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A WORKING-CLASS FIGHT AGAINST LABOUR AUSTERITY CAN BEAT BACK REFORM AND THE RIGHT

Both Starmer's New Labour and the Tories got a hammering in the elections on 7 May. Anger at the establishment politicians is growing.

No wonder, after decades of low pay and rising prices, high taxes and public services that are falling apart, alongside Starmer's support for the Israeli government's genocidal destruction of Gaza.

But a large minority of voters expressed their rage against the establishment by voting for Reform. It is a party that poses as standing for the 'little people', yet Farage gets a £5 million 'gift' from a billionaire, and there are now eight ex-Tory ministers in the leadership of Reform.

Farage is also cynically winning votes by using racism and anti-migrant rhetoric, building on what has already been whipped up by successive Tory, and now Labour, governments.

The working class has abandoned Labour because it has continued with Tory austerity. It is essential that the trade unions take on the fight against Labour austerity if they are to cut across Reform. That includes the trade unions starting to build a new party of the working class that can take on Reform at the ballot box, and more.

Many protested against both Labour and Reform on 7 May by voting for the Green Party, which has just won control of five more councils on the basis of opposing austerity. Some of the new councillors are determined to implement that stand, but unfortunately, the Greens as a whole are not committed to refusing to carry out more austerity.

Any councils that took a clear stand against austerity, refusing to make cuts or increase council tax, would have a huge impact – not least on winning working-class voters who voted Reform.

To successfully defeat Reform we need to build a workers' party with a leadership accountable to the working class, and which is committed to fighting in the interests of the working-class majority.

Today capitalism is in crisis - and governments that defend the capitalist system are determined to make us pay for the crisis of their system. The working-class majority has the potential power to bring this rotten system to an end, provided we are united. If you want to join the fight for socialism - a society in which the vast wealth and resources are democratically owned, controlled, and planned by the working-class majority to meet the needs of all - join the Socialist Party today.

● **Read Socialist Party analysis of the 7 May elections, pages 2-4**



Socialist Party protesting against the far right PHOTO: MADDIE ROONEY

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

MAY ELECTIONS: CAPITALIST POLITICS IN CRISIS, TIME FOR A WORKERS' PARTY



PHOTO: NICK CHAFFEY

2026 will be remembered as the year that Britain's existing political order finally fell apart. The two main parties that have governed Britain in the interests of the capitalist elite for the best part of a century, and presided over endless attacks on the living and working conditions of the working-class, were mercilessly beaten by voters. Seeing what was coming down the track, Labour politicians were warned by head office not to cry in front of the media. No wonder.

In Wales – Labour's traditional heartland – they were destroyed, left with just nine seats in a 96-member parliament (see page 13). In Scotland more pro-independence MSPs were elected than ever before, while the 17 seats won by Labour was the lowest since the Scottish Parliament was founded in 1999 (see page 12). In England Labour lost almost 1500 seats in the English council elections, around 60% of all those they were defending. But while the Labour government was the main focus of voters' fury, the pattern of the past – when the pendulum swung from red to blue and back again – has now been smashed. The Tories, who were already only defending a fairly puny 1,300 council seats, still managed to lose nearly 600 of them.

The desire to use the election to express anger at the establishment's politicians was common to virtually every working-class voter. The electoral weapons that were picked up to achieve that varied enormously both between and within communities, however. It is probable that the sheer number of candidates was the biggest ever, reflecting the splintered political landscape. Many winning candidates therefore had relatively small shares of the vote. Nonetheless, overall, the biggest gainers were the right-wing populists of Reform, who won around 30% of the council seats contested. Reform won control of fourteen councils, including traditionally Labour working-class areas like Barnsley, Gateshead and Sandwell. In Wales it came second behind Plaid Cymru with 34 seats. In Scotland too it won 16% of the vote, giving it 17 seats from the regional lists section.

> **The desire to use the election to express anger at the establishment's politicians was common to virtually every working-class voter**

It could not be clearer that Farage is cynically harnessing all the reactionary ideas – particularly anti-migrant moods – that have been whipped up by successive governments, not least Starmer's Labour. The danger of growing racism and division in the working class is clearly increased by Reform's gains. Seeing this, many working-class voters were motivated to support whoever they thought could most effectively block Reform.

In desperation Labour used this to try and shore up its vote, putting out leaflets saying 'voting Labour is the only way to stop Reform' even in seats where it was clear that Reform would get only a handful of votes. Maybe that had some limited effect in preventing Labour suffering an even worst catastrophe. For most people, however, the Gorton and Denton parliamentary by-election two months ago, won by the Greens with Reform second and Labour pushed into third place, shattered the lie that voting Labour through gritted teeth was necessary to block Reform. In these elections the Greens won over 500 councillors, an increase of 400+ since these seats were last contested, and control of five councils – including Hackney, Lambeth and Waltham Forest in London. In addition, Aspire increased its majority in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets, and in neighbouring Newham the Newham independents combined with the Greens have a majority of councillors. There were also various anti-war and anti-austerity councillors elected in different parts of the country.

Unfortunately, however, many national trade union leaders will ignore the reality that was writ large in these elections, and keep using the threat of Reform to try to justify clinging to Labour. By doing so they are rolling out the red carpet for Reform. The primary reason working-class people voted Reform was in order to protest against a Labour government that has continued with Tory austerity. Initial surveys suggest that, on average, Reform's vote went up most in the most deprived parts of Britain.

Role of the trade unions

The trade unions are the force in British society able to build a political party that fights for all sections of the working-class, and would be capable of cutting across Reform just as, in the 2017 general election, under Jeremy Corbyn's leadership, Labour's anti-austerity programme won a million voters who'd previously backed Reform's predecessor UKIP. It is criminal for trade union leaders to instead continue to plead for Labour - a party that the working class has abandoned for good reason - because they understand it defends the interests of the elites rather than the majority.

True, in the wake of these election results even the most right-wing trade union leaders have had to echo some of their members' anger with Labour. More militant leaders have done so more trenchantly. Unite general secretary Sharon Graham responded to the election results by saying that if Labour "does not shift decisively towards the working class it is finished. It is change or die. Now or never." Similarly, Andrea Egan the new left general secretary of the public sector union Unison, called on Labour to change its "entire approach" and put "the interests of workers before the wealthy". Yet Starmer's Labour left the 'last chance saloon' long ago, the time has passed for pleading with Labour to change, an alternative needs to be built.

The money given by affiliated trade unions to Labour does not result in any power to influence the government via the structures of the Labour Party, as was shown when several – including Unison – tried in vain to get Andy Burnham agreed as the candidate in the Denton and Gorton by-election. The Birmingham bin workers have had to strike for over a year against a Labour council which carried out fire and rehire, backed by the Labour government. There was no mechanism within the Labour Party for Unite to change the council's disgusting behaviour. That is why, to mark the strike lasting a year, the Unite executive in March voted to cut its Labour affiliation fee by £580,000 to £900,000.

That is not enough, however. Last month's Unite Executive election saw the left 'Workers Unite/Back to the Workplace' slate win a clear victory, including 4 Socialist Party members being elected. Previously a narrow majority on the Unite executive opposed Sharon Graham's leadership, trying to hamper the development of a fighting strategy. The margin of victory in these elections shows that Unite reps and activists want to develop, rather than retreat from, the militant industrial record under Sharon Graham's leadership. This undoubtedly includes building the capacity for coordinated action by starting to put flesh on the bones of the 'combines' which were initiated at the start of her leadership but have not yet fully developed. The Unite result also reflects the mood of anger at Labour, which resulted in a virtually unanimous vote at last year's Unite conference to reassess the union's relationship with Labour. That should not wait for next year's scheduled rules conference which would be too late to have any impact on the 2027 local council elections, where around 7,000 seats will be contested, including Scotland and Wales. Motions from two regions calling for a special rules conference in 2026 were left on the table by the old executive. Now they need to be discussed and enacted.

Nor is Unite alone. In the immediate aftermath of the election, the Communication Workers' Union conference discussed its relationship with Labour. A motion to disaffiliate was on the table (see page 5). Socialist Party members delegated to the conference voted for this motion. Even if it had passed, it would only be the first step of what is needed. 'Non-political' trade unionism is not the way forward. The same issues are posed across the trade union movement. Andrea Egan's election as Unison general secretary was one reflection of that, now another is this week's victory of the left in the PCS civil servants' union national executive elections, including the election of six Socialist Party members. Capitalising on those victories will mean campaigning in each union to implement a fighting defence of members' living standards in the face of a new inflation squeeze, as well as starting to seriously develop a 'coalition of the willing' that will coordinate action against New Labour austerity if the TUC refuses to act. But it also poses the need to discuss how the trade union movement can have a political voice. A cross-trade union conference to discuss that issue is urgent.

Too many missed chances...

Already too many opportunities have been missed to build a new mass workers' party. Before the general election, back during the 2022-23 strike wave, we saw the launch of Enough is Enough, led by two national trade union leaders – Communication Workers' Union general secretary Dave Ward and the then RMT transport workers' union Mick Lynch – plus Zarah Sultana, then a Labour MP. Half a million joined Enough is Enough, looking for a new party, but its leadership was not prepared to take that step. At that stage, as workers felt their collective power during the strikes, there was a widespread desire to also give that power a political voice. No doubt, not a few of those workers have since voted Reform, seeing it as the only effective way to express their rage.

More recently, of course, we have had the abortive launch of a new party by Jeremy Corbyn and Zarah Sultana. Your Party had huge potential, but that has been negated by the mistaken approach of its leadership, with its top-down methods instead of an open, federal approach, and its failure to orientate towards the trade unions. Just last summer, more than 800,000 people signed up to express their support for what became Your Party. Yet in these elections there were only 20 Your Party candidates out of the more than 5,000 council seats that were up for election.

In the Socialist Party we argued that, had it taken a correct approach from the start, Your Party could have made a massive impact on 7 May, winning control of councils with a clear pledge of refusing to implement austerity – either by cutting services or increasing council tax – and demanding that the Labour government restores the funds cut from local government since 2010. The 'targeted seats' approach instead adopted, which meant standing only a handful of candidates, and backing some of the hundreds of left independents who stood in this election, could only ever have a tiny impact in comparison. That is why the Socialist Party supported the proposal of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) – an electoral coalition that enables any workers who want to contest elections on a clear anti-austerity basis to do so – to offer the TUSC electoral descriptions to all those in Your Party, and outside, who wanted to see a clear socialist national anti-austerity stand in the election. Had that been taken up, it would have been possible to reach the 840 candidates threshold needed to get 'fair media' coverage and an official election broadcast, which could have been used by Jeremy Corbyn and Zarah Sultana.

