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TUSC AGAINST CUTS

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Nadia

NADIA DITTA
SOUTHAMPTON SOCIALIST PARTY AND TUSC CANDIDATE IN BEVOIS WARD

It feels like everyone we speak to is fed up with Keir Starmer's Labour and their failings. People are angry, many are struggling and tired of trying to survive – now facing a new cost-of-living crisis.

Two years ago, in the 2024 local elections, we nearly beat Labour in what was once their safest seat in the south. Then, even before Starmer had got into Downing Street, lots of our supporters were angry at his support for the Israeli state's genocidal siege on Gaza.

We met hundreds of people who were angry about war in the Middle East, and fighting wars in their own homes to keep up with the rising cost of living and to keep food on the table.

Since, we have campaigned to save the only green space in our neighbourhood – and won! The Labour council had planned to sell 'the Venny' adventure playground. Our campaigning forced them into spending money to restore it. Now hundreds of children use the park.

We are fighting against all the cuts, and know that to improve our area will mean a fight for funding. It's in the news every day the bumper profits for oil bosses, as well as all the billions being spent on wars. People can see through the lie that 'there isn't any money for services'.

In our area, people want to deal with fly-tipping first, we are fighting to reinstate free bulk waste collection. We are also fighting to restore and invest in youth services, as well as for rent controls.

Labour locally are trying to use the threat of Reform to save their own skins. But our message of a united working-class fightback against the cost-of-living crisis is what can really cut across their support. And in Bevois, it's getting a real echo!

If you're in Bevois, vote for me. Where you can, vote for TUSC. Let's beat Labour and their cuts!

- Socialist Party members are among the 300 candidates standing for the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition on 7 May, in the Welsh Senedd, Scottish Parliament and English local elections

- **Read more on what we're fighting for pages 2-5**

MAY DAY PULLOUT GREETINGS FROM THE WORKING-CLASS MOVEMENT

1926 GENERAL STRIKE CENTENARY: WHEN WORKERS TASTED POWER ▸▸▸ p8-9

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

Councils can provide free school meals for all

As food prices start to ratchet up, many children will be going hungry. Councils have the power to offer free school meals to all children – including in school holidays. They could also bring back meals on wheels services for elderly and disabled people, running them in-house instead of pouring money into the bank accounts of private providers.

Save Plymouth CATERed

ED EVANS
PLYMOUTH SOCIALIST PARTY

The planned liquidation of Plymouth's school meals provider, CATERed, is a stark example of the human cost of austerity and a system that puts budgets before basic needs. When a public service is forced to operate like a commercial business, it is the community that loses.

For over a decade, the co-operative has provided 10,000 meals a day to children in 59 schools, prioritising fresh, locally sourced food over profits. Now it faces closure.

Schools in Plymouth receive just £2.66 per meal, far below £3.40 in Wales and £3.30 in Scotland, while food costs have surged by more than 50% in three years, and labour costs by 28%.

The consequences are immediate and severe. CATERed employs 237 staff, many now facing redundancy. Services have already been cut, including meals-on-wheels provision for 150 elderly residents. This represents a wider retreat from public provision, hitting both the young and the vulnerable. The council claims it cannot afford to continue subsidies beyond a £600,000 stopgap. Yet what is affordable is a political choice, one based on refusing to fight for more funding from central government. Plans to hand provision to private contractors threaten a race to the bottom in food quality, wages and conditions.

TUSC candidates say that enough is enough. We call for a needs-based no-cuts budget and our demands to Plymouth council are:

- People Before Profit: A needs-based budget doesn't start with what the Tory or Labour government allows us to have. It starts with what it costs to feed 10,000 children properly and keep 237 people in good jobs.
- Defy the Liquidators: Instead of winding up the company, the council should use its reserves and its borrowing powers to fully fund the service, while building a mass campaign with the trade unions and parents to demand the missing millions back from Westminster.
- Reject Privatisation: The 'next step' for schools is to tender to private providers. We know what that means, lower-quality food for the kids and a 'race to the bottom' for staff wages and conditions.

CATERed staff have spent years going above and beyond, even feeding tens of thousands of children for free in parks during the holidays. It is time the council showed that same level of commitment to them.

Socialist Party members have been part of the Save CATERed campaign since December last year and have got support from local unions, and are still fighting to maintain school dinner quality and against any redundancies.

Deptford Lewisham hustings

Green council candidates asked: Will you fight the cuts?

ADAM GILLMAN
SOUTH EAST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

At the local election hustings in Deptford, south London, there was huge anger at Labour. Lewisham Labour-run council has carried out brutal austerity, including threatening Lewisham Shopping Centre with closure. It has also made unpopular decisions such as pedestrianising Deptford High Street. Disgust at the Labour leaders' support for the horrific genocidal slaughter in Gaza remains too.

There were lots of new young Green Party members in attendance, clearly enthused by Zack Polanski's left-wing rhetoric. The young greens were very open to the ideas of the Socialist Party - a Green candidate even bought a paper for solidarity price, and was open to further discussion.

Socialist councillors

In the hustings itself, I asked: "Would the councillors take the 'Liverpool road' and implement legally balanced no-cuts budgets - the official position of the local authority unions of Unite, Unison and GMB?" I also highlighted how, when the Socialist Party had three councillors in Lewisham in the 2000s, we used this fighting approach of mobilising the working class to save Ladywell Hospital, and won millions of pounds for services.

Unfortunately, none of the candidates indicated they would support a no-cuts budget, with the Liberal Democrat even effectively calling for more cuts by highlighting "wasteful spending." The Green candidate, Councillor Hau-Yu Tam, was originally elected as a Labour candidate in Evelyn ward but is now standing in Deptford. She is also the co-chair of internal Green Party campaign group Greens Organise, and replied to my question saying that "it was illegal, and that the council would have a section 114 notice".

Green summit

She also highlighted that Greens Organise have a petition that's calling for a summit to discuss a strategy to fight austerity. On its website it says it would invite "willing councillors, MPs, community organisations and trade unions".

Contrary to what some argue, councils can't go bankrupt and the government can't just force a council to issue a section 114 notice. It's also not true that a no-cuts budget is illegal. The strategy TUSC candidates are fighting for is no-cuts council budgets to be balanced by using reserves and borrowing powers.

The other essential part is for the council to help build a campaign with the trade unions and community to fight for the funding needed for our services that's been stolen by central government. History shows that this fighting approach works – including in Lewisham itself!


Lewisham TUSC mayor candidate Jay Coward (back left), supporting the socialist campaign in Croydon BERKAY KARTAV

Socialist Party members in the borough will be contacting all Green and other councillors, and look forward to continue the discussion with them and the trade unions on what strategy is needed to build the fightback.

- Jay Coward is standing as a TUSC candidate for Lewisham Mayor
- Chloe Rae Leslie is TUSC candidate for Deptford ward, one of five TUSC candidates across the borough

Free public transport

Owning and driving your own vehicle is becoming more and more unaffordable as we enter a fuel crisis due to Trump's war on Iran. The prices at the pumps are going up, while BP continues to make massive profits. It is increasingly clear that we need free and accessible public transport. This is possible. Luxembourg, for example, has made all public transport free since 2020, saving each household an average of 110 euros, reducing cars on the road and fuel consumption

Councils already subsidise public transport, it would be entirely possible to increase subsidies to make it free and expand services. Councils can act on this now, including by bringing services back in-house.

Free public transport would mean households would save and carbon emissions will be cut - it is time to make a real change that unites neighbourhoods and makes services available and places them back into the hands of us, instead of making profits for big business.

KERI ANDREWS
TUSC CANDIDATE IN MANOR PARK, RUSHMOOR DISTRICT COUNCIL

2026 Senedd elections - Green and Plaid drop free education pledges

BEN GOLIGHTLY
TRADE UNIONIST AND SOCIALIST COALITION (TUSC) CANDIDATE IN GWYR ABERTAWE (SWANSEA AND GOWER)

The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition candidates are now the only ones in the Welsh Senedd election standing up for young people.

In 2021, Plaid Cymru promised an immediate £1,500 reduction in fees for Welsh-domiciled students at Welsh universities – with a "long-term goal of free university tuition." But all that has since dropped from their 2026 Senedd manifesto, replaced by a promise of a review.

At the 2024 general election, the Green Party supported "the restoration of grants and the end of tuition fees". However, in the 2026 Senedd elections, the Greens are instead now calling only for a pathway to "sustainably lower" tuition fees.

And in 2023, the Labour Party under Keir Starmer dropped Jeremy Corbyn's free education pledges.

But the Welsh Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition manifesto instead says: "University tuition fees should be scrapped", and grants paid at a level "to allow students to study without having to work".


Green leader Zack Polanski - Welsh Greens have dropped their free education pledge ZACK BROWNE/CC

That's what we're standing for. Apparently now in Wales, we are the only candidates that are.

We have a record, such as leading successful student rent strikes in Swansea and Bangor during the Covid crisis, winning millions of pounds back for students.

- **Read more from Ben about our socialist election campaign below. TUSC is also standing in Caerdydd Ffynnon Taf (Cardiff North and East)**

16 to 17-year-olds vote in Welsh elections: Youth want alternative to low-pay horror

CAVAN GRIFFIN
RHONDA CYNON TAFF SOCIALIST PARTY

Since 2021, 16 to 17-year-olds now have the right to vote in Welsh election. Although overlooked, they are the future.

As a student myself, I've gone through the stress of tuition fees, the poor excuses for public transport, and not being able to afford a car. As well as the universal experience of horrific working conditions.

Young people are constantly exploited by employers for their lower pay, including myself. At age 17, I was working at a bar past legal hours, being an 'honorary' barman for £7 less than everyone else.

This is not a unique experience. Many readers will have their own stories.

On a zero-hour contract, if you attempt to stand up for what's right, it can lead to termination, as happened to me. That's why we need to stand together collectively.

We also need a political voice. That's why the Socialist Party is standing with the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC).

We oppose every cut to public services. We say renationalise public transport, to allow effective and affordable travel for everyone.

