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the Socialist

Issue 1369

28 May - 3 June 2026

formerly **Militant**

WE WON'T PAY FOR TRUMP'S WAR

MAKE THE SUPER-RICH PAY!

The price at the petrol pump is ticking up, at the supermarket tills too. And the papers are full of warnings for a new wave of price rises across the board coming our way.

You can bet your bottom dollar that the super-rich capitalist bosses will find any excuse to hike prices and squeeze our pay packets. It's one way they continue to get even richer at our expense.

Every time there's a crisis - in this instance Trump's war on Iran and all its economic repercussions - the capitalist bosses try to make the

working class pay. A fightback is needed.

The last inflation surge was met by the biggest wave of strikes in a generation: nurses, teachers, posties and more, refusing to put up with unacceptable real-terms pay cuts.

Now, two years into Starmer's Labour government, it's as if nothing has changed. If anything, the state of our public services has got even worse.

People are definitely angry, it was expressed in the beating given to Labour and the Tories in the elections on 7 May. The trade unions need to lead in getting that working-class anger organised, by acting on the Trades Union Congress policy to organise a demonstration against Labour austerity, and by bringing together a cross-union conference to discuss working-class political representation.

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The Socialist is written, read, sold and bought by ordinary workers, trade unionists, young people and Socialist Party members. We want you to write for the Socialist.

Send us reports of your workplace and community campaigns, short letters on working-class issues, or ideas for other articles.

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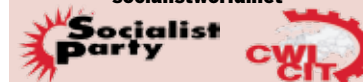
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"The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it."
Karl Marx

Trade Unionists for a New Party

After May - what now for working-class political representation?

Zoom meeting 8 June 18:30

Register: tinyurl.com/yc8hzepx

Update from petition organiser Dave Nellist

The 7 May election results again showed a sharp fall in support and seats for the Labour Party, alongside a commensurate rise for Reform UK.

Right-wing populism is thriving because the capitalist market economy is failing to deliver decent wages, jobs, housing, and public services. Rather than addressing a system run for corporate profit and billionaire wealth, Farage's right-wing scapegoating falsely blames the most recent arrivals to these shores for these systemic failures.

But the spread of these ideas is not inevitable; Reform UK's bubble can be burst. With six and a half million members, the trade union movement has the numbers, resources, and reach into working-class communities to undermine the right with a clear message: 'Pay, Jobs, and Homes for All, not Racism'.

A union campaign on this theme must be

actively promoted throughout 2026 and ahead of the May 2027 local elections to prevent Reform UK from cementing its position. This should include a TUC-led national Saturday demonstration in London, with full mobilisation across the movement to maximise numbers. If the TUC refuses to act, we must build a 'coalition of the willing' among trade unions prepared to counter Reform with class-based policies and campaigns.

Crucially, this requires trade unions to challenge their support for the political status quo. We must urgently discuss - both within and across unions - a new political party rooted in working-class organisations and communities, committed to an economy run for the needs of all working people, alongside a serious drive to achieve it.

This meeting will hear from past and present NEC-level members in unions where TU4NP supporters are already driving the debate on political direction, including disaffiliation from Labour. There will also be ample opportunity for general questions and discussion.

Sign the petition



Register for the meeting



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Socialist Party WHAT WE THINK

“Completely preposterous.” That was the response from M&S chief executive Stuart Machin to the idea that the government might ‘urge’ supermarket bosses to introduce voluntary price caps on food essentials in England.

What is ‘preposterous’ is that “over five million households have cut back on or skipped meals because they cannot afford food”, according to research last autumn, in the sixth-biggest economy on the planet.

The number of families who have gone without essentials such as heating, dentist appointments, or fixing broken fridges, has been seven million or over for four consecutive years. That is before the double-digit inflation in food prices anticipated later this year kicks in.

Iran war

Trump's war in Iran is worsening this situation. Even if shipping in the Strait of Hormuz went back to functioning as it did before he launched the war, which is unlikely, the impact of the shortage of fertiliser is expected to last into the autumn and winter. According to the United Nations (UN), around a third of the world's fertilisers - such as urea, potash, ammonia and phosphates - normally pass through the strait.

The Food and Agriculture Organization has predicted that the war shock will unfold in stages - energy, then fertiliser, then seeds, then lower yields, then commodity prices, and finally food inflation reaching shoppers.

The climate crisis is also a factor in this picture. Forecasters put the odds of a strong El Niño, a natural warming of the Pacific Ocean, above 90%. That will bring more extreme weather. The UN's World Food Programme has warned that 45 million more people could be pushed into acute food insecurity.

While war and climate crisis are exacerbating factors in the existence of millions of families experiencing hunger, it is not true that governments must remain passive or that leaving everything to the ‘market’ will improve anything.

What is also ‘preposterous’ is that the Labour government has retreated from its timid proposals on price control in the face of inevitable hostility from big business bosses. One supermarket executive called the idea of voluntary food caps on essential items “completely mad”. Another said: “This is an unnecessary, unwanted and unjustified intervention in the market.”

The Scottish National Party (SNP) pledged in its election manifesto to use its devolved public health powers to make large supermarkets adhere to fixed prices on up to 50 items such as bread, milk, cheese, eggs, rice and chicken because their rising cost was “impacting our nation's nutrition”.

While the SNP pledge was being denounced by big-business supermarket bosses in April, the Labour

FOOD PRICE CRISIS LOOMS



government said the proposal was “incoherent and undeliverable”. However, after people used their votes to punish Labour at the May polls, motivated by the cost-of-living crisis, they then temporarily floated an about-turn on the question of food price controls.

If you want to be popular, food price controls appear to be a no-brainer. In February 2022, even before the price inflation following the Ukraine war, let alone what has happened since, 70% of voters surveyed said they would support food price controls. Even 65% of those identifying themselves as Conservative voters were in favour.

