay, pensions and support, agencies would no longer be able to undercut national pay and conditions. This is being trialled in Bristol this term, before becoming a national campaign in September, to hopefully win better deals for supply, agency and contracted education staff in all settings.

Socialist Party

We held a Socialist Party fringe meeting, tying together all the issues that face education workers. This was addressed by Socialist Party Executive Committee member Rob Williams, and was chaired by young teacher and Socialist Party member Rees Melville, who pinpointed the blame for the crisis in education on the politicians who defend the capitalist system. Education is used to serve profits and big business rather than to inspire a new generation.

An education system under socialism would open minds, develop skills and talents, that are likely to never be found under capitalism. We believe that to get away from an education system that is just training children and young people to be ready for the workplace, we need to link the fight for pay and funding now to the fight to change the whole economic system and create a socialist world where children, young people and education workers could design an education system that would allow all to flourish.



Main picture: Sheila Caffrey (left) on one of picket lines in the successful Bristol and North Somerset strike in 2025 over support staff pay
Insert: Louise Cuffaro speaking at conference against privatisation in education
PHOTOS: SOCIALIST PARTY

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 are taking to the picket lines in increasing numbers as the cost of living rises. Come to the NSSN conference to discuss with the heroic Birmingham bin workers, striking health workers, bus drivers and many more, to build the fight against Starmer's austerity and 'Trumpflation'.



THE FIGHT FOR A 32-HOUR WORKING WEEK

RACHEL COX
SOCIALIST PARTY SOUTHERN REGION ORGANISER

Many young workers in Britain today face enormous challenges. It is becoming increasingly hard to find work as bosses are becoming increasingly nervous of losing profits in the face of rising inflation and an unstable world. All of this has led to around 732,000 16 to 24-year-olds being unemployed. If they were all in one place, they would rank as the 8th largest city in Britain, larger than Nottingham. In total, 957,000 are what is known as NEET - not in employment, education, or training - around the population of Glasgow!

If you went to university, in many cases you enter the job market today with a student loan that is growing faster than it can be paid off. And that's even if you can get a job at all. Across all age ranges, 700,000 graduates are unemployed.

To those hundreds of thousands of workers and youth, as well as their family and friends watching them struggle, one thing is becoming increasingly clear - something is fundamentally broken.

With nearly a million young people unemployed, workers in Britain work 42 hours a week on average, some of the longest hours in Europe, according to TUC data. Why not share out the work?

The Socialist Party calls for a 32-hour week with no loss of pay or worsening conditions. And with the right to flexible working, under control of workers not the employers. Workers could choose to work a four-day week, or work shorter days to fit more conveniently with childcare and a child's school day, for example.

A recent trial of the four-day working week in the UK found 39% of employees were less stressed, and 71% had reduced levels of burnout at the end of the trial. But not only would it improve existing workers' lives, it could also be used to create more employment opportunities and boost production that could be used for improving services, building council homes, and more. Unsurprisingly, it would be extremely good for workers.

So, could Britain actually afford it? The short answer is yes, quite easily. In 1974, faced with high inflation and government-imposed pay restraint, the miners went on strike. At the time Britain mostly ran off coal power, and with no new coal coming in the Tory government was forced to use reserves. As part of this, the Tories brought in a three-day, 24-hour working week in order to weaken the union's leverage, and revealed far more than they meant to in the process. During the strike, across the rest of industry, 80% of existing production levels were maintained in a reduced working week, with productivity per worker being half of what it is today!

In the end the miners won out. The Tories called a general election asking "who governs Britain", and lost. The miners won pay rises from the Labour government that followed.

Less work less pay?

In the capitalist media, on the BBC or in the Financial Times, there are occasional articles praising the four-day week as leading to improved productivity and profits. Around 10.9% of workers reported working a four-day week in one ONS study, these tending to be in the private sector – jobs such as in tech and marketing. What it didn't say is whether or not this was without loss of pay, or simply working the same number of hours just squeezed into four days.

For example, London Underground bosses have recently been pushing for a change to driver shift patterns, billing it as being the introduction of a 'four-day week.' In response, members of the RMT union have voted to strike. The first strike dates were suspended for further talks with the bosses. During the strike ballot period, the union was pointing to what the changes would mean: "Longer more extreme shifts and less block leave. 9.5-hour shifts that can be shifted 2 hours each way with a day's notice, increased weekend working, more time on the handle within each duty, earlier starts and later finishes with night turns drastically reduced, reduced walking and prep time, attacks on block annual leave with only one rostered summer week off every other year."

The most successful companies and capitalists are more than happy to crunch their workforces to gain the competitive edge over others, some do it through compression of days, but ultimately extracting as much labour time as possible per worker is the root of capitalist profits.

This logic extends to the system as a whole, and the policies of the capitalist parties such as Labour – currently governing for the bosses in Britain. While the move to a shorter working week without loss of pay would undoubtedly make Starmer more popular, it's a calculation of politics and economy. After all, the reason nearly a million young people are NEET is because it would be unprofitable to employ them. The existence of a pool of unemployed labour helps keep wages lower across the economy.

The introduction of a 32-hour working week without loss of pay would likely make individual workers more productive. It would also be a boost to workers' hourly wages – and that would be a hit to the capitalists' profits. What's more, a successful struggle to achieve it would risk boosting the confidence of the working class to struggle for more. A shorter working week without loss of pay won't be won except through struggle.

The call for a shorter working week has been a key demand of the labour movement for many years. All the way back in 1817, Robert Owen, one of the early socialist thinkers, coined the goal of "Eight hours' labour, Eight hours' recreation, Eight hours' rest". In the landscape of 10 to 16-hour days, this became a major pillar of the labour movement in the 19th century.