We fight for free education. How can we expect teenagers to promise thousands to institutions, when the skills they will gain will only help improve the world?

Continuation of the status quo will only be detrimental to youth. That's why we're fighting for a socialist alternative in these elections.

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**



Swansea TUSC campaigning ALEC THRAVES

Student: Why I'm standing

BEN LEES
BIRMINGHAM TRADE UNIONIST AND SOCIALIST COALITION (TUSC) CANDIDATE FOR BOURNBROOK & SELLY PARK

Decades of Tory and Labour austerity has hit Birmingham hard. The council spends more money trying to break the bin strike, than it 'saved' from pay cuts.

Students are an afterthought. We are subject to the whims of rogue landlords.

On top of substantial student debt, many are forced to find minimum wage work during time they could otherwise focus on studying.

Labour, the Tories, and Lib Dems offer only different flavours of the same disappointing policies, favouring the rich. Reform prey on the discontent of disenfranchised workers by disguising Trump-style attacks on vulnerable immigrants, women, and LGBTQ+ people as a solution.

Many say they're voting Green as an alternative. But the Green Party has failed to commit to opposing the same cuts to services and jobs that we've all been forced to deal with.

That's why I'm standing as a socialist candidate. With the power of workers and students, council cuts can be opposed, lighting and transport can be increased to make people safer, and we can end the housing crisis.

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

"You're fighting for us!"


TUSC candidate Ben at the Swansea hustings

Swansea TUSC candidate **Ben** tells us about the campaign

"We spoke to hundreds of people, across four hustings in just one week, about a socialist voice in the Senedd. The fourth husting, organised jointly by refugee, youth, and climate organisations, was definitely my favourite.

I am a nervous speaker – definitely not used to being interrupted mid-speech by spontaneous applause! But if my voice wavered, my politics certainly didn't. Our message hit home.

Whereas Labour's Shabana Mahmood, egged on by Reform UK, demonises and clamps down on the right to asylum, we explained the need for working-class unity to fight for jobs, homes, rights, and services for all. And for a Socialist Green New Deal to save the planet.

At the close of the hustings, unlike the other candidates, I was immediately sought out by a crowd of young refugee women wanting to shake my hand and have lengthy discussions. "You're fighting for us", one said.

The socialist campaign for the Senedd is far, far smaller than it easily could have been. But we are doing everything we can to raise people's sights, including making a special appeal to all trade unionists ahead of the Senedd election.

One Labour politician called me a "pessimist" for complaining about his party's loyal implementation of austerity. I told him, on the contrary, that I'm an optimist.

I was optimistic last year when we organised to strike a blow against Labour's disability cuts – and we did. And I'm optimistic for the present and the future. Despite the lack of political representation, working-class communities are successfully organising to defeat his party again.

Socialist Party members, and our Welsh Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition candidates, have an extremely proud record of doing exactly that.

Tower Hamlets crying out for policies to alleviate housing and food crises

HUGO PIERRE
TOWER HAMLETS SOCIALIST PARTY AND TUSC MAYORAL CANDIDATE IN TOWER HAMLETS


Campaigning in Tower Hamlets PHOTO: HUGO PIERRE

New figures just released show what has been known for some time - Tower Hamlets in east London has the highest proportion of children living in poverty in the country. What a shame on the heads of all the establishment politicians - over 50% of the borough's children live in deprivation. Of course Tory austerity is to blame, but locally Labour politicians and, unfortunately, Aspire councillors have pushed through cuts to council services that have blighted the lives of many families.

The previous Labour administration privatised the council's nurseries, a service that could have given a good start to thousands of children born in the borough. Unfortunately the Aspire council has not returned the service back to the council. This at a time when childcare costs are a major outgoing. The council could provide free childcare to families if it once again ran and controlled nurseries. It could open up more in schools and community centres around the borough with professionally qualified staff at trade union rates of pay.

But the housing crisis is the major factor contributing to child poverty. The borough is the most densely populated in the UK, has the highest level of overcrowding and thousands of families living temporary accommodation. There are 25,000 people on the housing waiting list even after the council has restricted who can get onto it.

Councillors have failed to build council homes in the borough. Instead, greedy developers get plans approved for unaffordable housing, especially in areas like the Isle of Dogs where they can build sky-high and rent or sell sky-high! They may promise the council 'social' or 'affordable' housing then renege on that promise as soon as building starts.

We say build 3,000 council homes a year! There is a lot of building development going on but very few young people, who pay on average the fifth highest rents in the country, can afford to buy. Many are staying in ex-council homes and paying three or four times the rent of their council tenant neighbours living next door. Housing Associations have also joined the development bug as they look to exploit the homes they took over from the council and the value of land by building for commercial rents.

Socialist Party members have campaigned with tenants and residents to stop this profiteering on the Isle of Dogs and in other parts of the borough. However the council continues to approve developments of little or no value to local working-class people. The borough's population has shot up by 20% in ten years while the housing waiting list has grown.

The mayor, Lutfur Rahman, has made some reforms that have helped - free adult social care, free school meals for all school children etc. However, the cuts made to the council's budget have limited the real progress the council could make. The cuts also play a divisive role, allowing stories to circulate that the mayor's party favours one section of the community over another.

The mayor's party, Aspire, has no organisation beyond the elected and prospective councillors. This government has vindictively targeted this former Labour stronghold with auditors and other officials watching the mayor's every move. Rather than fight for the resources the borough is in desperate need of, the mayor is collaborating with these officials and introducing spending restrictions on departments.

The TUSC campaign in the borough is being met with enthusiasm where we get our message across. The need for a mass campaign involving the trade unions, tenants' organisations and community campaigners to win resources for the council to improve services for working-class people is getting an echo, especially among young people.

- **Read more: 'Editorial: Should socialists be standing in Tower Hamlets?' at socialistparty.org.uk**

Councils: Bring back EMA, college student bursaries

ELIZABETH KENT
SOUTH YORKSHIRE SOCIALIST PARTY

Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA), abolished by the Tory-Lib Dem coalition in 2011, provided a weekly payment to students from lower-income households, and was a consistent and reliable form of financial support. Nowadays, very few college students receive discretionary bursaries granted by colleges themselves. Government bursaries are reserved for a small minority of young people living independently or disabled.

One advantage of EMA was its predictability. Students knew exactly how much they would receive each week, provided they met attendance and performance criteria. The up to £30-a-week payment allowed students to budget for essentials such as food, transport and study materials.

EMA acted as a strong incentive for attendance and commitment. EMA increased participation in post-16 education by around 4%, rising to up to 9% for the poorest students.

Students in Wales still get EMA and councils could reinstate EMA today, as the Aspire-led council in Tower Hamlets has done. As the cost of living continues to rise, many young people do not feel financially secure enough to pursue their education, instead going into employment to support themselves and their families.

We need councillors that will stand and fight for the young people in their areas. Implementing EMA, alongside reopening youth clubs, free public transport and more would go a long way to improving young people's lives.



Youth worker: 'What has austerity done to our service?'



PHOTO: SOCIALIST PARTY

EMILY
YOUTH WORKER

As a youth worker in London, it is impossible to ignore the compounding crises within systems that are supposed to support and care for young people.

Schools are being siphoned off to private entities. Catering, cleaning, and teaching staff are outsourced to private agencies. This not only limits consistency of staff within schools, but takes a big chunk of school budgets.

Education is in crisis. Classrooms have upwards of 30 children, while the needs of children and young people are higher than ever.

It can take years to be assessed by mental health support services. In the meantime, mounting pressure leads to unmet needs.

When an educational facility can't meet the needs of a pupil, typically one of two things happen. Either they are transferred to a tailored setting, such as special educational needs provision or, when the issues are related to behaviour, they are likely to be permanently excluded. Many of those excluded will be neurodiverse and undiagnosed.

'Looked-after children' refers to children in the legal care of the local authority. Of registered children's care homes, 84% are privately owned, with just 16% within local authority control.

The number of children's homes has doubled since 2011. But the number of foster carers has fallen by 10% in the last four years – a recruitment crisis. Is it any wonder that we're seeing this huge decline, when one of the conditions of being a foster carer is having a spare bedroom, while the housing crisis is worsening?

It is so difficult to find pathways for children back into education once they have been excluded. Consequently, young people I have worked with find it almost impossible to find ways of earning legitimate income.

In England, Wales, and Northern Ireland, children from the age of ten can be arrested, charged, and convicted of a crime. Roughly 50% of children in custody have experience of the UK care system.

When every service that is supposed to support young people has faced cuts, been shut down, or simply doesn't exist, young people are left with fewer options than ever before. Those who work with young people, like me, are left with the remnants of services that are not fit for purpose.

We must continue to campaign and put pressure on councils to fully fund youth services, including bringing services like care homes back in-house. Let's empower young people to fight for a socialist future. That is what Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) candidates are standing for.

Birmingham: Only TUSC is fighting for the bin workers, for affordable housing and against cuts

NICK HART
BIRMINGHAM SOCIALIST PARTY AND UNITE WM/6030 BRANCH TREASURER (PERSONAL CAPACITY)



PHOTO: SOCIALIST PARTY

"I used to always vote Labour... but definitely not anymore!" Those words have been on the lips of workers we've been speaking to on doorsteps and high streets over the last month of campaigning across the West Midlands - and nowhere more so than in Birmingham.

In just the four years since the last council elections in Birmingham, the council has voted through £450 million worth of cuts, hiked council tax by 30% and waged a war on the bin workers which has led to rubbish piling up around the city.

Where have Reform and Greens been?

So where will that anger at Labour go on 7 May? Some are talking up Reform's chances in Brum as the main option to punish Labour. But where were they when the families of disabled adults were protesting to save day centres? What have they done to pressure the council to create public housing in regeneration schemes, not unaffordable yuppie digs? And when have any of their candidates shown up on a picket outside bin depots?

The same questions could be asked of the two existing Green Party councillors in the city, whose alternative budget still left £97 million worth of cuts and £500 million sales of public land and buildings intact.