The New Labour government of Keir Starmer has sought since 2024 to act in the interests of big business,



While the food industry is left in the hands of the profiteers, we don't determine what gets produced, nor how, nor where, nor the conditions of workers and livestock. Private ownership is incompatible with our health and wellbeing

like the Tories, driving down our living standards - with pay restraint, maintaining anti-trade union legislation, continuing Tory funding cuts to local government, attacking



benefits, and privatising public services.

The extremely timid proposals on measures designed to help workers and young people with their weekly shop - and then the retreat from them - shows that a party committed to the interests of big business cannot be trusted to act in our interests. In the face of big business hostility, the idea was quickly dropped.

'Great' summer savings

A much watered-down version of 'help' with the cost of living was presented by chancellor Rachel Reeves. Her 'Great British summer savings' scheme included free bus travel for children aged between five and 15 in England during the school summer holidays, VAT cuts on tickets to the zoo and other attractions, an extension of the fuel duty cut, and a suspension of import tariffs on some foods, including chocolate and biscuits. Let them eat cake... 'Every little helps', but these measures won't fundamentally change things, not least the profits big business - including the big supermarkets - make at our expense.

What this episode reveals is that governments are under pressure in both directions - pressure from the anger of voters and pressure from the bosses. The fear of the bosses is that even the milquetoast measures proposed would risk the appetite for measures in the interests of the working class growing with the eating (pardon the pun). The task of the organisations of the working class is to build the biggest united struggle possible to shift the balance in our favour and fight for more far-reaching measures that challenge the rule of the bosses.

A very important part of that is the question of a political voice for the working class, independent of other class interests. The question of action on food prices shows the need

for a trade union conference that brings together representatives from across the movement to discuss and debate a way forward. Socialist Party members campaign in the unions for this step and will argue in the debate for the trade unions to take steps to a workers' political voice, including unions standing candidates that stand for their demands.

Rising inflation will move the issue of pay up workers' agenda. Trade unions need to prepare, starting with learning all the lessons of the 2022-23 strike wave. Striking works but uniting the strikes could make an even greater impact.

Short-term profit

Despite all their claims, the big business bosses in the food industry prioritise their short-term profits over food provision, nutrition and the environment. Trade union Unite reported in October that Tesco's operating profits have skyrocketed by 72% over the previous five years. Having intimidated Labour into retreat on price controls, the bosses demanded further measures to maximise their profits at our expense, that mild regulation on health and packaging be removed to 'help' them keep prices down.

But in the idea of food controls is recognition that free market capitalism is incapable of feeding us all and therefore must be replaced with rational planning in the interests of people not profit: socialism. While the SNP has made proposals that will be popular, it is its commitment to maintaining 'free-market' capitalism

that will mean it will be found unable to defend the working class, and its unpopularity will grow.

Governor of the Bank of England Andrew Bailey commented on the idea of food price caps on certain items, saying this is “not a sustainable thing in the long run”. There is an element of truth in that because while the food industry is left in the hands of the profiteers, we don't determine what gets produced, nor how, nor where, nor the conditions of workers and livestock. Private ownership is incompatible with our health and wellbeing.

Public ownership

The Socialist Party fights for 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.

That is part of the struggle for a socialist plan of production, which includes the question of international cooperation to plan for the environment as well as distribution of food, without waste. The first step towards that plan would be nationalising under democratic working-class control and management the biggest 150 corporations and banks that dominate the economy. That would put the key levers of the economy into the hands of the working class to start planning in the interests of need not profit.

Part of building the movement capable of fighting for those measures will be the struggle at local level. Councils control 20% of public spending and are responsible for services that feed people such as schools, care homes and, where they have survived the austerity decade, meals-on-wheels. They also administer hardship funds like the Crisis and Resilience Fund which includes 'charitable food aid' defined in its glossary as “Charitable help with food for free or at very low cost for people experiencing financial or food insecurity. Providers include food banks, food pantries, social supermarkets and food clubs.”

In the last two years, many council administrations were replaced, having implemented austerity measures obediently. For example in 2026, 30 English councils went to no overall control. All councils should be put under unrelenting pressure to use every means they have to support families facing food insecurity, spending the millions they have in reserves, using their prudential borrowing capacity, and mounting campaigns to fight for the funding needed from central government.

The Socialist Party will be fighting for the action needed in the trade unions, the socialist programme required to end poverty, food insecurity and environmental crisis, and for every step in our communities to build a working-class fight against the cost-of-living crisis. Join us!

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Richard Tice and Nigel Farage HOUSE OF COMMONS/CC

Tech giant Palantir claws dig deeper into our public services

Workers must control technology, not Trumpite profiteering warmongers

ADAM HARMSWORTH
COVENTRY SOCIALIST PARTY

US tech giant Palantir Technologies recently won a renewed contract with Coventry City Council to process data for its children's services. This is only the latest of many public contracts Palantir has secured in Britain, including a £330 million NHS contract and more in the Ministry of Defence and police forces.

Two of its most notorious clients are the Israeli military, and ICE in the US. Our public funds are being used to bankroll a company with a direct role in the genocidal slaughter of Palestinians and in Trump's brutal assault on migrants in the US.

That has earned it a clear endorsement from Donald Trump, who wrote on his social media site, Truth Social: "Palantir Technologies (PLTR) has proven to have great war-fighting capabilities and equipment. Just ask our enemies!!!"

Health and other campaign groups

have called for Palantir to be booted out of the NHS, where it now has access to the medical and other personal data of millions of patients. Doctors' union the British Medical Association is among those calling for all existing NHS contracts with Palantir to be terminated.

So how can Palantir be stopped? Trade unions in the NHS and across the public sector have a crucial role to play in opposing Palantir data privatisation, and all times public services are passed to profit-making companies. NHS workers showed their power to change things in the 2022 strike wave. If the unions organise together they can force the NHS, councils, and other public bodies to scrap their contracts with Palantir.

