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STARMER PUNISHED AT THE POLLS

BUILD THE WORKING-CLASS FIGHTBACK



The price of everything is cranking up again, our services - the NHS, schools, universities, local councils – are crumbling from years of austerity. And despite a Labour government promising change, two years on, it feels like nothing has.

Attacks on pensioners' winter fuel payments, disability benefit cuts, the initial refusal to remove the cruel two-child benefit cap, hiring Mandelson dripping with sleaze to try to suck up to Trump… All are piled onto the mountain of reasons people have for wanting Keir Starmer gone.

This issue of the Socialist is going to press before the results of the 7 May elections for the Welsh Senedd, Scottish Parliament and thousands of seats in English local authorities. But we already know Starmer's Labour faces a beating.

Many will have picked up Nigel Farage's right-populist Reform UK as a weapon with which to club Starmer's Labour government, wanting to express anger at 'broken Britain.' Many will have voted for the Greens, Plaid and independents too, among them those wanting to deal Starmer a blow from the left.

The working class faces a new wave of the cost-of-living crisis. And attempts by any politicians to make us pay - again! - for another crisis of their system won't just be meekly accepted.

In these elections, the Socialist Party was part of a 300-strong Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition stand. We raised how fighting, socialist elected representatives could be part of leading the working-class fightback, by using elected positions to defy austerity attacks on our services, helping to mobilise a movement that says 'we won't pay for Trump's wars - make the super-rich pay!' We put pressure on Greens and left-wing independents to take the same approach.

And we explained how such a fightback, with the involvement of and lead from the seven million-strong trade union movement, is the most effective way of cutting across support for Reform.

The crushing blow for the Labour government is for the same reasons the Tories were smashed less than two years ago – because they are governing within a capitalist system in crisis, and so are attacking the working class and overseeing stagnant or falling living standards while the bosses get richer.

The working class needs its own party, one which fights for socialist change.

POST-ELECTION ANALYSIS FROM THE SOCIALIST PARTY

▶▶▶ socialistparty.org.uk



Sick for profit: How capitalism is draining our health

20 years

fewer of healthy life expected for people living in the most deprived areas vs the most affluent

DAVID ELLIS
BIRMINGHAM SOCIALIST PARTY

Healthy life expectancy is the number of years someone can expect to live in good health. In England, this has fallen by around two years over the last decade and is continuing to fall. The UK is one of only five of the richest 21 countries to experience a decline in healthy life expectancy, despite being the fifth richest.

Inequality in healthy life expectancy has also been rising, particularly since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic. Data from the Office for National Statistics shows that those living in the most deprived areas of England can expect 20 fewer years of good health than those living in the most affluent areas along with living fewer years overall!

Much of this inequality is driven by poverty and poor housing. Around 1.1 million households in England are overcrowded, making the spread of infection more likely. An estimated 6.5 million people live with significant damp and mould, increasing cases of childhood asthma. And 6.1 million UK households already living in fuel poverty will see further energy price increases due to Trump's war on Iran, meaning more people this winter will be choosing between eating food and heating their homes. These problems are compounded by poorer neighbourhoods having less access to green space and often suffering from higher levels of air pollution.

While the well-off can afford private healthcare, the poor are forced to face the full force of decades of NHS cuts. Despite recent modest improvements, 7.29 million people in England are currently waiting for elective (non-emergency) care. This often means many months of living in pain and discomfort while waiting for treatment. Labour health minister Wes Streeting's withdrawal of more specialist training posts, despite chronic staff shortages, to punish resident doctors continuing their strike for fair pay, will only make this worse.

Factors like obesity also play a significant role in our country's declining health. Capitalism's drive for profit has led to the creation of modern food that is often calorie-dense and hyper-palatable, making it easier to overeat. On top of this, workers are increasingly turning to cheap, high-calorie, convenient food due to lowering wages and the increase in irregular and unstable work.

As capitalism works us into an early grave, only socialism offers a path to a healthy, high standard of living for all. A fully funded health service democratically run by its workers and patients would mean everyone gets the healthcare they need. A massive programme building council houses that are well insulated with access to quality green spaces would reduce overcrowding and improve living conditions. Furthermore, by cutting out the profit-stealing bosses, we can work less and earn more. Only then will workers be able to prioritise long-term health over the day-to-day struggle to survive.

After Golders Green attack: working class must unite to fight division

Socialist Party

WHAT WE THINK

A brutal daylight knife attack on two Jewish men in Golders Green in north London on 29 April has raised fear for their safety among Jewish people living in Britain. The stabbings followed the horrific attack on a synagogue in Manchester last October and arson attacks on volunteer-run ambulances and other sites in London this year.

The attacker, who is reported to have a history of violence and allegedly also attempted to stab a Muslim man he knew in South London earlier in the day, has been arrested. The motivations of the attack are not clear, but the Met Police declared it a terrorist attack.

The Joint Terrorism Analysis Centre has raised the terrorism threat level to 'severe', the second highest level. There is unconfirmed speculation that the attacker could be in some way linked with the brutal Iranian regime. Many will presume that the attack is motivated by opposition to the actions of the Israeli regime in Gaza and the West Bank, where brutal slaughter and repression remain the order of the day.

The Socialist Party completely opposes terrorism. Violent attacks by individuals or small groups, including and especially those carried out indiscriminately on ordinary people, alienate the mass of ordinary people, and are used by the ruling class to justify further repression. They are the opposite of what is needed to bring an end to war and oppression, including national oppression – a united mass struggle against the capitalist system, led by the working class.

Opposition to the Gaza onslaught which has claimed over 75,000 lives is widespread among workers and young people around the world. The movement ebbs and flows but has, for example, found expression in general strike action in Italy last autumn. In the US, there has been an historic shift away from support for government aid to the Israeli regime. The anti-war mood is a factor in the dramatic collapse of support for capitalist establishment parties – and the political instability that brings. It will be a part of the picture when Labour suffers big losses in the elections on 7 May.

Capitalist politicians are cynically attempting to use this horrendous attack to undermine the anti-war movement. Opportunistically, Tory MPs, Reform UK leader Nigel Farage, and Sir Keir Starmer raced to Golders Green to claim to support Jewish people living in Britain. But they and their system are the authors of division as well as of falling living standards and war. They have no solutions to any of the problems of society.

There has been an angry response to Starmer despite the government rushing out various announcements of measures like police funding. But they have no serious ideas about how to keep the Jewish community in the population safe in a world where capitalist politicians are daily ramping up tensions and divisions. From Trump to Farage to Starmer, they do this in the hope of building any base of support for themselves. But in defending profit-before-all-else free market capitalism over the needs of society, a stable base of support is a pipedream for all of them.

For example, social media has been identified by many as a source of antisemitic hate, with a tiny minority able to promote vile antisemitism, likewise misogyny, islamophobia, etc, online. But Starmer's government has refused to take any decisive action to impose democratic public control on the social media billionaire owners.

Gaza protests

While seeking to defend capitalism, they also cannot stop the fall in living standards for the overwhelming majority of people and so they seek to cast blame elsewhere and sow division. After this stabbing incident, there has been a concerted attempt to lay the blame for antisemitic attacks on the mass demonstrations in solidarity with Gaza, with many commentators from the capitalist establishment again labelling them 'hate marches'.

The BBC reported that the "government's independent reviewer of terrorism legislation Jonathan Hall KC called this week for a 'moratorium' on pro-Palestinian marches claiming it was 'impossible' for them not to incubate antisemitism". Asked if he wanted tougher policing of language used during marches, or if he wanted to stop some protests altogether, Starmer told BBC Radio 4's Today programme: "I think certainly the first, and I think there are instances for the latter."

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Golders Green SJENGHAU/CC

Across the country, there have been hundreds of Palestine marches since the Israeli regime unleashed its offensive in October 2023. Millions of people have probably participated over the last two and half years. Among them there are likely to have been a tiny minority who hold reactionary racist and antisemitic views, but the mass marches have included Jewish people, and have demanded a ceasefire, an end to bombing, and peace.