A demonstration outside Parliament for the 8-hour working day
PHOTO: PUBLIC DOMAIN

'Not a penny off pay, not a minute on the day'

In the 1926 general strike, for example, miners faced attacks on pay, but also attempts to extend the working day. Then, the slogan taken up was "Not a penny off pay, not a minute on the day".

Karl Marx went as far to say at the 1866 Congress of the First International: "The legal limitation of the working day is a preliminary condition without which all further attempts at improvements and emancipation of the working class must prove abortive", as bosses could always increase hours to eat costs. Additional demands for inflation-matched pay and a jobs guarantee for every worker could have the same effect today in tying the capitalists' hands and raising workers' sights.

But while struggles of groups of workers can win gains workplace by workplace, this is increasingly hard. Capitalism is a system based on the exploitation of workers, and on competition. A capitalist boss making concessions to workers faces the prospect of being at a competitive disadvantage. With an extremely weak and fragile economy, globally and nationally, defending existing working conditions from the bosses' attacks is hard won, and concessions are even harder won still.

We need to generalise the struggle across the trade unions and build a political force that will fight to implement a shorter working week and other demands.

The 2021 Trades Union Congress voted to "launch a public campaign for a three-day weekend/four-day working week, including political lobbying, and an effort to build popular support for the policy - the four-day week/extended weekend should be a reduction in overall hours worked, with no loss of pay." The Communications Workers Union (CWU) has recently been campaigning amongst its members in telecoms for a shorter working week. And the PCS civil service union presented a case to Starmer's government as to how a four-day week would make civil service departments more productive and save money. The government bluntly rejected.

The Employment Rights Act, much-vaunted by trade union leaders, fails to even mention a shorter working week. A handful of Labour MPs and one Green did try to add an amendment to create a 'Working Time Council' to address the issue, which was rejected.

PHOTOS: LAND ROVER MENA/CC AND PAUL MATTSSON

Working-class political representation

The trade union movement and the working class does not have its own party to fight for policies in its interests, or even a group of MPs which can be relied upon to take the policies of the workers' movement into parliament.

The CWU was the seconder of that TUC motion and is affiliated to the Labour Party. It doesn't however, have any real democratic say over the policies the Labour Party and government adopts. It won a vote for renationalisation of Royal Mail at Labour conference in 2022 for example, but that does not make it Labour policy.

CWU conference next month will discuss the union's relationship with Labour. Socialist Party members have been pushing for the unions to lead in the building of a new mass working-class party. One in which the unions' millions-strong membership can have a collective democratic say over policy.

The 800,000 initially drawn to Jeremy Corbyn and Zarah Sultana's Your Party showed the huge enthusiasm for a new party. A four-day week without loss of pay was actually a policy put forward by Labour during Jeremy's time as leader – albeit one undermined by right-wingers inside his own shadow cabinet.

It was a mistake from those at the top of the Your Party project not to make an appeal to the trade unions to get involved and to offer them a say in the newly formed party's democratic structures.

The election of a new layer of left trade union leaders, and Unite the Union's decision to further restrict its funding to Labour, point to the intense pressure being exerted by the rank and file of these trade unions on their leaders.

Join us in the fight for a shorter working week, but as part of the struggle for the socialist transformation of society where these gains can be made permanent

In this May's elections, Socialist Party members will be standing as part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC). Over the last few months, we have helped to organised 'people's budget' meetings – bringing together trade union bodies and campaigners to draw up a list of policies a council on the side of the working class and willing to take on austerity could adopt. That could include for example, a 32-hour working week without loss of pay for council employees. People's budget campaigns could also be used on a local level to demonstrate the need for a new mass workers' party. After all, if Labour councillors won't implement our demands, we'll need a party of our own.

But such a mass workers' party would only be a stepping stone towards what is needed to permanently improve workers' lives. Faced with global economic turmoil, and a system in which the economy is owned and controlled by competing profit-driven bosses, the battle over pay and working hours will be a battle that has to be fought over and over again. Join us in the fight for a shorter working week, but as part of the struggle for the socialist transformation of society where these gains can be made permanent.

The Socialist Party says

- Share out the work. A maximum 32-hour working week with no loss of pay or worsening conditions. The right to flexible working, under the control of workers not employers
- End 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
- No austerity through inflation. For all wage rates to be automatically increased at least in line with price rises
- Build a new mass workers' party, based on the trade unions and fighting for socialist change
- Fight for a democratic, socialist plan of production to meet need – based on nationalisation of big business and the banks under workers' control and management, compensation only on the basis of proven need



Putting together a 'workers' list' of candidates in Waltham Forest

LINDA TAAFFE

As it became clear that the Your Party leadership had no intention of standing thousands of candidates in the May council elections, Socialist Party members in Waltham Forest decided we had to step up and encourage others to also stand under the banner of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC).

That would mean standing on a fighting manifesto aimed at workers, who are being so ground down by the cost of living, austerity and now war. Having read so much about the Liverpool 47 in the 1980s, it was high time we launched a similar campaign for the 21st century. We decided to start by recruiting candidates that we called 'The Workers' List'.

People in the proto-Your Party branches also wanted to stand, but disagreed with us about standing big numbers of candidates. As they concluded that they wouldn't be able to stand under the Your Party name, we offered that they join with us under the TUSC umbrella, but they declined. So we proceeded, but stayed in contact.

Striking porters

We started to approach workers with whom we'd been involved previously. Firstly, we arranged to meet a group of porters at the local hospital. A number of them had stood with us in a previous election. We socialists had always been supporters on their picket lines, especially when they went on strike to get private company Serco dropped. This was the latest in a long line of private companies that porters, cleaners, caterers and security were outsourced to. All services were brought back into the NHS. Their success owed much to their own determination, and that of Unite branch secretary Len Hockey.

