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the Socialist

Issue 1363 | 16-22 April 2026 | formerly Militant

CUT RENTS - BUILD COUNCIL HOMES

Fight for a socialist alternative to Starmer's Labour

JOHNNY REYNOLDS
SOUTH EAST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

Living and working in London, the cost-of-living crisis is felt most keenly through housing. Working people in the capital typically spend more than half of our income on rent.

Conditions are often poor, repairs delayed, buildings deteriorating, even for those in council housing. Hundreds of thousands are on years-long waiting lists, many more can't even get accepted.

A big majority polled support rent caps. Actually, councils could already be using existing powers to introduce effective rent controls by placing conditions on landlord licensing and registration. Councils also have the means to use financial reserves and borrowing to invest in building new council housing. The problem is that existing councillors, from all the establishment parties, refuse to take on the profit interests of the big developers.

Nationally, as of 2025, over 1.4 million homes have planning permission but are not under construction. Developers hoard the land as a financial asset, in part to keep prices and profits high, even when there is a clear need for high-quality, environmentally friendly council housing.

Housing problems don't exist in isolation. This is a system that prioritises profit over need. High rents exist alongside low wages and insecure work. We need councillors who are prepared to stand up to that system, and use their position to help mobilise a struggle to demand resources for our communities from Starmer's government.

That's why Socialist Party members are among those standing as part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) on 7 May. Fighting for the things we need to make our communities decent places to live: well looked-after green spaces, fully funded local NHS facilities, free flexible high-quality childcare, schools with funding and resources, expanded and free public transport, and more.

The capitalist bosses keep hiking their prices to protect their profits. Starmer's Labour government can find billions more to spend on war and destruction. We need to take the wealth off the super-rich to fund the services we need!

Vote TUSC on 7 May and get involved in the fight for socialist change.

● **Socialist answers to the housing cost crisis – page 5**



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

Defend the right to protest

The High Court ruled in February that the government's ban on protest group Palestine Action was unlawful. On Saturday 11 April, over 500 activists were arrested for expressing support for what the government regards as a 'terrorist organisation' – it remains banned while the government appeals the court's decision.

Meanwhile, far-right activist Tommy Robinson has called another 'Unite the Kingdom' demonstration for 16 May. This is scheduled deliberately to coincide with the annual Nakba demonstration to commemorate the Palestinian 'Catastrophe' - when thousands of Palestinians were forced from their land in 1948.

The Metropolitan Police has granted permission for the Tommy Robinson demo and refused permission for the Palestine protest organisers' planned route. "London is ours on May 16th", Robinson has posted on X.

Figures from the trade union movement have signed an open letter from Palestine Solidarity Campaign (PSC) calling on the Met to change its decision. Several Labour MPs have signed too. But Labour London Mayor Sadiq Khan has not. With responsibility "for setting the strategic direction of policing in London", neither has he used his influence to apply pressure on the Met and the government.

It is clear that this Labour government is determined to restrict the right to protest and to intimidate activists and trade unionists, including using the police and courts in an increasingly repressive way. For example, by getting injunctions to stop striking Birmingham bin workers and support from picketing bin depots.

The trade unions must lead in the fight to defend the right to protest, linked to building a struggle against Starmer's Labour government and its war and austerity agenda.


Police arresting a protester on suspicion of supporting Palestine Action PAUL MATTSSON


TOM JERVIS/CC

North Sea oil price rises
Stop the fat cats – nationalise!

JOE WOOLFALL
LIVERPOOL SOUTH SOCIALIST PARTY

North Sea oil prices have hit a record high in the past week, surpassing a peak set during the 2008 financial crisis. Already, working-class people have seen the effects as prices have started to soar at the petrol pumps.

This is occurring in the context of a 'stalemate' in talks between the US and Iran, leading to the Strait of Hormuz remaining shut, as the Socialist goes to press. Despite the apparent ceasefire agreement on the evening of 7 April, the strait has remained shut, with Iran suggesting that the US has broken the terms of the agreement. (see opposite)

In 'normal' times, roughly 20-25% of the world's oil passes through the Strait of Hormuz, with 80% of Asia's oil and petroleum transiting the strait.

Bosses of oil companies, in times of crisis, are raising prices and passing on the costs to customers. In fact, record prices will mean record profits for oil and gas companies, as demand has risen for North Sea oil and gas this means a windfall for the big bosses.

Instead of allowing these superrich polluters to get even wealthier, take them into public ownership. Nationalisation of oil and gas companies under democratic workers' control would mean prices would be under the control of working-class people, not the fat cats - who deserve no compensation.

As the world enters further chaos and disorder, the need for socialism becomes clearer. A nationalised oil and gas industry would mean we could transition away from polluting fossil fuels and guarantee the jobs and conditions of workers instead of making us pay for it. A democratic socialist world, based on cooperation not competition, would mean a world free from war, austerity and environmental destruction.

Water woes

Water companies seem to have no money when it's time to repair and improve our sewage system. Raw sewage was discharged into our rivers almost 300,000 times last year, despite it being one of the driest on record.

But five of them did have over £32 million to spare to spend on something else – raising our bills! After the mostly ineffective regulator Ofwat ruled that they could raise water bills by 24% by 2030, before inflation, the water companies wanted more. And it was money well spent! The Competition and Markets Authority has allowed these water companies to raise bills by an extra 2.2% on average. That means they will get £463 million more over the next five years, paid for by us!

We need to turn off the taps of profit for the water company bosses. Take them into public ownership with compensation only on the basis of proven need. Run our water industry under democratic workers' control and management. Pump investment into improving our leaky water system, with new reservoirs, sewage treatment facilities and modern pipes. And through this we could end the pollution scandal and bring down all our bills!

£1 million salary reward for job cuts

£990,000 is not a bad salary, most would agree. But it wasn't enough for Jason Tarry, chair of the John Lewis Partnership. His pay rose to £1.2 million for the year to January.

He probably got inspiration from MPs whose salaries rose by 5% to within touching distance of £100k from 1 April.

The John Lewis business has cut over 10,000 jobs in the past three years, with plans for more. The business still refers to its workers as 'partners' though!

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US-ISRAEL WAR ON IRAN FAILS TO ACHIEVE VICTORY

WHAT WE THINK



After nearly six weeks of Iran being pounded by enormous US military might, along with bombardment from Israel, the limits of this brutal force have been shown. Despite the firing of 21,000 missiles, those two imperialist powers haven't been able to impose their will on Iran, and US president Trump felt compelled to engineer a break from the war without any of their aims being met.

The ceasefire is built on sand, as it wasn't based on agreement on any of the issues under dispute, including whether the Israeli regime's war on Lebanon would end. Lebanon has continued to suffer horrific military attacks with thousands killed, urban areas and whole villages destroyed, and 1.2 million people displaced.

The theocratic Iranian regime held out against the complete capitulation demanded by Trump and has survived. It still has some missile capability, its stocks of enriched uranium, and it now has more incentive than ever to develop a nuclear weapon. Also, it still has a residual network of allied militias across the region to aid its interests. In some ways, that authoritarian regime is in a strengthened position. It has taken full control of the Strait of Hormuz through which over 100 ships a day normally pass, carrying oil and other commodities. The Iranian leaders that have come to the fore under the war conditions might demand more in negotiations with the US than they thought they could achieve before the war.

The mass movement of protesters who courageously went out onto the streets of Iran just a few weeks before the war now suffer the regime's use of the crisis to step up repression, including executions, and attempts to use the mass indignation with the assault on the Iranian nation in the interests of those at the top. While the Iranian masses have suffered thousands of deaths, destruction of infrastructure and increased deprivation, the religious leaders and the heads of the regime's strongest fighting force, the Revolutionary Guard, are raking in riches from exploiting the war economy and higher oil prices. In addition they have started to charge massive tolls on the cargo ships they allow to pass through the Strait of Hormuz.

Media reports made clear that Trump, contrary to his bellicose and genocidal rhetoric, had become aware of the disastrous direction of the war for US interests, and desperately needed to devise a way out. Iran's blockade of shipping and its missiles that were hitting energy installations across the region were impacting on the world economy. Domestically, Trump's poll ratings were sinking ever further, as petrol prices rose and there was no sign of military success being achieved. The US doesn't have an oil supply problem as it produces its own oil, but the price for US consumers is affected by world energy markets; and the US can't escape the overall adverse impact of the war on the world economy.

US imperialism

For US imperialism, there has been a range of consequences against its interests. One of its key aims is to counter China's influence in the Middle East and globally. However, while China has been economically threatened by the war, not least because around half of its imported oil comes from the Middle East, it has observed Trump's administration depleting the US's military arsenal, shifting weaponry from the Pacific to the Middle East, and showing itself to be the most destabilising factor globally. Russia, a China ally, is expected to gain up to $100 billion extra over the next year as a result of the now higher energy costs and because the US has reduced sanctions on its exports to try to mitigate rising energy prices. Overall, while the US is still the most dominant power on the planet, the war reflects and exacerbates the ongoing weakening of US imperialism relative to China and other world powers.

The war has also seen a further deterioration in relations between the US leaders and those in Europe, who have been condemned by Trump for not proactively assisting the US-Israel war. He has made more threats to withdraw support from NATO as a consequence.