Capitalism fuels division

The root of racist division in society, including antisemitism, is not anti-war demonstrations but the system of capitalism which Badenoch, Farage and Starmer all defend. Antisemitism has its origins in the development of societies based on class division as propertied classes sought to defend their exploitative and unequal systems, and Jews were scapegoated at various times.

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

There has been a 2% increase in hate crimes recorded outside London in the year ending March 2025. "That includes a 19% increase in religious hate crimes targeted at Muslims (excluding the MPS), with a spike in these offences seen at the time of the Southport murders and subsequent disorder".

In that period, the Labour government of Keir Starmer has been attempting to out-Farage Reform UK with attacks on migrants, attempting to scapegoat them for the problems of society.

However, polling published last December found that, despite the capitalist propaganda, only 36% thought that 'being British' meant being born in Britain, down from 74% in 2013. The biggest factor in these changes is that, in almost every part of the country, workers live, work and struggle alongside workers from different backgrounds.

How can we overcome divisions and come together amid fear and suspicion heightened by the recent attacks and build on the potential for solidarity? The trade unions are the biggest mass workers' organisations in the country, organising workers from all backgrounds. In the strike wave of 2022-23, over a million workers took action together giving a glimpse of the potential to overcome division in our common interests. The pay rises they won from a Tory government claiming there was no money show how a mass movement can win for all sections of the working class.

Working-class people of all religions and none have the potential to cut across the divisions by organising collectively. The trade unions should now take the initiative with a call for a mass march uniting the struggles against racism, austerity and war as part of a sustained strategy on the theme: 'No to austerity, make the rich pay! Workers' unity not division – jobs, homes, and services for all, not racism!' Added to that must be the defence of the right to protest. That would have an immense appeal and would help cut through the racist lies.

16 May demo

More immediately, there is a Palestine march called for 16 May to commemorate the Nakba, the annual day which remembers the displacement of Palestinians in 1948 when the state of Israel was formed. Far-right thug Tommy Robinson has provocatively called a Unite the Kingdom march and rally on that date too. The Golders Green events and establishment response will embolden the small minority of dangerous violent racists and antisemites who will be on that march making both Palestine marchers and Jewish workers and young people less safe.

Therefore, the appeal the Socialist Party has put out regarding the planning of the 16th is now even more necessary. "The trade union leaders, along with anti-racist, anti-war, Palestinian solidarity campaigns, need to say clearly now: we are all marching together to oppose racism, war and austerity: to oppose war on the Palestinians, to stand alongside Muslim and all other communities that feel vulnerable on that day, and to fight for a decent future for all of us – for jobs, homes and services.

"Socialist Party trade union members will be arguing that the trade unions should take a lead on ensuring that happens – and, crucially, organise defensive trade union stewarding." It is a mistake to march towards the Robinson hate march without the necessary mass mobilisation and organisation and we appeal to the organisers to seek an alternative route given the lack of time to prepare. But a well-attended and well-stewarded march can be organised as a show of strength and preparation for building the united movement we need.

We also need debate in the anti-war movement about a socialist programme for peace in the Middle East and the rights of the Palestinians. The Socialist Party has marched in solidarity with the Palestinians since our inception, as have our forerunners. We campaign to bring the full strength of the trade unions with their six million members to the heart of the anti-war movement.

We also put forward socialist ideas on the thousands of leaflets we distribute on the Palestine marches. We call for "an independent, socialist Palestinian state, alongside a socialist Israel, with guaranteed democratic rights for all minorities, as part of the struggle for a socialist Middle East." We have always fought against antisemitism, as well as against all forms of racism. Our opposition to the actions of the right-wing Israeli government is part of a programme that draws the conclusion that we can have no trust in capitalist politicians internationally.

For the working class to challenge the divisive capitalist establishment and the likes of Robinson, we also need a new mass workers' party. That must be a place for discussion and debate among members fighting for common aims, working out the means to get there collectively. That means a socialist programme which aims for the power, wealth and resources of society to be in the hands of the working-class majority not the tiny billionaire capitalist class.

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



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



Leeds City College IAIN DALTON

West Yorkshire - Socialists and youth demand free public transport

IAIN DALTON
WEST YORKSHIRE SOCIALIST PARTY

As part of our local election campaigning, young Socialist Party members and Socialist Students have launched a petition demanding the West Yorkshire Mayor, combined authority, and local councils introduce free public transport.

Our campaign stalls have had a warm response from college and university students in Bradford, Leeds, and Wakefield. Some college students have told us they walk to college because of the cost, whilst others work part-time jobs just to afford the £40-60 a month buses to college cost them.

When people ask us how can it be afforded, we point to the subsidies already paid to big local private bus operators, and the super-profits of £30 million an hour being made by the oil companies. If these companies were brought into public ownership, instead of paying dividends to shareholders, resources could be used to fund vital services.

Some students have asked us why we are standing Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) candidates in the elections, when the Greens are standing. But they understand why when we explain the Green Party in Leeds refused to meet us or commit to voting against all cuts, rent, and council tax rises. Around a dozen students who consider themselves socialists have left their details wanting to come along to our local meetings.

Bevois, Southampton - We're fighting for Nadia and what our community needs



NOREEN YOUNIS
SOUTHAMPTON SOCIALIST PARTY

We've been fighting to elect Nadia Ditta. But we need a voice for Bevois, no matter who wins the election. This is what we discussed at our Socialist Party pre-election meeting of 30 people.

We stood with Nadia in 2024. We canvassed and introduced the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC). We listened to the community about their issues.

When the Labour council tried to take away our only green space – known as the 'Venny' to locals – we protested with the local community and Nadia to save it. This resulted in forcing the Labour council to actually invest in the Venny.

This proved to locals that we listen. This is what people told us when we knocked their doors.

In 2024, we came second to Labour, with an amazing 848 votes, showing people we can make a difference.

The change we noticed, knocking doors in 2026, is people already know about TUSC, remember Nadia Ditta, and agree we need change.

"We have had enough"

"We have had enough of Labour lies, not doing anything. We need someone who can be our voice."

It's amazing that more youth want change. They feel there no safe space where they can go, play, and socialise.

People are fed up of fly-tipping, anti-social behaviour, drugs, and drinking on streets. Many say they are willing to vote anyone else, but not Labour. So we are a real alternative.

If we win, Nadia will put a motion to the first council meeting to restore free bulk waste collection, cut by Labour. If we don't win, we'll still be protesting for what our community needs.

In 2024, local women were empowered to come out and use their voice for Nadia. In 2026, people from the local community are ready for a change. Our meeting said: "This is just the beginning to our change."

$1.5 billion spent by fossil fuel companies on greenwashing adverts

HAMZA KHAN
WEST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

Multi billion-pound British advertising conglomerate WPP has been accused of breaching its own climate policy in a recent report by climate investigations platform DeSmog. The report finds that major oil companies Shell, BP, ExxonMobil and Chevron spent over $1.5 billion buying advertising space in the USA since the signing of the Paris agreement in 2016.

A 2024 US congressional investigation found that these companies have been using 'deceptive and misleading' communications to counteract policies designed to address the climate crisis through reduced reliance on fossil fuels. Oil companies have continued to increase the extraction of fossil fuels while promoting speculative solutions to the climate crisis in order to wash their hands of the urgent responsibility and maintain their profits.

'Garbage'

WPP's various agencies have worked on several US ad campaigns including a 2019 ExxonMobil ad that compared the pairing of natural gas and renewable energy to 'a peanut butter and jelly [jam] sandwich,' and a Shell advertisement with the tagline 'We see possibilities in planes that fly on garbage.'

Such behaviour by advertising companies working on behalf of the oil industry is to be expected, all they care about are their profits. While the energy industry is left in the hands of the profit-hungry bosses, money is invested in maintaining the huge amounts to be made from oil and gas - not in the interests of the working class who will pay the price of the climate catastrophe.