> **Half a million joined Enough is Enough, looking for a new party, but its leadership was not prepared to take that step**

> **Your Party had huge potential, but that has been negated by the mistaken approach of its leadership**



PHOTOS: PAUL MATTSSON HOUSE OF COMMONS/CC

Unfortunately, that did not happen. Nonetheless, TUSC succeeded in getting around 300 candidates on the ballot paper, making it the sixth biggest party in terms of number of seats. However, inevitably – without the authoritative socialist challenge on a national basis which Jeremy Corbyn and Zarah Sultana could have headed up – TUSC candidates, along with many of the patchwork of left independents that stood, were electorally squeezed in these elections (a full analysis of left results in these elections will be available at tusc.org.uk).

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

There were partial exceptions to this in some areas. These were mainly those candidates, whether independents or representatives of local parties, that stood in areas with a large population from a Muslim background. This is a continuation of the same process which took place in the general election, when four 'Gaza independent' MPs were elected. It shows that a majority of Muslim workers remain profoundly hostile to Labour as a result of its support for the Israeli state's genocide in Gaza, as well as austerity and racism in Britain, and are looking to the left which they see defending Palestine – including the record on that issue of prominent left figures like Jeremy Corbyn and George Galloway. This is a positive beginning but, in order to successfully fight for change, a mass party that unites all sections of the working class is needed. The wrong approach of Your Party meant that steps towards that were not taken in this election.

Instead, in England, and to a lesser extent in Wales and Scotland, it was the Green Party under the leadership of Zack Polanski that stepped into the vacuum that Your Party failed to even partially fill. The national profile of the Greens in this election meant that for most of those looking for a means to vote left, and protest against Labour and Reform, the Greens were the clear choice for all but a small conscious minority. This illustrates how, had Your Party been launched on a sound basis, and then organised a serious, national challenge in these elections, it would have transformed the situation. Zack Polanski was fairly unknown when he was elected Green Party leader by around 20,000 Green Party members. Corbyn launched the idea of a new party with a much higher personal profile, widely seen as a principled socialist, as shown by the 800,000 who signed the declaration for a new party. When that potential was squandered 200,000+ surged to instead join the Greens under Polanski. Most importantly, however, the support for the Greens shows the enthusiasm for a left alternative that remains and is growing, despite the many failures of the trade union leaders and others to take the steps needed to build a new workers' party.

So, should the trade unions just back the Greens?

During this election campaign, on May Day, Zack Polanski declared that 'the Greens are the workers' party' and launched a workers' charter which included a pledge to introduce a £15 an hour minimum wage and to scrap all anti-union laws introduced since Thatcher came to power in 1979. These pledges will be welcomed by trade unionists and, in the debates in the workers' movement on political representation, clearly some will argue that the Greens are the solution to the problem.

However, the Greens are about to be tested in power – albeit at local level – to an extent they have not been before. True, even before these elections, existing Green councillors could have been an important weapon in the fight against local council cuts, but instead in 41 councils they were part of administrations – in coalition variously with Labour, Liberals, 'Independents' and Tories – and implemented cuts and council tax rises on the same basis as other councillors. Now, however, they have won a number of councils on a different basis, as part of the 'green anti-austerity surge.' The voters who have thrust them into power in Waltham Forest, Hackney and elsewhere are expecting a council that refuses to implement any more austerity measures.

Before the election we backed a petition, initiated by the Trade Unionists for a New Party campaign, which called on Zack Polanski to join the struggle against local authority austerity and insist that "no candidate shall appear on the ballot paper on behalf of the Greens who has not made a public commitment to vote against all cuts and closures to council services, jobs, pay and conditions should they be elected as a councillor on May 7th." Zack Polanski did not do so, and in fact has argued that councils have 'no choice' but to implement cuts as result of central government austerity. The inevitable result of sticking to that position would be for Green councils to find themselves – no doubt reluctantly – attacking the rights and conditions of local authority workers, and facing strikes against them as a result. The general secretary of Unison was absolutely right when she declared: "Unison will not tolerate attacks on our members from Reform-run local councils. If Reform comes for our jobs, pensions, pay or conditions they will face the full force of the union." But union members will not accept such attacks whichever party implements them.



PHOTO: BRISTOL GREEN PARTY/CC

> **The voters who have thrust the Greens into power in Waltham Forest, Hackney and elsewhere are expecting a council that refuses to implement any more austerity measures**



PHOTO: NUMBER 10/CC

However, the question of what role the Greens play in the fight against local authority austerity is not settled. A number of Green candidates did sign the Trade Unionists for a New Party petition, and it is clear that among the Greens that have been elected there are some who want to join the fight against local government cuts. There has also been a proposal from the 'Greens Organise' grouping for a summit or conference to discuss building the fight against local government austerity involving Green councils and other anti-cuts councils, alongside trade unions. This would be a positive step which trade unions should take part in, arguing forcefully for the conference to the launchpad for a group of councils to commit not to implement cuts and to take the fight to the government.

What is a workers' party?

Trade unions' approach to the Greens cannot, however, be limited to the questions of local government. Being able to claim to be a workers' party does not just mean accepting large trade union donations. On that basis the Democrats in the US, or Starmer's Labour in Britain, would be classified as such! But actually, powerless as the unions are within Labour in Britain, they still have more formal say over decisions than they would if they affiliated to the Green Party at the moment, where they would have no rights at all under its current structure. A democratic structure, within which trade unions have real say in decision making, and elected representatives can be held to account, are vital to the development of a workers' party. So too, is seeing the working class as the force that is central to change and recognising that the change that is needed is socialism. Debating these issues in the trade union movement in the coming months is going to be vital, as part of the struggle for the working class to develop its own party, not least by the trade unions entering the electoral struggle directly themselves.



PHOTO: OWAIN.DAVIES/CC

Only the beginning

Seismic as these elections were, they are only the beginning of a new period of instability and turmoil in Britain. At this stage Starmer is still in Number Ten, and is insistent that he will not leave. Old time New Labourites Gordon Brown and Harriet Harman have been dragged in to try and shore his leadership up. The fact he is clinging on is not only about his own personal ambition. Above all it reflects the capitalists' fear of what could follow him if he goes. On 8 May the cost of Britain's government debt fell slightly, as the hopes of the bond markets then grew that Starmer would stay put, rather than be replaced by someone who might be more susceptible to the pressure of the working class. The Financial Times, one of the main mouthpieces for British capitalism, had an article on the issue which quoted 'fund managers' relieved that "the Green Party wave" was not "big enough to drag Labour to the left and imperil Starmer". No surprise that the results of the racists of Reform did not cause the bond markets qualms!

What the unnamed 'fund managers' really revealed, however, is the capitalists' consuming fear of any outlet for working class anger, and the threat they know will come to their rule when that anger finds a cohesive expression. The shattering of the parties of the capitalist establishment in this May's elections was only a beginning of that process. Huge class battles are ahead and right now Keir Starmer's prime ministership is the best political weapon the capitalists have to defend their interests. Nothing could epitomise their weakness more!

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CWU conference debates Labour affiliation

DEJI OLAVINKA
UTAW BRANCH DELEGATE



PHOTO: PAUL MATTSSON

CWU general conference started just three days after an election slaughter, which saw the public overwhelmingly reject Keir Starmer's Labour Party at the polls.

It was initially scheduled to be a normal conference. But after multiple branches submitted motions for Labour Party disaffiliation, the National Executive Committee (NEC) changed the agenda.

The NEC proposed a special report that called for a continuation of their existing attempt to fight within the Labour Party. This stopped those original disaffiliation motions from being included, and gave branches just a few weeks to submit amendments to the NEC report.

Before the debate on the union's relationship with the Labour Party began, Angela Rayner gave a speech to the conference. Another delegate from my branch suggested we walk out during Rayner's speech and so we did.

Rayner said Labour should be judged by its actions not words, so I had to use time in my speech to explain that the 2025 Unite union conference overwhelmingly voted to suspend her Unite membership for her actions in the Birmingham bin dispute, where a Labour council, backed by Labour MPs, threatened fire and rehire on striking bin workers.

Renationalisation

My main point was to call for our union to disaffiliate so that we could use our resources to only support candidates, politicians and parties that advocate our policies - such as renationalisation of Royal Mail and BT - and fight for the wider working class.

General secretary Dave Ward asked that speakers include their party membership when they introduced themselves, and at three points across conference he talked about the Socialist Party's influence. This year, I was the only Socialist Party delegate at the conference.

Dave Ward himself and several Labour members spoke against disaffiliation, arguing that the union has the chance to change Labour by remaining in it. I pointed out the role of the RMT rail union, which is not affiliated and yet was able to give the second biggest union donation to Jeremy Corbyn in his Labour leadership bid, and has achieved more in its campaign for renationalisation of the railways than CWU has in renationalising Royal Mail. Almost all the speakers called in were Labour councillors and members, and the vote was lost.

In the final item on the section's agenda, Dave Ward introduced the NEC's policy, which was a continuation of the existing approach. Unlike standard practice at previous conferences, there was no debate allowed on the item, the chair went straight to a vote.

The UTAW tech workers' branch hosted a fringe meeting entitled 'Labour disaffiliation: What might the future look like?'

Despite a long day of conference, the fringe was packed with over 50 attendees. Paul Holden, author of 'The Fraud,' introduced the meeting with a deep dive into the sabotage of the Labour Party by the pro-capitalist right wing to stop Corbyn.

In the meeting I explained that while Corbyn was Labour Party leader, the Socialist Party advocated for mandatory reselection and other democratic measures to enable the surging membership and the organised working class in the trade unions to gain control of the party and fight the inevitable sabotage by capitalist interests. Once Starmer won the leadership, we recognised the need for the trade union movement to put its resources into the building of a new mass workers' party.