For the Gulf state elites, the war has been greatly damaging to their interests as it has removed any aura of their countries being safe for investment and tourism. They are in turmoil, caught between their relations with both the US and China (not forgetting that Iran is in China's orbit), their dependence on US security, and the risk associated with their hosting of US military bases.

While Trump is in electoral difficulty regarding the US mid-term elections in November, Israeli prime minister Netanyahu is in an even worse predicament, facing a general election this year and a population questioning what his government's war on Iran has achieved. He had insisted that it would bring increased security for Israel but it is clear to most Israelis that it hasn't. Reflecting this situation, the leading capitalist opposition politicians - who all fully swung behind the war - have now turned to heavily criticising aspects of it.

Trump's options

As Trump has come up against the limitations of firepower, and resuming all-out war would only worsen the scenario for the world economy and for his poll ratings in the US, he likely wants to limit further military intervention. However, a decision to escalate can't be ruled out, which would be a nightmare for the Iranian population and further factors could come into play against the world economy, such as the Houthis moving to block the exit from the Red Sea, adding a second geographical blow to shipping.

For now, Trump is looking at other options, including the US navy now blocking trade from Iranian ports. This is one of Trump's many U-turns, because last month he lifted sanctions on some of Iran's oil exports, to aid global supply. However, Iran can still hit the world economy by threatening shipping, and as it has land borders with seven other countries there are land routes that can potentially be used to circumvent the US naval blockade. Every US military option only shows the inevitability of an eventual return to negotiations.

Meanwhile, the disruption to world oil markets has been the greatest ever and recovering from that will take years to achieve, even if Trump doesn't pursue further war on Iran. Along with rising inflation, government borrowing costs are increasing, as also are debts. This means lower global economic growth and will accelerate the timescale towards the next recession, for which many causal factors were already building up before this latest war. FT journalist Ruchir Sharma commented: "Never has the world entered a crisis of any kind with such high deficits and debt levels" (6 April). The world's poorest people are already bearing the worst consequences, unable to pay higher prices for food, fuel and other basic necessities.

At the same time, fearing where the world economy is heading, capitalist institutions – the European Commission for example - are warning governments against spending money to help ordinary people through the price shocks. The ruling class interests involved in such policies won't go unnoticed by workers and youth, layers of which can draw increasingly far-reaching conclusions about the class nature of society - and then can develop awareness of the central role of the working class in transforming it. There is also an impact on mass consciousness caused by the horrors of the war itself and wars such as those on Gaza and Lebanon. They further expose that the rotting capitalist system only offers a barbaric future to humanity, and they underline the necessity of a socialist alternative.

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to find out more about joining us today!



NHS profits

£12 billion
total spent by the NHS on private providers over two years

£1.6 billion
'leaking' out of the NHS as profit

Those profits could pay for 19,428 nurses or 9,178 doctors

£352 million
was paid out to pay just the interest on private sector debts

- Make our NHS public! Bring private health facilities in-house, with workers employed on NHS terms and conditions
- Nationalise the big pharmaceutical and equipment manufacturers and suppliers
- Scrap Private Finance Initiatives and write off the debt!
- Fully fund our NHS to be run democratically by workers, patients and the wider community. Make the super-rich pay!

Student loan interest capped, but we still can't afford it!

Scrap the debt, we need funding not fees

BECCA BAYMAN
LIVERPOOL SOCIALIST STUDENTS

Keir Starmer's government has announced that interest rates on student loans will be capped at 6% from September 2026. This decision is intended to calm growing outrage among students and graduates facing the rising cost of higher education. This small concession falls far short of addressing the actual problems with the system of higher education funding.

The cap will apply to 'plan 2' loans, taken out by 5.8 million students in England and Wales between 2012 and 2023. These graduates have massive debts, blown up by high interest rates meaning unless you are a high earner, the total amount owed increases even as it is being repaid.

While the interest cap is welcome, it is not a relief for students or graduates. The Institute for Fiscal Studies has said the concession will reduce interest for higher-earning students but will do nothing for lower-earning students who will spend a lifetime stuck with a stealth tax paying off their debts. During a burgeoning youth unemployment crisis, where many young people are struggling with precarious employment and low wages, the student finance system continues to place a disproportionate burden on the poorest graduates. As the government has frozen repayment thresholds, by the end of this parliament, people working fulltime on the minimum wage will have to pay.

Government ministers have defended the cap as a way to protect borrowers from potential increases in inflation 'due to the situation in the Middle East'. However, as household bills increase due to Trump's war, this interest cap will not stop the working class from having to pay. Starmer's government made it clear it was not on the side of students and young people when tuition fees were increased last year. As things stand, undergraduate fees will be over £10,000 per year by 2029, and with it, even more debt.

The National Union of Students declared the cap a "huge win". It definitely proves the government is under pressure. A mass mobilisation of students and young people fighting for free education could win more. This cap is not enough to lessen the decades of debt that will be carried by millions of us. Socialist Students' Funding Not Fees campaign calls for the scrapping of all tuition fees and the cancellation of student debt. Funding for our education system should come from taking the wealth off the super-rich, not students and workers.

Join the student fightback: join...

socialist students

- Visit **socialiststudents.org.uk/join**
- or text your name and school, college or uni to **07749 379 010**



MARY FINCH

Reform's super-rich exploits



RICSPRINTER123/CC

Former Tory minister, and now Reform UK's spokesperson for the Treasury, Robert Jenrick described his new party as a 'party for working people' in January. As they enter the local elections hoping to make gains at hated Starmer's Labour's expense, let's see how working-class the 'anti-establishment' party full of former Tories is.

Reform treasurer, and major financial backer, Nick Candy completed the most expensive property deal in the UK. He sold his Chelsea mansion for over £275 million.

Reform leader Nigel Farage has just purchased £2 million of the cryptocurrency Bitcoin. He did this for Stack, a Bitcoin treasury company whose chair is Kwasi Kwarteng, in which Farage had invested £215,000 at the end of last year. Kwarteng was Liz Truss's chancellor, whose short tenure in that job was disastrous for working-class people.

How can Candy, Farage, or Reform MP Richard Tice – in the news for a row about tens of thousands of pounds of tax paid on the dividends of his property company – have any idea what its like to be a working-class person struggling to make ends meet? If you're selling the UK's most expensive mansion then how can you represent people who have spent years waiting for a council house, or forced to spend half their wages on rent? If you have £2 million spare to purchase some cryptocurrency, what can you know about seeing food prices rising faster than your wages?

We need a party that actually represents the working class. When Socialist Party members stand for Parliament they pledge to only take the wage of a skilled worker they represent, so they rise with the class that they're fighting for, not sitting pretty on massive MP salaries. Instead of filling a party with millionaires we are building a party that will fight to take the wealth off them and put it to use for the good of the millions of us.

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

HOUSING COSTS CRISIS – WE NEED RENT CONTROL AND COUNCIL HOUSING

PAUL KERSHAW
ENFIELD AND LEA VALLEY SOCIALIST PARTY

Most of us don't need figures to be convinced that the cost of housing is a growing problem – but the figures do give a sense of the scale of the housing emergency. The inflationary fallout from war threatens to make it worse; we need a serious fightback.

Housing costs in Britain have risen by an eye-watering 41% over the last five years, according to the property group Savills.

The rise was partly driven by rising interest rates which hit people with mortgages directly as well as driving rents up. It means that housing is now more unaffordable than at any time on record. Further interest rate rises driven by the US-Israeli war on Iran now loom.

By March 2025 rents reached 36.1% of earnings on average, the highest proportion on record, according to the Chartered Institute of Housing annual review. This crisis hits young people particularly hard; 18 to 25-year-olds spend half their income on rent.

The parties of the capitalist establishment, from Reform and the Tories to the Labour government, are absolutely opposed to controls on rents, despite numerous opinion polls showing overwhelming support for rent caps. This year a poll for the Greater London Authority showed that three in four Londoners support rent control. Notably, polls have shown that a big majority of Tory and Reform UK voters support rent control. But when it is a choice of banks and landlords or renters, their leaders know what side they are on.

It is no surprise that homelessness figures have hit a record high. But many workers are barely managing to cover the rent. Employers like to use measures of inflation that exclude housing costs when calculating cost-of-living pay increases, trade unions must expose that and fight for pay rises that match our real living costs.

Social housing

'Social' rents, the lowest supposedly affordable rents charged by housing associations and councils, are government-controlled, but Starmer's Labour government has recently committed to allow them to be increased by more than inflation every year for a decade. That follows lobbying by social landlords who argue that rents need to go up in order to attract investment – tenants pay more in order to boost the profits of banks and financial institutions.

Adding insult to injury, tenants and shared owners face shocking unaffordable 'service charges', often bearing no relation to actual services provided.

Research carried out by the housing association tenants campaign group SHAC (Social Housing Action Campaign) shows that more than 63% of landlords were found to be overcharging for services when challenged in a tribunal. Typically, tenants do not have representation at the tribunal, but when they do, they succeed in 80% of cases.

This is profiteering, not just the occasional mistake, and that becomes even more clear when tenants get legal support. Councils should work with tenant and resident groups to support them and arrange advice and legal support to counter profiteering by landlords. Councils' 'needs budgets' should, alongside investment in housing stock, include resources to help residents protect themselves from bad landlords.

For example, the housing association Hastoe has told leaseholders at Harrowden Court in Luton that their service charges will go up by £500 per month from April, to cover fire safety work. Residents talk of "significant anxiety and stress" in a recent BBC report.