In addition, 72 candidates will appear on the ballot across Brum as independents, with as many as four vying for a single seat in some parts of the city. Among these are former Tory, Reform, Lib Dem and Labour councillors and candidates who have had their personal ambitions frustrated. It also includes two former Labour councillors who took the correct step of voting against cuts budgets and were expelled for their trouble and campaigners against day centre closures and gentrification.

TUSC is standing seven candidates in seats where we have a track record of campaigning to provide people in these areas with a principled, 100% anti-cuts record. However, we want to influence the debate on what kind of political voice working-class Brummies need beyond this election, and collaborate with others looking to build a new party on a principled basis.

To that end we have written to all independents, as well as the 27 standing for the Workers Party of Britain and five for Your Party, to ask if they will join us in pledging to vote against all cuts if elected, stand against oppression and discrimination, support a clampdown on landlords and a fair deal for bin workers.

Bin strike

The bin strike was named as the number one issue in this election by 56% of voters in one poll. Despite bin workers' union Unite still being tied to Labour nationally, it has cut its affiliation funding by 40% and is giving no support, financial or otherwise, to Labour candidates in these elections. Instead, the union is using its political fund to get letters delivered around the city outlining candidates' attitudes to the bin strike, so that residents can cast their vote accordingly.

It's welcome that Unite is using the respect the bin workers have among a wide cross-section of different communities in Brum to channel the anger at Labour in what is becoming a highly polarised and confused election. Imagine what a step forward it would be though if in future elections Unite and other unions and community organisations were able to openly support and shape the policies of candidates standing not as independents, but in the name of a worker-led party? This is what TUSC supporters will be pushing for regardless of the result on 7 May.

As a council tenant, my area's repairs contractor is changing yet again. I've seen a merry-go-round of countless private companies profiteering from housing repair contracts. We need to bring repairs back in-house. We need to end co-operation with spiv-like property developers such as in Perry Barr where the council has lost £300 million plus on the 900 properties from the Commonwealth Games. The old high street was demolished as part of the 'redevelopment' and is still a wasteland years on.

Unite the Union has reported that the council will lose at least £30 million on a skyscraper with 370 rented flats with no genuinely affordable housing.

We need to take over empty properties and use the council borrowing powers to build real affordable council homes. While canvassing a fish-and-chip shop, owner said he may vote Reform but honestly didn't trust any parties, including Reform! He said: "It's everything, not just housing, even £15 per hour isn't enough. The local pub and bingo hall have closed, that should be a youth centre, I would help run it, I used to run a gym until the pandemic."

We would agree that empty properties need to be utilised and local communities decide how.

Unite has been leafleting, declaring which candidates support a fair deal for the bin workers. Some parties state that they will resolve or end the bin dispute, neglecting to say in whose favour! Only TUSC has stated categorically that it should be resolved in a deal that is favourable to the bin workers. We haven't found anyone blaming the bin workers!

JOE FOSTER
TUSC CANDIDATE IN PERRY BARR

Councils can act on cost-of-living crisis

ADAM HARMSWORTH
COVENTRY SOCIALIST PARTY AND TUSC CANDIDATE FOR LOWER STOKE, COVENTRY CITY COUNCIL

Years of austerity and inflation have pushed millions of us into poverty and debt. Councils have the resources and powers to provide support for those who need it now, and will in the future as inflation bites. That includes existing schemes like Council Tax Support (CTS), but could also include grants and support for those struggling with heating bills, or providing free school meals all year round.

Over the last 15 years, council funding has been slashed over and over again with repeated austerity cuts from central government. Across the country, services and provisions that provided a lifeline to millions have been cut. Many have cut the level of council tax reduction available under CTS.

Labour and Tory councils, and those led by Greens and Reform, have all refused to stand up to austerity, but instead cut CTS and other support. They have done this while raising council tax year after year.

This year, the average council tax bill is going up 4.9% - an extra £111 burden on families in Band D homes. How many of us have £111 to spare?

None of the main parties are willing to fight to provide the support that families need – increasing support for CTS, providing free school meals all year, support for energy bills. Nor will they fight for the longer-term changes needed to get millions out of poverty, like affordable housing for all, free publicly owned transport, and restoring council services and jobs.

Instead of increasing taxes on the working class, councils should demand the funding needed from central government, the resources we need are there, but hoarded by the super-rich. That is what socialist candidates are fighting for this election. Socialist Party candidates are standing under the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) umbrella. They would, if elected, be the socialist opposition to the other parties, standing up against poverty and decline, to support working-class families rather than strangle their income further.



Fighting council cuts and council tax rises in Bradford PHOTO: SOCIALIST PARTY

Don't just tax energy bosses nationalise energy!

RACHEL COX
SOUTHERN AND SOUTH EAST SOCIALIST PARTY

With the memory of 2022's energy price shock still close to hand, the rise in oil prices triggered by Trump's war on Iran is not only hitting workers at the pump, it is also an ominous omen for what happens to our energy bills when the price cap is revised in July.

In response Labour, which promised to cut £300 from energy bills by 2030, unveiled their latest stingy tinkering. This time, energy secretary Ed Miliband announced his plans to move solar and wind farms onto fixed-cost contracts in an attempt to cut the link between electricity, and gas and oil prices. At the moment, the price paid to electricity generators is determined by the cost paid by the most expensive energy supplier at use at that moment. At times when renewables and others don't produce enough, it's natural gas that sets the price. Miliband aims to put pressure on firms to switch to new contracts by putting extra taxes on the ones that don't.

These attempts to coerce firms to move to different contracts leave their profits intact. Unite the Union found that energy bosses took home £30 billion pre-tax in 2024, or £500 of every household's bills on average. It is clear that far more needs to be done than tinkering, and clear that this is all Labour is currently willing to do.

What is really needed is the full renationalisation of the energy system under democratic control and oversight, beginning with the national grid (both transmission and distribution networks). Compensation should be paid only on the basis of proven need – no more money to the fat cats! We could then invest in research and funding into renewables, including investment in energy storage. Alongside this, a publicly funded insulation and energy transition plan for existing housing stock would be vital. This would lower working-class households' energy costs, but how do we win them?

Oil and gas lobbyists do all they can to have their influence on the political system - MPs are more than happy to take their money, such as the £45,000 given to new Labour MPs in 2024. To fight back, workers need a party of our own based on the organisations of the working class, including the six million-strong trade unions.

But while the bosses' system is left intact even any victories can be lost, as our privatised energy system testifies. For this reason, we can't leave it there, we must fight to put the working class in power internationally and build a system of our own, democratically run and owned by workers: a socialist society. Only then will the gains we've made be safe. If you want to fight for such a future, join the Socialist Party today!

Join the fightback
JOIN THE SOCIALISTS
- Visit **socialistparty.org.uk/join** or call **020 8988 8777**
- or text your name and postcode to **07958 032071**

to find out more about joining us today!


READING TOM/CC



Universities: free speech for some, clampdown on protests for us

ADAM POWELL DAVIES
SOCIALIST STUDENTS NATIONAL ORGANISER

The Labour government has announced that it will implement new rules aimed at 'protecting free speech' on university campuses.

Under the new legislation – originally drawn up by the previous Tory government – the Office for Students will gain powers to investigate and potentially fine universities over complaints made by university staff, external speakers, and other 'non-student members'. A complaints system that excludes the roughly 3 million university students living in the UK – not exactly free speech for us!

It shows how, despite paying lip-service to 'free speech', the Labour government only wants certain voices to be heard. Like all capitalist politicians, they pick and choose whose speech to promote or suppress according to what suits them and the system they defend.

Where is the Labour government's outrage at the managements of twelve UK universities who, as reported this month, have paid private security firms to spy on pro-Palestinian student protesters and academics? Will this not have a chilling effect on 'free speech' on campus?

During the Gaza solidarity movement on campuses in 2023-24, uni bosses imposed sanctions on students and staff for protesting on campuses, often over institutions' links to the arms industry. Labour politicians and vice chancellors claimed these protests made students scared to speak out, supposedly infringing their 'free speech.' Why would the freedom of expression for one section of students have to come at the expense of another?

Labour politicians and vice chancellors are currently working together to destroy higher education. They have the most to gain from sowing division among students and staff, while outwardly purporting to do the very opposite under the banner of 'protecting free speech.'

As a vital counterweight, students need our own democratic organisations which could provide a genuine forum for all students to discuss and debate different ideas, free from the meddling of management and capitalist politicians.

To free society from a tiny capitalist elite using its wealth and power to police the language and behaviour of the vast majority, we need to fight for a socialist system under the democratic control of the working class, based on meeting the needs of all, not the profits of a few. Part of that struggle includes the fight for a democratically run education system that is free and accessible to all.

Join the student fightback!
JOIN socialist students
- Visit **socialiststudents.org.uk/join**
- or call **020 8988 8761**
- or text your name and school, college or uni to **07749 379 010**

WHAT WE THINK

This summer the National Shop Stewards Network (NSSN) will organise its twentieth conference. In October 2006, the RMT transport workers' union, then under the leadership of Bob Crow, brought together representatives from across the trade union movement to agree that a shop stewards' network was needed.

The following summer, the first conference of the NSSN took place on the eve of the 2007-08 world economic crash. The NSSN was founded to bring together rank-and-file trade unionists, reps and activists from across the trade union movement to rebuild the strength of the workers' movement from the bottom up. To help coordinate action and, above all else, as a means to put pressure on the leaders of the trade unions to organise the action necessary to fight capitalism's attacks on the working class.

Over its 20-year history, the NSSN has sought to bring militant trade unionists together to draw out the key next step and how to organise it, depending on the challenges facing the workers' movement at a given moment. It was key to applying pressure to the leadership of the TUC, through lobbies and NSSN-organised regional demonstrations, to organise coordinated action to defeat the new 'Con-Dem' government's opening salvo of austerity attacks.

On 30 November 2011, two million workers participated in what was effectively a public sector general strike. In the run-up, the NSSN helped coalesce the fighting forces in the trade unions around the demand for the TUC to name the date for coordinated action.