That still leaves the question of what to replace Palantir with. In an attempt to rescue its public image, Palantir representatives have emphasised the potential good its services could provide. Palantir's NHS work promises to cut waiting lists

and improve cancer diagnoses, while its work in Coventry could increase the time social workers spend supporting children.

Pro-capitalist commentator Andrew Marr, in the New Statesman, outlines the problem, saying: "If Britain is waiting for a liberal, Guardian-reading cutting-edge tech company to help modernise the state, we may be waiting for a while". Marr concludes that we need the tech giants, so instead should just seek assurances and safeguards. Those are about as likely to work as waiting for a Guardian-reading tech company!

Kick out privatisers

But we don't need the tech giants at all. The NHS, councils, and other public bodies could develop the technology themselves, hire teams of skilled workers in software and AI to deliver those same benefits - without the links to war crimes and human rights abuses, or resources sucked away as private profit.

That technology could also be publicly owned and run, and how it uses the data it has access to could be subject to constant democratic scrutiny by the workers who know best.

At a recent 'Drop Palantir' meeting in Coventry, Socialist Party member and former MP Dave Nellist explained that Palantir is only the tip of the iceberg in terms of wretched corporate giants profiting from the NHS. Pharmaceutical firms for example have made huge profits ripping off the NHS. It shouldn't just be Palantir's services that are publicly owned; we need our health services and all public services nationalised under democratic workers' control and management.



Palantir stand at the NHS confederation conference in 2022 RATHFELDER/CC

Kick profit vultures out of our NHS

£241 million was dished out to private profit-making firms to interpret NHS diagnostic scans in the last year. It's up from £81 million in 2018. Lots more profit potential for the privatising vultures that circle our crumbling health service.

Ambitious and recently resigned Labour ex-health minister Wes Streeting would probably tell you it is necessary to deal with waiting lists. And private health bosses would probably shake his hand and say 'we agree'.

The Royal College of Radiologists however reports that 86% of radiology department heads say that they have serious concerns about the quality of reports, 90% of radiologists need to double-check the work done through outsourcing.

The NHS is short of radiologists,

but there is currently a shortage of training posts and currently 11 applications for every post. The outsourcing vulture bosses are probably perfectly happy with that potentially profitable fact.

Our NHS needs investment now. Just a fraction of the vast wealth reported as held by those in the Sunday Times Rich List would do the job of bolstering training places. Nationalising all the private health profiteers under democratic working-class control and management would be an important step too.



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Reform warns investors, don't invest in protecting the planet!

ADAM GILLMAN
SOUTH EAST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

Deputy leader of Reform UK Richard Tice has warned investors: "We put people on notice. Invest in nuclear energy. Invest in gas. Invest in oil. Don't invest in renewables." It's quite ironic that at the same time as Tice called net zero "net stupid zero", he himself has a business that has boasted about cutting emissions using solar panels. This shows the huge hypocrisy that these right-wing populists tend to lean on.

This comes at a time when climate change threatens the lives of millions of people. Our planet is getting hotter: we've just had the hottest day in May on record in the UK. Tice's comments show that this boiling capitalist system will not be able to invest in the necessary action to halt and reverse climate change before it's too late.

Is this really surprising when this polluting capitalist system is

responsible for the destruction of the environment? Whether it's the water companies literally putting raw sewage into our rivers and seas or oil companies taking advantage of wars to increase their profits. The big bosses will put their own profits and interests above the need to protect the environment.

But is our future really doomed? No it is not! A socialist society, where we nationalise the energy, water, transport and the banks and the companies that dominate the economy under democratic workers' control and management, would enable us to move to socially useful production to protect our livelihoods and the environment. Not just in Britain but internationally, a plan of production would put our needs first, not the profits of a few.

If you want to fight against climate change, and the rotten capitalist system that's the root of the crisis our world faces today, then join the Socialist Party!

Join the fightback
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Rich list billionaires hoarding obscene wealth

HANNAH PONTING
LIVERPOOL NORTH SOCIALIST PARTY

£784,000,000,000

the combined wealth of the UK's 350 richest individuals

The Sunday Times has released its annual 'rich list', which sees the country's wealthiest families, billionaires, property owners, cryptocurrency investors and hedge fund managers paraded across its front pages like celebrities.

Over the last year, the combined wealth of the UK's richest 350 individuals rose by 1.4% to £784 billion.

Top of the list is Dheeraj Hinduja and Sanjay Hinduja, finding themselves at the top of the UK's annual wealth ranking for a fifth consecutive year. Their combined net worth is £38 billion! Dheeraj chairs Gulf Oil International, while Sanjay oversees the automotive giant Ashok Leyland. The family owns businesses operating in 48 countries across industries including oil, gas, banking and transport.

They also own a 25-bedroom mansion! Meanwhile, more than 1.3 million households remain on waiting lists for council homes across the UK.

These obscene levels of inequality aren't just a mistake, but are features of an economic system run in the interests of profit instead of need. Capitalism allows a tiny minority to

accumulate vast fortunes while the overwhelming majority are left to deal with the consequences.

The people in the pages of the Sunday Times have multiple parties that will represent their interests. When the Labour Party accepts more donations from big business than from trade unions, it's clear whose interests it represents.

To break out the wealth that is currently being hoarded by the super-rich and use it to provide for us all, we need a party that will represent the interests of the working class. The impact such a party would have would be massive.

For instance, if councillors were prepared to use their existing reserves, 5,000 council homes could be built in Liverpool and 15,000 in Manchester alone, right now. Councillors that stand on the side of the working class would send the bill to Starmer's government, and build mass campaigns to demand the resources to provide the services residents need.

Trade unions remain the largest

voluntary organisations in the country, with a combined membership of more than 6.5 million people.

The trade union movement should take the lead in building a new party rooted in working-class interests and armed with a socialist programme. A programme to take the wealth, power and resources out of the hands of the super-rich capitalist elite and run society democratically, providing for all not for profits would abolish the billionaires and make them yesterday's news.