The BBC quotes Suzanne Muna of SHAC: "We are seeing increases of hundreds of per cent in some cases. The disregard by landlords for the impact of such increases is obscene - it is driving people into debt and into deep despair because they know the charges are extortionate, they can't pay, but they don't know where to turn."

It is vital that the workers' movement mobilises to keep down rents and demand the building of genuinely affordable council homes. In the past, rent control, secure tenancies and mass council house building were achieved as a result of struggle.

In Spain, the government has responded to the current crisis by introducing a freeze on rents, the measure has automatic extensions until the end of 2027. That should be a minimum emergency step here.

Before Thatcher abolished rent control in the 1980s, rents were assessed in relation to wages and local rent tribunals could order a rent to be lowered if it was not deemed to be a fair rent. To solve the housing crisis we need rent controls, democratically set by local communities based on wages; a programme of mass council house building, to provide housing for all instead of the current race to the bottom; and for local communities to have real democratic say about what gets built and where, for what we need not for the profits of a few.



PAUL MATTSSON



When is a council home not a council home? When it's built by Hackney's Labour council, apparently. "163 council homes" actually means "36" social housing units (and "for social rent" which still isn't clear if the council itself actually running them) - the rest are on market rates. These will be unaffordable for the 8,500 households on the borough's council house waiting list, never mind those who couldn't get on or have been put off trying.

In the past five years, housing costs have risen by 41%

The Socialist Party fights for:

- A mass good-quality, energy efficient and environmentally friendly council house building campaign. Councils should use their powers to take over empty properties and use them to provide secure housing for all who need it. Stop council housing sell-off
- Rent controls democratically decided by residents so people can afford housing. For council-run works services and landlord registers to improve substandard and dangerous buildings
- End the commercialisation of housing associations and registration of for-profit providers, run in the interests of big business and hedge funds. Take the housing associations into democratic public ownership. This could include the option to return to council ownership with independent tenant democratic control, or co-ops
- Councils to refuse to implement the cuts now and link up with other councils, building a mass working-class campaign to fight for the financial resources to reverse cuts, fund remedial works and for the public services our communities need. Use the wealth of the super-rich and big businesses for what we need not what makes a profit for a few
- Take the big construction companies, alongside the banks and big businesses that dominate the economy, into public ownership under democratic workers' control and management, with compensation only on the basis of proven need

Should socialists be standing in Tower Hamlets?

Socialist Party

WHAT WE THINK

The stand of Socialist Party member Hugo Pierre for the mayor of Tower Hamlets, backed by seven other council candidates under the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) umbrella, is a controversial one.

The victory four years ago of the Aspire party's Lutfur Rahman in Tower Hamlets' mayoral contest was a stand-out moment in the 2022 local elections. Aspire also won a majority on the council, with 24 seats to Labour's 19.

What role Lutfur Rahman and Aspire could play in the fight for a new, mass vehicle for working-class political representation across Britain was still to be determined. But right-wing Labour had been defeated in London's poorest borough – the site of the famous Poplar council rebellion in the 1920s, which Lutfur Rahman himself frequently references – and the possibilities were immense.

So with Aspire seeking re-election in May, is it right for socialist candidates to be on the ballot paper too?



PHOTO: GRINDTXX/CC



Protesting against the closure of domestic violence services in Tower Hamlets PHOTO: HUGO PIERRE


Lutfur Rahman PHOTO: ADAMKASH/CC

Aspire's record

Over the past four years the council has implemented many policies which the Socialist Party fully supports. Meals on Wheels have been reintroduced and free homecare for residents in need, with only one other council in England offering this service. A £1,500 grant University Bursary Programme has helped 2,400 students, while 2,800 16 to 18-year-olds in Further Education have received a £600 Education Maintenance Allowance. Tower Hamlets was also the first council to bring in free school meals for all primary and secondary school students.

But nevertheless, Tower Hamlets has not been able to escape the effects of the austerity squeeze on local councils' spending and the services they provide, from both the Tories and now the Starmer Labour government. There are still over 25,000 people on the council home waiting list, for example, while the borough has the seventh-highest private rents in the country, the highest proportion of overcrowded households, and the greatest levels of child poverty. There have been above-inflation hikes to both council tax and council rents too.

It was cuts in other services - the placement of homeless families - that produced the first split among the Aspire councillors. Now, this May, two councillors elected for Aspire in 2022 are standing for the newly registered Tower Hamlets Independents party in a borough-wide challenge.

Unfortunately however, neither of these local 'community independents'-style parties sees the fight for resources for Tower Hamlets as part of a national battle against austerity, mobilising the working class in the borough and linking up with struggles elsewhere. That's the critical argument that socialists will bring to the election campaign.

> **Aspire does not provide a forum for workers or their organisations to debate and discuss the way forward**

Vultures circling

Alongside extreme poverty, the borough also has extreme wealth flowing through it, with the Canary Wharf district within its boundaries home to numerous global banks and financial institutions. The rateable value of Tower Hamlets businesses, for example, is six times greater than the London borough of Lewisham just across the River Thames. Councils only retain a small proportion of the business rates that they collect but it has provided Tower Hamlets with a relative cushion - but not indefinitely.

The recent news that the giant JP Morgan bank, with a net income of $57 billion (£43 billion) in 2025, is seeking a business rate discount before building a new UK headquarters in Canary Wharf, is a sign of things to come, certainly as the world capitalist economy heads for stormy times. The Labour government, always putting the interests of big business first, is pushing the council to offer "up to 100%" for "a period of years", on a site that would otherwise generate £1.6 billion in rates over 25 years. The fightback cannot be limited to Tower Hamlets alone and needs a national political vehicle too.

But in its four years in office, what has Aspire done to build a national movement against austerity? Or to contribute to the struggle for a new, mass party of the working class?

No chance to debate

In the 1980s, Liverpool council, led by Militant the predecessor of the Socialist Party, defeated the then Tory government of Margaret Thatcher by mobilising the city's working class, with mass meetings, strikes and demonstrations alongside electoral victories, and spreading its campaign beyond. The Poplar councillors too did not limit their struggle to the council chamber or to their own borough.

In 1922, two of the rebel councillors were elected to parliament and used that as a platform to advance the struggle in Poplar and at the same time build what was then the still newly developing working-class based Labour Party. And yet Aspire did not even contest the 2024 general election, in Tower Hamlets or anywhere else.

But couldn't these arguments about how to defend what's been gained in Tower Hamlets have been made within the Aspire party rather than in an election campaign? Unfortunately, however, contrary to how it is perceived outside the borough, Aspire does not provide a forum for workers or their organisations to debate and discuss the way forward. There are no branches in a borough of 319,000 residents, or public meetings held. In Aspire's 2024 annual report to the Electoral Commission for example, it recorded "no visible activities during the year", with the councillors' group the only organised party unit. How can that be the basis to mobilise the Tower Hamlets working class to resist the coming attacks?

Compare this to Poplar, with nearly 70 trade union branches affiliated to the Poplar Trades Council and Borough Labour Party during its fight, or Liverpool with its 400-delegate strong District Labour Party meetings, which decided what the councillors should do, not the other way round.

The Your Party national officers informed local members by e-mail just days before nominations for the council elections closed that the party was "endorsing" Aspire candidates, without consultation, debate or even an online vote. That too is not a method that will enable a movement to be built to beat back the new local austerity agenda, but instead will prepare a new defeat.

That's why, when the alternative is an enforced silence before the Tower Hamlets working class, it is right for socialists to be standing in the elections in May.

Bevois – Southampton election

70 women tell socialist Nadia the services their community needs

SUE ATKINS
SOUTHAMPTON SOCIALIST PARTY

One of the candidates standing for the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) – fighting for 'people's budgets' to provide the services we need – is Socialist Party member Nadia Ditta in Bevois ward in Southampton. In the 2024 council elections, she won 854 votes, coming second to Labour. Before then it was Labour's safest seat in the city.

As part of her campaign, Nadia organised a 'Ladies Tea Party' to talk to women in the ward, and hear what they expected from their elected councillor. The room was booked for Saturday afternoon. 150 samosas and piles of cake were made.

But, we began to worry when only a handful arrived at 2pm. However, by 3pm the room was packed, with standing room only.

Over 70 women, some with babies in arms and toddlers in buggies, had gathered to hear Nadia's message – opposing war in Gaza and the Middle East, and linking this to the war in people's homes, as they struggle to put food on the table, pay the rent, and build a future for their children.

Nadia has come to make a difference, and build on the recent success. Nadia and Socialist Party led the campaign that forced the Labour council to refurbish the local 'Venny' adventure playground. Previously, they had said there was no money, and planned to close it.

Nadia asked the audience about what they wanted from their councillor. The reply was that they wanted someone to fight for the needs of the community, including:

- Stop fly-tipping
- Rent controls and registration of landlords
- Council-run youth clubs, and the children said they need a football pitch
- Full school funding, and free school meals for all

However, this will be a team effort, especially getting Nadia elected on 7 May. The mood in the room was that they want to get involved to help make this happen.

We also heard from Sayma, a local teaching assistant, Sakina, a police community support officer, and Azmi, a solicitor. They all explained the struggles they had had in reaching their goals in life. They were there to support Nadia fighting for what we need, not what the other politicians say we can afford.

There was then plenty of time for tea and talk, and by 5pm 150 samosas and piles of cake had all disappeared.