Angry mood of members

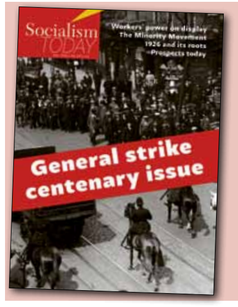
There was an attempt by some delegates and elements of the leadership to paint a picture that the mood for disaffiliation was being fomented by a minority misled by the Socialist Party. However, the facts proved different. A Facebook post by the CWU advertising that it "remains affiliated to Labour" was flooded with comments from members angry at the outcome.

And within hours of the vote, several members of my branch have complained too, with some asking how to opt out of paying a political levy to Labour. In fact, every time the CWU publicises its affiliation with Labour by sending members emails or letters, I receive angry complaints from members asking to quit the union or stop political funding. So much so that we've created a template response to explain that it's branch policy to advocate for the CWU to disaffiliate!

A delegate from another branch suggested that this UTAW branch policy was achieved with a small minority in our meeting. But it's a position that's been voted on several times over the last few years. I am the branch chair, but the Socialist Party is wholly against the use of leadership positions to bureaucratically impose your will on members or prevent democratic debate.

Last October, a large branch meeting voted to support disaffiliation. The draft was shared to branch members and was emailed to the NEC with the request for "discussion at all levels of the CWU about our relationship with Labour and the need for a political strategy that supports our members taking action.

"Our branch would like you to help organise an all-member union-wide consultation, including meetings, about the best use of the union's political fund, including the question of funding candidates outside the Labour Party who support CWU-agreed policy. We think that this could be a key part of establishing processes and practices that can engage the membership politically and raise their sights on what genuine political representation should be."



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Leicester uni UCU strike against job losses

REPORTS BY HEATHER RAWLING, EMI MISE AND STEVE SCORE

At the UCU University of Leicester picket line against cuts in courses and jobs, geologist Gawen Jenkin spoke movingly about the trauma of job losses on staff. As Gawen said: "Geography, Geology and Environment are losing 9 people, and there are 12 remaining. So that's a huge chunk. Some are really traumatised by this. It's not just about loss of income: We're talking about loss of everything that makes you an academic.

"You can be a research leader, a great grant winner - the university says, you're no longer wanted here.

"You can win awards from the university and be lauded by them - the university says we no longer want you.

"You can be a great teacher, loved by the students. The university doesn't care - the university no longer wants you now.

"You can receive a letter, praising you on exemplary long service record for the university. They no longer want you."

A second year Geography student told Gawen that of all the optional modules for the final year of her degree, only one is confirmed running next year.

UCU member Emi Mise reported: "We couldn't stop the closure of Modern Languages. Everybody will be gone. Officially, there are no compulsory redundancies because they will be going on voluntary severance scheme (VSS). But they are not really going voluntarily. They are keeping a few staff for the next three years to teach out the remaining students."

In all, 50 academic staff are leaving on 'Voluntary Severance Pay'. The sacking of professional services staff is still going on.

UCU members argue it has been anything but voluntary for most of them.

However, without the determination of UCU members taking industrial action, including strike action, the situation would have been far worse. University management know, because of the courageous campaign against redundancies that any attacks on staff pay, conditions or jobs will be met with opposition from the union.

What is happening at the University of Leicester is being repeated at universities around the country. A nationally coordinated struggle where university staff strike together is what is needed. The TUC should name the date for an anti-austerity demo.

UCU members at University of Leicester will be on strike again next Monday.

Why do we have to pay for bosses' wars with our holidays?

Jet fuel shortages, a consequence of Trump's war in the Middle East, have meant around 13,000 flights have already been cancelled, around 2 million seats booked! Surely we can get compensation for this? After all, it is not our fault. However some airlines have even sought to avoid paying compensation to travellers affected. UK airlines have requested that the Civil Aviation Authority act to make working-class people lose between £220 to £520 in compensation each. How dare the likes of easyJet, which made £665 million in profits last year, take our compensation away!

While the big bosses try to pass the costs of their wars onto the working class, instead of that, let's make the bosses pay! We need to nationalise the energy companies and the airlines under democratic workers' control and management, so decisions are made by us, not for what makes them a profit. Compensation should be paid only on the basis of proven need – the big bosses have made oodles of profits already.

The democratic nationalisation of the transportation industry would mean we can make public transport such as high-speed rail free, and invest in infrastructure to make them environmentally sustainable and good quality for us all. A socialist world, in which the working class makes the decisions democratically, would mean we could build a world free from war, conflict and climate change once and for all.

ADAM GILLMAN
SOUTH EAST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

Strengthen the movement against war – unions must lead

SCOTT HUNTER
SWINDON SOCIALIST PARTY



PHOTO: NICK AUVACHE

Horror continues in Gaza and across the Middle East. Six months on, the 'ceasefire' of October 2025 is anything but. Although the slaughter has slowed, at least 700 Palestinians have been killed since last October as the Israeli state continues to conduct airstrikes and other armed incursions. Aid remains below agreed levels and the prospect of implementing any of the Gaza reconstruction efforts outlined in the deal seems remote. Murderous violence against Palestinians in the West Bank continues.

At the same time, Trump and Netanyahu's war in Iran and Lebanon continues to destabilise the region and the world. Netanyahu is desperate to escalate conflict in the region, in part to keep himself in power. The spectre of a renewed onslaught in Gaza remains.

When Trump and Netanyahu launched their onslaught on Iran in February, Farage and Badenoch came out in slavish support. They were forced into a rapid U-turn as the unpopularity of the war became clear. That Keir Starmer did not immediately declare wholehearted support for Trump's failed 'regime change' mission is in part a reflection of the huge anti-war mood, as well as the weakening of US imperialism. Starmer has given permission for Trump to use US airbases in Britain to carry out his military operations.

What all the establishment politicians fear is the conclusions people might draw: not just about the bankruptcy of their political parties but of the whole rotten capitalist system. They fear most of all the organised working class - represented through the trade unions - entering the scene, with their power to shut down society and threaten the bosses' profits. A glimpse of that potential power was shown in the magnificent general strikes in Italy last year.

We need to get organised! The trade unions should play a central role. Not only do they have the power to organise mass demonstrations democratically, including defensive stewarding against police and far-right provocation, but they also organise workers in defence and logistics industries.

The Socialist Party has raised the call for a conference of workers in those industries to discuss how best to organise opposition to war and in defence of those workers threatened for doing so. The Trades Union Congress passed a motion last September to organise a mass weekend demonstration against austerity. It should name the date and link the struggles against austerity, racism and war.

16 May demos: Unite the struggles against racism, austerity and war



PHOTO: ANDREW CAUSON

Far-right thug Tommy Robinson will march in central London on 16 May, deliberately and provocatively to coincide with the annual Palestinian demonstration to commemorate Nakba. Socialist Party members will join the Nakba demo, arguing to bring the full strength of the trade unions with their six million members to the heart of the anti-war movement. And putting forward a socialist programme for peace in the Middle East and the rights of the Palestinians.

Faced with the threat of the far right, we have argued for trade union organised defensive stewarding, warning: "It is a mistake to march towards the Robinson hate march without the necessary mass mobilisation and organisation", appealing for "the organisers to seek an alternative route given the lack of time to prepare", and adding that "a well-attended and well-stewarded march can be organised as a show of strength and preparation for building the united movement we need."

In the immediate aftermath of the hundreds of thousands-strong Together demo in March, the Socialist said: "A serious discussion needs to take place in the trade unions, workplaces and local communities about what strategy, programme and tactics are needed to cut across support for Reform and far-right ideas.

Unite struggles

"Our placard on the demo called to 'unite the struggles against racism, austerity, and war'. You cannot fight one without fighting the others. The cost-of-living crisis and the brutal continuation of austerity, which is seeing our services atomised, is pushing people towards Reform.

"A serious alternative that campaigns for jobs, homes and services for all can unite and mobilise millions of people to cut across racism and division. The organised working class, the trade unions with 6.5 million workers, should lead."

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Defend the right to protest

TOM BALDWIN
SOCIALIST PARTY NATIONAL COMMITTEE



Birmingham bin strikers
PHOTO: BIRMINGHAM SP

Keir Starmer has suggested some marches opposing the genocidal violence of the Israeli state could be banned, echoing other capitalist representatives in policing and politics.

They have tried to justify this curb on the right to protest by cynically using the sickening antisemitic attack in Golders Green and other incidents. Attempts to conflate demonstrations in solidarity with the Palestinian people with violence and discrimination against Jews are completely wrong. The description of 'hate marches' doesn't match the reality of peaceful anti-war protests, which also include many Jewish participants. This is rank hypocrisy from a government that has pushed divisive rhetoric on immigration and policies which hurt working-class people of all backgrounds. It has shown a very different approach to the march organised by far-right agitator Tommy Robinson, which will include many openly racist thugs.

Restrictions on Palestine demos are not unique – they are just one example of increased attacks on democratic rights. The big business class are desperate to clamp down on any opposition at a time of capitalist crisis when their system offers the majority only war, austerity and a cost-of-living crisis.

The Tories introduced the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act in 2022 which gave police significant powers to restrict the right to protest. Some of those opposing the law were met with violent state repression, including the use of riot shields as weapons, brought down on the heads of seated protesters.

The Conservatives also further extended anti-trade union legislation, making it harder for workers to strike. Labour's promises to scrap these laws have still not been completed after almost two years in government. In fact, a Labour council in Birmingham won a court injunction to try and prevent effective picketing by bin workers on strike against the imposition of £8,000 a year pay cuts.

These will not be the last attacks on civil liberties under a capitalist system in which the vast majority are exploited for the benefit of a tiny super-rich minority. Attacks on the right to protest must be opposed and defied – and they can be defeated.

Former Tory Home Secretary Suella Braverman (now of Reform) was sacked after she called for stronger police action against "pro-Palestinian mobs." Mass public support for the anti-war movement made her position untenable. This year, the Labour government was defeated in court over its proscription of Palestine Action, although disgracefully that ban still remains in place while the ruling is appealed.