In the years that followed, on whatever issue the organised workers' movement faced, the NSSN and the reps and activists which make it up have been at the forefront of trying to coordinate the fightback. From the 2016 'Kill the Bill' campaign against the introduction of the Tory anti-union laws, to in 2020 bringing together nationally the main opponents in the trade unions against social partnership with the Tories, fighting for workers' safety and interests during the Covid pandemic.

And two years ago, ahead of the general election, the NSSN pre-empted the battles which were to come under a Labour government, with the pre-general election forum at its 2024 conference 'How can we fight for a workers' manifesto?' to discuss how workers' policies could be fought for under a pro-big business Labour government. Following the general election, the NSSN lobbied the TUC on 7 September 2025 in support of the call for the TUC to organise a national demo against Labour austerity.

What role for the NSSN today?

The discussions at NSSN's 2024 conference were a foretelling of the many struggles working-class people are today facing under Starmer's government. Despite the promise of change from 14 years of Tory rule, life for us is extremely similar to under the Tories – the only difference being things have got worse!

NSSN conference 2026: WORKERS' FIGHTBACK AGAINST NEW COST-OF-LIVING SURGE – HOW WILL IT TAKE SHAPE?



NSSN lobby of the TUC Congress in 2025 MARY FINCH

Public services and infrastructure continue to crumble; the Tory anti-trade union laws remain in place; and with the new round of war in the Middle East, prices are beginning to rise faster and faster while our wages stagnate.

The war on Iran poses all sorts of problems for trade unionists, including the question of what role workers can play in halting the capitalist classes' drive to war while simultaneously defending the jobs, pay and conditions of all workers. But the front and central issue for the majority will be the new inflationary and cost-of-living crisis.

The last time the energy bosses price-gouged to protect their profit margins, workers responded in their millions with the biggest wave of industrial action in three decades, forging a new generation of trade union reps and activists in the process.

That 2022-23 strike wave forced money to be paid into workers' pockets which the Tories initially insisted 'just wasn't there.' Who does that sound similar to? Not only that, it provided the underpinnings of the Tories being kicked out of office in July 2024.

But that action didn't fall from clear blue sky – it had to be fought for, and pressure applied on the trade union leaders. As the then RCN nursing union leader Pat Cullen summed up on behalf of other trade union leaders at that stage: "I may personally have underestimated the members and their sheer determination".

Labour facing its own strike wave?

Levels of industrial action have receded since that 2023 peak, but still remain higher than in the pre-Covid period. Resident doctors organised in the BMA are currently leading the charge in the public sector against Labour's policy of managed pay erosion. This was following the nationally coordinated action taken by UCU members in Further Education earlier in the year.

But national action is brewing elsewhere. An indicative ballot of National Education Union members showed a determined mood to reject and fight the Labour government's unfunded and inadequate pay offer.

The inherent power of the working class is increasingly on display in this unstable period. The RMT just last week shut down London over the attempt by Transport for London and London Mayor Sadiq Khan to attack tube drivers' working conditions. The Cwm Taf Morgannwg health visitors in Unite are leading the fight against the Welsh Labour government over pay. And ongoing is the heroic action of the bin workers in Birmingham against the Labour council's fire-and-rehire attacks. All this before the next cost-of-living tsunami hits.

The NSSN then and now

The role the NSSN played in the run-up to and in the aftermath of the 2011 public sector strike came immediately after a period of relative economic stability and under the long shadow cast by the collapse of the Stalinist states in Eastern Europe, a historic turning point in history which threw back working-class consciousness and organisation for decades.

A decade and a half since 2011, the situation has developed in favour of the workers' movement. Austerity and stagnant or falling living standards have discredited illusions that the capitalist system can offer a future to workers and youth. The working class in Britain and internationally is in the early stages of beginning to rebuild the strength of its organisations and to re-enter the scene of history.

The 2022-23 strike wave not only saw fresh layers joining the trade unions and a certain renewal of rank-and-file trade union leaders, it also burned into the consciousness of millions of workers that, as the most powerful collective tool at the disposal of the working class, 'striking works.' As the Socialist Party predicted in the document agreed at our 2024 Congress: "The strike weapon will therefore be picked up much more easily in the next period than was the case in recent decades."

That resulting confidence from the strike wave has haunted Starmer's Labour government from day one. To the chagrin of the capitalists, Rachel Reeves in summer 2024 awarded above-inflation pay rises to some public sector workers, saying: "There is a cost to not settling, a cost of further industrial action". The government is paying that price now! Starmer and Reeves are in vain trying to put the genie back into the bottle to make it up to the bosses.

Although 30 November 2011 brought two million workers out, the right-wing trade union leaders at that stage were able to end the action. As a result, Cameron and Clegg's coalition was able to ride out the movement and commence the biggest round of attacks on the working class in modern history.

But that couldn't be further from the position facing the Labour government today. After 14 years of austerity, so rotten is the edifice of British capitalism, Starmer faced humiliating defeat in Parliament without the leaders of the trade unions as much as lifting a finger over proposed cuts to disability benefits, attacks which the government is returning to this summer.

NSSN 2026 conference

Even the greatest optimists amongst the capitalist class would struggle not to worry about the reliability of Labour to hold down wages and get more public spending cuts through Parliament. But with the majority of trade union leaders still making excuses for Labour and attempting to steady Labour's ship, the militant industrial action workers need will again have to be fought for.

How workers can fight for this coordinated action against Labour austerity and to take on the new cost-of-living crisis will be a key theme of the NSSN conference 2026.

It will also be taking place near the eve of the potential repealing of the 50% industrial ballot thresholds in August, kept in place by Labour now for two years at the behest of big business. With the thresholds having only just saved Labour from potential national action by Unison in local government over pay, the question of how the trade union movement responds whether or not they are repealed – either using their lifting to go on the offensive, or demanding their immediate repealing along with all the other anti-union laws – will be central in the coming period.

And it will be coming after the seismic political earthquake which is set for the 7 May local elections. With Labour set to sustain a historic defeat, with a 'patchwork' of Reform, Green, and various independent councillors filling the resulting gap, questions for trade unionists will be posed about how the rising tide of industrial militancy being fought for every day by rank-and-file trade unionists in our workplaces can be expressed at the ballot box.



The NSSN supporting Birmingham bin workers SP

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

GENERAL STRIKE CENTENARY

When workers in Britain tasted power

2026 marks the centenary of Britain's general strike. From 4-12 May 1926, workers tasted power, in what is the most important event yet in the history of the British working class. ***Ian Pattison****, the Socialist campaigns organiser, describes events.*

When the trade unions were discussing the possibility of a general strike in 2012, John Hannett, then the right-wing general secretary of shop workers' union Usdaw, said: "We tried it once, and it didn't work."

In the Socialist Party, we take a very different view. The nine-day general strike in 1926 is one of, if not the most important event in the history of the working class in Britain.

1926 showed that the working class has the power to change society. It demonstrated that the working class in Britain is not 'conservative'. Instead, it has massive revolutionary potential.

Soldiers returned from World War One expecting a 'land fit for heroes'. Instead, they came home to find British capitalism in decline. And, like today, the working class had to fight a bitter class struggle to defend its living standards from bosses' attacks.

> **Soldiers returned from World War One expecting a 'land fit for heroes'. Instead, the working class had to fight a bitter class struggle to defend its living standards.**

1926 came towards the end of a period of major working-class struggles across Europe, which began at the end of the first world war, and with the Russian Revolution in 1917.

The Russian Revolution, led by the Bolsheviks, was a massive example to workers in Britain and across Europe, demonstrating that it was possible for the working class itself to take power.

The level of social unrest and strikes in 1919 prompted the Liberal prime minister, David Lloyd George, to say that the country had "never been nearer to Bolshevism". Even the police were on strike.

In 1921 – known as Black Friday – the ruling capitalist class came back for the concessions the working class had won in 1919. Scandalously, the workers were sold out by the trade union leaders. Six million workers suffered pay cuts.

But the working class learnt from this defeat. They elected more left-wing union leaders to defend their interests, in some unions.

If the working class is defeated in one arena, it can turn to another. Defeated industrially, the working class turned to the political field.

And the first Labour government was elected in 1924. But Labour prime minister Ramsay MacDonald cut pay and repressed the trade unions, and soon the Labour government was out.

Now, defeated politically, the working class turned back to industrial struggle.

In the Socialist Party, we say there needs to be both. We need to combine the struggle in the workplaces, link those different battles together, and combine that with a political alternative – a new political party for the working class.

But even the best new left-wing trade union leaders in the 1920s – like giant miners' leader AJ Cook – mistakenly believed that the working class could win control by solely conducting a workplace struggle, without challenging capitalist political power.

Ruling class prepares

1925 saw attacks on miners' pay and a lengthening of hours. But the threat of general strike action at that stage forced the Tory government to concede, on what was known as 'Red Friday'.

The ruling class used the next nine months to prepare to inflict a defeat on the miners and the working class. Compare that to the TUC General Council, which only met six days before the general strike to plan it.

If only the TUC had prepared. The working class was ready to fight, and would have responded.

In 1926, the mine owners cut miners' pay. Even the TUC leaders agreed that the miners would have to accept pay cuts.

But the miners said 'no'. They had the whole working class behind them. Workers knew that if miners' pay was cut, they would be next.

The TUC leaders wanted to do everything to avoid a confrontation. But they knew, if they failed to call a general strike, they would lose control. And others would lead the working class. In this scenario, they felt compelled to lead the struggle down 'safe' channels.

While his union was voting for the general strike, Charlie Cramp, deputy general secretary of the National Union of Railwaymen (NUR), turned to the person next to him and said: "We can't win".

Instead of listening to workers' demands of everybody striking together – the quickest and most effective way to win the strike – the TUC held some workers, like shipbuilders and engineers, in 'reserve'.

This led to frustration. But workers that hadn't been called out were striking without permission.