MICHAEL BARBERA, GEOGRAPHER, PAULOLEONG2002/CC

Workers can't afford to retire

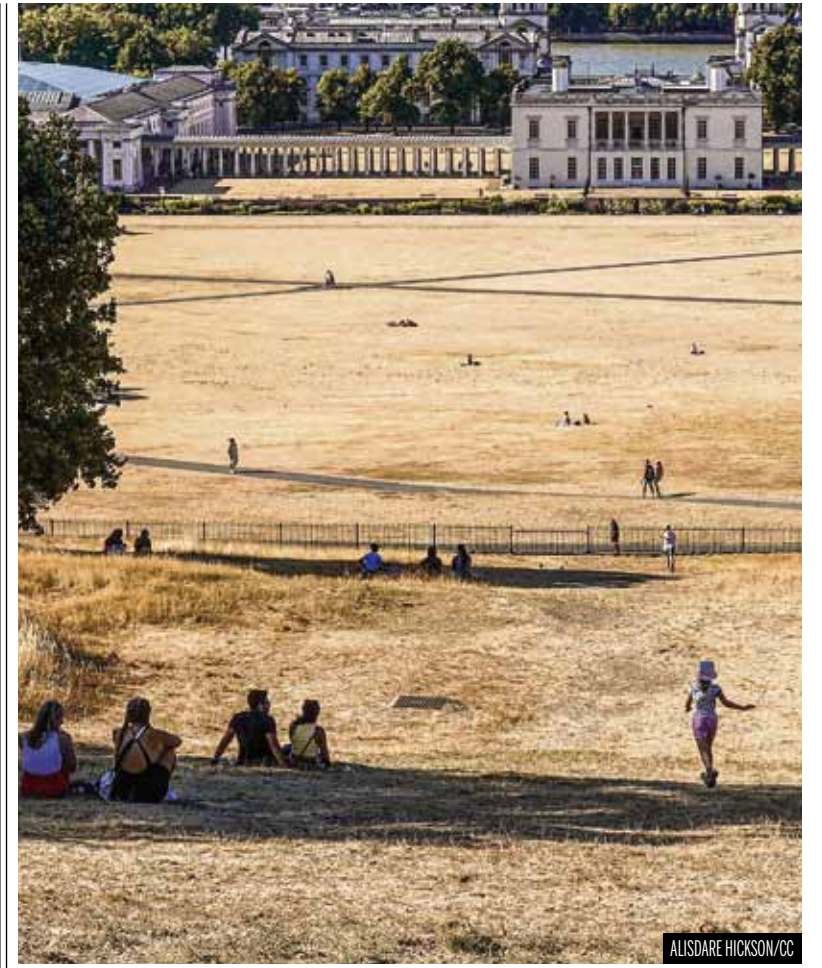
15 million people are currently not saving enough for retirement according to the Pensions Commission. 45% of working-age adults in the UK are not saving into a pension at all, despite nearly half of them being in work, and unsurprisingly low and middle earners are most at risk.

Millions of pensioners live in poverty right now, which is worsening due to living and housing costs, and is the same reason millions of workers can't afford to save or pay into a pension in the first place. Currently the default State Pension rises every year by CPI inflation, average earnings growth or 2.5%, whichever is highest. A full state pension is £965 every four weeks, which is hardly a living pension. No wonder the Pensions Commission warns of a cliff edge for the millions more who will face this when they retire.

Auto-enrolment means employers must place employees in a pension and contribute to their retirement funds but in reality, this adds little.

We need to fight for pensions that can be lived on comfortably and tax free, taking the profits of the companies millions work for and using the billions spent on war to help working-class people instead. A mass council house building programme would also free millions of us from insecure tenancies and rip-off rents, including pensioners, as more of us reach retirement without owning our own homes.

We can provide everyone with a decent standard of living by using the wealth and resources in society to democratically plan what we need, not what is considered 'affordable' to the bosses who continue to get rich at our expense.



AUSDARE HICKSON/CC

Heatwave hits workers' health

It's hot! The second May bank holiday was met with a scorchingly hot heatwave. Thermometers topped off at over 30 degrees across the country, breaking records. This is the future facing us, as capitalism-driven climate change means more extreme weather and hotter heat waves.

With the hot temperatures come unsafe working environments. In Britain, there are no maximum temperature regulations, so across the country workers will have put their health at risk. Health and safety regulations state that employers must maintain a 'reasonable' temperature. But, like with many safety regulations workers have fought for, bosses will try and wriggle out of anything that melts their profit margins.

The TUC (Trades Union Congress) has called for a maximum temperature to be set for workplaces, 24°C inside. Fighting unions can take

immediate action when workers are put at risk by high heat. The National Education Union threatened to walk out of schools when the Tories were trying to make teachers and pupils go back to unsafe schools during the Covid-19 pandemic, and won.

The collective strength of workers, organised in the trade unions, can make workplaces safe, during heatwaves and in general. Air conditioning, proper access to water and toilets, shorter shifts with no loss of pay, and if necessary shutting down unsafe workplaces when they become too hot are all things that can be achieved. If workers democratically decided how their workplaces were run, instead of unelected bosses, health and safety could be prioritised. And if we had the same democratic control of society in general, we could transition away from polluting production that is leading to climate catastrophe.

Amazon boss: 'Don't blame young people, make them work for free'

"Stop blaming young people for being unemployed, says Amazon's UK boss", the BBC news headline read on 22 May. Sounds surprisingly progressive from a boss at one of the world's most exploitative big business enterprises.

Read a bit further or listen to the interview, and actually John Bounphrey thinks work experience should be made compulsory for over-16s. Sounds like a good deal for bosses!

Socialists say everyone has the right to a full-time job, paid at least £15 an hour. Which is not something

Amazon is prepared to offer all its workers in its pursuit of maximum profits.