So around a canteen table we put the case. We've had enough. If services continue to be cut there'll be nothing left - especially for young people with rents costing £1,000 for a single room in a shared house; or the 8,000 households on the housing waiting list. We want to drive private profiteers out of housing; we need a massive programme of public works to repair homes and build council houses. We would restore services for children and adults with special needs.

We would have to build a massive campaign of trade unions and communities to get back the money stolen by successive governments - just like in Liverpool!

Three porters and a ward host agreed to stand - sadly, one had to drop out due to a bad accident.

With Socialist Party members being added to the list too, numbers were increasing.

Bus pickets

Next, we approached the local Stagecoach bus drivers who had been involved in a long-running conflict with their management. We had supported their picket lines and helped in practical ways. We got the Unite rep and organiser to speak at a big Your Party meeting with Zara Sultana, and about a half dozen drivers came too. We organised a gang of pensioners to ride the buses on their strike days to hand out leaflets and hold pop-up meetings on buses. So, when asked to join us in TUSC, two drivers came forward.

Then we went back a few years to the Butterfields campaign. This was a campaign to stop 63 families being evicted from homes built by a philanthropist nearly a hundred years ago but now taken over by a wide-boy wanting to make a quick profit, by getting rid of low renters and making a killing in a fast-gentrifying area. We socialists helped the tenants in a year-long campaign, and they won. We kept up contact through nights out together at the local pub.



Ade (left) marching with other Butterfields residents and supporters - successfully beating eviction from their homes SOCIALIST PARTY

It's usual for politics to be part and parcel of the drinks. So, one night we popped the question to the main leader who'd coined the phrase 'Butterfields Won't Budge'. And she said 'yes'!

Trade unionists

Altogether we gathered eighteen candidates, amongst whom are three union branch secretaries, the secretary and president of the trades council, activists involved in the Save Our Square campaign against private property developers, a conservation worker, and a parent involved in campaigning for SEND support.

We will have at least one TUSC candidate in 14 wards – two thirds. I will be standing in a ward where three Tory councillors have jumped ship and gone over to Reform. There's no way we are giving them a free run.

So, workers in those 14 wards will have the opportunity to vote for a workers' candidate in a workers' organisation that, if elected, will take the traditions of trade union struggle in the workplace into the town hall.

We have just finished getting all the election forms completed and confirmed. Our leaflets have arrived from the printers, ready to kick off campaigning directly after Easter. I have been involved in many elections, but the landscape in this is like nothing we've experienced before. Anything could happen! Let's go for it!

Why I'm standing: 'First-hand experience that if we organise collectively we can change things'

ADE WALLACE
'BUTTERFIELDS WON'T BUDGE' TENANTS LEADER

Standing in a local election with the Socialist Party, for the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC), for me is to show by example that while the options appear limited with the mainstream parties and the outcome looks bleak, there are other options - it doesn't have to be a case of 'the same old same old.'

The Socialist Party stands head and shoulders over the others with its tradition of class struggle.

Many people feel disconnected from politics because they do not see their experiences reflected in decision-making bodies. Talking to friends, colleagues and family, there is a sense of desperation and disillusionment about the state of the world and the continued battles we face on a day-to-day basis.

'We didn't budge'

I know what it is like to battle. After being threatened with the loss of my home that I had rented for the previous 20 years - my own safe sanctuary being taken from me by greedy banks and landlords - I helped build the Butterfields Won't Budge campaign. It was a campaign to prevent the eviction of 63 families from a long-established housing estate in 2015. It seemed initially that the odds were firmly stacked against us. However, as we met, talked, planned and campaigned, it created a momentum, and a camaraderie which inspired us all to stand up. We found our voice and we made those who had put us in this position listen and change tack. We got our message out there and through sheer determination, we won through.

Socialist principles emphasise equality, solidarity, and democratic control over resources. At the local level, this means advocating for genuinely affordable housing; to cut rents, create jobs, restore essential services; and ensuring that public money is spent in the public interest. Too often, councils are pressured to prioritise private development or austerity policies that widen inequality.

Genuinely affordable housing

By standing in the election, I can challenge these priorities and argue for alternatives that benefit everyone. Even if winning may be difficult, campaigns can raise awareness. It can push other candidates to address issues more seriously and hold them accountable. In this sense, the act of standing is itself a form of advocacy and pressure for change.

Finally, running as a socialist reflects a belief that change is possible when people organise collectively. I have first-hand experience of this. Standing offers a vision of a community where resources are shared fairly, decisions are made democratically, and everyone has the chance to thrive. Standing in a local election is one step toward turning that vision into reality.


Socialist Party campaigning against Brighton library cuts GLENN KELLY

Stop Labour's cuts to Brighton and Hove libraries!

- Oppose the reduction in opening hours
- Fully fund all council services

BRIGHTON SOCIALIST PARTY LEAFLET

Brighton & Hove Labour council is reducing the opening hours for Jubilee and Hove libraries in yet another attack on our services. Two community libraries have also been completely closed in recent months.

The reduction in opening hours is by five hours each week, with the main cut coming on Sundays. The main library in our city will now only be open 40 hours a week. Five hours might only seem like a small amount, but it will still have a significant impact on users who have nowhere else to work and study. This is not the first time opening hours have been reduced - how long before they decide they want to close the libraries entirely?

The council attempted this in the past with Hove library and was only stopped by a significant local campaign. If this attack is allowed to go through now, it will only give the council more confidence that they can carry out further cuts in the future.