In order for a true green transition away from fossil fuels, and to combat the looming climate crisis in any meaningful way, modest policy reforms within the capitalist framework are insufficient – agreements like the Paris Accord are ignored. The energy industry cannot be left in private ownership, it needs to be nationalised, democratised and run for the benefit of all of us.


ERPBX/CARLYOUNG/CC

Join us to fight for socialist change

*Socialist Students member **Adam Tyas** was a Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) candidate in the St Michael's ward in Coventry. He spoke at Coventry Socialist Party's pre-election public meeting.*

I am a student and young worker, standing for Coventry City Council, to represent and fight for students and all working people.

Students like me are leaving uni and entering work in tens of thousands pounds of debt. Whilst studying, we have to endure extortionate rents, and take the harshest edge of the cost-of-living crisis.

Exploitative landlords rob students. They charge too much, and give little to nothing in return, with poor maintenance and standard of homes.

Socialists like me will fight to cap rents and hold landlords to justice, and fight to build the publicly owned housing that people need.

We will fight to end student tuition fees, bring back proper student grants, and have fully free and suitable education and training for everyone.

It is no better after uni. The number of graduate jobs has just dropped below 10,000, according to Bloomberg. The number of graduates is 900,000 and climbing. The maths do not need explaining.

Young people leave uni or college, and enter a society where it is more and more difficult to find secure, well-paid jobs. This has a massive impact on people's lives.

We demand that councils and national government create new jobs for all.

There are limited-to-no services left in our local communities to use or help us. We are ultimately paying more for less.

Energy bills and fuel prices skyrocketing. Water bills up. Crap dumped in rivers in the remaining areas of nature we wish to enjoy in the limited time off work.

Poorly run, expensive public transport systems are ineffective and unaffordable, so we are unable to get to work, or even to hospital. Socialists in Coventry are fighting to scrap the hospital parking charges, nurses and visitors should not have to pay. End the profiteering PFI privatisation schemes in the NHS.

In my workplace – automotive/manufacturing – there was no pay rise last year. Workers have spent a year increasingly disgruntled.

Unite, our workplace union, has given members the statistics for the last two years. The cost of living has risen by 7%, and other companies in the region have had an average 6.1% pay increase.

So most workers are getting a pay cut. Profit for the millionaires and billionaires is put before our basic needs of the working class.

We need a party of the working class, rooted in the trade unions, that stands for the working class and for the next generation, to encourage those to join the fight for socialist change and organise in trade unions in our workplaces.



Little Learners nursery parents fight closure

Fight to fund Early Years and SEND provision

LITTLE LEARNERS PARENT

Parents of children attending my son's pre-school were dismayed to learn that the setting would likely close at the end of the summer term. But by coming together and demanding funding to meet the needs of all, parents and the preschool committee have now managed to put on enough pressure to delay a final decision.

The pre-school has operated from a building on the grounds of a local primary school for 16 years, and is currently attended by 35 children.

Now the school wants to take back the building to accommodate the needs of its pupils, including SEND (special education needs and disability) provision. With no suitable alternative premises, the community-run pre-school announced it would likely have to close.

As an initial response, several parents wrote directly to the MP, local councillors, and school governors appealing for them to reconsider. They shared their own stories about the impact the pre-school, and its experienced and dedicated staff, have had on their families.


YMCA/FORTH WORTH/CC

Staff and parents also stressed that the current location of the pre-school is not incidental. The pre-school is an integral part of the local community. It can't just relocate to a different area.

Currently, 30% of pupils at the primary school have gone through the pre-school. The transition to 'big school' is made much easier by already being on the school site, and parents can drop off younger and older children at the same time.

The Socialist Party is standing a Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) candidate in the same council ward – Cheshunt South and Theobolds. There are six TUSC candidates running for Broxbourne Borough Council.

There is more than enough money to ensure the needs of all children, primary and pre-school alike, can be met. Hertfordshire County Council has £156 million in usable reserves, including £11.7 million earmarked for schools. That amount has increased from the year before!

Why not expand the current school building and refurbish the pre-school building as well? There is space on the site to do that. But it needs representatives willing to fight for it.

Along with other parents, I helped to draft an open letter to demonstrate the level of support for the pre-school staying at its current location, to maximise the collective pressure we put on the key decision-makers. To date, the letter has been signed by over 139 parents, residents and Early Years professionals.

This has contributed to the school governing bodies announcing: "No final decision has been made", despite previously informing the pre-school committee of a date by which to vacate the building.

Now, we must keep the pressure on the local authority to provide the funding needed, while overcoming any attempts to divide by putting the needs of one group of children over those of another.

Increasingly, decisions like this are being made about the future of pre-schools and primary schools, without any input from the staff, local community, or parents and children attending. Often, decisions to close or merge settings are down to financial considerations.

Schools are struggling, squeezed by government funding that fails to keep up with rising costs, let alone invest in their school buildings.

That is why we need a national campaign for full funding for the whole of education, and for staff, parent, and student oversight and control of key decision-making processes.

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Socialist Party

WHAT WE STAND FOR

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

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

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

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

WORK, PENSIONS AND BENEFITS

- A trade union struggle for the immediate implementation of the TUC demand of a £15-an-hour minimum wage for all as a step towards a real living wage, without exemptions. For the minimum wage to automatically increase linked to average earnings or inflation, whichever is higher.
- Share out the work. A maximum 32-hour working week with no loss of pay or worsening of conditions. The right to flexible working, under the control of workers not employers. An end to insecure working, for the right to full-time work for all who want it; ban zero-hour contracts.
- All workers to have trade union rates of pay, employment protection, and sickness, parental and holiday rights from day one of employment. End bosses using bogus 'self-employment' as a means to avoid giving workers rights.
- No to austerity through inflation. For all wage rates to be automatically increased at least in line with price rises.
- Open the books of all companies cutting jobs or claiming they can't afford to pay a real living wage. State subsidies, where genuinely needed, for socially-useful small businesses.
- For trade unions independent of the capitalist state, with members having democratic control over their own policies, constitutions and democratic procedures. For all trade union officials to be regularly elected, subject to recall by their members and paid a worker's wage.
- Reduce the state retirement 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!
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1926 GENERAL STRIKE CENTENARY

NEWS AS A FIELD OF CLASS BATTLE

DAVE NELLIST
COVENTRY SOCIALIST PARTY

"The field of battle is no longer transport but news" (Winston Churchill, Tory Chancellor of the Exchequer, 5 May 1926, as he commandeered the Morning Post building, the production base for the government's British Gazette).

The 1926 General Strike, in support of 1.2 million miners who had already seen their wages cut in half and now faced a further 40% cut, has been outlined in recent editions of the Socialist.

One of the key lessons from the 100-year anniversary of the General Strike, and other class conflicts since, is not simply that the capitalist media is often hostile, but that, in a crisis, communications become part of the struggle itself.

The final collapse of negotiations between the miners and the mine owners happened on 30 April 1926. Two days later, print workers at the Daily Mail refused to print an editorial which described the looming TUC strike as a "revolutionary movement... intended to inflict suffering upon the great mass of innocent persons".

Tory Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin seized upon this incident as a "gross interference with the freedom of the press" and an "overt act" of rebellion, using it as a pretext to terminate all discussions with the Trades Union Congress (TUC).

The TUC leadership was horrified by this. They sent a delegation to Downing Street to repudiate the printers' actions, only to find the building dark and the prime minister in bed.

In fact, the official TUC leadership desired a 'gentlemanly' industrial dispute. Thomas Jones, Baldwin's private secretary, recognised this and described to Churchill that the TUC chairman Arthur Pugh and railway union leader Jimmy Thomas were "as loyal as you are to the state".

At the start of the General Strike, the state had already laid plans for internal security and strike-breaking, including establishing the Organisation for the Maintenance of Supplies (OMS), a semi-official militia that recruited middle-class volunteers and 'patriots' to maintain services.

The state and the employers already possessed most of the established channels of mass communication; the government had emergency powers, an official newspaper and decisive influence over radio. The trade union movement had to improvise.

When the strike began, most newspapers ceased publication. The government requisitioned the offices and printing presses of the then main conservative daily, the Morning Post, chosen because its site was physically difficult to blockade.