Help the campaign:

- Every Sunday until the election
- Election day 7 May
- Anytime!
- Contact Socialist Party organiser Nick Chaffey 07833 681 910


Standing room only at the meeting PHOTO: SOUTHAMPTON SP

Cardiff workers' Senedd election stand

Socialist Party member **John Williams** is the lead Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) candidate in Caerdydd Ffynnon Taf (Cardiff North and East) for the Welsh Senedd elections. He is a young hospitality worker, LGBT+ activist, and chair of Cardiff general branch of Unite the Union.



Caerdydd Ffynnon Taf candidates John, Helen and Dave PHOTO: HOUSE OF COMMONS/CC

"A lot of people in my industry think that politics isn't for them, that the establishment parties aren't offering anything different to help with our living conditions.

"But we need people like us in the Senedd, elected to fight for our class. I'm standing because workers need guaranteed hours, with no loss of pay, and flexible hours – decided by the workers, not by the bosses.

"I've been involved in campaigns to make sure that hospitality workers keep all their tips. It's disgraceful that the UK Labour government has retreated on that.

"Prior to the 2024 general election, Labour had pledged to give workers control over how tips would be allocated, but dropped the proposals in office. Unite the Union general secretary Sharon Graham slammed this as 'insulting.'

"And it's not just UK Labour. Look at the health workers at Cwm Taf Morgannwg, taking their fight for fair pay to Labour at the Senedd. Or the recent struggle of Cardiff bin workers against bullying culture and union busting by a Labour council.

"I'm proud to have stood shoulder to shoulder with striking workers, as well as bringing trade union solidarity to Trans Day of Remembrance and Trans Pride."

Helen Perriam, a nurse at Llandough Hospital, and Dave Bartlett, Cardiff Trades Union Council secretary, are also standing for TUSC in Caerdydd Ffynnon Taf.

Helen says: "I have seen firsthand what Labour and Tory cuts and privatisation have done to our NHS, and will stand up in the Senedd to fight every cut, and speak up passionately for more resources to allow nurses and health workers to provide the services we need."

Dave helped lead the campaign that saved health facilities at Cardiff Royal Infirmary.

He says: "Campaigning in our communities isn't enough on its own. We need a voice for the working class in the Senedd. It is time for the trade unions to end the funding of Labour, and to form a mass new workers' party instead."

All Welsh TUSC candidates have pledged that, if elected, they will forgo the full £76,380 Senedd member salary, and take home only a worker's wage.

Welsh TUSC is also standing two candidates in Gwyr Abertawe (Swansea and Gower).

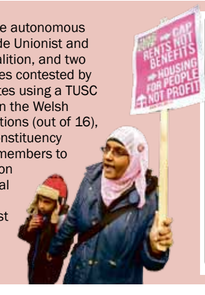
TUSC will be the 6th biggest bloc of candidates on 7 May

With nominations closed for the local elections taking place on May 7th it is now confirmed that the sixth-biggest bloc of candidates – behind Labour, the Tories, Reform, the Lib Dems and the Greens – are those using one of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) descriptions on their ballot paper.

The number of local authorities with scheduled contests this May is 136, with councillors being elected in around 3,000 wards or county council divisions. In total there are 289 candidates who are using a TUSC-registered description in the local elections across 64 councils – standing in one in five of the wards in those councils and just under one in ten overall – including candidates for the directly elected mayors of Croydon, Lewisham and Tower Hamlets.

At the same time there will be six constituency candidates using a TUSC description in the Scottish Parliament elections, agreed by the autonomous Scottish Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition, and two constituencies contested by five candidates using a TUSC description in the Welsh Senedd elections (out of 16), with each constituency sending six members to the Senedd on a proportional system.

- The full list is available online tusc.org.uk



TUSC AGAINST CUTS

A parents' view: 'we need to fight to keep that special needs provision for all who need it'



PHOTO: MARIQUITAS CK/CC

We wanted to give a personal view on what getting an Education and Health Care Plan (EHCP) meant to our son. It changed his life.

He started part-time nursery at the age of three. It became quickly apparent that he was totally different outside of the home. It continued into full-time primary school. He became really withdrawn; he was anxious, he didn't interact with anybody at all. We only noticed when picking him up, looking through the classroom window, he was sitting by himself when everybody else was off doing things. When teachers had the kids on the mat reading them a story or talking to them at the end of the day, he would be sitting with his fingers in his ears. He came home crying every day.

We did not know he had autism and associated sensory processing disorder. When we asked the teachers if there was a problem, they said no. He was quiet, not causing any trouble, but he was internalising his stress and anxiety. When class sizes are too big, inevitably teachers' attention is diverted by the noisy and 'trouble-making' ones.

Over time, we realised he would really struggle in busy places because he didn't like the noise, the amount of people, the bright lights.

It is totally wrong for anyone to think it is easy to get a diagnosis and an EHCP. In fact, it is now way worse than it was when we did it.

To get an assessment we had to get him to see three different specialists. After the diagnosis then we needed the EHCP, which involves meetings with representatives of the local authority and specialists to negotiate about what his needs were. Only then came the challenge of finding a suitable school providing the help that the EHCP brings by law. All of this can take years.

We talked to the school before that, and they tried to help but really did not have the resources. He did get some help, but not enough. Neither did they have the necessary training. For example, they were trying to get him to make eye contact with people, which was not comfortable for him.

His mum took him out of school, deciding to home educate. It started well and we were going out to different places with other home education people, even though he still wasn't interacting. But then he started to withdraw from doing things like that again, and his anxiety levels started to peak. He just didn't enjoy doing anything outside of the home.

It also got to the point where his mum couldn't teach him anymore, and socialisation was non-existent, so decided that he had to get back into school.

Eventually we got the EHCP and then a place at a local council-run special school. Every person is different, and some are more suited to mainstream. And we know the current government focus is on mainstream rather than special schools, but this special school suited him down to the ground. It took about two years for him to settle into school and be confident and start learning to his own ability. Then during the last couple of years, he really got into it, took GCSEs and passed with flying colours! He is completely transformed from the young kid in his primary school days.

He went on to college and is going to a local university in September. He would not have had any of that without getting the EHCP. He would never have had the resources to manage his anxiety, the means to study and pass GCSEs, a 'T' level, and go on to university. He probably would have had a life of being housebound, without a job and reliant on benefits.

That's why we need to fight to keep special needs provision for all who need it, and that's why it needs the resources put into it.

> **Without SEND he would never have had the resources to manage his anxiety, the means to study and pass GCSEs, a 'T' level, and go on to university**

DON'T LET STARMER STEALTH CUT SEND SUPPORT

Unions must fight for fully funded schools and democratic control



Protest against SEND cuts in Leicester PHOTO: STEVE SCORE

TESSA, SCHOOL SUPPORT STAFF AND SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBER

At the centre of Labour government plans to restructure funding for education are proposed changes to provision for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). Currently children with additional needs are assessed for Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) which carry a legal entitlement to support alongside allocated funding. The White Paper going through parliament proposes moving to a tiered system of support with the introduction of Individual Support Plans (ISPs) as a level below EHCPs. This is nothing more than a sly moving of the goalposts to remove funding from those with the highest need. Children who would have qualified for EHCPs in the past, but won't meet the new stricter criteria, will instead be pushed onto ISPs. This will leave parents and tribunals with no legal recourse to challenge inadequate provision, and mandatory key-stage reassessments could mean students losing their EHCP midway through school.

Anyone working in mainstream education today will tell you that we are in urgent need of more support in the classroom, not less! As austerity bites at home and in school, increasing the level need, and with diagnoses of Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder(ADHD), autism and other developmental conditions increasing, there already exists a huge number of children in need of EHCPs but not getting them.

Limited places in specialised educational settings mean mainstream schools are becoming overwhelmed with additional needs and struggling to meet them. We typically don't have the staff, training and resources to manage. These changes risk placing children in environments where they may fail and face exclusion from a lack of support.

Support staff like myself are the main source of support for SEND students and so EHCP funding is the pot our wages come from. With each academic year, as the funding from school leavers ends and that of the new intake begins, support staff are hired or fired, having to reinterview for their jobs if they are under two years in employment. The stress of this instability is high, with many support staff being mothers of young families trying to make work hours fit around looking after their own kids. If the reforms to SEND funding are passed it will only lead to increased job insecurity and anxiety for some of the lowest paid yet absolutely essential school staff.

On top of all this, the insufficient £4 billion assigned to the restructure comes from within the existing Department for Education budget and is destined to pay off school debts. Instead, debts should be written off and extra money used to fund services. What a disgusting sham this White Paper is, making vulnerable working-class children pay the price for austerity whilst funds are found to assist Trump in his deadly war in the Middle East.

Starmer's Labour government, like the Tories before them, have neither children's nor workers' interests at heart. They have no intention of making the super-rich pay, they'll just keep making us foot the bill, no matter the human cost. The National Education Union, which organises teaching and support staff, has launched an indicative ballot for strike action to save education. This needs to be the first step in a serious linked-up national campaign to oppose these attacks, demanding funding for education be based on the needs of students and not the other way around.

> **What a disgusting sham this White Paper is, making vulnerable working-class children pay the price for austerity whilst funds are found for deadly wars**

Billions spent on private provision

Councils in England spent over £2 billion on private provision for children with SEN in 2024-25, an 88% increase from 2020-21. Profit-making companies are capitalising from a lack of investment in state schools, charging average annual fees per pupil in excess of £63,000 – more than double state school costs.