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TUC Cymru conference: Social partnership is no answer



Socialist Party Wales members at TUC Cymru

DAVE WARREN
DELEGATE FROM SWANSEA TRADES COUNCIL

The biennial congress of TUC Cymru (Wales Trades Union Congress) took place in Llandudno 19-21 May against the background of the political earthquake of Labour losing control of the Senedd (Welsh parliament) for the first time ever.

The conference provided a timely opportunity to reassess the political orientation of the trade union movement in Wales under a Plaid Cymru government and map out a way forward.

Under a Labour government in Wales, the tops of the trade unions have been heavily embroiled in 'social partnership', whereby unions, employers and government seek consensus and allegedly work together to achieve common goals. The Socialist Party has always opposed this approach.

Social partnership didn't help steelworkers

Several speakers opposed this strategy from the rostrum, including Socialist Party members, pointing out, for example, that social partnership had not prevented the loss of thousands of jobs at Port Talbot Steelworks, where Tata Steel closed both remaining blast furnaces while opening new blast furnaces in India.

As the Socialist Party pointed out at the time, nationalisation under democratic workers' control and management was the only realistic option for saving primary steel production in Wales. The truth is that multinational firms like Tata do not have common interests with their workforce. They are interested only in profit and care nothing for the communities that their decisions affect.

A motion from Swansea Trades Council sought to prepare for future battles by calling on Congress

to "prepare to mobilise the support of all affiliated unions to resist any future attacks or undermining of living standards by the Senedd." This motion was carried, but a statement from the General Council of TUC Cymru reaffirming "a commitment to social partnership and fair work in Wales" was also carried.

This cross-class approach to industrial relations muddies the waters and it is evident that the leadership of the trade union movement in Wales is set on building the same cosy relationship with Plaid Cymru in government as it had with Labour. In fact, a 'memorandum of understanding' has already been signed between Plaid Cymru and TUC Cymru.

While it is obvious that trade unions must engage and negotiate with both employers and government, they must do so free of any illusions of common interests and goals. Plaid Cymru has already shown in the leadership of councils that it has been no different from Labour when it comes to making cuts to public services.

No-cuts budgets

Most of the motions were uncontroversial and positive. However, when any motion introduced a note of dissent to the position of the General Council, they moved to delete it. More than once the General Council supported a motion "with a reservation", with the speaker proposing to delete and/or add wording with no written amendment having been circulated to delegates. Congress was then invited to vote on the reservation even though there is nothing in the rules and standing orders which allows the General Council to amend motions in this way. This was a democratic deficit that needs to be campaigned against in order for it to be corrected for future congresses.

However, when discussing a motion from Caerphilly Trades Council to preserve local libraries and

leisure centres, the General Council (mistakenly?) failed to call a vote on a reservation to remove reference to legal no-cuts budgets. Therefore the motion was carried as written and a commitment to legal, no-cuts budgets remains TUC Cymru policy.

Nationalisation

The final debate of Congress was on a motion from Unite to support Welsh manufacturing, and an amendment from Swansea Trades Council calling for "Opening the books for inspection, and the option of nationalisation by the Welsh government under democratic workers' control and management, with compensation paid only on the basis of proven need, should be a major demand in order to save jobs and services."

This amendment was opposed by the General Council and by Unite. The speaker for the General Council stated that while there is a case for nationalisation of natural resources such as water, that does not apply to manufacturing industry. He said that we need the competition and innovation that private ownership provides!

This was nothing short of a defence of the capitalist system that produces such inequality and misery all over the world. Socialist Party members of course supported the amendment, and although the vote was lost, several delegates approached us afterwards to say they agreed with us.

The attitude to motions is decided in delegation meetings beforehand and lay delegates were mandated in advance. Nevertheless, Socialist Party members made a significant impact at this conference and won considerable support from the rank-and-file delegates. We made a total of 30 interventions from the rostrum over the three days of conference and sold 28 copies of the Socialist.

The debate to arm the trade union movement to defend workers will intensify in the months to come.

Trades Councils conference: Prepare for the battles ahead

KEVIN PARSLAW
DELEGATE TO CONFERENCE FROM WALTHAM FOREST TRADES COUNCIL

The 2026 trades councils conference takes place on 30-31 May against the background of increasing discontent with the Labour government. Trade unionists and the whole working class have experienced little change from the previous Tory governments and face continued austerity and a looming cost-of-living crisis.

Local trades councils are comprised of delegates from trade union branches with members who live, work or meet in their area, and therefore have enormous potential to campaign for working-class people's interests. As remembered when we commemorated the centenary of the 1926 General Strike in Britain, when trades councils were transformed into councils of action, beginning to control the distribution of supplies and the maintenance of essential services, that potential extends to running society.

That may seem to be a distant memory, but society is entering stormy times. Our organisations have to be prepared for all eventualities. The trade union leaders have to match what we expect of them.

The trades council conference agenda reflects this. There are demands to build a campaign for affordable housing from Enfield and Newham trades councils. Motions from Coventry and Brent trades councils lament the weakness of Labour's Employment Rights Act,

and demand new legislation to fully restore trade union rights and end practices like zero-hour contracts. Internationally, the motion from Basildon and Thurrock raises working-class solidarity against wars in the Middle East, and calls for nationalisation of the defence industries and for workers to discuss alternatives to war production.

All these motions should be supported, but then our decisions need to be acted upon.

Trades councils now only have the Joint Consultative Committee, acting under the auspices of the TUC (Trades Union Congress), and one delegate and motion to TUC Congress itself. A composite motion at this conference demands increased representation and rights at TUC Congress - after all, trades councils helped found the TUC in the 19th century, before later being excluded altogether!

But motions from Plymouth and Waltham Forest trades councils demand that the TUC act upon the motion passed at last year's trades council conference, sent to TUC Congress and passed, calling for a Saturday demonstration against Labour austerity. Our members would mobilise if this call was acted upon, and show that the working-class movement can give a lead.

The Socialist Party will have a strong presence at conference, reflecting the militant mood of many trades council delegates, and will be urging that trades council conference adopts fighting policies for the battles ahead.