From this location, Churchill directed the government's main propaganda effort. Churchill viewed news as a weapon of war and approached the General Strike as if it were the foretaste of a revolution; with the Russian Revolution only nine years earlier, many in the establishment no doubt shared his fears.



THE BRITISH WORKER

OFFICIAL STRIKE NEWS BULLETIN

Published by The General Council of the Trades Union Congress

No. 2. THURSDAY EVENING, MAY 6, 1926. PRICE ONE PENNY

WORKERS CALM AND STEADY

Firmer and Firmer Every Day of Strike

BLACKLEGS FAIL

The third day of the General Strike sees the situation unchanged. The working class is holding quietly and tenaciously to the position it has taken up.

The easy assurance of anti-Labour people that it would be "over in a couple of days," that "they would soon be sick of it," that "anyway the Government will get heaps of volunteers to run the trains and things" has vanished entirely. It has given place to a growing anxiety.

For "it" is not over. The workers are growing more determined as the days pass. They are not "drifting back to work." On the contrary,

the trouble everywhere is to keep those men at work who have not yet been ordered to strike.

And as to getting the "trains and things" running with "volunteers," the first day's boasts have quite failed to materialise. The train service remains a skeleton—and an even bonier skeleton than yesterday.

A few London buses are being run by "volunteer" drivers, each guarded by a policeman. Here and there in the provinces the same thing. But what does it all amount to? In all Manchester, for example, three tram drivers!

A few buses, a few passenger trains. But the mines are still, the goods traffic has ceased, the docks are closed, the factories are closing.

Not all the O.M.S. in the world can get them going again. Only the organised workers can do that.

And the organised workers, solid, disciplined, calm, are refusing to do it until justice is done to their fellows.

The third day. And still every-where complete calm, complete order.

Anti-strike propagandists are rumours going of a riot here and a Continued on Page Six, Column Three

WEATHER

Wind northerly, moderate or fresh; strong at times locally; variable sky, some showers of rain or hail; perhaps local thunder; rather cold.

LABOUR'S REPLY TO THE PREMIER

General Council's Conditions for Reopening Discussions

"UNFETTERED ATMOSPHERE"

The following is the reply of the General Council of the Trades Union Congress to the Prime Minister's statement as to possible terms of peace:—

Mr. Baldwin, in the House of Commons on Wednesday, said:—

"No Government in any circumstances could ever yield to a general strike. The moment it was called off unconditionally the Government were prepared to resume negotiations."

The General Council is ready, at any moment, to resume negotiations for an honourable settlement. It enforces no conditions for resuming preliminary discussion with the Government on any aspects of the case.

It is obvious, however, that at this stage, with no knowledge of the subsequent line of policy that the Government intends to pursue, the General Council cannot comply with the Prime Minister's request for an unconditional withdrawal of the strike notices.

The General Council, it must be remembered, was not responsible for the breakdown of negotiations. The strike was due to the Government's refusal to secure a withdrawal of the lock-out notices in the mining industry, and to its action in provocatively taking the side of the coalowners and in breaking off negotiations at a time when the General Council was sincerely seeking a peaceful settlement.

The conditions that govern the reopening of discussions should be different from the conditions governing the withdrawal of the notice for the general strike; and inasmuch as the Government was responsible for the breaking-off of negotiations, any preliminary parleys with a view

Contd. at foot of Col. Two, Page Eight

OUR REPLY TO "JIX"

The General Council urges the men and women of Great Britain not to be stampeded into panic by the provocative utterances of the Home Secretary.

The inference contained in his broadcast appeal for special constables on Wednesday evening, to the effect that the Trade Union Movement was violating law and order, is quite unjustifiable.

Only on that same afternoon, in fact, the General Council of the Trades Union Congress had officially urged every member taking part in the dispute to be exemplary in his conduct and not to give any opportunity for police disturbances.

The General Council had also asked pickets to avoid obstruction and to confine themselves strictly to their legitimate duties.

There is no need for the panic which the Home Secretary seems intent on provoking. The strikers are standing firm, and they mean to conduct themselves in a disciplined, quiet and orderly manner.

The unnecessary and unwise action of the Home Secretary is more likely to imperil good order than to preserve it.

HOW THE "B.W." CAME OUT

A Sudden Police Raid—and After

AMAZING SCENES

Eight o'clock last night.

A hundred difficulties had to be overcome. But they had been overcome. And the Barrow Worker was all ready for printing.

The last line of copy had been set-edited and set. The last stereo plate had been made and fastened in place on the presses. All was ready.

Swarm of Police

The big crowd of members of the Distributive Section of the Paper Workers' Union, who had been waiting with their cars and cycles outside, very patiently, for three hours and more, raised a cheer.

Then—from the half-finished new Daily Mail building across the street emerged a policeman—two policemen—five—ten—twenty—fifty or more. Round the corner came a dozen mounted men.

They pushed the waiting workers away from the front of the office, and held them by a cordon 50 yards away. Then a number of plain-clothes men, headed by a detective inspector, entered the building and ordered that the machines should not be started.

Warrant from "Jix"

Mr. Robert Williams saw the inspector, who explained that they had a warrant from the Home Secretary to search for and seize all copies of the Daily Herald of May 5, all material used in producing it, or which might be used in producing any document calculated to impede measures taken for the maintenance of essential services.

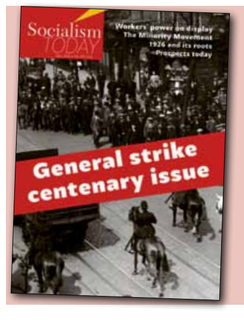
It was quickly made clear that what really interested them was less the Daily Herald of May 4 than the British Worker of May 5.

The inspector requested that a dozen copies of the paper should be run off for submission to the City Commissioner. If the Commissioner approved, we could go ahead. If not—he was sorry, but—

He went off with his copies, leaving some of his men in charge.

Continued on Page Eight, Col. Four

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SOCIALISM TODAY

Magazine of the Socialist Party

May's 1926 General Strike issue includes...

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- **The general strike today** Possibilities in the modern era

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The first edition of the British Gazette had two of the four pages blank. It went into circulation at 200,000 copies, reaching two million by the end of the strike.

Some other newspapers continued production, but without many of their printing staff. The Sunday Times (3 May 2026) described how the ruling class rallied round The Times after a fire broke out in the machine room.

The proprietor, Major John Astor MP, "had already dragooned his domestic staff into helping, but suddenly came the proprietor's friends from the House of Commons including the future Tory prime minister Harold Macmillan, they were joined by young naval officers, students from Westminster School and Oxford colleges, as well as barristers of Gray's Inn, members of London clubs, directors of banks and public companies, an earl, and at least two duchesses (of Westminster and of Sutherland) who drove lorries."

Churchill wanted the BBC taken over. It had an estimated audience (sharing radio sets) of between five and ten million listeners (in a population of 40 million).

In fact, while nominally independent, the BBC served the government's interests during the strike. John Reith, the managing director, argued that since the government was "acting for the people", the BBC should be "for the government in the crisis".

The BBC routinely broadcast inaccurate reports of workers returning to work to demoralise those still on strike. It carried regular government appeals for 'volunteers' and refused the Labour leader, MacDonald, a right of reply. It refused to allow the Archbishop of Canterbury, Randall Davidson, to broadcast a peace appeal on 7 May aimed at settling the dispute, while carrying the government's message to the armed forces that any action taken to aid the civil power would receive the state's full support.

Reith later wrote in his diary: "They [the government] know they can trust us not to be really impartial."

TUC

The TUC launched the British Worker on 6 May from the offices of The Daily Herald. On the first night, the paper was raided by plain-clothes police who delayed production by demanding copies for submission to the Police Commissioner.

Terrified of being seen as 'revolutionary', the TUC leadership vetted the paper. The editor, Hamilton Fyfe, recalled: "Our chief aim is to keep strikers steady and quiet... our line is to be dignified, calm in our own strength; to make our statements forcibly, but with moderation of language". Four of the seven issues printed before the strike was called off carried an identical declaration from the TUC that the strike was only industrial, not political or constitutional.