Four million workers joined the general strike. Only nine out of 2,000 London trams ran, and just 1% of rail freight.

The print trade unions refused to allow a Daily Mail article attacking the general strike to go through. And the capitalist newspapers struggled to get out throughout.

Workers you wouldn't expect were taking part. House of Commons business was affected by workers there striking.

Telegraph workers were angry they weren't included in the action. Even specialist gold workers sent a delegation to the TUC asking how they could help.

In Shrewsbury, even leading local Tories joined the strike. And in Bolton, 2,300 people turned up to the first day of the strike volunteering to help

The strike was so powerful in some areas that vehicles could only move if they displayed a 'By permission of the TUC' sign in their window.

One striking worker said: "Employers were coming, cap in hand, begging for permission to allow their workers to perform some customary operations. They were turned away. I thought of the many occasions when I had been turned away from the door of some workshop in a weary struggle to get the means to purchase the essentials of life."

Even Mussolini's fascist regime in Italy was shaken, and had to take steps to quell support for the strike.

Repression fails

The government and rest of the capitalist state used repression to break the strike. But this failed.

Police attacked striking workers. The government organised a strikebreaking operation. But it was ineffective.

The government took over running the BBC. It was only permitted to put the government line. The union position was banned from being broadcast.

The capitalist newspapers sided with the government. But they weren't even allowed to give the appearance of a 'balanced' debate or quote from the unions.

And the government went further, producing its only daily newspaper, British Gazette, edited by Winston Churchill, to spout lies to undermine the strike.

The government didn't use the army, as it had to crush previous workers' struggles. But it's questionable whether this would have worked. There was too much sympathy for the strikers from rank-and-file soldiers.

It wasn't capitalist state repression which brought an end to the strike and a defeat for the working class. Instead it was the treacherous role of the right-wing trade union leaders, and the weakness of the left union leaders.

After nine days, the TUC leaders called off the strike. It was a complete capitulation. They hadn't been 'offered' anything more than when the strike started.

Had the workers won?

When the strike was called off, many workers thought they'd won. They felt themselves in power on the ground. They couldn't believe it was any other way.

Describing events in Birmingham, the Socialist Party's Peter Taaffe, in his book '1926 General Strike – Workers Taste Power,' says: "The strike committee produced a special 'victory bulletin'. And why not? The strike had been solid here".

"There was no other reason to think otherwise". Even "victory arrangements were put in hand".

The biggest day of strike action was actually the day after it was called off! This shows that talk from some of the right-wing union leaders that the strike was weakening was rubbish. And, as victory hadn't been won, one million miners continued to strike.

The defeat of the general strike led to pay cuts, unemployment, repression of both the trade unions and the recently formed Communist Party. In the immediate aftermath, union membership fell to its lowest level for ten years.

Summing up the anger towards the TUC leaders after the strike, at the TUC conference in September 1926, one young miners' delegate said: "We will have another general strike without you, and we'll win next time."

An all-out general strike, like 1926, is different. It poses the question 'who is in power – the working class or the ruling class?' Workers have to answer that question, and go forward, or retreat and go back.

During the 1919 strikes, prime minister David Lloyd George, said: "If you carry out your threat and strike, you will defeat us. But if you do so, have you weighed the consequences? For, if a force arises which is stronger than the state itself, then it must be ready to take on the functions of the state, or withdraw and accept the authority of the state.

"Gentlemen, have you considered? And if you have, are you ready?"

Union leaders retreat

In 1926, the union leaders weren't prepared to take that step. Even the best left-wing union leaders didn't have an idea about how things could be different. So, facing that, they retreated.

But, the fledging Communist Party of Great Britain, formed after the Russian Revolution, had the chance to play a history-defining role in 1926.

> **The miners said 'no'. They had the whole working class behind them. The working class was ready to fight. If only the TUC had prepared, the working class would've responded**

The National Minority Movement organised the left-wing of the trade unions. It was established and led by the Communist Party. At its height, it counted the support of trade unionists representing 1.25 million workers.

But in the long run-up to the strike, and during the nine days, the Communist Party used the mistaken slogan: "All power to the TUC General Council". This was the same TUC General Council that was about to sell out the strike!

Many Communist Party activists played a heroic role during the strike, many others were arrested and persecuted. However, the party's leadership was relatively young and inexperienced, it also took its political lead from the leaders of the Communist International (Comintern) – increasingly pushing a political line in the interests of an emerging bureaucracy headed by Joseph Stalin.

The huge authority of the Russian Revolution was used by Comintern leadership to mislead the strategy of the young party in Britain.

The mistaken Stalinist approach was typified by the Anglo-Russian Trade Union Committee - an alliance between the trades unions in Russia and Britain.

On the surface, that sounds like a good thing – working-class solidarity from Britain for the Russia Revolution. But, in reality, the Anglo-Russian Committee allowed British trade union leaders to talk up their radical credentials with their links to Russia. At the same time, these union leaders failed to organise for the same socialist ideas on the ground in Britain.

Leon Trotsky summed up this approach. Commenting on the 1925 TUC Congress, he said: "This sort of leftism remains only as long as it does not impose any practical obligations. As soon as the question of action arises, the lefts respectfully surrender the leadership to the rights."

The Anglo-Russian Committee became a straitjacket for the Communist Party. It failed to prepare the working class that the right-wing union leaders would sell them out.

Who did workers trust?

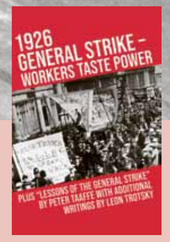
And it wasn't just the TUC right-wing. Alf Purcell, International Federation of Trade Unions, and George Hicks, construction workers' union, were part of the previous wave of left-wingers winning union positions. But both stayed silent on the TUC General Council, while the general strike was sold out.

And it was similar for AJ Cook – the great union militant. After the strike, he proposed longer hours for the miners. At the September TUC Congress, he used his massive authority in the movement to manoeuvre to get discussion of the general strike off the agenda.

It's debatable whether the opportunity for revolution was lost in 1926. The trade union leaders still held enormous authority in the eyes of the working class. If the Communist Party had taken the correct approach, preparing the working class for the role the union leaders could go on to play, including by systematically putting demands on them, it would have strengthened its authority.

It may or may not have been sufficient to change the outcome of the strike. But it would have best positioned the party to - with the correct strategy and approach – go on to transform the class battles that were to take place in Britain in the rest of the 1920s and 1930s.

Would you like to read more?



- '1926 General Strike – Workers Taste Power' by Peter Taaffe
- 'Where is Britain Going?' by Leon Trotsky
- Available from leftbooks.org.uk

To get 'real money' for an NHS pay rise, we are going to have to fight for it

ADRIAN O'MALLEY
STANDING FOR RE-ELECTION TO THE UNISON HEALTH SERVICE GROUP EXECUTIVE, PERSONAL CAPACITY

NHS workers receiving their wage slips at the end of April will barely notice the 3.3% pay rise that has been imposed on them by the Labour government.

3.3% was barely keeping up with inflation when it was announced in February. But now, following Trump's war on Iran and the resulting sky-high fuel increases, it is lagging behind the real inflation rates that working-class people are experiencing. Increases in fuel and heating costs are expected to continue to rise throughout the year.

NHS workers are rightly asking what are the unions going to do about it? Earlier in April, Unison's health conference unanimously agreed to fight for more pay, alongside the other NHS trade unions, through the 'structural talks' that are to take place by the end of April.

The talks, which were intended to deal with problems within the NHS pay band structure, were supposed to take place as part of last year's pay rise. But due to Labour health secretary Wes Streeting's contempt for the NHS unions, they didn't take place.

Unison's Head of Health Helga Pyle announced the talks last week: "Unions have been calling for talks to fix pay for months. Getting these in place is a step forward, albeit a year and a half after they were promised."

"NHS workers have been deeply disappointed by this year's 3.3% pay award, which has already been overtaken by inflation. There's a lot riding on these talks. Real money on the table from the government will be key".



Unite-organised lobby of parliament against the Labour government's attacks on the NHS SOCIALIST PARTY

One thing is certain. If we are to get "real money" from the government we are going to have to fight for it.

Unison's position of joint action with the other unions is a welcome step forward. Health conference heard that the joint union letter, '3.3% is not enough', had been signed by over 40,000 members of all unions in the first few days. There is clearly large support for joint union action around a common claim.

Limiting talks to discussions around the pay structure is potentially divisive, as it limits discussions to the small numbers who are impacted by the changes to their particular pay band or increment. Tying the pay spine to the real living wage, or Unison's policy for a £15-an-hour minimum wage with corresponding rises throughout the pay spine, would keep the unity necessary to deliver action if or when it becomes inevitable.

We must also avoid the trap of becoming involved in discussions over a multi-year pay deal, unless above-inflation pay rises are agreed in principle at the beginning of talks.

If the structural talks are to deliver more pay for all NHS staff they need to be entered from a position of strength by the trade unions. The Unison Health Service Group Executive missed an opportunity when it voted against lodging a national dispute over pay, moved by Socialist Party members, when the 3.3% was imposed back in February.

Nevertheless, with the backing of Unison health conference and with thousands of NHS workers from every union demanding more pay, we are in a prime position to demand more and, if it is not forthcoming, plan for nationally coordinated strike action.

NHS workers and campaigners lobby parliament

JON DALE
SECRETARY, UNITE NOTTINGHAMSHIRE HEALTH BRANCH

On Wednesday 22 April, health workers from across the UK protested outside parliament, outraged at Labour's attacks on the NHS. Organised by Unite the Union, the protest brought together workers in current disputes with campaigns defending health workers and the services we provide.

Unite's general secretary, Sharon Graham, made a blistering attack on Labour's NHS record: jobs and services cut, while patients face lengthening waits for appointments and treatment. "Shame on you, Labour."

Travelling from South Wales, the biggest contingent at the rally were health visitors on strike at Cwm Taf Morgannwg. These highly skilled workers have been underpaid for five years - and they have had enough!