How much more are young people expected to take? Youth clubs have been shut. Schools are underfunded. The Labour government is raising university tuition fees again and there is no guarantee of a good job even if you get a degree. Now one of the few spaces where we can work and study for exams is being cut as well.

We need to build a mass campaign of library users and trade unions to oppose the cuts. We will be protesting on 12 April - the first Sunday that the reduced hours take effect - to kick off the campaign and show the council that we won't take their cuts lying down. The protest is your opportunity to speak out. Library users should draw up plans for the library service we need. This could include increasing opening hours rather than cutting them!

When the campaign has drawn up plans for the library service it could ask candidates in next year's council elections to pledge to support them.

If councillors are not willing to fight for what we need then they should be replaced with anti-cuts, socialist councillors who will! Trade unions and anti-cuts campaigns should plan to put forward their own candidates as part of fighting to build a new mass workers' party which can stand in opposition to all the establishment politicians.

JOIN THE PROTEST

- 1:30pm, Sunday 12 April, Jubilee Square, outside Jubilee Library, Brighton

WE SAY:

- Stop the reduction in opening hours at Jubilee and Hove libraries - build a mass campaign of residents and library users
- Reopen all previously closed libraries -expand local services under the democratic control of the community and workers
- Stop the cuts to all our services - councillors must pledge to oppose austerity, not implement it
- Build a campaign of local trade unions and community groups to win the needed council funding from central government
- No trust in Starmer's Labour! Build a new workers' party to fight for us, not the 1%

Libraries in crisis:

- **773 libraries closed between 2010 and 2019**
- **22% reduction in opening hours - 780,000 hours a year**
- **8,400 fewer librarians**



ROB CANDLISH/CC

Privatised bus service 'like a curfew'

Fight for free fully funded public transport

AARON SMITH
ENFIELD AND LEA VALLEY SOCIALIST PARTY

I went to the 1st meeting of a bus users group in Cheshunt, Hertfordshire recently. It was set up by a local Tory councillor - just ahead of elections - to gauge interest and hear firsthand about the issues and complaints about the local bus services. Like in most parts of England, buses were privatised here 40 years ago and are run for profit, rather than social need. Unsurprisingly, people had many complaints, including around poor reliability, lack of accessibility and complex ticketing. Members from Goff's Oak Community Association said about the low frequency isolating older and disabled residents and the impact of development and traffic, stressing we need more buses in the area.

I spoke in the meeting and said the local buses felt like a curfew. Despite the town being next to London, few buses run after 7pm as they are not considered profitable and subsidies were cut during Tory austerity. I also said about the poor bus connectivity with the railway and to London. In neighbouring Enfield, where a proposed 'new town' has government backing, transport and traffic are major concerns. A representative each from Arriva and Uno, the local bus companies, were present to answer complaints in a rare semblance of accountability from privatised public services.

It was clear from what everyone was saying, including the representatives, that bus services are not fit for purpose. We need massive investment in public transport, with buses free at the point of use for all. Bus services need to be renationalised so that users can have a democratic say in the services we need. Transport needs to be joined up to where people live, work and do leisure – and at times when we need it. That needs resources and planning, only possible by fighting for socialist change which takes the power and control out of the hands of the bosses and gives it to the working class, so we can all live our lives to the fullest.

- Aaron is the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) candidate in Flamstead End ward, Broxbourne in the 7 May local elections

£49,985 raised to fight for socialist change!

The Socialist Party has had fantastic success in the first quarter of 2026 – raising a total of £49,985 for the fighting fund! Thank you to all those who donated to support our campaigns, including those Socialist Party members who contributed to the fantastic financial appeal at our Congress in March, in which £37,876 was pledged.

These funds will help us to resource our campaigning during the local elections, in which Socialist Party members will be standing as part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition. Socialist Party members are also involved in campaigning for fighting, democratic trade unions by standing in elections in Unite, Unison and PCS.

Millions of workers face the renewed threat of rising prices, and the Socialist Party faces the same. For example, sending the thousands of leaflets, as well as the Socialist newspaper, campaign posters and other resources, by Royal Mail to get into the hands of campaigners is getting even more expensive. The cost of a first class stamp has now risen to £1.80.

Profiteers like the billionaire owners of privatised Royal Mail can't be allowed to get away with exploiting the capitalist crisis to get even richer at our expense. Our fundraising is more important than ever, because our socialist politics, calling for nationalisation, socialist planning and a new workers' party that fights for it, are needed more than ever.

Help us raise the funds this quarter to again achieve our £25,000 target, and continue the fight for socialist change.

SOCIALIST PARTY FIGHTING FUND

AREA	£ RECEIVED	£ TARGET	Q1: JANUARY-MARCH 2026	FINAL CHART
Northern	1,563	800		195%
Eastern	2,342	1,300		180%
Southern & SE	4,073	2,400		170%
North West	1,957	1,200		163%
West Midlands	3,899	2,700		144%
London	6,666	5,000		133%
Wales	3,164	2,400		132%
South West	2,590	2,100		123%
Yorkshire	2,999	2,650		113%
East Midlands	2,302	2,050		112%
Other	18,431	2,400		768%
TOTAL	49,985	25,000		200%

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Socialist Party

WHAT WE STAND FOR

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

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

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

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

WORK, PENSIONS AND BENEFITS

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

PUBLIC SERVICES

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

ENVIRONMENT

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

DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS

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

SOCIALISM AND INTERNATIONALISM

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

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Obituary: Tara Blackman - friend and comrade



PHOTO: PAUL MATTSSON

It is with great sadness that we learnt of the death of Tara Blackman. Tara was a very dear friend and comrade of those in the PCS Socialist Party caucus and staff at PCS union. Tara died after a short illness in late February, aged 56.