Trades Councils played a big part in building solidarity in the 2022-23 strike wave

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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 - or text your name and postcode to 07958 032071
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Aslef conference debates Labour affiliation



Aslef members took part in the strike wave in 2022 - here in Northampton

CONFERENCE DELEGATE

215 items of discussion, 89 delegates and five days, bringing together first-time and returning delegates, reps and members of all backgrounds - the annual conference of train drivers' union Aslef in Birmingham was both a melting pot and battleground of ideas.

Aslef is a small union which punches well above its weight when it fights for its members, as it organises train drivers up and down the country.

One thread that ran through the debates was the future of the rail industry under the Labour government's Great British Railways (GBR). This is not full rail nationalisation under democratic workers' control and management - which our union must continue to fight for. But the renationalisation of train operating companies as their contracts expire does raise questions about

what the future looks like for our members after more than 30 years of privatisation.

There was serious discussion over 'harmonisation' and our 'dignity for drivers' campaign - our union must fight to ensure pay and conditions in different companies are harmonised up not down, and that we fight for improvements in pay, hours and facilities.

The words 'socialism' and 'working class' recurred throughout the conference. But the elephant in the room was the Labour government and its austerity policies.

That is, until the political motions, with several concerning our affiliation to the Labour Party. After three hours of debate over two days, a majority of conference voted to keep the affiliation going, with several contributions reflecting that this was not with enthusiasm, but out of concern about the rise of Reform and seeing no current viable political

alternative. This debate was timetabled to take place before the contribution by a guest speaker from the striking Birmingham bin workers.

Arguments were made for disaffiliation - and not only on the conference floor. The general secretary Dave Calle argued in favour of maintaining affiliation, while saying that the Labour Party "needs to be put on notice and something needs to change".

But the president, Andy Hudd, argued in favour of disaffiliation, stating that the party has abandoned all socialist principles, and that we as a union and movement need to look at a new independent political strategy, to review our potential support for other political parties that reflect our principles and attitudes more accurately.

This reflects the anger, frustration and disappointment growing among a significant layer of our membership regarding political representation.

Conference delegate Kris O'Sullivan spoke in the debate:

"This is not a debate about should we be political - this is a debate about what kind of politics do we want to be a part of, to help build.

"The rot didn't start with Starmer - we have heard the same arguments for years, pointing to the bare minimum crumbs, and told 'this isn't the right time to debate these issues'.

"An acid test should be the record of the Labour Party as an employer. Please comrades, tell me when it is the right time to blacklist, to use fire and rehire, to bus in scabs, to cut wages, to attack reps, to use High Court injunctions, to use the police to break up and intimidate picket lines? I've seen that with my own eyes against the bin workers here in my home city - and when the bin reps are here on Thursday, can someone please ask them how much 'influence' they felt they had being affiliated to the Labour Party?

"We can engage in political work, inside or outside of any party structure.

"But we could have the freedom and flexibility to support only the best of our Labour allies, and also to engage and work alongside other genuine supporters. The second biggest financial supporter of Corbyn during his Labour leadership campaign was the RMT union - they had control over where their resources went, not disappearing into the campaign pockets of the worst right-wingers.

"That could lay the groundwork for a situation of building a new workers' party like our forerunners did - all would be options and choices opened to us.

"This is not a purity test, this is having some working-class self-respect. I don't believe it's an accident that it wasn't a West Midlands Labour MP that opened this conference up, as would have been the normal tradition. I asked Jess Phillips MP, when she passed our Snow Hill picket line, if she could join us, and she told me she can't speak to us.

"Over 100 years ago our forerunners made the decision to help found the Labour Party. They rejected the arguments of 'lesser evilism'. They were also accused of splitting the vote, letting the worse lot in, 'this isn't the right time!' This is the right time. Reject the dead end of lesser evilism like our founders did, to pick up that torch and fight for a political strategy that we deserve."

Unison NEC: Democratic debate about relationship with Labour needed

JIM MCFARLANE
UNISON NEC MEMBER, PERSONAL CAPACITY

Unison held its last National Executive Council (NEC) meeting prior to National Delegate Conference next month. The main areas of discussion were to agree NEC positions on a number of motions that will be debated at conference.

Andrea Egan, general secretary, provided a report of her recent work and the outcome of the elections held in Scotland, Wales and councils in England that saw the Labour Party suffer huge losses. She put those losses in the context of austerity and policies that offered little to trade unionists and the wider working class.

She also reported on her discussions with senior government ministers and how she was "holding Labour's feet to the fire". As I and another NEC member pointed out, we need to do more than that. We need



Unison members in universities are part of the big wave of action across higher education in the face of a funding crisis that the Labour government is not resolving

an open democratic debate across the whole union about its relationship with the Labour Party. Her general secretary election manifesto was clear about needing a review of that relationship.

Members who campaigned and voted for her, and welcomed this change in approach, are keen to see progress made on this. Unfortunately, conference won't be able to have that debate this year, as a number of branch motions calling for a full review were ruled out of order by the Standing Orders Committee. Conference, being the sovereign body, should be able to decide. There is no doubt that the issue will dominate the discussion amongst delegates.

I was able to point out that the growth in support for the right populist Reform in all these elections is down to the continued austerity policies of Labour, Tory and, in the case of Scotland, the SNP and Scottish Greens. They opened the gates

for Reform and we can't expect any of them to put forward a genuine alternative, whoever is the leader.

The trade unions are key to the building of a new workers' party. The politics of division and racism put forward by the likes of Farage could be swept aside when the trade unions move to take their place in parliaments and council chambers across the country and fight for policies in the interests of the working class.

Get all the latest union news

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PCS CONFERENCE DECISIVELY BACKS A SERIOUS FIGHT

DAVE SEMPLE
PCS DEPUTY PRESIDENT

Just weeks after socialists in the Public and Commercial Services (PCS) union scored a decisive victory in the union's National Executive Committee (NEC) elections, the union met for its Annual Delegate Conference (ADC).