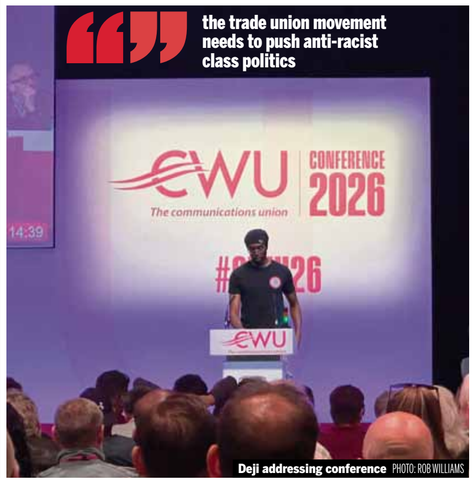
The Minimum Service Levels Act was a draconian attack on trade union rights introduced following the strike wave of 2022-23. But it was almost immediately rendered useless after train drivers' union ASLEF responded to threats to use it by saying it would escalate strike action.

These examples show the potential power of mass movements and of the organised working class. That terrifies the capitalists, which is why they're trying to restrict it. But no amount of laws and police powers can change the fact that it is workers and not the bosses that make society run – and that our class has the power to change the world and free it of capitalist exploitation, oppression and war.

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CWU conference agrees unions must lead fight against the right!

Socialist Party member **Deji Olayinka** spoke at CWU conference on 10 May, arguing for the trade unions to take the lead campaigning against racism but putting class politics to the fore



Deji addressing conference PHOTO: ROB WILLIAMS

I heard a story of a Black woman from Epping in Essex who had witnessed a sexual assault. Horrified by it, she went to a protest called in response. When she arrived, she found it being led by the far right, chanting racist slurs because the attacker was a migrant.

Across the road, she saw another group led by Stand Up to Racism shouting: "Nazi scum off our streets".

Good, but ultimately she went home, frustrated that no one there was serious about stopping sexual violence. Others in her position would have just joined the far-right demo.

To stop the growth of the far right, the trade union movement needs to push anti-racist class politics, to drive a wedge between racist scum leaders and the working-class people that are being misled into their hands.

Polls prove that we have a way in. Over a million former UKIP supporters voted for Corbyn in 2017. Reform supporters back renationalisation: 87% for water companies, 65% for energy companies, and for our Royal Mail, 77%. Farage doesn't want that, but neither does the Labour Party.

To defeat the right, our union needs to build working-class political campaigns. In 2018, the TUC agreed to launch a campaign for 'jobs and homes, not racism.' They didn't, but the union movement must do that now, because the others won't.

I went to a Stand Up to Racism demo outside a Reform rally in Croydon. For two hours, it was chants of "Reform racist" and "racist scum". At points, there were more black and brown people queuing for that Reform rally than with us. Not a single one of them would have had their minds changed.

Stand Up to Racism's election campaign was simply 'don't vote Reform'. Worse, the charity bosses in the Together Alliance leadership blocked that slogan for being too political! So they just said: "Register to vote".

We can't defeat the right by funding organisations where well-meaning charity bosses and liberal politicians block our bread-and-butter class politics.

Reject this motion and let's build a real united front campaign, bringing Unite housing union reps and renters' union activists to the next migrant hotel counter-demos, pushing placards and chants calling for 'jobs and homes, not racism', and demanding to build council homes for us all.

Those wanting to protest homelessness and housing waiting lists, but misled by the far right, might join our side. And if landlords and councillors refusing to do so, don't join us, then so be it.

The unions must organise and lead a working class, united front, anti-racist movement. So, at the next Reform rally, we can have our posties alongside NHS workers calling for renationalisation, not Reform privatisation, saying: 'Save our NHS from Farage's funders'!

Victory for the North West ambulance educators!

CHRIS CANNON
LIVERPOOL NORTH SOCIALIST PARTY

After two gruelling years of dispute and 35 days on the picket line, the North West Ambulance Service (NWAS) call centre educators, members of Unison, have secured a monumental victory.

This hard-fought struggle was characterised by unwavering solidarity in the face of employer indifference.

For 24 months, the educators were met with a wall of corporate dismissal. Management repeatedly claimed that the strike was 'having no effect' on the Trust's ability to deliver 999 and 111 training courses. They were explicitly informed that they would receive nothing.

However, the educators knew the truth: that their labour is the backbone of the emergency response system. They proved that no service can function without the specialised knowledge of those who train the frontline.

While the 9% recruitment and retention premium is not being reinstated, the settlement reached in April, via ACAS, represents a significant climbdown by NWAS leadership.

Affected educators will each receive a payment of up to £8,000. You don't pay out thousands of pounds per worker if a strike 'isn't working'!

This victory is a testament to the Unison members who refused to be intimidated - even when an employer has dug in their heels for two years, collective action can break the deadlock.

The £8,000 victory isn't just a win for their bank accounts; it's a win for the dignity of every worker who has been told they are replaceable. "They told us we were shouting into the wind. This payout proves they were listening the whole time - they just didn't want to pay up until we forced their hand."

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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to find out more today!

Big win for left in PCS leadership elections

SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBERS IN PCS

The left 'Coalition for Change' in the PCS executive election has achieved a stunning 21:14 victory, including president and deputy president, standing on a fighting democratic programme.

The coalition includes supporters of the PCS Broad Left Network, in which Socialist Party members participate. Six Socialist Party members have been elected to the new NEC, including deputy president Dave Semple.

On the same day as the PCS results were announced, Starmer's Labour was humiliated at the polls – hammered due to its continuation of Tory austerity and its attacks on the working class.

Public services and the infrastructure continue to crumble; the Tory anti-trade union laws remain in place; and with the war in the Middle East, prices are beginning to rise faster and faster while wages stagnate. For the majority of workers the central issue in the period ahead will be the new cost-of-living crisis and how to make ends meet.

Left Unity refusal to challenge Starmer

The defeat of the Left Unity-led leadership in the NEC elections is in large part due to its refusal to put up even the most modest of challenges to the Starmer government and its austerity measures.

They refused to implement 2025 Annual Delegate Conference (ADC) motion A383, in which conference demanded a serious national campaign on pay, pensions, cuts and working conditions. They instructed bargaining groups to negotiate within the government's 2025-26 pay limits. In the face of historic civil service job cuts to the tune of tens of thousands, they failed to launch a national campaign to defend jobs and services. They have paid the price!

This is the backdrop to 2026 ADC.

Instead of covering for Starmer's Labour government, the new NEC will now need to mount a fight in the interests of members.

We call upon delegates to vote for motion A5, which sets out the Broad Left Network programme for a serious national campaign - though it is possible this will be updated by emergency motions submitted before conference meets.

Political strategy

Conference motion A4 from the outgoing NEC on political strategy needs to be opposed. Its commentary on Labour's austerity programme is incredibly weak. Lots of warm words and meetings with Cabinet officials don't amount to a political strategy - all the threats to our members remain in place.

PCS already has a stronger political strategy, which includes a commitment to supporting candidates aligned to our union policies. Following the electoral humiliation of Labour on 7 May, PCS should be actively promoting this policy. PCS should take the lead in calling a trade union conference to discuss the crisis of working-class political representation, at which the Socialist Party will raise the need for a new workers' party with a socialist programme.

While the incoming NEC has committed to a serious fight, PCS general secretary Fran Heathcote remains in place and is part of the now-ousted Left Unity grouping.

There was a left coalition majority on the NEC from 2024 to 2025, but Left Unity also maintained the president's position at that stage. Martin Cavanagh abused presidential powers to prevent the left majority implementing its programme for change.

Who controls the union

Cavanagh has now been defeated. However, 'who controls the union' will be a major theme running through many of the conference debates. Power under Left Unity has increasingly been concentrated in the hands of the leadership, which has resisted attempts to bring it to account. Despite instructions from previous conferences, the Left Unity leadership continued to falsely cite GDPR issues to restrict reps' access to membership details. In reality, it was all about Left Unity maintaining control.

The outrageous abuse of presidential powers by Cavanagh, the outgoing president, demonstrates the need for rule changes. The two rule amendments in motions A15 and A19 substitute an NEC simple majority instead of the current two-thirds majority to overturn a presidential ruling. They must be supported.

Union disciplinary rules have a history of being used to suppress dissent, usually against the left. The incidence of such cases appears to have increased under Left Unity's leadership. Motion A70 makes the disciplinary process clearer and more transparent. It should be supported.

Again this year many Trans+ motions, and other motions which ask who controls the union, have been axed from the agenda. Conference must support a reference back to hear a motion to amend Rule 6.22(g) which is currently being misused and abused.

Fight division

This is a period of upheaval worldwide: of war, racism, climate change and austerity. Labour's pro-capitalist government does not start from the standpoint of what is needed for working-class communities. Its betrayals fuel the rise of the right-populist Reform and run the risk of increased racism and division.

It is vital that the unions put themselves at the head of the movement against this 'divide and rule', which weakens the workers' movement in the interests of the fat-cat bosses. The Labour government's answer has been to follow Reform into the political gutter by stepping up their anti-migrant rhetoric and policies.

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 - alongside a massive programme of socialist public ownership of utilities.

Delegates to ADC this week must send a clear message to Starmer: PCS members are up for the fight. Join us in the struggle to transform PCS into the fighting union we need.

● A summary of some of the key motions and how Socialist Party and Broad Left Network members recommend delegates vote can be found at 'Vote for a fighting programme at PCS conference' at www.socialistparty.org.uk

Socialist Party fringe at PCS conference
End of conference, Tuesday 19th May
Speakers: Hannah Sell, Socialist Party general secretary; Dave Semple, PCS Deputy President (pc)
St Paul's Church, West Street, BN1 2RE at rear of conference centre



PCS members - here at the Cabinet office - have bravely taken strike action in several different groups, but have been left by the outgoing NEC to fight alone without coordination or a national fightback SOCIALIST PARTY

The debate about Trans+ rights at PCS conference

EILONWY AWEN
PCS PROUD COMMITTEE, PERSONAL CAPACITY

PCS should campaign to defend the approach of our union, democratically agreed at previous conferences, to defend the rights of Trans+ workers as part of a campaign to unite civil service workers against attacks from the bosses and the Labour government.

The Supreme Court's ruling on 'For Women Scotland v Scottish Ministers' has created significant legal uncertainty which employers are already exploiting. The outgoing PCS leadership has used it as a cover to retreat from positions members have democratically agreed.