David Ward, a rep from Nottinghamshire, exposed NHS management's lies over the East Midlands Cancer Alliance (Centre for Psychosocial Health) which provides vital mental health support to cancer patients across the region.

"You cannot remove the staff, close the referrals and dismantle the service, and then claim nothing has changed," he said. "That is not reassurance. That is spin. And the consequences of that spin are real.

"Longer waiting times. Reduced access. Cancer patients in crisis left without support. People already dealing with fear, pain, and uncertainty - now being told to wait, or go without."

An NHS England worker told the rally that almost 1,300 redundancies were being made, particularly affecting lower-paid workers, a higher proportion of whom are women and Black.

After the rally, Unite members attempted to meet with local MPs. Only John McDonnell and Rachael Maskell came to meet those of us from England (separate meetings with MPs were held for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland).

NHS workers need a group of MPs we can rely on to take the fight to the government, just as resolute as those taking strike action and campaigning to defend the NHS. Unite's debate on its future political representation needs urgently taking out to members for a full and wide discussion.

PCS 'block vote' elections: Who runs the union?

KATRINE WILLIAMS
CANDIDATE FOR PCS NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE, PERSONAL CAPACITY

Alongside the election of the National Executive Committee and Group Executive Committees, additional important elections will take place in civil service union PCS from 5-14 May.

These elections are for positions which are crucial to the union's democracy, and holding the leadership and union officialdom accountable to branches and members. These elections are by block (branch) vote and are online.

The elections are being contested by a full slate of candidates supported by the Broad Left Network (BLN) in which Socialist Party members play a leading role.

The union has three elected Member Trustees who oversee the union's elections and finances. Socialist Party member Dave Bartlett is the BLN candidate. His election would give BLN supporters a 2:1 majority.

Democracy

There are five elected National Standing Orders Committee (NSOC) members. The NSOC prepares the annual delegate conference agenda. The Left Unity grouping, which controls the union's leadership, currently has a 3:2 majority on this body. Winning the two positions up for election this year would give a 4:1 majority for BLN-supported committee members.

This matters because for a number of years the NSOC has been seen as too much influenced by the Left Unity leadership in drawing up the conference agenda. This was clear last year, when a number of trans rights motions opposed by Left Unity were kept off the agenda by the NSOC.

Again this year, the just-published provisional 2026 conference agenda omits a number of trans motions, and omits or marks as 'out of order' a number of motions which question who runs the union.

Conference delegates will challenge these undemocratic manoeuvres and Socialist Party members will play a leading role in defending union democracy at the conference.

The two BLN members currently in a minority on the NSOC have argued for a conference agenda which reflects the needs and priorities of branches and members. They support the right of the conference to debate and decide policy on all issues.

A number of other important positions are up for election, including the union's editorial board and delegations to TUC (Trades Union Congress) conferences.

Branch secretaries will receive ballot papers by email on 5 May, to return by 12 noon 14 May.

- See 'PCS national and group executive elections' for the list of BLN-supported candidates for the National Executive Committee and programme they are standing on
- And see bln.org.uk for the slates for the DWP and HMRC group elections



PCS members at the Houses of Parliament on strike in 2025, supported by NEC members who are part of the BLN SOCIALIST PARTY

Surrey school strike: 'Action is our only option'

PAUL COUCHMAN
SURREY SOCIALIST PARTY

National Education Union (NEU) members set up a well-attended picket line on 21 April at the Royal Alexandra and Albert School in Reigate, Surrey. It was the first of six days of strikes due to a dispute with the school governors over a comprehensive restructure announcement with big effects for teachers and support staff.

I brought a message of solidarity from Surrey County Unison, the West Surrey Trades Council, and the National Shop Stewards Network.

The school was founded over 200 years ago and this is believed to be the first time teachers have taken strike action here. It is one of 32 state boarding schools in the UK.

NEU members are striking over several issues, including up to 12 redundancies, and the removal of pensionable allowances that amount to thousands of pounds in some cases. The governors also propose imposing market rents on resident staff.

The proposals stand to cost scores of members significant losses to pay and pensions. Members voted 90% in favour of strike action on a 89% turnout.

The strike is also for union recognition. This is the only state-funded school in Surrey that the NEU is aware of that does not recognise the union.

NEU activists said: "The proposed changes will be damaging to the provision of the excellent standard of education and pastoral care that is offered at the Royal Alexandra and Albert School".

"Members have engaged in good faith with management in the consultation process to try to resolve this issue without the need for industrial action. We don't engage in this action lightly, but it has become clear that industrial action is our only option in this situation."

- Further strikes are planned on 29-30 April and 5-7 May.

JOIN THE SOCIALISTS

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

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Big win for left in Unite the Union elections

ROB WILLIAMS
SOCIALIST PARTY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE AND UNITE MEMBER

As we go to press, it has been announced that the left 'Workers Unite/Back to the Workplace' slate of candidates has won an overwhelming victory in the election for the Unite Executive Council (EC), the leading lay member body of the union. They have defeated the candidates supported by the Members United/United Left group by 41 to 18 seats, with 2 independents.

Those elected include Socialist Party members and fellow Unite Broad Left supporters, as part of this slate that supported the manifesto that Sharon Graham stood on when she won the union's general secretary election in 2021.

We will produce a fuller analysis of the election, but the margin of victory shows that Unite reps and activists do not want a retreat from the militant industrial record under Sharon Graham's leadership. This would have been posed if the Members United/United Left group had won.

This result will have a major impact on Unite's EC, which has been hamstrung by the machinations and spoiling tactics of the United Left over the last three-year term, with no clear majority.


Birmingham bin strikers SOCIALIST PARTY

Mandate for militant strategy

This victory gives a clear mandate for the union to drive its militant industrial strategy and face up to the political challenge posed by Starmer's Labour government.

This has come into sharp focus during the heroic 15-month long Birmingham bin strike, indefinite since March last year. Starmer has stood full-square behind brutal fire and rehire by the cutting Labour council. This titanic struggle was the catalyst for an emergency motion at last year's Unite policy conference, initiated by Socialist Party members who were delegates, to support the binworkers and suspend any of the councillors who were Unite members from membership of the union, along with the then Labour deputy prime minister Angela Rayner. It passed virtually unanimously, with only a handful of United Left delegates not supporting it.

But the motion also agreed to open a discussion in Unite about its relationship with Labour. This must now take place at all levels of the union.

The Executive Council election leads on to the general secretary election, which will take place over the next few months, where Sharon Graham will be seeking re-election. A strike by a layer of Unite officers who have joined the Community union took place on Monday 27 April, the day that the election closed. It was a clear attempt at destabilising the union and is a warning that the fight for Unite is still on.

But this Monday was also the day that Birmingham binworkers forced a new offer that could end the bin dispute. One of the lead bin reps, Danny Taylor, was elected to the EC from the Workers Unite slate. This is the basis of the clash in Unite, and the EC election result opens up the opportunity to move the union forward industrially and politically.

Usdaw conference delegates face up to new cost-of-living surge

SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBERS IN USDAW

The first day and a half of the Annual Delegate Meeting (ADM) of retail and distribution union Usdaw reflected what members face in the turbulence of capitalism in Britain and internationally.

The impact of Trump's wars in the Middle East was felt in the ADM debates. Both the hit to the cost of living that will be increasingly felt as the year goes on, and the knock-on effects on retail and distribution workers' jobs - from abuse faced by petrol station workers as fuel prices soar, to delivery workers carrying heavier loads as people stock up, worrying about potential shortages.

In the debate on understaffing, speaker after speaker referenced the profits being made by companies. Replying to the debate, general secretary Joanne Thomas commented: "Minimum staffing means maximum profit".

There were increased references to industrial action in the conference, with a delegate calling for work-to-rule when self-checkouts are understaffed, and another referring to walking out when there are not enough workers on duty.

'Early discussions' were reported to be taking place about a new strike fund, in the wake of the Tetrosyl strike.

As the Usdaw leadership tried to burnish Labour's credentials ahead of the May elections, most of the Monday morning was taken up with a timetabled politics session, including a speech by Keir Starmer and a 'chat' with Kate Dearden, under-secretary for employment rights. Unlike previous conferences, questions to the latter were not put directly from delegates but from those submitted to a suggestion box on the Labour Party stall. This meant that over an hour of conference time was taken up with no delegates speaking!

Among the achievements Starmer listed was breakfast clubs in every primary school. But the government's scheme only applies to 1,250 primary schools out of around 21,000 across the country!

Unlike the more enthusiastic response Starmer received in 2024 when Usdaw members were desperate to see the back of the Tories, this year was far more muted, with sections of the audience remaining in their seats and not applauding.

Socialist Party member and Broad Left secretary, Iain Dalton, spoke to a 20-strong Socialist Party fringe meeting. Much of the discussion focused around the crisis of political representation. One attendee argued that we needed to support Labour in order to block Reform, and others raised the Greens and ex-Labour independents.

But as Iain explained, the key demand for Usdaw and other trade unions is to ensure candidates they are supporting fully back union policy, and that parliamentary groups are reconstituted on the basis of full support for union policy and democratic accountability to members. A trade union conference on political representation could discuss common measures to be taken as well.



Usdaw Tetrosyl strikers SOCIALIST PARTY

- Over 60 copies of the Socialist have been bought by those attending conference so far.

Solent uni workers strike against pensions fire-and-rehire attacks



PHOTO: SOCIALIST PARTY

NICK CHAFFEY
SOCIALIST PARTY SOUTHERN AND SOUTH EAST SECRETARY

Steve Desmond, president of Solent University and College Union (UCU), has sent an appeal to local trade unionists via Southampton Trades Union Council to support its five-day strike, beginning on Thursday 30 April.

"There is an ongoing strike of national significance taking place to defend pension rights and the Teachers' Pension Scheme (TPS). The university has now commenced Phase II of its pension strategy, with a target date of 30 June to TUPE [transfer] all academic staff to an internal subsidiary, stripping staff of their rights to a secure, government-backed pension."