Together with a boost in funding for state schools to meet the needs of all pupils, private providers should be brought into public ownership under local authority control.

£2bn spent by councils in England on private provision in 2024-25

SEND campaigner: Why I'm standing in the local elections for TUSC

ADEEL AURANGZEB
WALTHAM FOREST SOCIALIST PARTY

As the 7 May local elections approach, the council race in Waltham Forest's Markhouse ward has gained a passionate new voice. I am standing as the candidate for the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC), and have launched my campaign with a fierce commitment to champion the borough's most vulnerable residents. My pledge is to reverse the severe impact of austerity on Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) services.

For me, the political landscape is deeply personal. I would describe my family as direct victims of the local council's systemic negligence. My own son, who requires special educational support, has been left without a school placement for three years. This devastating firsthand experience has fuelled a drive for me to step into the political arena. TUSC has provided me an opportunity to stand up.

I am fighting for SEND children and adults in the borough who have been badly neglected due to cuts and austerity.

Beyond the urgent crisis in SEND provision, our TUSC campaign targets the broader economic pressures currently squeezing local families. We are drawing a hard line against the rising cost of living, pledging to stand up against any future increases in council tax and residential rents. Furthermore, we are campaigning to protect community assets, firmly opposing the handover of local housing developments to wealthy private builders.

Essential services should serve the public rather than corporate interests. We are making a stand strictly against privatisation of education and call for the immediate nationalisation of utility companies and railways.

I believe money should be invested for the welfare of the people, public funds should be redirected away from global conflicts and put back into community care.

As voters prepare to head to the polls on 7 May, I urge them to consider TUSC as an anti-austerity alternative, promising an uncompromising defence of working-class welfare and neglected families.

Join me in my fight – our fight. Fight against austerity, cuts, increasing rents and council tax and finish this two-party duopoly and also help to weaken right-wing hate-mongering opportunistic politics.

● Adeel is standing as the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition candidate for the Markhouse ward, Waltham Forest council on 7 May



Adeel campaigning to save SEND education PHOTO: WALTHAM FOREST SP

What councils could do now!

Councils have a role allocating school funding given by central government, including for SEND support. A 2025 report found 1,226 local authority-run schools are currently operating with a financial deficit. Disgracefully, some local authorities charge interest to these schools!

As part of a campaign to fight for the funding needing from central government, a willing council could instruct its schools to draw up budgets based on what is required to really meet the needs of their pupils, and give permission for budget deficits underwritten by council finances. Such a struggle would supplement the existing fight school workers are engaged in with the government over pay and funding. The National Education Union is currently carrying out an indicative ballot for strike action.

In council elections on 7 May, Socialist Party members will be standing as part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition, making the case for councillors to take that kind of fighting approach to help build the struggles against Starmer's austerity.

PCS national and group executive elections

Vote for a fighting, democratic PCS leadership

Keir Starmer's Labour government is preparing a jobs bonfire in the civil service.
The future holds redundancy and delayed pensions for thousands of civil servants, with expanded workloads, longer commutes and eroded pay for the rest.
The annual elections for the leadership of the Public and Commercial Services Union (PCS), which organises workers in the civil service and privatised government services, open on 16 April when the ballot papers are sent out for the National Executive Committee (NEC).
Voting for Group Executive Committees - for example, Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), Revenue and Customs (HMRC), the Home Office, Department for Education etc - will begin on 23 April with an email ballot.
Socialist Party members are standing as part of the PCS Broad Left Network (BLN), alongside other lefts in the union, to put forward a fighting 'coalition for change'.



Facilities management staff at the Cabinet Office on strike in 2025 SOCIALIST PARTY

The BLN says

Keir Starmer's pledge to "respect" the civil service has been proven hollow. A year ago, Chancellor Rachel Reeves announced a £2 billion axe to civil service jobs, firing the starting pistol on a year of cuts.

Thousands of jobs are already going through redundancy. Office closures have already been announced. Major investment in AI is laying the groundwork for job cuts to come – unchecked by any union campaign to demand controls on how AI is rolled out.

Meanwhile pay continues to be eroded under Labour. A majority of civil servants saw a below-inflation pay rise in 2024 and 2025, with no campaign to push back.

Thousands of PCS members are already fighting back. In Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), in Ofgem, in Met Police, in Parliament and elsewhere, our members have already taken strike action this past year.

What is missing is a united campaign across the civil service, not letting the government pick off employer areas one by one with their job cuts juggernaut.

The current Democracy Alliance (Left Unity/PCS Democrats) leadership has refused to carry out a national campaign on pay, jobs etc. It cannot be trusted to defend members against government attacks.

Whole-union campaign needed

A joined-up campaign that mobilises the whole union can win major agreements on pay, on jobs & AI, on office closures and hybrid working. Only a vote for BLN-backed candidates and determined socialist leadership can deliver this.

The union is crying out for a joined-up industrial strategy that supports reps and members to mobilise their branches, to defeat the 50% voter turnout threshold imposed by the anti-trade union laws, disgracefully kept in place by Starmer's Labour.

The BLN policy – passed by PCS conference – has forced the current leadership to organise changes such as branch ability to contact members directly, but with no timeline. Changes that support our reps are needed now. A BLN-led NEC will deliver this.

Political strategy

Last year, in October 2025, the union ran a political fund ballot. Very little was done by the NEC to win a resounding mandate from members to build a serious political strategy. We urged a 'yes' vote, and members voted 'yes'. Deadly silence has reigned since, on the political front.

It is essential that PCS does not leave Starmer's austerity agenda unchallenged. We must mount a serious campaign for pay, jobs and hybrid; we must fight for a workers' political voice.

The Cabinet Office has cut staffing by 13% in one year. The government wants to replicate this across all departments. A socialist-led NEC can build a united campaign to defeat the job cuts and win us the pay rise members desperately need to beat rising prices

Dave Semple, Department for Education group assistant secretary, BLN candidate for PCS Vice President

A Broad Left Network-led NEC will ensure that, whether you work for Westminster departments, Scottish or Welsh government, or the private sector, there will be a serious campaign on pay, jobs and hybrid working that can win for you. We will end Left Unity's cycle of cancelling campaigns and refusing to even try to fight for members' demands

Fiona Brittle, Scottish Government group organiser, BLN candidate for National Executive Committee

The Broad Left Network demands

- For a political voice that represents the interests of union members, and campaigns against attacks on public services, pensions and disability benefits
- Fight for every job. No to increases in workload, yes to properly staffed, high-quality public services
- Inflation-proof pay rises that win back what we have lost. For a 10% pay rise as a first step, and for an £18-per-hour minimum wage
- Flexible and hybrid working for all. No to quotas, no to office closures, yes to maximum flexibility for all
- Defend and improve pensions. Unite working and retired members in a serious campaign to bring civil service pensions back in-house
- End privatisation. Bring outsourced work back in-house. Facilities staff have fought valiantly for sick pay and fair treatment and are winning! No more privatisation
- Equality at work. Active opposition to discrimination in all its forms. Ensure that the full force of the union is felt to stamp out inequality and discrimination
- Repeal Tory 50% turnout thresholds immediately, and all anti-trade union laws
- For PCS and the trade union movement to lead the fight against racism and war. Jobs, homes and services, not racism!
- No to climate injustice. A democratically run National Climate Service could lead decarbonisation with no worker left behind

The PCS Broad Left Network candidates for the National Executive Committee

President
Bev Laidlaw (DWP)

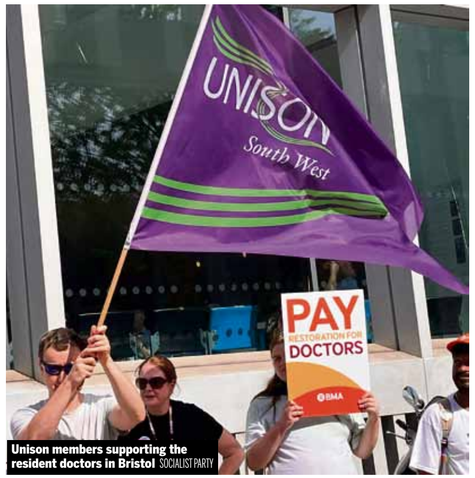
Vice Presidents
Ellie Clarke (Cabinet Office)
Rachel Heemskerk (DWP)
Dave Semple (DfE)
Hector Wesley (HMRC)

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

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

'Senior union figures aggrieved at resident doctors'

NHS workers stand in solidarity and want our leaders to fight for all of us!



Unison members supporting the resident doctors in Bristol SOCIALIST PARTY

In a Guardian article on 4 April, unions with NHS staff were reported to be "aggrieved" at the strike action of resident doctors in the BMA (British Medical Association).

Nurses, midwives, ambulance workers, porters and more are due to receive pay rises of 3.3%. 'Senior union figures' are reported to protest that "The deals we have been able to present to our members are becoming a much tougher sell"! They thought the "problem" was that resident doctors are leading their own negotiations – clearly if negotiations were in the hands of unelected, remote officials, inadequate pay deals would be much easier to agree!

They argue that the resident doctors can't see "the bigger picture" of "resentment" among unions representing NHS staff who were not doctors.

Most members of the other unions would prefer their leaders to get on with it and organise a serious fight on better pay for all.