Following the judgement in April 2025, the Left Unity-controlled National Standing Orders Committee (NSOC) has attempted to unilaterally impose a new approach on our union. This is despite the fact that, as yet, the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) has not finalised its guidance!

Imagine if a union leadership responded so obediently to all attempts by governments to introduce repressive measures! We would give away all our strength to fight for members. It was intransigent resistance that saw the Minimum Service Levels legislation removed from the statutes, for example.

The trade unions remain the most important defenders of all workers' rights through their ability to unite workers against all attempts to divide us.

Division is the employers' strategy, not ours. Our union leadership needs to prepare training, resources and guidance for PCS organisers so they can defend trans+ members' rights of access to workplace facilities, alongside the rights of all members, and from discrimination and harassment.

Motions ruled out

Instead, Left Unity has ruled out ten motions related to Trans+ liberation from the conference agenda.

What remains on the conference agenda is a set of trojan horse motions cloaked in language apparently supporting the Trans+ community but which are intended to alter the union's policy in line with the ruling.

Among others, motion A85, submitted by the outgoing Left Unity-controlled NEC, accepts the ruling as 'clarifying' and seeks to give the NEC carte blanche to review and update current policy and guidance. The ruling was far from clarifying, as we have spent the last year working through what it means for our community and the impact it has on all of us, including cisgender women. The NEC did not consult PCS Proud, the LGBT+ advisory committee to the NEC.

Despite the efforts of two Broad Left Network members on the NSOC, the Left Unity majority on the committee voted to send these motions for legal advice, on the basis that the union might face some risk. No legal advice was provided to say that these motions amounted to defamation or libel.

The outgoing Left Unity-led leadership oversaw the suspension of a longstanding Trans Awareness training, and the equality and legal department's refusal to publish Trans+ inclusive articles, including an article for International Women's Day written by Proud's women's representative.

Unions that stand for women and trans+ rights are stronger. Unions that carve out exceptions teach employers exactly which members they can target.

Employers will look to the civil service as a baseline for how organisations should treat staff. We must now build a campaign to fight for all our members as we struggle against the exploitative capitalist system where only the rich benefit.

The incoming NEC, now led by a left 'Coalition for Change' majority, has the opportunity to do this.

An emergency motion has now been put forward by branches calling on PCS to seek urgent legal advice, lobby parliament and write to ministers in support of the Trans+ community.

National Education Union agrees an autumn ballot for action

DAN WARRINGTON
NEU EXECUTIVE MEMBER, PERSONAL CAPACITY

On 9 May, the National Education Union (NEU) National Executive voted to open a formal ballot of all state school members in the autumn term on the issues of pay, funding and workload. Should the government not commit to a fully-funded pay offer for teachers that exceeds inflation, that prevents the need for redundancies and rises in workload, the NEU will ballot for its teacher and support staff members from 3 October to 15 December.

The decision follows 200,000 education workers voting for action earlier this year in an indicative ballot. Everyone in education knows the situation is appalling. NEU general secretary Daniel Kebede said: "The cracks in our education system are obvious to all. Schools are running on empty. Pay and workload issues are driving many out of the profession, resulting in a recruitment and retention crisis that is directly impacting on the education of our children and young people."

Socialist Party members in the NEU have long argued for national action on the issues of workload, funding and pay. Socialist Party members on the Executive argued for an earlier start date, to enable action to take place in 2026, but this was not agreed.

But the public announcement of a date to open a formal ballot is the strongest commitment to national action from the union's leadership since the strike action of 2023. Those seven days of strike action secured a 3% increase in the teacher pay offer, and additional funding to pay for it, from Rishi Sunak's Tory government. Socialist Party members argued that more could have been won if union leaders had held firm and intensified action, as was seen with the junior doctors at the time.

Following the disastrous local election results for Labour, Starmer's government is in an even weaker position that that of Sunak.

With strong leadership, education workers could extract major concessions from government and force a halt to austerity in the education sector. Against a backdrop of war and rising inflation, high-profile action taken in one part of the public sector could encourage action against austerity in other public sector areas, as was seen in 2022-23.

The other unions which organise support staff are part of the NJC (the body through which local government pay is negotiated) and they will be balloting from 6 July to 9 August. The NEU exec correctly made it clear that we stand in solidarity with those unions and want to act in unity.

Securing a national strike ballot under the turnout thresholds imposed by the UK's anti-union legislation will be a challenge. Starmer's Labour government has repeatedly delayed implementation. The union leadership will have to take a strong lead to harness the anger of educators and build the profile of the ballot prior to its launch in the autumn to ensure thresholds are met.

The trade union leadership needs to rise to the challenge and demonstrate that an organised working class can not only stall decline, but can win improvements for the lives of workers. In the NEU currently, building to win a national ballot is the first step down that road.



Socialist Party members support the many local strikes taking place all over the country against restructuring, cuts, attacks on terms and conditions, in many of which party members participae and play a leading role. Pictured, Highgate Wood in Haringey, north London. A national fight is needed! SOCIALIST PARTY

NSSN CONFERENCE 2026

20th annual conference

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The NSSN was initiated 20 years ago by the RMT rail and transport union under the leadership of the late, great Bob Crow. We have a proud history of supporting striking workers, and organising for the action that's needed against the bosses and their political representatives.

AGENDA

10am-11am: Registration
11am-1pm: We won't pay for the bosses' crisis! Discussion on how we fight for our rights and to defend our living standards
1pm-2pm: Lunch
2pm-4:30pm: Forum: the fightback in local government after May's elections

Scan here to register to attend the conference. £10 attendance fee payable on arrival

shopstewards.net

Labour rejected in Northwood, Merseyside

NEILL DUNNE
TUSC CANDIDATE IN NORTHWOOD WARD

Voters in Kirkby rejected Labour, kicking them out of every ward. Part of Knowsley Council, Labour has lost power for the first time since the borough was created in 1974.

In the past, individual independent councillors, supported by activists based in the Kirkby Unemployed Centre, were elected. More recently, a First for Kirkby group had some limited success, reflecting the feeling of neglect. There are now three independent councillors.

Working-class community activists in Kirkby have taken up a number of important campaigns. One against medical waste incinerators being put in the town. Another demanding regulation of an industrial estate, with emissions from several sites harmful to the health of local residents. Socialist Party members organised an anti-racist counter-protest when the far-right Patriotic Alternative tried to mobilise the local community to attack a local hotel housing asylum seekers.

Knowsley Labour council has increased council tax, cut essential services, and outsourced and privatised local services. Youth services in Knowsley have had more funding withdrawn than any other borough since 2010. No A-Level education is available anywhere in Knowsley.

The consequence of these cuts is increased anti-social behaviour and knife crime. One committed community activist was forced to successfully campaign for stab/bleed kits to be located in local pubs and elsewhere, backed by the trade unions and independent councillors.

Reform

It is against this background that the emergence of Reform in Knowsley has to be seen. Reform won four seats in the council for the first time.

Reform now controls the council in neighbouring St Helens. In neighbouring Halton, Reform took 16 of 19 seats up for election.

Reform didn't put any indication of what was required or what their intentions were. They just tapped into fears of working-class people struggling getting kids a place in local schools, or accepted by a local dentist or doctor. Services that many Kirkby people are going out of the borough to access.

Reform's record in local government is not impressive – shutting council care homes, raising council tax despite pledges to the contrary, scrapping climate net-zero targets, endorsing fracking.

Where we stood as a Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) candidate in Northwood ward, we increased our number of votes and percentage from last election (to 409 - 19.4%), coming third, ahead of the Greens, just behind Labour. Labour's vote was massively down, losing the seat to Reform.



Sefton, Merseyside

Lewisham – the system has been shaken

JAY COWARD
TUSC CANDIDATE FOR LEWISHAM MAYOR

We had an extraordinary campaign, filled with sympathetic support, even from those voting for others, and staunch agreement from those fed up of the major parties dancing around problems facing the working class.

Our 721 votes in the Lewisham mayoral election isn't the metric to judge the response to socialist ideas. But the conversations and discussions on the streets and doorsteps of Lewisham definitely is.

Many we spoke to are celebrating Lewisham, as one of two London boroughs with a Green mayor, beating Labour by over 5,000 votes.

Our campaign and stand meant we met and discussed with people who agreed change is possible. But we always expected that hatred of Labour and fears around Reform would make the Greens the most enticing option for those in Lewisham wanting to combat more capitalist brutality. However, I can't recollect a time our campaign was met with hostility or even disagreement in the entire election.

The election was an opportunity to reconnect with members of Lewisham Trades Union Council, and strengthen these bonds via the respect we garnered by standing directly and loudly against austerity. Our branch will not take even a toe off the accelerator in pursuing this through the new and strengthened local relationships we've established. This election campaign has propelled the Socialist Party to be ready for new challenges and be proactive in fighting for the working class in Lewisham.

We were not voted in. But we have made our mark in an undoubtedly historic moment of the two-party system being shaken to its core.

Barnsley hammers Labour establishment

ANGIE WALLER
TUSC CANDIDATE IN HOYLAND MILTON WARD

Barnsley gave a hammer blow to the establishment, with only a few Labour councillors retaining their seats. This is the first time in 50 years that the council hasn't been Labour controlled. The same is happening in neighbouring Wakefield, where Labour only kept one seat.

In Barnsley, the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) stood in three wards, campaigning over two months, with Socialist Party stalls in the town every Friday and Saturday, as well as at Barnsley College.

Each stall, we met people frustrated with Labour, blaming Keir Starmer and the Labour council for the cost-of-living crisis. Many blamed Donald Trump for the war in Iran.

Reform won the election, taking a majority on the council. On election day, Reform were finally seen doing a stand in town. We were approached by people disgusted that Reform was there, instead signing up for more information about the Socialist Party and TUSC.

The Socialist Party held three public meetings in the town during the election, which were attended by new supporters, including college students.



Leafleting parents at school PAULA MITCHELL

Waltham Forest – cut rents, create jobs, restore services

LINDA TAAFFE
WALTHAM FOREST SOCIALIST PARTY

We wanted 'a workers' list' of candidates for the local elections. And 18 people volunteered to stand as Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) candidates.

We had three union branch secretaries, and both the president and secretary of the local trades union council. One of the leaders of the Butterfields anti-eviction campaign, two bus drivers, two hospital porters and a ward host.