As UCU explained at the beginning of the dispute last year, "While the pension cuts are presented as a TUPE transfer [a transfer arrangement which is meant to protect pay and conditions], Solent's plans mirror the most egregious fire-and-rehire practices, such as those seen at P&O, as staff are being forced to accept brutal cuts to their retirement benefits or lose their jobs."

Labour had suggested that these brutal practices would be outlawed, but employers are acting with impunity. If Solent gets away with it, this could spread to other institutions. The economic situation is worsening under the impact of the Iran conflict and all employers are looking to defend their interests.

Trade unions need to match fire with fire - take steps to unify action and launch a national campaign under the leadership of the TUC (Trades Union Congress) to defend jobs, pay and pensions with a national demonstration against Labour austerity, to build confidence and show employers they will face action.

This strike comes a week before the May elections, which will be a verdict on Labour's record over the last year – which is one of huge disappointment among working-class people as public services remained starved of adequate funding and the delays in the restoration of basic trade union rights continue.

Gloucestershire university workers' strike: 'Money for shiny new buildings, but not for us'

BILLY JONES
SOCIALIST PARTY GLOUCESTERSHIRE

Staff at the University of Gloucestershire, organised in Unison, held three days of strike action mid-April, with more strike days to come.

For the last 17 years they have been given nothing but below-inflation pay offers, which mean real-terms pay cuts. The current offer of a 1.4% pay award is not only lower than the 2% the university had budgeted for, but is also completely unacceptable.

The strikers are asking for a one-off, non-consolidated payment, an increase in annual leave, and a shorter working week.

Unison rep Joe Sucksmith explained: "Our members are generally the lower-paid members of staff, such as cleaners, porters, administrative staff, and student services. They are genuinely struggling to support themselves."

The current vice chancellor of the university has a yearly salary of over £200,000, and the university recently spent £75 million building a new campus in Gloucester. One of the strikers asked: "How can they pour money into shiny new buildings, and then claim there's not enough to pay us?"

"You don't come into higher education for the pay," Joe says. "You come into this sector because you love working with students. We love what we do, and we absolutely don't want to be on strike – but it comes to a point where you have no other option."

The newly established Socialist Students society at the University of Gloucestershire visited two of the picket lines last week. They are helping to set up a campaign to lobby the Students' Union for support, as well as writing to the vice chancellor. After just an hour or so on the picket, members managed to collect the details of over twenty students who were willing to engage with this campaign.


The new Oxstalls campus of the University of Gloucestershire PHOTO: JONGLEUR100/CC

York student protest says: 'Return our bursaries'

LOUIE NARDINI
YORK SOCIALIST STUDENTS

Over the past two semesters, our campaign to reverse bursary cuts has gathered 350 signatures. This is just from weekly Socialist Students campaign stalls and word of mouth.

We handed in these signatures to the university, with a protest on 22 April. We demand that the University of York reverse the cuts.

But the university hasn't even notified students about the £1,000 it has stolen from every one of them. University management must be worried that a message like that would kickstart an even bigger fightback against the cuts from students.

York St John University has also tried to sneak scholarship cuts past students. Low-income students are entitled to £250 per year. All this shows the austerity crisis in universities.



Handing in the petition PHOTO: IAIN DALTON

South Wales fundraising gig for Birmingham bin strikers



EIRA EKENBERG-JONES
RHONDDA CYNON TAFF SOCIALIST PARTY

The Socialist Party, alongside Caerphilly Trades Union Council and Unite the Union, hosted a benefit gig in Pontypridd, south Wales, for the striking Birmingham bin workers.

Countless people, mainly young, flooded in from the street, completely filling our venue. The atmosphere was electric, lively, and unforgettable. Multiple local musicians performed.

For a month prior, our RCT Socialist Party branch all got involved putting up posters in shops and public areas, inviting friends, and advertising on social media. Locals could hardly go anywhere in Pontypridd without seeing posters.

Mariam Kamish, Socialist Party and trades union council secretary, and Kerry Owens, Wales member on Unite the Union executive, talked about the strike. I was the event's MC.

We had a pop-up stall with copies of the Socialist, 'What We Stand For' pamphlets, and books on the miners' strike. The message of local solidarity for striking workers clearly resonated, as four people approached us about joining the Socialist Party by night's end.

Between selling tickets and Birmingham bin strike merch, provided by Unite, we raised over £300 – smashing even our most ambitious target. Caerphilly Trades Union Council also presented Kerry Owens with a £500 cheque towards the bin workers' strike fund.

We are already planning another benefit gig for the Cwm Taf health visitors, who are likewise striking for fair pay. The trades union council also paid £100 towards their strike fund.

The Birmingham binworkers aren't alone in their struggle. An attack on one worker is an attack on all of us.


PHOTOS: SOCIALIST PARTY


One of five campaign stalls in Waltham Forest PHOTO: WALTHAM FOREST SP


Some of the 30 campaigners canvassing in Bevois, Southampton PHOTO: SOTON SP


Cheltenham PHOTO: GLOUCESTERSHIRE SP


Newcastle PHOTO: TYNE AND WEAR SP

Socialists out campaigning: Join us!

BEA GARDNER
SOCIALIST PARTY FINANCE TEAM

Across England and Wales, members and supporters of the Socialist Party have been out in force on our 'mega weekend' of activity, as part of our bold, anti-war, anti-austerity stand in the upcoming elections.

We are campaigning on many issues that local communities are angry about, offering a real alternative to the cost-of-living crisis: campaigning to end council tax rises, to save local schools and libraries, to build more council homes, and to stop cuts to local services.

Our petitions on these issues have received a lot of support, and all highlight the numerous ways that working-class people are being asked to pay for the capitalist crisis. Instead, we have been raising what local councils could be doing to fight for our interests, including demanding the resources needed to fully fund services and to make the super-rich pay.

In Southampton, 30 were out canvassing for Nadia Ditta in Bevois. There, fly-tipping is a key issue; if elected, Nadia will move a motion at the first council meeting to reinstate free bulk waste collection.

Further north, the Carlisle Socialist Party branch has been fighting to defend the NHS from privatisation. There, our petition calling for an above-inflation pay rise for health and care workers, for all vacancies to be filled, and to stop and reverse the privatisation, received a lot of support and donations to our fighting fund.

Socialist Party branches organised additional activities, including extra campaign stalls and canvassing sessions. We have taken our campaigns into new areas and neighbourhoods, reaching even more people with our socialist programme. In London, the Waltham Forest branch organised five stalls in different wards where Socialist Party members are standing for TUSC. Meanwhile, Croydon organised a mega campaign stall involving 17 members and supporters.

Our message has been clear – we won't pay for the capitalists' wars. Our petition to demand that councils act now to provide support to counter the energy cost hikes and our demand for nationalising the energy companies have been very positively received.

While we are told to bear the burden of their crisis, multinational energy companies have been further increasing their profits. The latest of which has been from BP, whose profits more than doubled in the first three months of the year from the surge in prices from the Iran war. They called it an "exceptional" performance in its oil trading business. We say: Nationalise these companies and bring them under democratic workers' control and management to reduce the bills for billions of people.

Across all branches, we are discussing what kind of party is needed to fight the cost-of-living crisis, austerity, and to challenge the far right. We are raising why socialism is the answer to capitalist crisis and war. There is still time before election day, why not get involved in a campaign in your area? Even better, join the Socialist Party today and discuss how we can continue to build the socialist alternative, whatever the results on 7 May.

Coventry socialists campaigning at Vaisakhi festival


Campaigning at Coventry Vaisakhi PHOTO: COVENTRY SOCIALISTS

As with other years, the colourful 'Nagar Kirtan' marked the Sikh festival of Vaisakhi in Coventry on 26 April. Thousands gathered, joining the march as it made its way through Foleshill.

Socialist Party members were there in the early sunshine, handing out election material and selling the Socialist. We raised the idea with locals that, in this city and nationally, we need a political alternative that is able to provide concrete steps to fight for a future that is lead by the majority for the majority.

When raising these ideas and linking it to voting for the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition on 7 May, we had conversations with locals. When bringing up alternative parties, one person said "Mark my words - Reform are not for us" - and they're correct!

In the afternoon, we went on to campaign in St. Michael's, the ward where three Socialist Party councillors have previously been elected, raising further across the city that we need a party that represents working people and that fights for the essential demands of jobs, decent housing and restoration of essential services.

MILA MATHARU
COVENTRY SOCIALIST PARTY AND TUSC CANDIDATE FOR FOLESHILL, ONE OF 21 ACROSS COVENTRY

Socialist election campaign public meetings:

Fight the cuts, we won't be made to pay for the crisis

socialistparty.org.uk/events

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SOCIALIST PARTY FIGHTING FUND

AREA	£ RECEIVED	£ TARGET	Q2: APRIL-JUNE 2026	DEADLINE: 30 June 2026
Wales	806	2,400	34%	
South West	685	2,100	33%	
Eastern	413	1,300	32%	
North West	374	1,200	31%	
London	860	5,000	17%	
Northern	137	800	17%	
Yorkshire	449	2,650	17%	
Southern & SE	357	2,400	15%	
West Midlands	245	2,700	9%	
East Midlands	9	2,050	1%	
Other	2,057	2,400	41%	
TOTAL	5,330	25,000	21%	

Socialist Party

WHAT WE STAND FOR

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

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

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

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

WORK, PENSIONS AND BENEFITS

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

PUBLIC SERVICES

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

ENVIRONMENT

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

DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS

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

SOCIALISM AND INTERNATIONALISM

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

Do you agree? Join the fightback!

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Why I joined the Socialist Party



PHOTO: ALEX SMITH

MANCHESTER STUDENT

Part of being a socialist is facing up to all the horrors of the capitalist system. You watch as funding to local hospitals is cut and everyone has fallen on hard times that don't seem to come to an end. You are aware of the ever-accelerating exploitation of workers and resources. You see politicians blaming everything from immigration to convenience culture for the problems the country is facing, skirting around what their billionaire donors could possibly have to do with it. Nothing crushes revolutionary spirit faster than feeling that there is nothing you can do to challenge the capitalist system. That is why joining the Socialist Party was so important for me.