Wiltshire and Avon NHS Unison members in solidarity with resident doctors: 'Revolt over jobs and pay is needed'

ROGER DAVEY
CHAIR WILTSHIRE AND AVON UNISON HEALTH

At my union branch meeting last week, we urged our members to sign a statement in support of the striking resident doctors. The statement explains that the resident doctors are "fighting for everyone who cares about decent public health care in the UK. A win for the resident doctors would also be a boost for all NHS workers, who are struggling with low pay and are witnessing at close hand the destruction of the NHS.

"The government, mainstream media and, shamefully, sections of the leadership of other health trade unions, try to present the strikers as greedy, unrealistic and irresponsible. But the BMA is right to criticise the government's offer of a 3.5 percent pay rise for resident doctors this year, pointing out that their pay is still a fifth lower in real terms than it was in 2008."

It went on: "Rather than doctors being criticised for claiming more than the 3.3% offered to most other NHS staff, they should be congratulated for showing that no one needs to settle for less. In fact, the government and some in the trade union leadership fear that such demands could be contagious, leading to a wider pay revolt after decades of shrinking pay. Such a revolt over jobs and pay and to defend the NHS is much needed, especially when there seems to be plenty of money available to fund what the government describes as 'the biggest sustained increase in defence spending since the Cold War."

Members of my union branch stand in full solidarity with the resident doctors. The unnamed 'union sources' that have been quoted in the national press criticising the doctors dispute are outrageous. It is urgent that our national leadership, especially our new left general secretary Andrea Egan, makes it clear that they too stand in solidarity with the resident doctors.

New general secretary addresses Unison health conference

Challenge to Labour austerity desperately needed

STEVE BELL
OUTGOING HEALTH SERVICE GROUP EXECUTIVE MEMBER, PERSONAL CAPACITY

Andrea Egan, the newly elected left general secretary, spoke at Unison health conference on the first day. The health service group in the union was seen by defeated right-wing general secretary Christina McAnea as one of her key bases in the union.

Andrea was quite clear that the 3.3% pay award was not enough and she attacked the Labour government for not doing enough to bring services back in-house. She also spoke about socialist principles, opposing war and attacks on migrant workers, and taxing the rich. She said that we can't wait for Labour and Labour can't 'out-Reform Reform,' we have to defend our workforce and migrant workers.

She congratulated all Unison members taking strike action, but unfortunately gave no lead on how she was going to expand this and make Unison a more visible, powerful voice within the trade union and labour movement.

Andrea was respectfully heard and given polite applause from the floor. It was positive to hear socialism mentioned, but it was not a speech that set conference alight, giving a lead to activists as to how we are going to challenge austerity from this Labour government, or tackle the rise of Reform, apart from going on demonstrations.

Although Andrea went further in her criticisms of Labour than the right wing that dominates the health group would want, for those who have been to many health conferences, the speech resembled many past general secretary speeches: talking about Unison's successes, mildly attacking the government, and asking members to change things for the better - thus leaving any fight down to members in the branches.

Members have been left waiting to see if Andrea's election will support the change in Unison that is needed, and to see the largest public sector union use its weight. Our leadership in health is still falling behind what is needed - a militant industrial strategy, arguing for national strike action across all sectors of the public sector, alongside Unison playing a leading role in the building of a real political alternative for workers.

- As we go to press, conference is ongoing. A report of the pay debate and more will be carried in a later issue of the Socialist

Manchester critical care workers striking over fair pay say 'We can all do this'


SOCIALIST PARTY

NHS WORKER

Unison members in the critical care unit at Northern Care Alliance Foundation Trust (NCA) covering Greater Manchester took their second day of strike action on 6 April. This involved both the day and night shifts, following initial action by the day shift at the start of March.

The dispute is about access to true overtime. Under existing terms and conditions, called Agenda for Change, overtime pay rates are achieved through collective bargaining. The employer is seeking to reduce their rate, which means an overtime pay cut of up to £10 an hour for some workers. It also forces them to a secondary employer because the bosses are putting overtime out to agencies.

A striking worker said management is "not meeting our standard terms and conditions, not taking into account the skills we have. Staff are struggling to pay bills and feed their families."

This attack is yet another example of employers attempting to slash workers' pay and ignoring agreed levels, aiming to meet the cuts demanded by Integrated Care Boards and central government rather than pushing back to demand the funding required to deliver services and meet existing contractual terms.

The strike remains strong. Another worker made an appeal: "Others can help, sign our petition, don't be afraid to stand up yourselves. We can all do this". Unison reps told Socialist Party members: "Our members are not only standing up for themselves and their families, they are standing up for the future NHS workforce".

The workers at NCA will not be the only NHS workers affected by this. There should be a national campaign by Unison and all the health unions to demand restoration and maintenance of pay and conditions for all NHS workers. Leaving the campaign to be achieved branch by branch could lengthen the dispute and leave some branches and members exposed.

- Messages of solidarity to unisonnca@nca.nhs.uk

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

Unison NEC: Starmer-supporting right wing tries to hold back debate

Rejecting the partnership approach to Starmer's Labour, in December Unison members voted for a left general secretary for the first time in the union's history. But the right still have a majority on the National Executive Council (NEC) and are trying to assert their control.

JIM MCFARLANE
UNISON NEC MEMBER, PERSONAL CAPACITY

The National Executive Council (NEC) of public sector union Unison met in early April, in the main to prepare for the National Delegate Conference to be held in June this year.

Thanks were given to April Ashley, Socialist Party member and long-standing Black members' NEC rep, who is retiring. April played a great role over many years in supporting socialist ideas and the need for a union that builds struggles in the workplace in her role on the NEC.

Newly elected left general secretary Andrea Egan produced a report which outlined some of the work she has begun to put in place since her election. It was reported that she is in the process of setting up a 'Manifesto Delivery Group'. NEC members asked to be informed and involved in the work of the group, as well as reports on any progress or delays.

One of her main manifesto pledges was to review Unison's relationship with the Labour Party. Given the widespread disdain for Labour, Unison members will be keen to see this progressed. Socialist Party members are fighting for activists, members and branches to campaign to get this key issue democratically discussed across the union and at National Delegate Conference. It was reported that just 13% of union members currently pay in to the affiliated Labour Link Fund. Yet year after year national conference is blocked from discussing the issue.

The NEC voted on numerous motions and priorities for conference in June. A motion that could result in activists being prevented from speaking in a 'personal capacity' on public platforms such as at demonstrations, lobbies and public meetings, has been put on the agenda for the third time in a row. It has been decisively defeated both times previously by conference delegates as an attack on the right of free speech and of showing solidarity.

When there was a left majority on the NEC (2021-25) it rightly opposed this. The union already has rules in place for anyone who would put forward discriminatory ideas. But the now right-led NEC has voted by a majority to support it this year, in a clear attempt to prevent left activists from putting forward a fighting programme and applying pressure to the right-wing NEC. It is something that branches should organise to oppose at conference.

Plans were presented by the right majority to the NEC to ask Angela Rayner, Labour MP and former Unison NEC member, to speak to conference on her role in bringing forward the Employment Rights Act.

This prompted a heated debate and vote. This highlights one of the many reasons why trade unions need political representatives in parliament and council chambers who will fully support union policies and members' interests. The Employment Rights Act has brought in some limited concessions to workers' rights but does not go nearly far enough - particularly on the Tory ballot turnout thresholds which are still in place, and trade union recognition for collective bargaining.

Angela Rayner is now a backbench Labour MP, but in her role as Deputy Prime Minister had no problem voting to maintain the two-child benefit cap, cutting disability benefits and selling out the WASPI women, all against long-held union policy. She was suspended from Unite membership due to her role supporting the brutal strike-breaking Birmingham Labour council in the bin strike.

No politician should be given an uncritical platform and valuable conference time with that track record. Members at conference will have an opportunity to show their opposition and the NEC majority who voted for this will have to answer to members.

RMT tube drivers prepare to strike over compressed working week



PAUL MATTSSON

RMT MEMBER
Tube drivers in the RMT (Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers' Union) will be striking over four days from 21 April to oppose the imposition of a compressed working week, with longer shifts, longer spells of driving between breaks, short notice changes of duties, and a massive restriction on the right to transfer locations.

Management is trying to sell the plan as a four-day week, but RMT drivers have seen it for what it is. The proposal runs to many pages and will impact on almost every aspect of tube drivers' working life. RMT members rejected it in a referendum by more than 9:1.

RMT represents about half of all tube drivers. The Aslef trade union also represents half. Regrettably, Aslef has accepted the compressed-working proposal, although a majority of all drivers, across both unions, opposed it.

Tube management had agreed to review the proposal and negotiate on all elements of it. But, so far, no revised proposals have been made. Unless this changes in the days before the scheduled strikes, the action will go ahead with picket lines at tube depots across the network.

Stop Brighton Labour's library cuts



Young people protesting at Brighton library cuts SOCIALIST PARTY

GLENN KELLY
BRIGHTON AND HOVE SOCIALIST PARTY

As part of the Socialist Party campaign to force the council to reverse library cuts, we organised a protest outside the main library on Sunday 12 April – the day new reduced opening hours were to begin.

School and university students spoke about how the library study and work space were critical for them and their studies.

They can't afford to use local coffee shops' Wi-Fi at £3.50 a coffee, and they don't have the space to study in their overcramped digs, and are unable to afford Wi-Fi.