Tara began working for PCS over 25 years ago. One of her colleagues, Mary, remarked: "We started working for PCS on the same day and from that day until the present she remained consistent in her commitment to the trade union movement. It wasn't just a job or hobby, it was a reflection of who she was. Tara was always ready to step up and speak out. Even after her illness about a decade ago and her doctors telling Tara to take it slow, she continued to fight for justice and show her support on picket lines. They say you can judge a person by the tracks they leave behind. But they are also seen in the decades of laughter and shared history that we all built together working for PCS. I will miss her every day."

Tara's work at PCS included roles as an administrator in the organising department, as the national president's personal assistant, and as an administrator for the Home Office Group, where she connected with reps. She also spent years as a Union Learn officer, recruiting and training new reps, particularly women and young people. During the Covid-19 lockdown, she joined the London and South East organising team, supporting branches to build union strength.

Tara joined the Socialist Party shortly after starting work for the union. Her party comrade, Terry Adams, recalled: "Tara and I were in the same work team when CPSA merged with PTC to form the PCS. In those early days, the then right-wing bureaucracy pursued a business union model. This did not sit well with Tara. She challenged this form of unionism and argued for a fighting, democratic union to defend our members interests. Tara had enormous energy and enthusiasm which was a million miles away from the cynical and defeatist attitude often encountered in union bureaucrats. Brave, outspoken, and with a great sense of class, when Tara joined the Socialist Party I was proud to have her as a friend and comrade."

Tara consistently advocated for socialist policies, serving on and off as a rep in the GMB staff branch at PCS. She was a vocal proponent for fighting unions, demanding workers' representatives be paid a worker's wage, and often condemned careerist right-wing union officials by simply stating: "They shouldn't be here!"

Tara was truly warm, kind, and incredibly generous. She had a great sense of humour that kept the office laughing. She always provided the food and tea for lunch break walks and picnics.

Our condolences go out to Tara's family, her sisters, Emma and Zena, who cared for Tara when she was unwell, and to her nephew and great nephew, who Tara was devoted to.

LOIS AUSTIN

Scotland Holyrood election: a chance to make the case for socialist change

SOCIALIST PARTY SCOTLAND

The Holyrood election is taking place amid the death agony for Keir Starmer's Labour government at Westminster. It is a question of when, not if, he's forced out.

As the polls stand, Labour will be annihilated in the parliamentary elections in Scotland and Wales, as well as the local elections in England. He is paying the price for a series of brutal anti-working class policies that have resulted in Labour's 'mile wide, inch deep' support evaporate.

In Scotland, the Scottish National Party (SNP) is expected to be the largest party after the election, it is also polling at least 13% lower than its support in 2021. That's a drop of over a quarter in its vote. And no wonder.

The crisis in the NHS continues, council services are being cut to the bone, the self-declared housing crisis goes unresolved and workers are still having to move to strike action on pay and other issues to force concessions from the SNP government.

Recent polling by the BBC shows these are the questions that are of most concern for people. Asked to name the top three issues affecting Scotland, 62% cited the cost of living, with 52% choosing health, social care and the NHS.

Another 31% said the state of the economy was crucial. And it is precisely on those class questions that the SNP have failed utterly, a result of their cuts-laden budgets and refusal to stand up to Westminster austerity.

Socialist Party Scotland is standing our members in the election to provide an answer to those and other vital questions.

We demand an end to all cuts and for full funding of the NHS, council services and social care. MSPs should be refusing to pass on austerity and fight for the funding our communities need.

The money is there. The rich and big business are raking it in. By taking the wealth off the super-rich through public ownership and democratic planning of the economy, it would be possible to spend billions on reversing the effects of more than a decade of cuts.

As well as building the high-quality and affordable council homes required to meet demand.

To resolve the cost-of-living crisis, we demand pay rises and benefit increases that actually fully match inflation. As well as the introduction of a £15-an-hour minimum wage for all without age exemptions.

Reform

Reform UK is likely to win a number of MSPs. Primarily, this is a result of the mass anger and failures of the main parties, Labour and the SNP in particular.

Yet Reform - who are Tories with even more racist and anti-working class policies - will continue with the cuts agenda. It has pledged to cut benefits for the poorest, 'reform' the NHS - which means further cuts and privatisation - and to scrap net-zero policies.

The Scottish Greens are riding on a crest of a swell rather than a wave - and moreover, not one of their own making.

The 'Polanski effect' has had a certain and limited impact in Scotland. While the Green Party in England and Wales has increased its membership by 147,000 in the last six months, the Scottish Greens have added just 2,500.

The recent experience of its cuts coalition with the SNP, which lasted from 2021 to 2024, exposed the desire to work within the limits of capitalism. Another governmental agreement with the SNP after the election is possible if the SNP doesn't have a majority.

Independence

In the BBC poll, while just 13% mentioned Scotland being in or out of the UK in their top three issues, support for independence is currently at over 50%.

SNP leader John Swinney is making independence the key issue in this election, but he is doing so for electoral calculations only. Desperate to shore up falling support for the SNP, he is framing this as an opportunity to elect a majority SNP government which will then demand a referendum from Westminster.

Yet, it has no intention of building the type of mass campaign that is essential to apply real working-class pressure on the Labour government.

As with the crises facing public services and the cost of living, socialist policies and mass working-class struggle are essential to resolve the refusal of the capitalist class to deliver a second referendum.



PHOTO: SCOTTISH TUSC



PHOTO: ESTILLBHAM/CC

Your Party failures

Against this backdrop, the refusal of Your Party at a UK level to allow an election challenge in Scotland is a disgrace.