We had discussions with Your Party 'proto-branches,' independents, and the Greens – to see if we could collaborate with those who would stand on a no-cuts platform.

TUSC stood in 14 wards. In three-quarters of the wards, workers would have an opportunity to vote for at least one working-class candidate, with our manifesto to cut rents, create jobs and restores services, and who pledged not to vote for any austerity budget.

We talked to people wherever we could. We gave out our eye-catching bright pink leaflets at tube and train stations; to parents collecting kids from school; people coming out of mosques. We even covered Leyton Orient FC fans.

We ran stalls in the local shopping areas, and ran five stalls on 'super Saturday.' We also did door-knocking, and got going on social media.

We went to the FE college. We raised money at our pizza party, tried a few street meetings with a mic, and a postered-up car going round the streets.

We were out there. There was some kind of activity every day.

Leaflets were distributed in the thousands, speaking with ex-Labour voters who were thinking of going Reform or Green.

We recognised that both the Greens and Reform had national profiles. They would be looked to by people wanting to register their anger.

But our ideas, especially on housing and our anti-private property developer stance, were very well received. We met many people in housing crisis, due to the rents going up.

We offered a way forward that many people agreed with, even if they weren't going to vote for us.

Now Green-majority council

The Greens now have a majority on the council. It's clear we need to campaign and put demands on them, especially about council housing and rents.

The Green councillors will all be very different from each other. Some we've discussed with already, and we've already got an informal agreement to discuss with them again about how to fight austerity.

We'll be lobbying; we'll be helping build Waltham Forest Trades Council as a real organising force to create a campaign for our borough's needs. We will not accept going back to forever-austerity budgets.



Bevois, Southampton NICK CHAFFEY

Southampton – Bevois fights back against Labour's failings

TIM CUTTER
SOUTHAMPTON SOCIALIST PARTY AND BEVOIS WARD RESIDENT

The magnificent campaign of Socialist Party member Nadia Ditta, and our branch, in the Bevois ward of Southampton shows how new roots are being laid down in the battle against endless austerity.

In two consecutive elections, Nadia has come second standing for the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC). This time getting 739 votes, beating Greens, Reform, Tories, and Lib Dems.

Hundreds have backed the call for an end to cuts, whilst joining successful campaigns to halt closure of the local leisure centre and the Venny play park.

This election's lightning conductor was the generalised anger at the constant fly-tipping in the area. But also a new and positive wider mood to improve the community by tackling the lack of youth services and addressing the housing crisis.

Whilst we didn't win, our campaigning approach is restoring confidence. "We can fight and win, whatever", as I explained to our supporters after the results were announced.

Plans are already in place to demand the restoration of free bulk-waste collections in Bevois and city-wide at the next council meeting. Forced to recognise our campaign's impact, Labour took up this question on their own election flyers. We will now see how committed they are to deliver.

With six Green councillors now in Southampton, expectations that this can become an anti-austerity platform to challenge further cuts is growing. As Nadia said after: "They cannot take away our voice, the work continues!"



Campaigning in Tower Hamlets, east London HUGO PIERRE

Tower Hamlets hustings – socialist programme for jobs, homes, and services

PIPPA EVANS
TOWER HAMLETS SOCIALIST PARTY

Elections give socialists an opportunity to speak to a broader audience than we do in our normal campaigning.

I attended a councillor hustings for my ward, Bethnal Green West. The hustings was hosted by the Canal Club on the Wellington Estate – a community centre run by the tenants and residents association.

Demolition

The Canal Club is currently under threat of demolition, after being identified as a site for the Mayor's Accelerated Housing Scheme. There were candidates in attendance from the Tories, Labour, Greens, Tower Hamlets Independents, an independent, and Clive Heemskerk, the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) candidate.

The hustings was correctly used as an opportunity for the Save E2 campaign to ask candidates to oppose demolition, and sign their petition. While several candidates backed the campaign publicly, one Labour candidate said she would first need to "check with her agent" before signing.

Housing was the main issue raised among the 70 that attended. Residents questioned where and how genuinely affordable council housing would be built in the borough.

This reflects the desperate need in Tower Hamlets, which has some of the highest levels of overcrowding in the country, soaring private rents, and tens of thousands of people stuck on housing waiting lists. There was also concern about the lack of properly funded youth and community services.

Other issues discussed were violence against women and girls, domestic violence, CCTV, and controversial Low Traffic Neighbourhoods (LTNs).

The Green candidate downplayed the role of councillors in fighting attacks coming from central government. In contrast, the TUSC candidate, Clive Heemskerk, received a positive response by putting forward a clear anti-cuts position, and arguing for the resources necessary to properly fund housing, youth services, and support services across the borough.

Super-rich

He pointed to the £1.6 billion tax break handed to bank JP Morgan as evidence that the wealth exists to fund public services. It's just held in the wrong hands.

In the discussion around violence against women and girls, Clive raised the Solace domestic violence workers' strike in Tower Hamlets. He argued that industrial action is essential for defending jobs and vital services.

Clive stressed the importance of mass struggle and mass campaigns to win the funding and resources needed by working-class communities in Tower Hamlets.

Manchester and Salford socialists say 'no cuts' at Green May Day event

FIN COZENS-STOTT
MANCHESTER AND SALFORD SOCIALIST PARTY AND SOCIALIST STUDENTS

Socialist Party and Socialist Students members from Manchester and Salford attended the Green May Day rally, organised by the Green Party Trade Union Group.

We spoke to people outside, and it was agreed we could have a Socialist Students stall inside too. This allowed us to talk directly to Green Party members, including local election candidates.

We're pushing to encourage the Green Party, its internal groups, elected officials, and members to change course and reject the austerity mandated by this Labour government, by voting against cuts. When the Greens have been in power in local government, they have so far complied with Tory and Labour austerity.

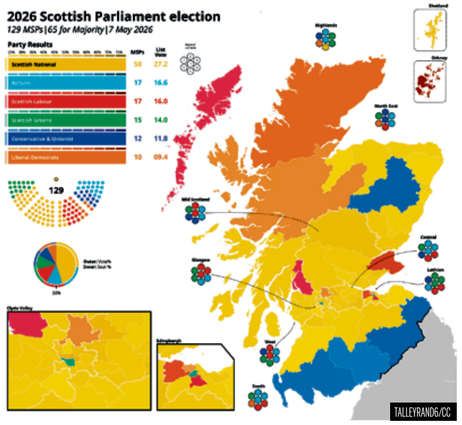
Fighting austerity

Green-controlled Bristol Council put through £50 million cuts, while adding £60 million to council reserves. Manchester Greens supported the Labour council's £6.7 million cuts, continuing the £400 million decline in funding since 2010, worsening council house waiting lists, which stand at 600% of the national average.

When we approached Green leader Zack Polanski at The World Transformed conference, he said that Green councillors had "nothing to do about it". This is a mistake.

We had many people sign the 'Trade Unionists for a New Party' petition, calling on Zack Polanski to ensure Green councillors oppose Labour-enforced austerity by refusing to implement cuts. On the day, this included Aatif 'Ate' Zafar, newly elected Manchester councillor for Whalley Range, and Joe Gosling, Usdaw (Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers) activist, and candidate for Stanley & Outwood East ward in Wakefield.

Holyrood election sees continued collapsing support for capitalist establishment



SOCIALIST PARTY SCOTLAND

In Scotland, despite being the winners on 58 MSPs, the SNP were also the biggest losers in terms of vote share, which fell by 9.5% across the 73 constituencies. A loss of over 400,000 votes compared to the last election in 2021. The SNP regional list vote fell further still, by more than 13%, a reduction of 468,000 votes.

The significant drop in SNP support reflects the enormous disillusionment in a government that has inflicted cut after cut to the NHS and council services. As well as declaring a housing emergency and failing to take any measures to solve it.

Overall, turnout fell by over 10% to 53%. For those who did vote, it was very often a choice of the least worst option available.

Reform UK won 17 MSPs on a vote share of 16% that meant they tied with Scottish Labour who also lost further ground. Both Labour and the Tories had their worst-ever performance in a Holyrood election. While the Scottish Greens gained six seats to finish on 15 MSPs, finishing fourth overall behind the SNP, Labour and Reform.

Threat of Reform

As expected, Reform entered the parliament in an election for the first time. Reform's gains were largely a redistribution of the anti-independence, pro-union vote, with the Tory vote falling by over 10% in Scotland. However, there was also a shift in working-class areas by some Labour and even SNP voters to Reform.

This election underlined the dangers of a Reform campaign that in part based itself on appealing to working-class anger at both the SNP and Labour with anti-immigrant rhetoric. At the same time their performance also showed the limits of its appeal as a party that is anti-working class to its core. The Scottish Reform leader, Lord Malcolm Offord, exposed himself as a creature of the big business class when he boasted at a recent televised election debate that, "I own six houses, five cars and six boats."

The threat of Reform UK poses the urgent need to offer a fighting socialist alternative to racism and division, and the cuts implemented by all the main parties in power, including Reform itself in the councils it now controls in England.

What is urgently required to defeat the threat of Reform is the building of a mass party that can unite the working class. Such a party would undercut support for Reform and weaken the appeal of racism and division. The cuts and continued austerity being implemented by the SNP, Labour and even the Greens in the areas where they run or influence councils can only continue to build the bridges that allow Reform to cross into working-class communities.

The three main pro-union parties – Labour, Tories and Lib Dems – polled 46.5% of the vote in 2021 on the regional lists, but this time around, with Reform added into that mix, that vote increased to 52%. Votes for the two main pro-independence parties – the SNP and the Greens – went from 48.4% in 2021 to 41.2% last week.

Independence

Nevertheless, the pro-independence parties won 73 of the 129 seats overall, the largest number ever. SNP leader John Swinney ran his campaign asking voters to elect a majority SNP government as a mandate for a second independence referendum.

The 58 seats won by the SNP means they are seven short of a majority, giving the Labour government at Westminster further reason to undemocratically refuse to give the powers to Holyrood for indyref 2. Since the election the SNP has changed tack, arguing that the pro-independence majority at Holyrood is sufficient.

The capitalist class in Britain will fight tooth and nail to avoid conceding another referendum to Scotland. A mass working-class campaign – separate from the leadership of the SNP – is necessary to deliver democratic rights alongside a struggle for socialist change.