Joining has meant my socialist principles can be used to work for real political change, rather than being reduced to a list of ineffectual gripes.

Organising with trade unionist members has provided a framework to take real political action. I've learnt how the potential power of the unions cannot be overstated, whether in terms of protecting women's rights in the workplace or in supporting the people's budget for Manchester City Council.

With student members, I've found great opportunities for political development: discussing the latest news from a socialist perspective

> **Joining has meant my socialist principles can be used for real change**

and speaking to people on stalls has helped me connect socialist ideas to daily life. Politicians serving the interests of capitalism want us to believe there is no hope to create a different world, but being in the party means working towards creating it.

All in all, joining the party makes being a socialist more than having directionless political vision. If you want to look towards the possibility of socialist future and take pro-working class action now, I would absolutely recommend joining.

Join the fightback

JOIN THE SOCIALISTS

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to find out more today!

Nigeria: Sham trial of Makoko anti-eviction activists begins



HT SOWETO
DEMOCRATIC SOCIALIST MOVEMENT (CWI NIGERIA)

On 24 April 2026, it was the third time that I and Dele Frank (Arole Fela) appeared in court to stand trial on criminal charges.

We are being tried on a five-count charge bordering on conduct likely to cause a breach of public peace among others. If found guilty, we both are looking at a few years behind bars. But we remain undaunted.

This is because the only reason why we are being subjected to this sham trial is our role in a peaceful protest on 28 January which successfully stopped the Lagos state government from forcibly evicting poor people from their ancestral lands in Makoko, in order to make way for the rich and powerful elite.

The sham trial, which started on 29 January following our arrest, is the clearest indication yet of how much the anti-eviction protest successfully pushed back the Lagos state government and the bevy of land grabbers in their agenda to wipe the people of Makoko from the face of the earth.

On 28 January, over 5,000 residents of Makoko, Sogunro, Iwaya, Oko Agbon, Otumara, Oworonshoki, Ajegunle and Owode Onirin marched to the Lagos state House of Assembly. The peaceful march was organised by the Coalition Against Demolition, Landgrabbing and Forced Evictions in Lagos state which members of the Democratic Socialist Movement (DSM) and the #EndBadGovernance Movement Lagos state helped set up in January, as news of a renewed push to demolish and evict residents of Makoko filtered in.

Makoko is a waterfront community in Lagos state that has been in existence for more than a hundred years. The traditional occupation of the Makoko people, numbering over 300,000, is fishing. Indeed, Makoko is widely celebrated as the 'Venice of Africa' due to its iconic wooden homes, schools, and churches perched on stilts over the Lagos Lagoon.

However, instead of supporting this highly resourceful community with public infrastructures like pipe-borne water and sanitation, the priority of the Lagos state government has always been to try to evict them in order to redevelop the community into a luxurious estate for the rich. The people of Makoko have historically resisted this agenda politically and legally.

- **Read more at socialistworld.net**

- *Update: At the Magistrate Court Yaba on 24 April, our application for the release of properties (DJ equipment, computer, generator, First Aid, etc) seized by the police during 28 January protest was heard. A counter affidavit was filed and argued by the police. The case was adjourned till 8 May for the ruling on the application and hearing on the substantive matter.*

CWI CIO

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

socialistworld.net

Hungary: Viktor Orbán defeated

Lessons on the character and limits of right-populism in government in Europe

Viktor Orbán has conceded defeat in Hungary's parliamentary elections, ending the first and longest 'experiment' in right-populist government in this era. At the time of the election on 12 April, Orbán was the longest serving leader in the European Union. Steve Bannon, the far-right podcaster and former adviser to Donald Trump, once described him as "Trump before Trump". Many of Trump's domestic policies, especially in his second administration, were pioneered by Orbán. But the 'endorsement' of right-populist politicians, including the high-profile eve-of-election visit to Hungary by US Vice President, JD Vance, counted for little in the end.

The scale of Orbán's defeat is huge. In the party-list component of the election, his Hungarian Civic Alliance party, known as Fidesz, contesting in alliance with the Christian Democratic People's Party (KDNP), lost over 800,000 votes compared to the 2022 elections, falling from over three million votes to 2.2 million. In total, Fidesz-KDNP lost 79 seats in the 199-seat parliament. This was on an 80% turnout, the highest in the history of capitalist democracy in Hungary, introduced in 1990 after the end of Stalinist one-party rule.



PHOTO: EUROPEAN UNION/CC

The opposition Respect and Freedom party, known as Tisza, has secured a supermajority of 136 seats, i.e. over two-thirds of the seats in parliament. This gives it the power to amend the constitution. This was a position enjoyed by Orbán in all four of his parliamentary terms too. He used it to make substantial changes to the Hungarian capitalist state and its laws in order to build a so-called 'illiberal democracy.' However, Tisza has exceeded even Fidesz-KDNP's highest vote by over 50,000. The verdict on 'Orbánism' after sixteen years in power is that it failed to solve any of the fundamental issues confronting post-Stalinist capitalism in Hungary.

- **Read more about the election, the new regime of victors Tisza and the lessons on populism and right-wing forces elsewhere at socialistworld.net**

DO YOU HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY?

- *Send your news, views and criticism, in not more than 150 words, to editors@socialistparty.org.uk*
- *We reserve the right to shorten and edit letters. For legal reasons, we need your full name, address and phone number - but confidentiality will be respected if requested*

THE SOCIALIST INBOX

The 1826 Lancashire Weavers' uprising

This April marks the bicentennial of the 1826 Lancashire Weavers' Uprising. Weavers who worked on handlooms were increasingly being challenged by mass production in the steam-powered cotton mills. Food prices were high and wages low, meaning thousands of families were living in poverty.

So, on 24 April 1826, thousands of people gathered at Whinney Hill, Accrington, to decide what to do, and the decision they made was to destroy the powerlooms in the area, while avoiding unnecessary damage to property, or violence to people. Over the next few days, over 1,000 powerlooms were destroyed, and around 10,000 people descended on Blackburn and Oswaldtwistle. Other groups of weavers and supporters joined the campaign, on 25 April 2,000 people met at Earcroft, proceeding across the moors to Helmshore and Haslingden to destroy the powerlooms there.

The mill owners and the capitalist establishment were initially taken by surprise at these events, but on 25 April soldiers were sent to deal with the weavers, 4,000 of whom were moving from Haslingden and Rawtenstall towards Dearden Clough Mill in Edenfield, and from there to Chatterton. The magistrate read from the Riot Act, ordering the crowd to disperse, and when they held their ground, soldiers from the Duke of York's Own Rifles Regiment fired into the crowd, killing at least six people. Despite this, the weavers regrouped, and on the final day of the uprising, a large crown assembled at Water Street Mill in Chorley, many of whom were local people who supported the weavers.

The true numbers of those killed or wounded is not known. 41 people were put on trial, convicted and sentenced to death, although these sentences were later commuted. These events show the determination of the working class to fight for justice, and the viciousness of the capitalist class to hold onto their power and property.

ROGER BANNISTER

Farage promotes the Sun the same week as a visit to Merseyside

Nigel Farage recently visited Southport on Merseyside as part of Reform's campaign to potentially win seats in Sefton and Knowsley councils. He believed the prospects for this are good - it is certainly true Reform have sent me two leaflets as a registered elector in Bootle (Sefton).

I wonder what the people of Sefton and Knowsley, and wider, the people of Merseyside, will think of Mr Farage proudly promoting the infamous rag 'newspaper' (see below) that lied about the 97 victims of Hillsborough? A 'paper' that exists solely as a mouthpiece for the most reactionary parts of the British capitalist class.

Farage is just another Tory. He must be resisted. That is why TUSC is standing in working-class communities in Bootle, Netherton and Kirkby to cut across the toxic anti-working class politics of Reform.

DEAN YOUNG
MERSEYSIDE SOCIALIST PARTY



PHOTO: SCREENSHOT TAKEN FROM X

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Come to the National Shop Stewards Network conference

WORKERS WON'T PAY FOR THE CRISIS

By fighting back collectively, we can win

For the trade union movement there is a lot to discuss.

What action is needed to defend workers' livelihoods from the oncoming inflationary hit? How can we force the Labour Party to deliver on all its promises to improve workers' rights and how can we push them further – to remove the undemocratic 50% strike ballot turnout threshold? And how can working-class interests be represented as Keir Starmer's Labour makes clear every day it stands for the big bosses not the working class?

The National Shop Stewards Network (NSSN) conference on Saturday 27 June, coming after the seismic May elections, is the perfect place to discuss a coordinated response to these questions, and more.

Workers are already fighting back, and the numbers of strikes are on the increase again. From the Birmingham bin workers who have received an improved offer after striking for over a year (see right), to resident doctors, tube drivers, phlebotomists and many many more.

The 20th anniversary NSSN conference will be a platform for hundreds of union reps and members to speak about their strikes, disputes and struggles, and organise together for the strategy we need to win.

● **Read more: NSSN conference 2026: Workers' fightback against new cost-of-living surge – how will it take shape?**



NSSN conference

- **Saturday 27 June, 11am-4:30pm**
- **Conway Hall, London**
- **Register at shopstewards.net**

Birmingham bin workers receive improved offer

On 27 April, Unite the Union announced that Labour-run Birmingham City Council has at last made an improved offer in the bin dispute, after 15 months of action.

In a Unite video, convenor for the bin workers Matthew Reid said: "Our collective strength has been amazing. We were right to go out on strike, that they could offer more than they said they could and still be fair and reasonable."

Rep Danny Taylor said: "So this announcement that has just been released shows what can happen if workers unite and stand together. We have been on industrial action now for 15 months and our members have remained strong. They told us it couldn't be done. But it has been done."

Steve Morris, workplace rep, said: "We are working-class men and women, and we are standing shoulder to shoulder together to fight against these cuts."

Striking bin workers will now consider the offer.

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

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