It marks a deliberate policy by the grouping who now have control of Your Party - particularly those around Jeremy Corbyn and the officers group who effectively now control the party.

It has also refused to hand over membership data to Your Party Scotland to allow a democratic selection process of candidates to take place.

The potential to build a mass workers' party - evident in the 800,000 who gravitated to Your Party last summer - has been squandered.

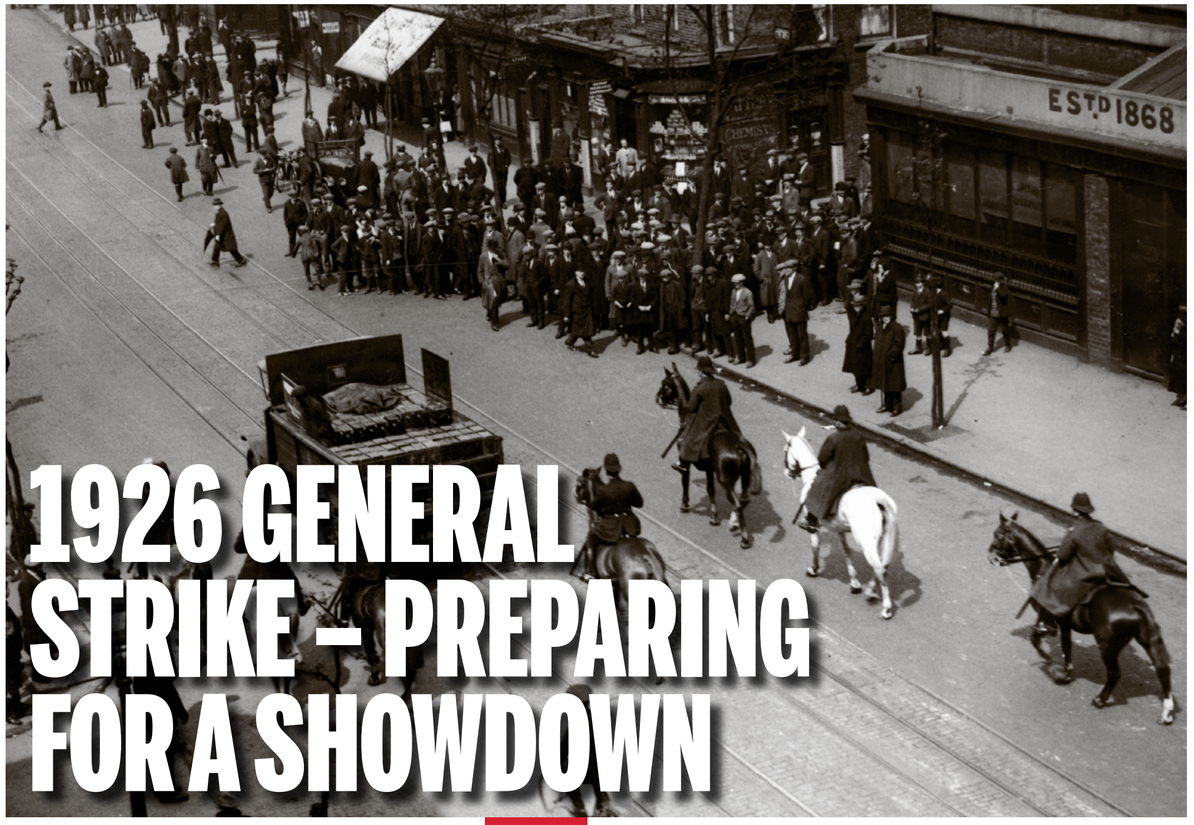
It underlines the necessity, as Socialist Party Scotland advocates, of the mass membership trade unions to play a leading role in the building of such a party.

In the interim, our members are standing as part of the Scottish Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition for Holyrood.

We are standing a number of trade union and socialist fighters. We will use the election to make the case for an end to all cuts, public ownership, the building of a mass workers' party and an independent socialist Scotland.

The 15 core policies that Scottish TUSC candidates will stand on are:

- End all cuts and austerity - elected politicians in councils, Holyrood and Westminster must refuse to make cuts and fight for fully funded NHS, council and social care services
- No coalitions or electoral agreements with parties or independents who have a record of implementing cuts and who refuse to sign up to a no cuts platform
- For a massive programme of council house building to tackle the housing crisis
- Scrap the council tax and for its replacement with a tax on income that makes the rich pay
- Increase the minimum wage to an immediate £15 an hour with no age exemptions - wages must rise automatically with inflation
- Abolish all anti-trade union laws
- Stop benefit cuts - benefits must match the cost of living
- Take the wealth off the billionaires. Tax the rich and big business. For public ownership and democratic control of the multinationals that dominate the economy
- End the genocide. End the occupation of Gaza. Build mass struggle for Palestinian rights and an independent Palestinian state
- End the war in the Middle East
- Oppose all forms of racism. Fight for jobs, homes and public services for all – Defend the right to asylum and fight against the onslaught against refugees
- Defend and extend LGBTQ+ and women's rights
- For socialist change, public ownership and democratic planning to tackle the environmental crisis
- For the right of self-determination for Scotland, including the right of the Scottish parliament to organise a second independence referendum. Fight for an independent socialist Scotland
- All candidates will stand on the pledge, if elected, of only taking the average wage of a skilled worker



1926 GENERAL STRIKE – PREPARING FOR A SHOWDOWN

In the first of a series of articles to mark the centenary of the British General Strike, Socialist Party National Committee member **Alistair Tice** looks at the events leading up to the strike.

The General Strike in 1926 did not come out of the blue. In fact, it could have come earlier. Britain was on the verge of a general strike in 1911, 1919, 1921 and 1925.