The SNP will most likely seek to govern as a minority for now, seeking support from the Lib Dems and the Scottish Greens for its legislation and budgets. One thing for certain is their campaign of cuts to public services will continue. Indeed, the Scottish Government before the election announced its intention to axe 11,000 public sector jobs as part of a £1.5 billion "efficiency savings" plan. The claim by the SNP finance secretary before the election that the public sector "needs to be smaller" is a warning to the trade unions about what is to come.

The Scottish Greens benefited from the anger towards the SNP government, including winning SNP seats in Glasgow Southside and Edinburgh Central. Yet, they were part of the cuts coalition with the SNP between 2021 and 2024 at Holyrood and have no record at all of opposing cuts either at council level. Indeed, some of the new Green MSPs have played a role in supporting cuts as councillors.

The Scottish Green candidate who defeated the SNP in Edinburgh was in fact a minister in the previous SNP-Scottish Green coalition. Unless the new intake of Scottish Green MSPs change that approach, those voting Green hoping for a struggle against austerity will be badly let down.

Socialist campaign

The election campaign was dominated by the cost-of-living crisis. A recent government survey from February 2026 found a large majority didn't trust the SNP on the cost of living, or to improve the NHS, or on climate change. And it was those issues that the socialist campaign of the Scottish Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition sought to address, standing six candidates for Holyrood.

By explaining that neither Labour, SNP or Reform fight for us, Scottish TUSC was able to appeal to a layer who were looking for an alternative. Our call for the trade unions to build a mass party of the working class was especially popular.

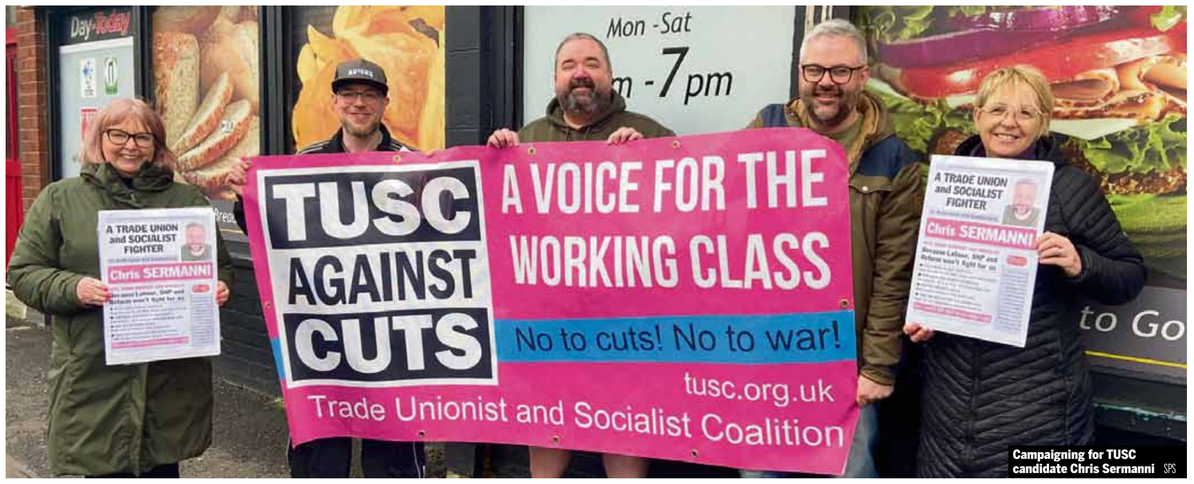
As it did in the run-up to the Holyrood election, Scottish TUSC will appeal to all those who want to see as widespread a socialist election challenge as possible to meet to discuss preparing for the council elections which take place in May 2027.

The Holyrood elections underlined both the accelerating erosion in support for the capitalist parties, including the SNP, and the crushing need for the workers' movement to build its own political vehicle to fight for its interests.

Socialist Party Scotland will continue to fight in the trade unions for that mass workers' party to be built. The recent advances for the left in Unison, PCS and Unite means there are new opportunities to make the case for those unions to build a campaign for working-class political representation.

In the meantime, we will take every opportunity to stand candidates as part of Scottish TUSC to advance that case, as well as making the case for the necessity for socialist change.

● **Read the article in full at socialistpartyscotland.org**



Campaigning for TUSC candidate Chris Sermanni SPS


The Senedd building SENEDD CYMRU/CC

2026 Senedd election

Wales rejects Labour - time for a new mass workers' party

DAVE WARREN
SWANSEA AND WEST WALES SOCIALIST PARTY

As expected, Labour suffered a crushing defeat at the election for the Senedd (Welsh Parliament) on 7 May. Labour won just nine seats out of 96 in a newly extended Senedd, down from 30 seats out of 60 previously. The First Minister, Eluned Morgan, lost her seat and has resigned as Labour leader in Wales. It would be difficult to overstate the scale of this defeat, or the seismic change it represents. There has never been anything but a Labour-led administration in the 27-year history of devolution. In fact, Labour has been the dominant force in Welsh politics for over a century.

But the Labour Party of 100 years ago was very different from the Labour of 2026. Welsh Labour leaders played a prominent role in the 1926 general strike, whereas now, Labour attacks strikers and censures MPs for attending picket lines.

Labour paid the price for its pro-big business, anti-worker stance, not only in Westminster, but in Cardiff Bay where Welsh Labour has acted as a transmission belt passing on cuts and austerity measures with barely a word of protest.

Plaid tops poll

The Welsh working class has delivered its verdict and mainly chose either Plaid Cymru or Reform as weapons with which to beat Labour. Plaid Cymru is now the biggest party with 43 seats, six short of a majority. It would be arithmetically possible for Plaid Cymru to form a coalition government with Labour, but understandably the Plaid Cymru leader Rhun ap Iorwerth has rejected the option of coalition with the party the electorate has thrown out, and plans to operate as a minority government after being elected First Minister.

The experience of Plaid Cymru in control of councils has been that it is so far no different from Labour when it comes to making cuts. People voted Plaid Cymru to remove Labour and to stop Reform. Plaid played down its formal position on independence, and the national question was not the main factor in the election with its campaign mainly centred on the theme of stopping Reform. Plaid will be exposed in government, although it will try to hide behind the fact that it is a minority government, and will put the blame on Labour in Westminster for lack of funding.

The trade union leaders cannot allow Plaid to get away with such excuses. The expectations of a whole layer of workers will be that the new government will bring change. The unions should demand the new administration uses every power at its disposal to fight the cost-of-living crisis and resist austerity from Westminster. This would represent a marked change from the experience of Plaid-led councils.

Reform gains

The 34 seats won by Reform is a setback, and some on the left have interpreted this as a move to the right in society. However, it would be both pessimistic and incorrect to brand the bulk of Reform voters as right wing or racist. Many people who voted Reform were first and foremost voting for change in the hope that a new party could somehow reverse the depressing trend of cuts to public services, low wages and poor housing. It must be admitted that Reform is in a strong position as the opposition in the Senedd and will now try to portray itself as the anti-establishment party in preparation for the local authority elections in 2027.

Other parties were squeezed out, although the Greens now have two members of the Senedd for the first time and the Liberal Democrats retain one seat. The Socialist Party stood in two constituencies, Gwyr Abertawe and Caerdydd Ffynnon Taf under the banner of the Welsh Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition. Many people we spoke to during the campaign said they agreed with much or even all our programme but would be voting tactically for Plaid Cymru or the Greens to stop Reform.

Your Party

Your Party, the party established by Jeremy Corbyn and Zarah Sultana, unfortunately did not stand in Wales and chose not to endorse any other party. The former Labour MP Beth Winter, who was initially one of the interim leaders of Your Party in Wales, resigned from Your Party and stood as a community independent, but was not elected. Your Party would have been far more effective by building on the potential of the 55,000 people in Wales who initially supported it and standing in all 16 constituencies.

The Socialist Party calls on the trade unions to stop financing the Labour Party and launch its own mass party with a socialist programme. Such a party could provide the genuine alternative to austerity that is sorely needed.

Guildford – joining socialists to fight Reform

JOHN REID
GUILDFORD AND SURREY SOCIALIST PARTY

We held our weekly Socialist Party campaign stall in our usual spot the day after the local elections, Friday 8 May.

One woman was glad to see us out on the streets, gave us a £20 donation, and filled out a 'join the Socialist Party' card. She wants to fight back against Reform.

Groups of school students gathered around our two-hour stall, angry at Reform, fearing division and racism. The slogan we were shouting was 'No to racism and division, for unity and socialism'.

Three school students filled out join cards. A 15-year-old school student has joined online, and was out with us on our next stall the next day, Saturday 9 May.

Many discussions took place about how to fight Reform, what is socialism, and how to fight racism.

Surrey University students also filled out join cards, as did a retired transport union RMT member. In total, 8 people filled in join cards, and 18 people bought the Socialist paper.

Before each campaign stall, we look at what is in the Socialist paper, what are the main issues, and use slogans that match the mood.

In recent weeks we have called out 'No to war, end imperialism and capitalism, join the socialists'. Post-election, we reflected the anger towards Reform. The response has been excellent.

SOCIALIST PARTY FIGHTING FUND

AREA	£ RECEIVED	£ TARGET	Q2: APRIL-JUNE 2026	DEADLINE: 30 JUNE 2026
London	3,024	5,000	60%	
Wales	1,385	2,400	58%	
North West	628	1,200	52%	
Eastern	616	1,300	47%	
Southern & SE	1,133	2,400	47%	
South West	783	2,100	37%	
Yorkshire	708	2,650	27%	
Northern	159	800	20%	
West Midlands	386	2,700	14%	
East Midlands	176	2,050	9%	
Other	5,735	2,400		239%
TOTAL	14,732	25,000	59%	

RCT, Wales – Youth react to Reform success

MARIAM KAMISH
RHONDDA CYNON TAF SOCIALIST PARTY

It was young people mainly coming to talk to us on our Saturday 9 May Socialist Party campaign stall, after the election. That doesn't usually happen in town.

Our stall said: "Fight back against Reform – trade unions build a new workers' party". The success of Reform has really shaken some young people up. But we're seeing a good reaction to that.