The cut in opening hours will bite hard. Previously, the library service director had told us herself that "she could fill the work stations in the library three times over. Students are queuing up even before the library was open to try and get one of the 40 workstations".

One former homeless man told us: "The library had been a lifeline for me. Particularly in the winter months, a chance to be in a safe and warm space, where I could read what I couldn't afford to buy".

Alongside Socialist Party members, who spoke at and led the protest, we were joined by the trades union council secretary, as well as Your Party and Green Party members.

We, of course, welcomed all support. But we also laid down the challenge that anyone seeking our votes in the Brighton council elections next year should commit to reversing all the library cuts, and reopening the two libraries already closed.

We are now planning to bring together the supporters of the campaign to discuss the next steps to force the Labour council into a U-turn.

University and College Union (UCU) members at London Met become the latest group of university workers forced to fight massive job and course cuts as the crisis in post-16 funding deepens



SOCIALIST PARTY



Southampton



Swansea ALEC THRAVES

South Yorkshire says – 'nationalise water'

PETE DYSON
SOUTH YORKSHIRE SOCIALIST PARTY

In recent months, on our Socialist Party campaign stalls in Barnsley and Doncaster, we have been running a petition for the renationalisation of the water industry.

We have all seen bills rising, and greater sewage problems in our rivers and seas. We are feeling the strain, placing added pressure on households already grappling with a cost-of-living crisis.

For a service that is essential to life, the idea that access is becoming more expensive, while companies continue to distribute dividends, has struck many as deeply unjust. As further stories of polluted rivers and rising bills emerge, trust in the system is eroding.

On our regular stalls, many people are angered that the CEO of Yorkshire Water received £3 million in salary and bonuses in the last two years And yet, sewage was still being dumped in our rivers and seas.

The contrast between environmental decline and financial gain is making it harder for the establishment parties to defend privatisation.

Many are keen to sign our petition, and are increasingly vocal about the water companies, and what they see as an outright rip off.

The £85 billion siphoned off in dividends since privatisation is sickening. For many, the nationalisation of the water companies could not happen too soon.

Swansea election campaign kicks off

RHYS CASTLEY
SWANSEA AND WEST WALES SOCIALIST PARTY

Before we had even finished setting up our campaign stall, we had someone come up agreeing we need a new mass party to oppose Trump's wars and the rampant cuts here in Wales. We had hundreds of people, from all backgrounds and ages, taking leaflets and stopping to talk to us about the many issues they face, from NHS funding, to jobs, to Trump's horrific wars across the world.

The level of engagement we got clearly shows people are disillusioned with the main austerity parties, and are desperate for an alternative socialist voice they can support in the upcoming election. And people agreed with us when we said that the trade unions must take the lead in forming a new workers' party.

Organise now for 'Socialist Saturday' 25 April

Every week, whether there is an election on or not, Socialist Party branches campaign in our local community, fighting for the services we need and in solidarity with workers' struggles. It is also a vital way to assess the mood, to sell the Socialist, to meet potential new members of the Socialist Party and to raise funds to help our campaigning.

Over a million people will have the chance to 'vote socialist' on 7 May. There are nearly 300 candidates standing for the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition, among them many Socialist Party members.

Faced with the crises of the profit-driven capitalist system, an increasing layer are looking for an alternative. And we want to meet them!

To do so, many Socialist Party branches are organising for 'Socialist Saturday' on 25 April, a mega day of action aiming to meet as many as possible with our socialist message against austerity and war.

How many people can you meet and invite to a Socialist Party public meeting? How many supporters can you inspire to come and help us on the day? What slogans and demands are going to be most effective at engaging workers and young people in your area?

Get organising now! And if you are not yet a member – get in touch to find out how you can help with our campaigns.

Lewisham Council – one rule for socialists, another for establishment parties

BERKAY KARTAV
SOUTH LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY ORGANISER

The socialist challenge in Lewisham's mayoral election began by challenging Lewisham Council's stringent conditions on our electoral statement. Every candidate can have a statement in booklets sent out by the council to every household in the borough.

There are certain rules around what you can and cannot include. But it seems Lewisham Council has one rule for socialists and another for others.

We were told that advertising the details of a public meeting, where our candidate will be speaking and answering questions about why we are standing is "unacceptable and must be deleted". Even though the neighbouring borough Croydon has allowed our mayoral candidate's meeting details to be in the booklet.

The council told us that we can't include any contact details, for example the email address of our candidate or our website, or a QR code linking to a newsletter about the record of when the Socialist Party had elected councillors in Lewisham in the 2000s. But another candidate had his Twitter, TikTok, LinkedIn, website, and a QR code.

We were told that our contact details were not allowed, because this is "explicitly a call-to-action to join a political movement/party, engage directly with the campaign and make contact with campaign organisers."

The Green candidate was rightly able to ask "will you join me?" in his statement, and included a website link. But, outrageously, socialists were barred from asking if people would like to help our campaign.

The council also requested we remove a short paragraph referring to the record of Greens in areas where they have been in power, voting for cuts. We asked them to justify this, and they couldn't. So, we kept that paragraph, and it still got published.

Mayoral booklets circulated by the council are a good opportunity, especially for smaller parties with limited resources like ours, to get across our message to voters in Lewisham. Having contact details, like other candidates were allowed, is an opportunity for voters to ask more questions and, if they wish, help campaign against Lewisham Labour's brutal cuts. But we were denied this opportunity by Lewisham Council.

Despite these restrictions, Socialist Party member Jay Coward, standing for Lewisham mayor for the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC), has used the election statement to put forward a fighting socialist alternative – a no-cuts budget that meets our needs, and a mass campaign to twist this Labour government's arm into paying up, instead of forcing workers to pick up the bill.

BBC censors socialists

BEN GOLIGHTLY
TUSC CANDIDATE IN GWYR ABERTAWE

BBC Wales Today Evening News reported on a hustings in Langland, organised by Surfers Against Sewage. Surfers Against Sewage criticise decades of failed regulation and underinvestment.

The campaign had reports of 212 people in Wales becoming ill from pollution in local seas, rivers, and lakes in 2025. Sewage was released into Welsh waters for a million hours last year.

The BBC report outlined each party's stance on the issue, presenting a quote and each party's logo.

But it did not include a quote from myself, or from the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC), despite our attendance at the hustings, or the fact I represented TUSC at the hustings. We were not approached by the BBC for comment.

In fact, we were the only party present not to be fairly covered. The BBC programme even included a quote from the Conservative Party, despite the Tories declining their invitation to attend.

The BBC coverage was selective, not politically impartial, and therefore "reasonably regarded as intended to promote any parties or candidates over any others". This is against the BBC's own guidelines.

Socialist Party

WHAT WE STAND FOR

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

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

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

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

CWI CIT

WORK, PENSIONS AND BENEFITS

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

PUBLIC SERVICES

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

ENVIRONMENT

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

DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS

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

SOCIALISM AND INTERNATIONALISM

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

Do you agree? Join the fightback!

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Why I joined – socialists raised my optimism

SAM HARVIE
WORCESTER SOCIALIST PARTY

I've been a socialist for most of my life. I lived under a Labour government and then Tory dominance – that brought austerity close to my working-class family's home. Even as a kid, I grew up with a vast dislike of the monarchy and the rich.

During university, after seeing election after election and referendum after referendum, it was clear that the existing political set-up was not going to bring about real change.

Movement from below

However, I saw a more organised mass movement start to form under Jeremy Corbyn's tenure as Labour leader. I reflected on how we could change society to work better for working people.

But, once this was squashed, by the neoliberal capitalists' puppeteering Keir Starmer and his cronies, I had to think again: "What could I do?"

I spent hours across YouTube and social media diving more into socialist ideals. We need organised action. And that doesn't start from inaction, but from each individual's action. This was always present in what I was reading and viewing.

With US imperialist aggression abroad and British politicians targeting the most vulnerable through cuts and targeted rhetoric, I felt the need to act.

I took a leaflet

When Corbyn was touring the country in the run-up to the 2019 election, he visited Worcester. There, I was given a small leaflet from a member of the local Socialist Party branch, and felt a wave of optimism. But with the 2019 election defeat, this was short-lived.

However, that leaflet back then raised my awareness of a more organised avenue of action. Later I finally acted, and put my details forward on our local Socialist Party branch website, before going along to my first meeting.

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



MAY DAY GREETINGS 2026

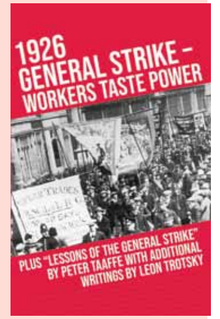
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Chile: Struggles stir in first month of hard-right government



José Antonio Kast LULA OFICIAL/CC

CELSO CALFULLAN
COMMITTEE FOR A WORKERS' INTERNATIONAL CHILE

Barely a month was enough for the ultra-right government to launch huge attacks on Chilean workers and their families. From the first day of taking office, systematic attacks against the working class began.

In just one month, the government of the ultra-right and the businessmen, headed by José Kast, has carried out repeated attacks on the living standards of workers, students, and the poor.

With the brutal rise in oil and gasoline prices, we are seeing everything on the rise, including basic food costs. The government refused to use 'MEPCO', a mechanism that the government has for the stabilisation of fuel prices, instead passing on the increases directly to the population. According to the government, the state must reduce costs. It also uses the excuse that the Chilean state is bankrupt, which economists, both right-wing, social democratic and progressive, have denied.