Even before the First World War, the 'Great Unrest' of 1910-14 saw a doubling of trade union membership and a series of mass strikes of miners, railway, dock, and transport workers, and even schoolchildren.

Despite defeating Germany militarily, British capitalism emerged from the war in a much weaker economic position, especially relative to US imperialism.

Although Liberal Coalition Prime Minister Lloyd George promised millions of demobilised soldiers "A land fit for heroes" in the 1918 'Khaki election' campaign, the ruling class was determined to drive down the living standards of all workers to try to restore the profits of British capitalism.

But they were also fearful that the example of the 1917 Russian revolutions, and that the mutinies and uprisings that ended Germany's war would spread to Britain. And with good reason.

Faced with the threat of unemployment and rising prices, 1919 was a year of mass strikes and civil disorder. Workers went on the offensive for shorter hours and higher pay. In total, 2.4 million workers took 35 million days of strike action. The Triple Alliance (of miners, rail and transport unions) was revived, although not brought into action.

Soldiers and tanks were on the streets of Glasgow against striking engineering workers, and warships moored in the River Mersey, when even the police went on strike. Lloyd George was later to say: "This country was nearer Bolshevism than at any time since". But unfortunately, the trade union leaders, both moderate and more left-wing, baulked at the prospect of overthrowing the government.

Miners did win concessions on pay and hours, but their demand for nationalisation of the coal industry was stalled by the government's Sankey Commission.

With revolution averted, and the severe post-war slump creating three million unemployed, the employers, backed by the government, went on the offensive.

In 1921, the mines were returned to the private coal owners, who immediately proposed massive wage cuts. Miners were then locked out for refusing to accept them and invoked the Triple Alliance for rail and transport union solidarity action.

The government declared a state of emergency and sent troops to the coalfields, including posting machine guns at pitheads. Faced with a government prepared for civil war, the union leaders capitulated on what become known as 'Black Friday', leaving the miners to strike on their own for three months before being starved back to work with huge wage cuts.

By the end of the year, employers throughout industry had imposed wage cuts averaging six shillings a week (approximately £19 today) on six million workers, and trade union membership fell by over two million due to mass unemployment.

A lorry loaded with cans of petrol is escorted and guarded by six mounted police officers on its way to a warehouse, passing striking workers PHOTO: PUBLIC DOMAIN

Faced with a revitalised German coal industry after the ending of the French occupation of the Ruhr, and the restoration of the Gold Standard with an overvalued pound in 1925 making exports more expensive, the coal owners proposed more drastic cuts of between 10% and 25% in wages and conditions. Tory Prime Minister Baldwin told the union leaders: "All the workers of this country have to take wage reductions to help put industry back on its feet."

This time, the rail and transport workers agreed to refuse to move any coal and the trade unions threatened a general strike.

An unprepared Conservative government bought time by conceding a nine-month coal subsidy while the Samuel Commission into the industry reported.

'Red Friday'

This retreat, which temporarily stopped the miners' wage cuts, was heralded as 'Red Friday' by the unions. Whilst it was revenge for the defeat of Black Friday, it missed the opportunity for an offensive struggle and possibly a general strike. Baldwin later admitted "We (the government and ruling class) were not ready."

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The government then used the nine months to prepare to defeat a general strike once the subsidy ran out. Ten government-appointed Regional Commissioners were given powers to control road transport, food and fuel supplies, and recruit special constables. Churchill set up the Organisation for the Maintenance of Supplies (OMS) to be a scab army to strike-break. And there was increased repression against the labour movement. 12 Communist Party leaders were charged with sedition and imprisoned. 167 striking South Wales anthracite miners were tried with 50 sentenced to prison terms.

But the Trades Union Congress (TUC) made no preparation or plans for a general strike until 27 April, just six days before it began. Unsurprisingly, the Samuel Commission rejected nationalisation of the mines and proposed reorganisation of the coal industry at some future date, but that there be an immediate reduction in miners' pay on the ending of the subsidy on 30 April. The right-wing trade union leaders wanted to accept the Samuel proposals, and Jimmy Thomas, the right-wing NUR railworkers' leader, admitted going begging to the government.

But the pressure of the miners and the working class forced a special conference of trade union executives on 29 April to make the call for a general strike from 4 May, with even Thomas's NUR executive voting for the strike. But it also agreed that the right-wing dominated General Council take over the running of the miners' dispute. And despite the near unanimous vote for a general strike, the right-wing TUC and Labour Party leaders still tried to negotiate a sell-out with the government right up to the final hour.

The question of political power

Marxists explain that an all out general strike poses the question of power. Who runs the country? The bosses or the workers? In a general strike, there is dual power or two contending powers. The state power of the ruling capitalist class or the emergent power of the working class and its organisations which could take over the running of society?

The ruling class understands this as well. In 1919 Lloyd George declared to the trade union leaders: "If you carry out your threat and strike, then you will defeat us. But if you do so... have you weighed the consequences? For, if a force arises in the state which is stronger than the state itself, then it must be ready to take on the functions of the state, or withdraw and accept the authority of the state. Gentlemen... have you considered and if you have, are you ready?" Moderate miners' leader at the time Robert Smillie reacted, "From that moment on we were beaten and knew we were."

Communist Party

This question of power faced the most left-wing trade union leaders like Arthur J. Cook (a figure like Arthur Scargill, leader of the 1984-85 miners strike) who was elected leader of the Miners Federation of Great Britain in 1924. And it faced the young Communist Party of Great Britain (CP), which was founded in 1920 under the inspiration of the victorious socialist revolution in Russia in October 1917. The CP brought together several smaller 'Marxist' organisations, including many of the most militant trade unionists and worker activists. Its membership doubled to around 5,000 by 1925 due to its interventions and initiatives in solidarity with the miners and other strikes.