For strikers with time on their hands, the second issue listed seven suggestions. "Do all you can to keep everybody smiling; the way to do this is to smile yourself. Do your best to discountenance any ideas of violent or disorderly conduct. Do the thing that's nearest: this will occupy you and will steady your nerves, if they get shaky. Do any odd jobs that want doing about the house. Do a little to interest and amuse the kiddies now you have the chance. Do what you can to improve your health: a good walk every day will keep you fit. Do something. Hanging about and swapping rumours is bad every way".

The British Worker produced between 320,000 and 700,000 copies a day. But the TUC leadership saw the strike as leverage for negotiation, not as a struggle in which workers might need to assume wider authority over transport, food, information, and local order.

On the ground

The true power of the strike resided in local strike committees and councils of action. In many industrial areas, the strike rate was 100%, meaning no trains, buses, or newspapers operated without a permit from the workers.

Local bulletins were produced by trades councils, councils of action, local unions and groups such as the Communist Party. Most active towns and industrial districts had at least one daily bulletin. There were probably up to 500 different local bulletins per day. Few had access to proper printing facilities; instead, they relied on duplicators or small presses.

Many were not only read locally but also distributed to surrounding areas - for example, Liverpool supplied bulletins to Bootle, Ormskirk, and others. Coventry's council of action produced a daily strike bulletin, and 2,000 copies of each edition were circulated. In some places, output reached up to 10,000 copies a day, and demand often exceeded supply.

The bulletins filled a crucial gap. Local bulletins gave workers what they really needed day to day: local strike news, which workplaces were solid, meeting notices, rebuttals of hostile press stories, humour, cartoons, and morale-boosting material, with reporters attached to strike committees and union branches. These were almost a miniature workers' news agency rooted in the strike organisation.

The strongest bulletins portrayed the strike as a class struggle. They countered the government's British Gazette, attacked rumours, mocked volunteers and blacklegs, and tried to keep up morale.

Some estimates say that half of the 9,000 arrested under the Emergency Powers Act during the strike were in connection with the production and distribution of local strike bulletins. A significant portion of these arrests were for "acts calculated to cause sedition or disaffection," a broad charge used against those producing and distributing strike bulletins.

Simply possessing a stack of bulletins for distribution was enough to lead to a summary conviction and hard labour.

Today

The press and broadcast media have proportionally fewer users than a generation ago. More people now get their news online, but in a national conflict the government would seek to use the press again. That rise in online media as a source of news for many/most people would not be immune.

After the killing in custody of Jina Mahsa Amini in Iran in 2022, the Iranian authorities sought to limit telecommunications. Following the December 2025/January 2026 protests there, an internet blackout was imposed. Activists had to adapt, using technical workarounds, offline methods and older communication channels.

This is the digital-age equivalent of what 1926 teaches: when rulers fear mass action, they move to close or control the channels through which workers can coordinate.

When the struggle deepens, communication is never a neutral terrain. Workers need their own press and communication networks, and the earlier they are developed, the stronger they will be.

Start today by taking out a subscription to the Socialist and convince your workmates, family and friends as well.

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HEALTH VISITORS!

PCS Executive: We need more than 'hope' and 'trust' – we need action!



LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

FIONA BRITTLE
PCS NEC MEMBER, PERSONAL CAPACITY

Many members and activists in the PCS civil service union will be frustrated to hear that the National Executive Committee (NEC) is planning for the union's Annual Delegate Conference (ADC) with motions littered with excuses for an anti-worker Labour government, opposing a vibrant national campaign on jobs, pay, pensions etc, and opposing improved lay democracy. The Left Unity/Democracy Alliance NEC majority continues to ignore the explicit demands of PCS members from conferences gone by.

NEC members in the Broad Left Network (BLN – in which Socialist Party members play an important role) have repeatedly raised motions to enact the strategy agreed at ADC 2025. The Left Unity grouping - which includes general secretary Fran Heathcote and national president Martin Cavanagh - has voted against them.

The general secretary's papers delayed preparations for a campaign; the leadership then blamed branches for low engagement at hastily called meetings during peak leave season, and then used this as the reason to cancel the national campaign in October 2025. Thousands of members have been left without the ability to fight for inflation-proof pay awards, let alone restoration after 16 years of vicious austerity.

No proposals for action from Left Unity-led NEC

The paper to this April's NEC was no different, containing no proposals for improving our industrial strength or to build for a ballot to influence and challenge what will inevitably be an insufficient 2026-27 pay remit (due to be announced by the government in May).

BLN NEC members once again argued that we need to prepare members now, so that negotiators can approach the Cabinet Office with the threat of a strike mandate, in order to pressure them to produce a remit anywhere close to provide adequate pay awards.

The NEC majority, however, believes that it is better to wait until after the remit is published, and then hold talks, before considering the possibility of preparing for action. This approach has failed. It has meant that delegated talks (in separate groups) are completed, and the employer imposes pay, before a campaign is launched - by which point the fight is invariably over before it starts.

The National Disputes Committee report showed how many areas of the union are in dispute, separately. BLN members raised again that there is no consideration by the national union of how to join up these campaigns to increase their chances of winning, rather than leaving areas to battle alone.

The words of the day were "hopefully" and "trust". The BLN says it is time for action.

Once again, the NEC majority has agreed to oppose the motion (A5) which seeks to build a national campaign, building early among branches to deliver a ballot in mid-September if there is insufficient progress towards our demands for pay restoration, pension justice, job protection and improved conditions.

Lay democracy

They have also, once again, agreed to oppose important motions seeking to increase lay rep and member control of PCS.

They consistently cite GDPR without further explanation to block lay reps from accessing member details and directly contacting those they are elected to represent. Reps in other unions are able to do this, so why not us?

We know that some groups and branches wishing to put out member bulletins with stances that differ from the NEC majority view have been prevented from doing so by their full-time secretaries. This has included AGM reports where opposition slates have been nominated!

The general secretary has repeatedly stated that, contrary to the PCS rules, she does not have to consult the NEC on matters of staffing. Now, she insists that any motion which seeks to review how PCS departments work is unacceptable, because what happens with PCS staff is her business.

This is alarming because full-time officers provide vital support to lay reps. It is therefore important that lay reps and members have oversight via ADC on how PCS uses this valuable resource and what approach is taken on issues like bargaining, organising, equality, legal, technology, etc.

The general secretary's insistence that more and more of how PCS functions is up to her, without the control, accountability or even input from the lay structures, is contrary to the democratic, worker-led, socialist trade unionism that PCS members deserve, and must be strongly opposed.

Debate essential

One of the most revealing elements of this NEC was the plea from Left Unity that those of us who disagree with their policy positions don't bring "that negativity" to ADC. This came during the paper on Organising, when we welcomed the increase in membership but pointed out that we are still short of the density we would want. It is evident that we grow most in areas where we are in dispute. The lack of a national campaign has meant that many of our key areas have not seen significant increases – and growth slowed when it became clear last autumn that there was to be no fight on pay.

This is absolutely a discussion we should have at conference. ADC should not be a performance of unity but a forum for thorough debate. 'Unity' around an ineffective strategy will not win for members. PCS must put a united front against employers, but this must be built on an agreed programme to meaningfully advance members' demands.

- Socialist Party members have stood for election to the NEC of PCS as part of the Broad Left Network, alongside others in a 'coalition for change'. That election closed on 8 May
- Group Executive Committee elections, by email, continue till 13 May
- Socialist Party members are also standing in vitally important online branch block vote elections. These elections run 5-14 May and branch secretaries will receive the ballot paper by email

Haringey school strike against cuts

NORTH LONDON TEACHER

On Thursday 7 May, teachers and support staff in the National Education Union at Highgate Wood School in Haringey will begin a series of strikes.

The ballot achieved a 100% 'yes' vote for strike action against a package of cuts planned by school leadership to clear the school's £1 million deficit.