Starmer's Labour government, which has mounted huge attacks on civil service jobs and funding, has been savaged at the polls. And the PCS leadership which has covered for that government and resisted mounting a serious campaign has been ousted.

Members of PCS, representing civil service workers, workers in other national public bodies such as museums, and private sector workers on government contracts, have elected a left majority, including a new union president. This NEC majority involves the Broad Left Network (BLN - in which the Socialist Party participates) in a left coalition alongside others.

The ADC met from 18-21 May, debating vital national motions on a cost-of-living campaign, political strategy, rep victimisation, and much else.

On virtually every issue - and despite plenty of efforts to avoid it by the outgoing president of the union, Martin Cavanagh, who presided over the conference - the positions put forward by BLN supporters and the left won votes decisively. ADC closed with the announcement of a spectacular left victory in the elections to a range of other union bodies, to the National Standing Orders Committee (NSOC) and others.

The time to fight is now

Socialist Party members in PCS have been arguing for a serious fight on key industrial issues since the former general secretary, Mark Serwotka, and the NEC led by the misnamed 'Left Unity' (LU) group, collapsed the union's national campaign in summer 2023.

Delegates at every conference continued to vote for a serious campaign. But at that stage, even when they lost their majority for a year in the 2024 elections, the LU grouping kept the president position, as well as the new general secretary, Fran Heathcote, who was elected with a slim majority in December 2023, and they persistently obstructed the development of any campaign.

At this year's conference, despite opposition from the now-ousted NEC, and despite attacks by LU supporters on everything from the proposed timing of the struggle to the so-called 'shopping list' of demands proposed, conference passed motion A375 by 204 votes to 133. This gives the union leadership a clear instruction to move to a dispute over pay,

jobs, office closures and hybrid working, allied to other unions if possible.

Fight the far right with class politics

Motion A111, in the section of the agenda on fighting the far right, was moved by Alan Dennis, national secretary of the Broad Left Network (BLN). It is unambiguous: "Conference believes... a party based on the organised working class, that fights for anti-racist, anti-war, socialist policies, is vital to prevent the far right harnessing the growing anger of working-class people with Starmer's Labour."

The motion instructed the incoming NEC to pick up the banner - long the official policy of PCS and the TUC, but not implemented - of 'Workers' unity, not division - jobs and homes, not racism'. And, should Labour not move to implement pro-worker policies, to convene a conference with other unions to discuss the building of a political vehicle for workers.

This will be a major task for the new NEC in the year ahead. The first priority is launching a cost-of-living campaign that will defend our members. But uncritically urging an 'anti-Reform' vote in the face of the rage of working-class people, without offering an alternative electoral programme, is likely to shipwreck any hopes of avoiding a Reform government. We must build the alternative now.

Democracy not top-down control

The conference in 2025 was a scene of controversy, as 20 motions relating to the Supreme Court judgment 'For Women Scotland v Scottish Ministers' were barred from the agenda. The stage looked set for a repeat, with a slew of motions being X-marked (ie refused a hearing) and others not being printed.

But at the last minute, the standing orders committee (NSOC), which oversees the conference agenda, had a change of heart. The NSOC is meant to be the guardian of the agenda to defend the rights of delegates, but for the last few years it has increasingly bent to pressure from the LU-dominated NEC. The NSOC is elected by block vote (ie branches voting as a unit) and last year two Socialist Party members - Zakk Brown and Craig Worswick - were elected to it. Though



PHOTO: SOCIALIST PARTY

in a minority, they played a crucial role in ensuring that democracy prevailed at conference this year.

Emergency motion A348, demanding support for trans members whose rights are threatened, was put straight to the top of the equalities section of the agenda. It sailed through with a clear majority and a full-throated roar of delight from delegates, despite attempts by LU-supporting branches to repeat 'the law, the law, the law' - in reality attempting to avoid a debate.

Reliance upon selective interpretations of the law was a common theme of LU. How dare activists propose effective, democratic means of contacting members, for example, as this would breach GDPR! How dare they propose support for trans rights, as this would breach the Supreme Court judgement! Conference rejected all of it.

In addition to Heathcote and Cavanagh's lack of strategy to defend members - beyond talking to the Cabinet Office without a campaign to exert pressure - there is an absence of basic support for reps.



On virtually every issue - and despite plenty of efforts to avoid it by the outgoing president of the union, Martin Cavanagh, who presided over the conference - the positions put forward by BLN supporters and the left won votes decisively

Access to members' data to ensure branches are well-organised, high-quality printed materials, up-to-date information so that reps know how to answer members' queries - all are either not done, or done inadequately.

More seriously, support for victimised reps appears to be selective. LU supporters, when senior officers of PCS, appeared to do nothing beyond speeches to push back against the victimisation of Rachel, Joel and Gordon at Revenue and Customs Benton Park View. They appear to have done little to support other victimised HMRC reps this last year. Conference asserted clearly and repeatedly the need to defend our reps.

A key moment in reps becoming aware of the risks to union democracy posed by Heathcote and Cavanagh was at ADC 2023, when Heathcote was exposed for actively soliciting contributions on uncontroversial motions, in order to run out of time to debate motions LU wanted to avoid, such as on trans rights.

These tricks were at work at conference this year. In the chair, Cavanagh crammed in speakers on uncontroversial motions to talk out motion A70, which sought to address LU's abuse of the union's disciplinary

process. Tellers were called when the vote was clear, and in one case a full card vote was unnecessarily called. During the first card vote, most of the top table wandered off, instead of continuing with other motions while the card votes were counted. All in the service of delays to block other motions down the agenda.

Cavanagh's ousting by members in this year's elections will hopefully mark a break - but the confirmation of this will lie in the ability of the new NEC, which includes six Socialist Party members, and on which Broad Left Network supporters make up the largest single group (13), to mount the fightback against Labour austerity that members and reps are demanding.