In particular, they supported the development of the Minority Movement in the Miners Federation which helped get A.J. Cook elected as a left-wing leader of the miners' union, and the Minority Movements which spread in other unions. The CP then helped initiate the formation of the National Minority Movement with a founding conference in August 1924 of 270 delegates representing 200,000 workers. The Minority Movement was not set up in opposition to existing trade unions but to fight for a more militant policy and leadership.

Miners' leader AJ Cook (right) speaking at a Communist Party rally in 1928 PHOTO: PUBLIC DOMAIN



Its conference prior to the general strike in March 1926 attracted 547 organisations representing nearly one million workers, a quarter of the total trade union membership, so had real influence.

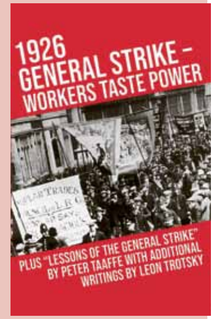
This conference, under CP influence, correctly called for the establishment of pit and factory committees, workers' defence corps under trade union control, and for trades councils to constitute themselves as 'councils of action' by mobilising all the forces of the working class in their localities, effectively a British form of Soviets. Mistakenly though, it also called for "All Power to the General Council" (of the TUC) at a time it was clearly obvious that the TUC leadership was going to betray the miners.

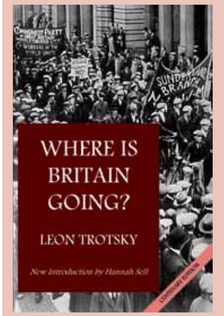
This false policy emanated from the political shifts in the leadership of the young Soviet Union and the recently formed Communist International (Comintern). Increasingly isolated following the defeats of revolutions across Europe, especially in Germany, the Soviet Union was increasingly falling into the hands of a developing bureaucracy headed by Stalin. The Stalinist bureaucracy's priority was to defend its own position, as opposed to seeing the future of socialism in the Soviet Union being dependent on successful workers' revolutions elsewhere. (Read more: 'The Collapse of Stalinism – its Causes and Consequences' at socialistparty.org.uk)

In 1925, under the guidance of the Comintern, the Anglo-Soviet Trade Union Committee was set up with the participation of leading left-wing trade union leaders like Arthur Purcell (Furniture trades union) and George Hicks (building workers trade union). This gave these left but still reformist trade union leaders an undeserved revolutionary authority, sowing illusions in them amongst worker militants and even Communist Party leaders.

But with the sharpening of the class struggle, these erstwhile Lefts had no real alternative to the right-wing Labour and trade union leaders that dominated the TUC General Council, in whom 'all power' had been invested. This left the Communist Party members and through them the National Minority Movement politically disarmed.

The 1926 General Strike began on 4 May, propelled by the willingness of the working class to struggle. As with all struggles, it put the all the leaders of the workers' organisations to test. 100 years on, the General Strike remains the most important event in the history of the British working class.

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Support NHS workers' fight to

SAVE OUR NHS

There are over 100,000 staff vacancies in the NHS – a vacancy rate of 7%. That is a root cause of why millions wait months for treatment and hours at A&E.

For years, the real-terms pay of NHS workers has been eroded, their conditions of work deteriorating in a health service deprived of funds and burdened by privatisation – allowing companies to profit from our poor health and forking out to pay PFI debts.

And yet the Labour government is overseeing an expansion of privatisation, and has made NHS workers a below-inflation pay offer.

Disgracefully, health secretary Wes Streeting has punished resident doctors, the NHS, and all of us patients, by snatching back his offer of limited extra doctors' training places. Surely if the NHS needs more training places, it needs more training places!

The 'crime' he is punishing is resident doctors organised in the British Medical Association (BMA) being willing to demand a course is set towards their pay being restored, after it was cut by over 30% in real terms between 2008 and 2022. They are taking six days of strike action from 7 April.

Speaking on the first day of the strike, Streeting described resident doctors as the "winners" among public sector workers of the best pay offers. Despite the bile that will be poured on resident doctors by the Labour government and the capitalist media, it won't be lost on other workers that the BMA's preparedness to call action, and the determination of the resident doctors to strike (94% voted in favour), is why. And all public sector workers need a pay rise!

Other health unions have rejected the government's pay offer too. Socialist Party members are fighting for the unions to organise action now.

Len Hockey, Unite branch secretary at Barts Health Trust, standing for election to the Unite Executive Council, said:

"Labour's imposed 3.3% pay 'deal' will further anger overworked health workers. This amounts to a substantial real-terms pay cut.

"The response from all health unions must be immediate. That must mean coordinated sustained strike action.

"Local, regional and national rallies should be organised, with reps' meetings in constituent unions called, and joint union meetings at all levels: in hospitals, districts and regions, and nationally."

Adrian O'Malley, Yorkshire and Humberside, standing for re-election to Unison Health Service Group Executive, said (in a personal capacity):

"The NHS unions must lodge a national dispute immediately. We must prepare the ground for coordinated strike action.

"The continuation of the Tories' austerity pay policy can be beaten by a united NHS workforce acting in solidarity together."



The Socialist Party says

- **Support NHS workers' struggles for fully funded pay, jobs and training - make the super-rich pay**
- **Kick out the profiteers - end and reverse privatisation of our health service**
- **Unions must lead the fight against Labour austerity, fight for a new mass workers' party**

WHAT WE STAND FOR: THE SOCIALIST PARTY'S MAIN DEMANDS ►►► see column on page 12

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