A carpentry student from Coleg y Cymoedd, Tomasz, spent about half an hour talking with us. He finally asked if he could join us to help behind the stall.

One group of young people and a couple of teenagers with their mother signed. A thirteen-year-old came to talk to us. He said: "I think what you're doing is a really good thing".



TUSC campaigners in Swansea

WHAT THE SOCIALIST PARTY STANDS FOR

This manifesto sums up our main demands on the different issues that face the working class.

It outlines what is necessary to begin the process of achieving a socialist society, in Britain and internationally, able to meet the needs of humanity and to protect the planet.

- Visit **socialistparty.org.uk/WWSF**
- Or purchase a physical copy from leftbooks.co.uk



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!

JOIN THE SOCIALISTS

- Visit **socialistparty.org.uk/join**
- or call **020 8988 8777**
- or text your name and postcode to **07958 032 071**

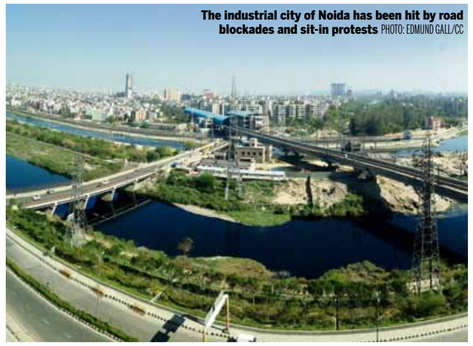
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Wave of working-class unrest in India



The industrial city of Noida has been hit by road blockades and sit-in protests PHOTO: EDMUND GALL/CC

MAKRAND NANDA
NEW SOCIALIST ALTERNATIVE (CWI INDIA)

A growing wave of unrest is beginning to sweep across the Indian working class, reflecting worsening living conditions and intensifying contradictions within the capitalist system. This trend has become visible through a series of protests across multiple regions.

The chain of struggles began on 9 April in Noida, an industrial hub in Uttar Pradesh, and intensified over the following days with road blockades and sit-in protests. With 12-hour workdays becoming the norm, workers are paid a paltry 10,000–12,000 rupees a month ($100-$115). In Noida - a city with high living costs - this effectively amounts to a starvation wage. The unrest continued until 13 April, when the situation escalated. Around 45,000 workers, mainly from the garment and hosiery industries, gathered at nearly eighty locations across the city. Frustrated by the continued neglect of their grievances, sections of the protest turned violent, with damage to vehicles and property, and instances of stone-throwing. In some cases, workers entered factory premises, forcing shutdowns.

The sheer scale of the protests stunned the authorities and sent shockwaves. The state responded with repression to curb further unrest. Shunning any pretence of democratic engagement, the right-wing BJP government unleashed a crackdown, arresting around 300 workers and activists and filing serious criminal charges. In a familiar pattern, the government alleged 'foreign links', particularly with Pakistan, to justify its actions and suppress the movement.

The protests in Noida were soon followed by similar demonstrations across Delhi, Uttarakhand, Gujarat, and Maharashtra, continuing until 23 April 2026. The spontaneous nature of these protests highlights the depth of frustration among workers.

The situation in Gujarat further exposed the vulnerability of migrant workers. The rush of thousands attempting to return home led to massive, uncontrollable crowds at Surat railway station. Workers endured acute distress, standing in queues stretching up to three kilometres under the scorching sun, with temperatures reaching 40°C. Many fainted, while others suffered serious health complications, though no casualties were reported. Drawn from poorer regions such as Bihar and Bengal into industrial centres, these workers often labour under harsh, insecure, and inhuman conditions. The shutdown of production due to fuel shortages forced more than 400,000 workers in the ceramic industry to return to their homes, highlighting the fragility of their livelihoods. Similarly, protests by taxi and cab drivers in Maharashtra exposed the precarious nature of labour in the so-called 'platform economy,' where flexibility often masks exploitation and income instability. The state also witnessed a five-day strike by government employees across various departments over their longstanding demands.

At the core of this unrest lies the sharp rise in living costs, further exacerbated by the ongoing war in the Middle East. Workers are increasingly unable to meet even their basic needs, and the mounting economic pressure has triggered widespread anger across industrial sectors. Demands for fair wages and dignified working conditions are now resonating across regions and industries.

These developments cannot be viewed as isolated events. Though they may appear fragmented at this stage, they point to a deeper reality: the intensification of contradictions within Indian capitalism. Taken together, these struggles signal the emergence of a broader current of working-class resistance. However, this resistance has yet to consolidate into a sustained and coordinated movement. What remains absent is not merely leadership, but a political force capable of linking immediate struggles to a broader programme of transformation. At the same time, such a movement cannot be conjured overnight; it must emerge through a process of accumulated experiences, struggles, and organisation, through which the working class develops both confidence and clarity.

Committee for a Workers' International
FIGHTING FOR A SOCIALIST WORLD
socialistworld.net
CWI EN-216

Labour's fit note plans unfit for purpose

AN OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH ADVISER

New changes planned to the benefits system will mean hardship and worsening health for many. The government intends to change the way 'fit notes' are issued. Its 'Work-Well' scheme will be brought in across the country from November.

When someone is unfit for work longer than seven days they need to be certified unfit for work with a 'fit note' to get sick pay.

Labour's Health Secretary Wes Streeting says, with WorkWell, GPs can refer patients directly to job coaches, physiotherapists, and mental health specialists "to tackle the underlying issues that keep people out of work – like debt, housing, or physical health – rather than just treating the symptoms." That sounds good, but Labour isn't building council houses or lifting people out of debt and poverty.

There's nothing to stop GPs making these referrals now – except for the desperate shortage of physiotherapists and mental health services after years of cutbacks! The Chartered Society of Physiotherapists union recently surveyed its members. 8 in 10 reported NHS services had insufficient staff and widespread recruitment freezes.

Mental health services are also severely understaffed. Years of low pay, poor working conditions and unsafe workloads mean many trained health professionals leave the NHS, burnt out and often with their own health problems.

Labour's plans will lead to outsourced physio and mental health services, swallowed up in time by big profit-seeking companies.

Job coaches could play a valuable role helping people with long-term health problems find and retain good work – if such jobs were there. Identifying work adjustments needed and helping ensure employers provide them would be a real help. But if there aren't suitable jobs and employers won't make adjustments, sick or disabled people will get forced into unsuitable employment, making their health worse.

Big companies like Atos and Serco have profited from carrying out medical assessments of benefit claimants. There's every chance Labour will repeat this with WorkWell.

If Labour wanted to help disabled people into work, or keep their jobs, they wouldn't have frozen Access to Work's cap on grants for two years – a real-terms cut. They would immediately inject funds to end its waiting list, up 4,000 to 66,000 people. Applicants are told they may wait up to 37 weeks just for a decision. Self-employed people may wait more than a year.

While employers aim to make profits, or in the public sector are squeezed by continuing austerity, workers with disabilities and illness will remain vulnerable to bullying management. Labour's plans are for the bosses' benefit. Unions must fight for workers' control over working conditions, with flexible hours, safe workplaces and, for those who need them, disability adjustments.



PHOTO: SHIXART1985/CC

TUC Disabled workers conference

Labour's threat to Personal Independence Payments remains



Protest outside PIP offices in Norwich PHOTO: ROGER BLACKWELL/CC

DAVID MAPLES
BRIGHTON SOCIALIST PARTY AND SOCIALIST PARTY DISABILITY CAUCUS CONVENOR

The Trades Union Congress (TUC) Disabled Workers Conference on 19-20 May meets less than two weeks after Labour's humiliation in the May elections.

Most years this is a largely uncontroversial conference dominated by the myriad of everyday issues confronting disabled workers. This year is different.

After 14 years of Tory government, many disabled workers hoped for something better. These hopes have been cruelly dashed. Labour's Budget in October 2024 included a tightening of Work Capability Assessments. In March 2025, Labour announced a continuation of £5 billion of benefit cuts inherited from the Tories.

This provoked a big reawakening of disability activism, which had been severely set back by the pandemic. Despite all the obstacles in front of us, disabled activists launched a sustained campaign which shook the Labour government and literally reduced the chancellor, Rachel Reeves, to tears. 150 Labour MPs threatened to vote against the cuts.

The campaign was reflected within the trade union movement by motions passed at last year's TUC Disabled Workers and Trades Council Conferences. Motion 38, 'Disabled workers oppose welfare reforms' was passed unanimously at TUC Congress in September 2025.

Actions in Motion 38 included to organise a demonstration and lobby of Parliament in support of disabled workers, and to organise a weekend demonstration against Labour austerity as a launchpad for sustained trade union action in defence of workers and young people.

Delegates spoke passionately at 2025 Congress. Angela Hamilton from Unison said: "Who can forget Stephen Timms interrupting the debate to announce concessions just before the vote? Let's be clear, we might have won the battle but we haven't won the war."

Amy Bishop from Prospect said: "They may have taken the PIP plans out of the bill but the scope of the Timms review of PIP is wide-ranging, with the target of making PIP 'sustainable to support generations to come.' And I think we can all agree that that pretty much always means cuts".

Alan Hackett, NASUWT, said: "The current government has made it very clear that they're not going to just continue the war on disabled people, but they are going to escalate it."

The TUC General Council supported the motions, with the caveat that "The TUC will consult with the General Council on the most effective and most accessible forms of action".

Delegates will therefore be surprised to read that the report to conference includes:

"On 1 July the government announced they were not going to proceed with the changes. The conference motion to Congress, now policy, called for the TUC to coordinate and organise protests against the proposed changes to PIP. However, swift and effective lobbying by the TUC, trade union movement and disabled people's organisations had forced the government to change its policy direction and so these were not needed."

Socialist Party members and other activists will argue for delegates to reference back that section of the report. Delegates should also back Motion 1 'Protect the PIP daily living component,' which goes from GMB to Congress this year.

The Timms Review is due to report in the autumn so pressure on the TUC to take action is essential. The National Shop Stewards Network (NSSN) lobby of TUC Congress on Sunday 13 September can play a crucial role in concentrating this pressure. DPAC (Disabled People Against Cuts) and other disabled peoples' organisations are warmly invited to coordinate with the NSSN.

The TUC should name the day for the weekend demonstration against Labour austerity. For many disabled people this is the fight of our lives.

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