This package breaks an agreement reached less than a year ago after a previous strike, in which teachers agreed to an increase in contact time and class sizes. The latest cuts will extend these measures even further and also reduce the GCSE and A-level subjects offered to students, along with a restructuring that will lead to compulsory redundancies.

The school leadership argues that these measures are needed to pay off the debt owed to Labour-led Haringey Council. We argue that councils and headteachers should not be a conveyor belt for austerity measures that make staff and students pay for a crisis they did not make. Escalating strike action is planned in the next weeks until half term.



LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

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Major debate at CWU conference on political strategy

SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBERS IN CWU

The conference of the Communication Workers Union (CWU) takes place in the immediate aftermath of the May elections, as workers reel from the tightening cost-of-living squeeze. CWU members in Royal Mail have faced attacks on terms and conditions and are now being balloted on whether to accept a new negotiated 'Optimised Delivery Model'. In BT, members face threats from bosses to shed 55,000 jobs, 40% of the workforce, by 2030.

What kind of industrial response is needed to attacks on our members will be a feature of conference.

So too will be the question of where workers look for the political leadership to seek a route out of this mess. The debate about the CWU's relationship with Labour is a major part of conference, which will take a special report on this issue. The debate will be essential in pointing the way forward for our members, as part of a discussion about workers' political representation across the whole of the trade union movement.



CWU members in Royal Mail and BT were at the forefront of the strike wave in 2022 PAULA MITCHELL

Continuation of attacks

CWU members, along with millions of other workers, breathed a sigh of relief when the Tories lost the last general election and had high hopes of real improvement in their lives. Labour won a landslide 174-seat majority, the platform to carry out policies of real change for working-class people. But instead we got a continuation of austerity and the anti-working class policies that we suffered under the Tories.

Starmer's government has operated as 'New Labour Mark II', copying the pro-capitalist agenda of Tony Blair, at home and abroad. Disgracefully, he has stood behind the Israeli regime's murderous war on Gaza. He has been prevented from a fuller supporting role on Iran because of the overwhelming mood among ordinary people to oppose the US and Israeli assault.

The Employment Rights Bill, which is supposed to be Labour's flagship legislation, has been watered down as a result of constant lobbying by employers. Most significantly, Starmer has not yet abolished the 50% turnout threshold for industrial action brought in by Tory prime minister David Cameron.

'Fire and rehire' was supposed to be abolished, but Birmingham bin workers have been on strike for more than a year over precisely that issue, a vicious wage cut of £8,000 a year. The Labour council in Birmingham has used ruthless strikebreaking tactics which have been fully supported by Starmer's government, and the binworkers' union Unite has been fined £265,000.

No wonder that last year's Unite policy conference voted overwhelmingly for an emergency motion, initiated by Socialist Party members in Unite, to start the debate in their union about its relationship with Labour.

Reform seeks to fill the vacuum

These issues are the cause of the electoral surge of the 'pound-shop Trumps' of Reform UK, who have sought to fill the political vacuum that Starmer and co have created.

CWU general secretary Dave Ward talks of the rise of Reform and "the real threat of a deeply anti-union government taking shape in a few years' time". But our union continuing support for Labour while it attacks the working class and oversees falling living standards will only undermine our case, and can actually further bolster support for the right.

Dave also spoke of "a comprehensive, class-focused approach to resolving the political division that has spread across our society". The trade union movement, with over 6.5 million workers across all communities, must lead the fight against Farage and the far-right on the slogan passed by TUC Congress in 2018 – 'Jobs, homes, not racism'.

The call in the special report for "a significant change in the direction of the Labour government", is likely to be supported by the overwhelming majority of delegates. Supporters of Labour Party affiliation say that it enables us to influence the Labour Party.

But at the 2022 Labour Party conference, during the postal dispute, our union won the vote to make renationalisation of Royal Mail Labour policy. Yet in the crisis in Royal Mail this hasn't been implemented, leaving our postal members to deal with a succession of venture capitalist vipers. The CWU leadership should have been far more assertive in demanding the renationalisation of Royal Mail, along with BT, to put pressure on Starmer.

In reality, we have received no influence in return for the £100,000 we gave Labour last year.

Change the rules

Socialist Party members will support changing the rules of our union to disaffiliate from Labour. But we are opposed to non-political trade unionism. It is essential that the CWU and all unions have a political voice to strengthen our industrial muscle.

This conference voting to disaffiliate from Labour would be an important step to open up the CWU's political strategy. The union could then support election candidates that support CWU policies or even stand its own candidates.

Imagine if the union had stood candidates in the May elections calling for the return of Royal Mail to public ownership! That would have been a far more effective use of our political fund than being limited to supporting pro-cuts, pro-privatisation Labour candidates - and would be the beginning of what is needed to cut across working-class support for Reform.

And we would argue for the CWU to go further, to play the leading role in what is desperately needed – a new mass workers' party on a socialist programme. Along with other unions, to convene a conference on workers' political representation, to discuss the launching of a real political alternative for workers.

Fringe meeting organised by UTAW branch

- Labour Party Disaffiliation - What might the future look like?
- Sunday 10th May at the Hermitage Hotel in the Clifton Suite, 6-7.30pm



SOUTHAMPTON SOCIALIST PARTY

Students supporting Solent Uni strikers

ADAM GILLMAN
SOCIALIST STUDENTS

University and College Union (UCU) members at Southampton Solent University are striking over removing pensions from existing staff by transferring them to a subsidiary company. This could result in staff being rehired on worse conditions or losing their jobs entirely, with no compensation or pay.

This is on top of students having to pay thousands in tuition fees. Socialist Students are supporting the UCU strike and went to their picket line.

University management highlights the current funding crisis in higher education and the need to 'balance the books'. But that's exactly the problem. Attacking staff conditions, and attacking students through fees and cuts, all end up with workers and young people paying for the crisis.

What's needed is for the trade union struggles happening in universities all over the country to be co-ordinated into a national campaign, united with a national student fightback, against job cuts and course closures and for a new funding model for fully funded free education.

One lecturer at the picket line told us: "National action is exactly what we need, as the funding model is completely broken."

In addition to the national dispute, there also needs to be a TUC (Trades Union Congress) national demonstration against austerity in central London, which was voted for at the TUC Congress last year, to show we are stronger together and will fight back!

CUBA – THREATENED WITH COUNTER-REVOLUTION



PHOTO: DUDVA/CC

CWI ENT-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

TONY SAUNOIS
SECRETARY OF THE COMMITTEE FOR A WORKERS' INTERNATIONAL

"I do believe I'll be having the honour of taking Cuba, I think I can do anything I want with it", proclaimed the autocratic Donald Trump in another of his imperial declarations. This followed his kidnapping of Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro in January, followed by Trump's aerial blitzkrieg on Iran, and his threat to destroy its entire "civilisation".

Cuba is next on his list of targeted colonial conquests. Venezuela's new President Delcy Rodríguez, who is happily heading what has become Trump's puppet regime, complied with Trump's demand to stop the crucial supply of Venezuelan oil to Cuba. Combined with US imperialism's murderous intensified embargo, this is an effective blockade. The strengthening of the embargo is having devastating consequences for the already crisis-ridden Cuban economy. The price is paid, like in Iran, by the Cuban masses. Pharmacies are empty. The once-prized Cuban health system is on the point of collapse as lifesaving treatments are shut down due to lack of fuel. Chemotherapy for cancer patients, dialysis for kidney patients and other crucial treatments and vaccines are delayed or cancelled. Malnutrition and a breakdown in public health services have led to an increase in viral diseases. Since last autumn, tens of thousands have been afflicted with chikungunya, dengue and oropouche.

Food shortages are reported and the threat of malnutrition now faces thousands. Trump's embargo is literally killing and starving Cuba's population. Petrol is now selling in Havana at $40 per gallon! Power cuts are longer. Tourism, a crucial ingredient in the economy in recent years, has ceased due to the embargo and the inability of planes to refuel if they make it to Cuba. The regime has used solar power, much of it supplied by China, to try and mitigate the loss of oil-based power supplies.