But on the other hand, we see how big businesses continue to increase their profits via price increases. This government wants to lower taxes on the richest sectors of the country (for the richest 1% of society) and in this way increase the profits of the large economic groups. In other words, the rich will become even richer and the poor will become poorer.

But not satisfied with these attacks on the living standards of the working class, they have also taken other measures, such as withdrawing 43 decrees on environmental issues that are being discussed in parliament. These seek to prevent the destruction of the environment by large mining, fishing, or forestry companies.

At the same time, a series of attacks are being conducted in the field of human rights. Under the previous government headed by Gabriel Boric, the 'Search Plan' (a commission) was created which was intended to search for all the detainees who disappeared under the dictatorship of the right and the Armed Forces between 1973-1990 and whose remains are still not found. The main people in charge of the Search Plan have already been dismissed from their posts, and it is almost certain that nothing will continue to be done about this issue.

Another relevant issue is the withdrawal of the fisheries law that was being processed in parliament. This means that the 'Longueira law' is maintained. This legislation was adopted in Congress as a result of bribes to several parliamentarians who ended up approving a law that gives the Chilean sea to seven families. This has a devastating effect on fishermen, among whom are also the lafquenches (Mapuche fishermen). The only ones to gain from the new legislation are the large fishing and salmon companies in Chile.

The government will also apply 3% cuts to all government ministries. This means that health spending will be reduced by more than 517,000 million pesos, in an area that is already operating at its limit. The limitations and restrictions on healthcare will affect more than 15 million people. In education, a cut of 524,000 million pesos will be carried through. This will make the situation in education even more precarious, where there are also many limitations on resources. There will also be further measures to limit even further access to free higher education, which is already very limited.

The cuts in the other ministries have the same objective; to limit the few social rights that the most oppressed sectors of Chilean society still have, such as the construction of social housing.

Support for the government has fallen rapidly. The government of José Kast has gone from winning 58% in the elections to having barely 41% approval in just a month. This must be the first government since 1990, to date, to see support among the population erode so quickly.

Our perspectives were that after six months or so, we would see a reaction against the government of the ultra-right. But already we have seen massive mobilisations, such as the one on 22 March, on World Water Day. Thousands of people marched through the centre of Santiago. There were also mobilisations in Valparaiso and other cities in Chile. The marches organised by the environmental social movements sought to protest the withdrawal of 43 environmental decrees by the government of Kast, and to warn about risks to ecosystems and access to water.

High school and university students also marched in Santiago on 26 March, two weeks after Kast took office. The protests were called by ACES and Confech (organisations of secondary and university students). They rejected the 3% cut in education and the attacks on free education, which are a massive setback for that sector.

What should workers, students and residents do in the face of these brutal attacks on our living standards?

The working class throughout its history has only one way to defend its most basic rights, such as the right to a dignified life - through mass struggles. A fundamental tool of workers' struggle has historically been to organise a general strike to stop the abuses of the bosses, not only in Chile, but throughout the world.

We believe that the time has come to start preparing a plan of organisation and struggle. It is not enough just to call a general strike; we need to organise local committees of struggle in every community, place of work and study. These need to be formed in every town or village, in every commune, in every region, in every corner of this country, to prepare for a successful strike and stoppage, and to force the employers and the right to respect our minimum rights as human beings.

If the workers cannot organise a successful struggle, the right-wing and the bosses will override all our rights and will take us back to the last century or even further back.

The struggle for a workers' government and a socialist society is still more relevant than ever before in the history of humanity.

Socialism or barbarism, there are no other alternatives!

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We won't pay for Trump's wars

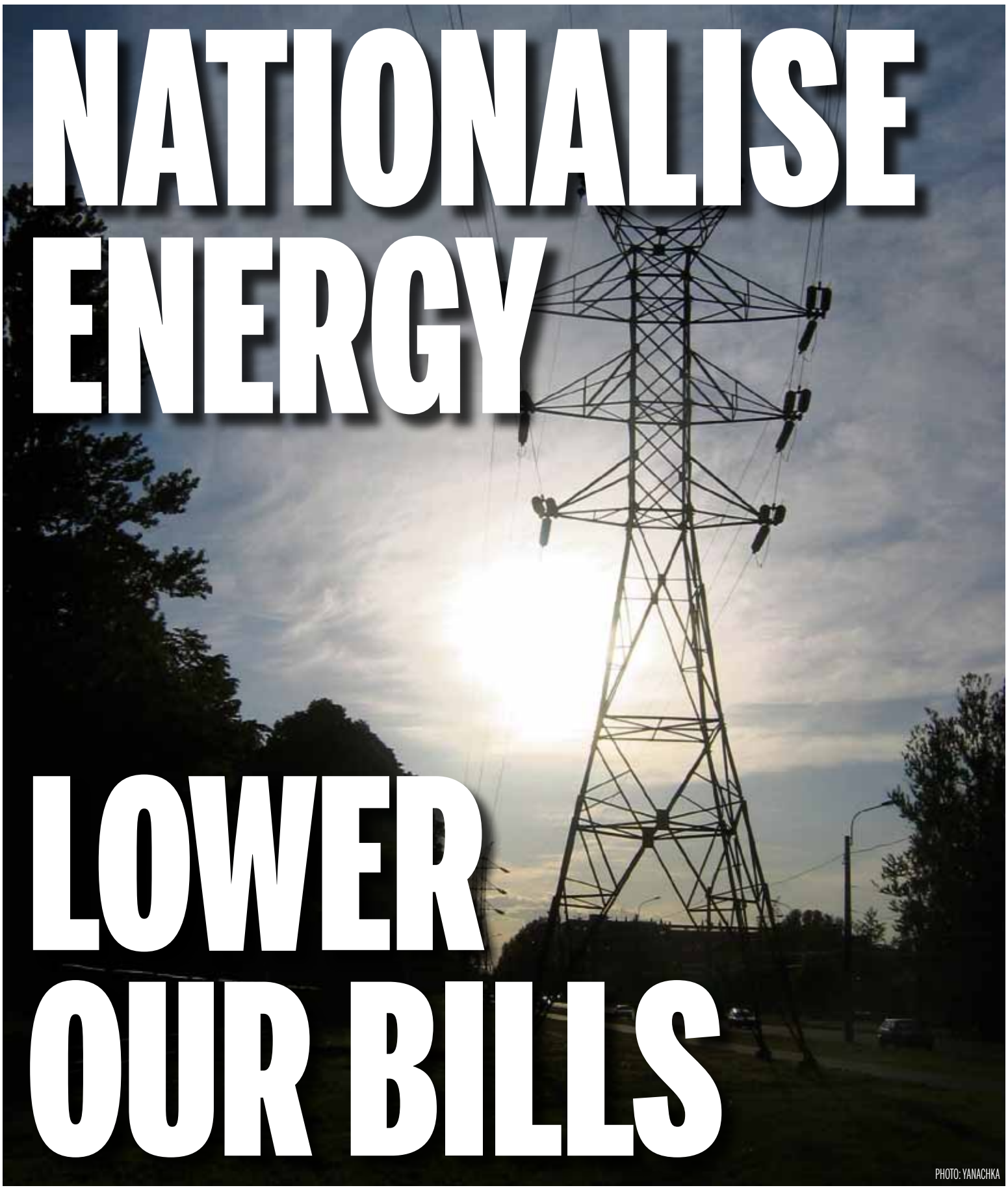


PHOTO: YANACHKA

JOE WATERS
DEVON SOCIALIST PARTY

The average household will be £480 worse off over the next financial year due to inflation caused by Trump's war on Iran, according to the Resolution Foundation think tank. That estimate would put millions of households under significant financial pressure, and was made before talks between US and Iran broke down and the US imposed a new naval blockade on Iran.

Energy companies made massive profits during the cost-of-living crisis which started a few years ago, and continue to do so. Their levels of profit have been so obscene that even the Tories subjected them to a 'windfall tax' from 2022, but this has only raised £12 billion so far - a fraction of the profits generated in that time.

Labour Chancellor Rachel Reeves is insistent that any government support on energy bills will be limited and targeted at the poorest households, so most will get nothing. The Labour line is that any increases in government spending or interventions in private industry would be 'fiscally irresponsible.' What could be more irresponsible than leaving the entire population at the mercy of predatory, profit-seeking capitalists?

When the price of energy goes up it raises prices for everything. We need to end private ownership of essential infrastructure and nationalise the energy industry under the democratic control and oversight of workers and service users to allow decision making in the interests of the majority. On this basis, the massive amounts of money which currently get paid out to shareholders, could instead be used to lower prices for consumers and be invested in improvements to infrastructure.

The alternative is to continue to allow the tiny number of very rich people who control the energy companies to effectively decide what living standards we are allowed to have. The brutal logic of maximising profits gave us the ongoing cost-of-living crisis - and the capitalists will not blink at going further and taking more if they think they can get away with it.

So we've got to get organised to fight for a socialist alternative, including as part of that process a party that represents the working class. Socialist Party members are standing as part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition in May's elections to say 'the working class won't be made to pay for Trump's wars!'

WHAT WE STAND FOR: THE SOCIALIST PARTY'S MAIN DEMANDS ►►► see column on page 14

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