Prior to the revolution in 1959, and the overthrow of capitalism which followed in 1961, when Fidel Castro proclaimed "socialist" Cuba, the island was the playground and brothel for the US rich and powerful, including the Mafia gangs. Following the revolution, prostitution disappeared. Now it has returned, illustrating the counter-revolution and capitalist restoration which was already unfolding and is now more rapidly taking place.

One of the gains of the Cuban revolution, which resulted from the overthrow of capitalism, was the building of the once-celebrated health system. The Cuban regime was at one time spending 20% of the state budget on health care; twice the global average. As a result, until the Covid-19 pandemic, life expectancy and infant mortality figures were comparable with those in western capitalist states. In 2018, infant mortality was four per thousand – lower than the US.

This was despite the devastating effects of the collapse of the former USSR in 1992 and the loss of subsidies that flowed from it to Cuba. Despite what Fidel Castro dubbed the "special period" that followed, incredibly the Cuban regime and its nationalised, planned economy managed to hang on against all the odds. But now things are very different. By 2025, infant mortality had more than doubled to ten per thousand – twice that of the US.

Vindictive Trump has now threatened countries that allow thousands of Cuban doctors to work with sanctions, to cut further the foreign income to the Cuban government.

Three hurricanes have ravaged the island, resulting in one million people being displaced. Limited aid from the US was only distributed through the Catholic Church, hampering the state efforts to organise some relief. The vindictiveness of Trump and his reactionary regime seemingly has no limits.

The healthcare and other gains of the revolution have been systematically destroyed. This was happening before Trump's assault. Yet it has dramatically accelerated since Trump's sanctions were hardened. Market and capitalist measures were increasingly introduced by the regime as the bureaucracy desperately attempted to find a way out of the economic and social crisis. This process is now rapidly accelerating as the counter-revolution and capitalist restoration gathers pace.

Cuban Revolution

The Cuban revolution of 1959-61 resulted in the overthrow of capitalism and landlordism. It enjoyed the mass support of the Cuban population and enthusiastic support internationally amongst the working class and the socialist left. It resulted in massive gains for the Cuban masses. Yet the character of the revolution, led by a relatively small guerrilla army rather than the collective action of the working class, resulted in the establishment of a bureaucratic regime, not one of workers' democracy, as was initially the case following the Russian Revolution in October 1917.

Although initially some elements of workers' control did exist at the local level in Cuba, it was a bureaucratic regime modelled largely on what existed by then in the former USSR. It was however enormously popular with deep social roots, which was a crucial reason the regime managed to endure so long after the collapse of the former USSR.

Fidel Castro, and its other leaders in the July 25th Movement, distinct from Che Guevara, did not regard themselves as socialist. Raúl Castro was not in the leadership of the July 25th movement but had joined the Young Communists at an early age. Following the revolution, he was incorporated into the leadership and maintained liaison with the Stalinist bureaucracy in the USSR. The leadership of the July 25th Movement was driven to overthrow landlordism and capitalism, and became drawn into the orbit of the USSR, by the pressure of the masses and the intransigent opposition of US imperialism. (for more background analysis see Tony Saunois's Che Guevara: Symbol of Struggle – Left Books and Cuba, Socialism and Democracy, Peter Taaffe – Socialist World Media). The 'socialist' regime of Cuba accrued the bitter hostility and opposition of US imperialism, which resulted in hundreds of assassination plots against Castro and failed attempts to overthrow the regime.

In a desperate attempt to survive and overcome the isolation and impasse the Cuban government found itself in by the late 1990s, some capitalist measures were introduced. These are now assuming a qualitative change. Trump and US imperialism are now capitalising on this, and aim to secure in Cuba a client regime that will do its bidding. Rather than launching a full-blown military intervention, Trump, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio and his entourage are looking to repeat what they secured in Venezuela, without a kidnapping.

Bolivarian Revolution

In Venezuela, the 'Bolivarian Revolution' led by Hugo Chávez constituted a political but not social revolution. It overthrew the ruling powers, purging the state machine, including the army. It made serious incursions against capitalist interests and, based on income from oil, introduced important reforms. However, capitalism was not overthrown, despite Chávez eventually proclaiming a "socialist" revolution. The top-down, bureaucratic methods were similar to those employed by the Cuban regime. Corruption and mismanagement developed and a new ruling class, dubbed the 'Bolibourgeoisie' emerged.

Following the death of Chávez in 2013, and the fall in oil revenues, the corruption, repression and economic crisis rapidly accelerated, made worse by the sanctions imposed by US imperialism. The initial massive support for the 'revolution' eroded as the economic and social crisis dramatically worsened. Millions fled the country as a result (for more background information, see Venezuela's Bolivarian Revolution – Lessons for the New Global Era of Populism – Socialist World Media). Trump intervened with the objective of regime change to get access to Venezuela's vast oil reserve, and also to send a warning to China, which has economically penetrated US imperialism's 'backyard.'

"A defeat of the Cuban revolution, historically therefore, was not inevitable. If it comes to pass, it will however have significant international repercussions

Collaborating with Delcy Rodríguez, Maduro and his wife are left languishing in a US jail awaiting trial. Rodríguez had since acted as a puppet for Trump and initiated a purge of the former regime. She has replaced military commanders, changed 17 ministers, appointed new diplomats and overseen the detention of at least three major businessmen linked to Maduro. She has also fired several of Maduro's relatives from positions, and cut off most of his family from oil contracts. In effect, a client regime of US imperialism has been installed and the right-wing capitalist opposition has been cast to one side.

A similar effort is under way in Cuba. Blockades alone rarely cause an immediate regime change. They impact slowly, in general, and accumulate pressure over time. In the American civil war, Abraham Lincoln ordered the blockade of ports across the Confederacy. They were effective, but yet the fighting continued for four more years. Britain blockaded Germany in 1914, yet the war endured until 1918. Venezuela was blockaded in 2025 but further action was needed. Nor is the blockade of Iran bringing an immediate end to the conflict there. Thus in Cuba, Trump is also reaching out to sections of the Cuban regime to try and negotiate a change. Rául Castro's grandson met with Rubio, at a Caribbean summit in St. Kitts. Following this, Rubio commented: "Cuba needs to change. It doesn't have to change all at once".

The Cuban regime is now in dire straits. Since 2021, an estimated 20% of the population have left the island, mainly younger people. There has also been a generational change in the regime, apart from Raúl Castro who, despite being 94 years old and having retired as President, still wields power from behind the scenes.

Others, like the current President Miguel Díaz-Canel, were not active participants in the revolution and have accumulated wealth and business interests. This layer, following events in Venezuela, are hoping to 'hang on' by reaching a deal with US imperialism. Oscar Pérez-Oliva Fraga was recently made deputy Prime Minister and given a seat in the National Assembly, a prerequisite to becoming President or Prime Minister. Manuel Marrero Cruz, former head of tourism, is also being speculated on to play the role Rodríguez has in Venezuela. The regime has already taken the previously unacceptable decision to allow Cuban Miami businesses to invest and own property in Cuba. Others involved in negotiations with the US include Raúl Guillermo Rodríguez Castro, Raúl Castro's grandson (known as 'the crab' as he was born with six fingers).

Whereas Fidel Castro in public maintained an austere lifestyle, 'the crab' has been viewed travelling in private jets and living a lavish lifestyle. He is also understood to be involved in looking after family interests in GAESA (Business Administration Group), which is an opaque organisation and one of the most powerful institutions. It was formed as a way of financing the military in the "special period". It has since grown into a business conglomerate involved in dozens of businesses, construction, hotels, tourism, fishing, retail stores and financial services. It is thought to own businesses in Panama. These sections of the regime are involved in a variety of business and money-making companies and schemes and are detached from the revolution of 1959-61.

Capitalist transitional arrangement?

US imperialism is likely to tolerate some transitional arrangement involving sections of the existing regime. There are obstacles to this process. Not least the continued claims for compensation of the companies taken over by the state following the revolution decades ago. ExxonMobil is claiming $1 billion, there is another $400 million claim from a Florida-based cruise shipping company which had port facilities expropriated by the revolution.

Should this process be carried through, as is probable, Cuba will de facto revert back to being governed by a regime serving US and capitalist interests, as is currently the situation in Venezuela. It signifies a counter-revolution and a defeat, and will be a disappointment to many workers and socialists.

It will be used by the ruling classes internationally to attempt to discredit socialism, especially in the US and Latin America. However, it will not have the same effect as the collapse of the former USSR did in 1992. The world situation today is entirely different. Capitalism globally is in a deep protracted crisis and death agony. But it will not simply collapse, the ruling classes will fight to maintain their power and need to be overthrown.

This development was not inevitable. The Cuban revolution could have been developed internationally, especially in Latin America. The attempt to replicate the Cuban revolution through a guerrilla struggle elsewhere in Latin America, in very different conditions and where a powerful working class existed, was a decisive mistake. This mistake involved Che Guevara – a socialist and internationalist, repulsed by the bureaucracy in the former USSR and Eastern Europe, who wanted to develop the international revolution but with the wrong methods.

Opportunities were also lost later in other countries, like in Chile during the revolutionary process which developed between 1970-73. More recently, if Chávez had completed the revolution and overthrown capitalism, and established a government of the workers' and poor in Venezuela, along with Evo Morales in Bolivia and Rafael Correa in Ecuador, with an appeal to the Cuban masses to establish a genuine workers' democracy, a socialist confederation of those countries could have been established. This would have acted as a massive pole of attraction to the working class throughout the Americas and beyond, including Greece and Spain, where explosive struggles were unfolding.

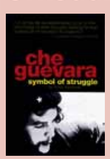
A defeat of the Cuban revolution, historically therefore, was not inevitable. If it comes to pass, it will however have significant international repercussions. The Chinese regime is likely to tolerate Cuba being turned into a client, but unstable capitalist state (which will not lead to a new 'golden era' of rebirth of Cuban society). The Chinese regime could take that development as an example to justify its own aspirations and future interventions, in its own sphere of influence.

Socialists and revolutionaries need to draw the lessons from these developments, to prepare for the revolutionary movements that will erupt in the coming years.

CUBA: SOCIALISM AND DEMOCRACY
by Peter Taaffe, £7.50



CHE GUEVARA: SYMBOL OF STRUGGLE



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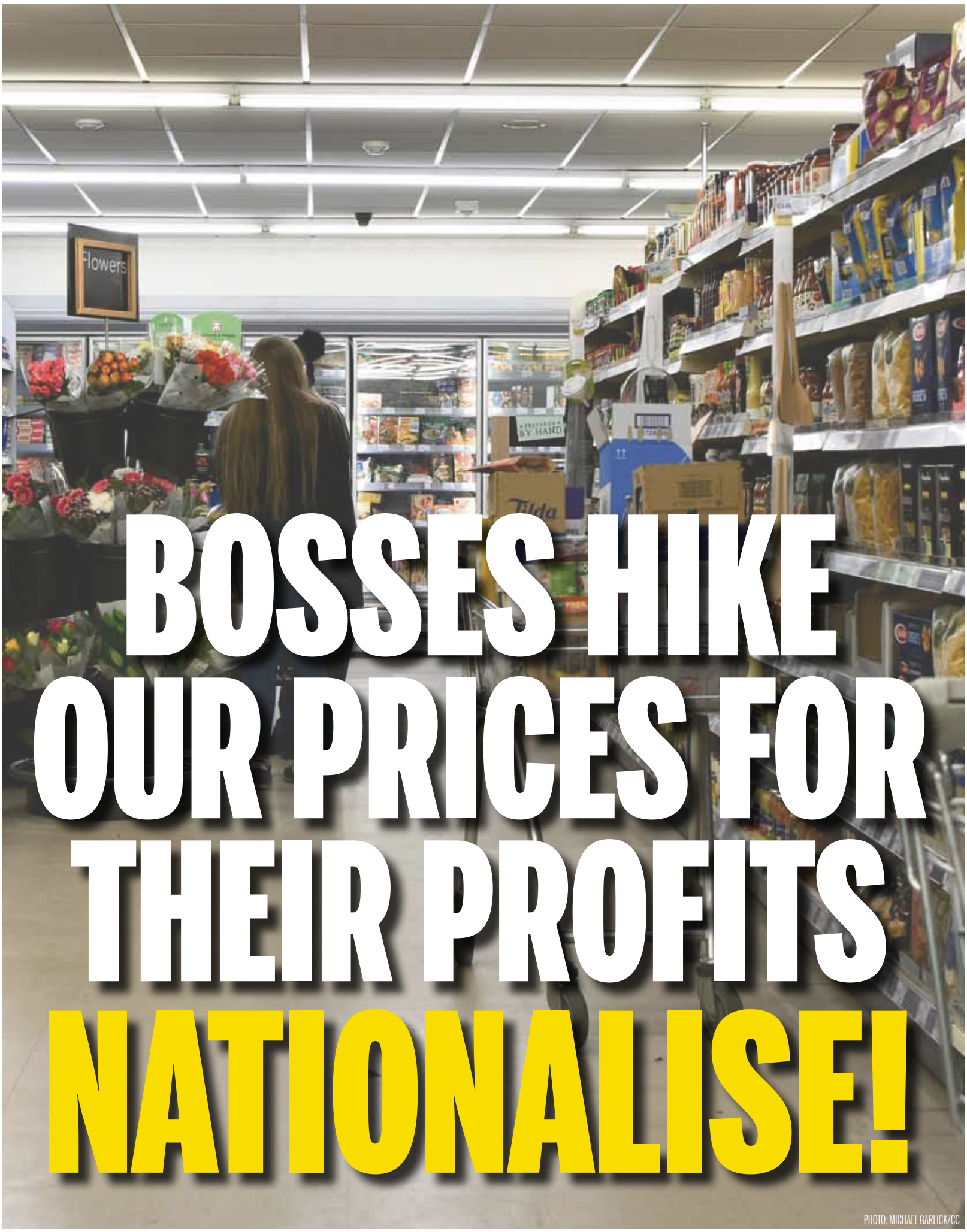


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TOM YOUNG
CHESTER SOCIALIST PARTY

As newly elected councillors and members of devolved parliaments take their seats, the first item on the agenda will likely be the cost-of-living crisis. Trump's war in the Middle East has made an already bad situation worse, as the price of fuel and other raw materials has risen sharply, with knock-on effects felt across the whole economy.

Workers, many already struggling to make ends meet, are feeling the squeeze. One in ten households are skipping meals and 85% of people are now worried about food prices. It is worth pointing out though, that this is only slightly up from 83% in February. Worry about putting food on the table has become 'normal' for many. It is a feature of the capitalist system!

While we pay more at the pumps and for our weekly shop, oil companies report record profits and supermarkets continue to pay huge dividends to their shareholders. They opportunistically hike their prices by more than their rising costs and pocket the difference.

This so-called 'greedflation' is taking money directly from the hands of workers and placing it in the offshore accounts of the bosses.

But councils, and the Welsh and Scottish governments, can act now! For example, Crisis and Resilience Funds have been established for use by local authorities, but these are currently only being used for the very poorest of households. They should be extended to assist more working people by subsidising food and fuel payments. Free school meals is another scheme that should be extended to all, and throughout the whole year, to help tackle hunger and ease the pressures on food bills.

Big business never misses a trick though. Expect the greedy bosses to take every opportunity to hike prices and capture the subsidies. Emergency cost-of-living measures are needed. But we also need to stop super-rich capitalists profiting from our hardship. We need to nationalise the major supermarkets and energy companies, bringing them under democratic, workers' control and management. As part of an economy based on public ownership rather than competing profit interests, prices can be set affordably, for the benefit of the working-class majority, not a greedy few.

WHAT WE STAND FOR: THE SOCIALIST PARTY'S MAIN DEMANDS ►►► see column on page 8

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