Civil service pay

On the final day of conference, the government announced the 2026-27 civil service pay remit of 3.5%. (This is the ballpark pay rise around which different civil service groups set increases.)

The general secretary, despite the explicit decisions just made by conference to launch a national cost-of-living campaign that picks up pay, jobs, office closures and hybrid working, immediately rushed out a statement on the PCS website and an all-members' email, bypassing the newly elected NEC.

Heathcote's statement that "while the outcome of talks does not represent sufficient progress to meet all our demands in a single year, it builds on the progress made in previous years and takes us further forward", and that the NEC will "issue guidance to your negotiators", presupposes a rush straight into delegated pay bargaining in the groups within that 3.5% remit, without any attempt to put additional pressure on the Cabinet Office to offer further concessions.

The phrase in her statement, "I commit to members that I will do all I can to ensure that the changes we have secured quickly translate into much-needed money in your pockets", is an attempt to present herself as being on the side of members against any delays allegedly caused by the new NEC.

But the members have rejected her passive cover for Starmer's government in both the elections and at conference.

Despite the general secretary's press release, the NEC majority has already called an emergency NEC. There, the elected lay-led leadership will thoroughly debate the pay remit and set out a way forward to equip reps to build the campaign necessary to win and as agreed by delegates at conference.

We believe if the new NEC is able, in collaboration with the reps and members, to mount a serious campaign, we can force this weakened Labour government into retreat. Building this fight is our key work for this year.

Educators: Come to NSSF conference on 27 June



PHOTO: MARY FINCH

SHEILA CAFFEY
NATIONAL EDUCATION UNION EXECUTIVE MEMBER
(PERSONAL CAPACITY)

With what schools, nurseries, colleges and local authorities are currently facing, solidarity and a strong fightback, united across unions, is needed now more than ever.

Education funding has dropped by £20 billion since 2010, with another round of unfunded, below-inflation, pay offers, which is going to see a total shortfall of £1.1 billion this year across nurseries, schools, sixth forms, alternative provision and special schools. For an education system already teetering on the edge of total collapse, this could finish it off.

At the same time, we've seen workload, pressure and mental health struggles spiralling amongst education workers, with many just voting with their feet and leaving roles and professions they love due to stress and burnout. We've seen the scandalous cutting of sports premium funding, and we've seen nearly every area of England and Wales contemplating or carrying out redundancies.

Yet in six months last year, the Department for Education spent over £200,000 on influencers trying to promote their decimation of our education system, including the latest comedy skit with Gemma Collins, social media celebrity. She took part in a shocking 'comedy' video with Bridget Phillipson that has angered and shocked education workers and families affected by cuts to SEND provision; the general massive funding cuts leading to rising exclusions amongst working-class children and young people, or those with Special Educational Needs; burnout for staff and parents struggling for support, and mass redundancies with some schools actually closing due to the funding gap. They simply cannot believe that that is something the government thinks it's ok to joke about.

But this disbelief, upset and anger cannot just be expressed in social media posts. It needs to be channelled into a proper fightback to change the education system. NEU members will be doing this by building their ballot in October for strike action to ensure funding is restored; workload is cut and redundancies are halted.

But this shouldn't be fought by one union alone. We need a united struggle with all education workers joining together, with parents, communities and pupils to fight for the education system that is needed. One that looks at the needs of pupils and then ensures the appropriate level of staffing and funding. One that ensures that there are the appropriate support services and professionals to meet all children's and young people's needs. One that looks at inflation and the cost-of-living and ensures that education workers don't face year-on-year pay cuts for decades. One that ensures support staff are paid properly, and not poverty pay for term-time only.

This will never just be given to us though. We need to discuss and organise across unions, learning from others' struggles to build the strongest fightback - and this is what will happen at the National Shop Stewards Network annual conference. It will bring together class fighters and leaders to motivate others, as well as share successes and stories of hard-fought struggles.

We want education workers at the forefront of sharing and learning so we can not only defend the current education system, but build the one that education workers, our students and communities all need and deserve. So, book your ticket; share with colleagues and we look forward to building the fightback together on Saturday 27 June.

• See conference details on page 1

New Green council in Waltham Forest pressed on rent controls

SAM SMITHSON
WALTHAM FOREST SOCIALIST PARTY

Working-class people in Waltham Forest are in desperate need of change. The previous Labour council made millions of pounds of cuts to public services and was punished for it at the elections. Now the Greens have gone from having no councillors to 31, a majority on the council! But the question of what they will do with it still hangs in the balance.

Waltham Forest Socialist Party has a long record of campaigning on the issue of housing in the borough and have met many working-class people being forced to move out of their homes due to rising rents.

So we sent a letter to every Green councillor laying out the devastating effect the housing crisis is having, and putting forward a programme of how the council could bring in rent controls to cut rents for thousands of tenants and also freeze all rents on council homes too.

We set out how a fighting council could introduce a compulsory register for private landlords, with affordable rents and well-maintained properties as a requirement of registration. Rental rates could be set in consultation with tenants' organisations and trade unions. We put forward the pressing need for a mass council house building programme, which would alleviate the crisis faced by thousands of people who currently reside in temporary accommodation. This must be done without the involvement of private developers, who only use the development of social housing to boost their own

profits. All these demands could be enacted by the new Green council.

At the first council meeting of the new administration on 21 May, we greeted Green councillors at a lobby outside. We pointed out that at the meeting they would be asked to vote to ratify the minutes of the previous meeting which included Labour's budget, and suggested they refuse. It could have been used as a key moment to make an anti-austerity stand.

Many of the Green councillors listened to our arguments, some said they had taken the case to council officials and came back out repeating the counterarguments they had been told. In the end there was no contest on the floor of the town hall.

Stand up to Labour cuts

The Greens now lead 18 councils nationally and have significant power in many others. They could join together in a real fight and spearhead a national campaign that implements rent controls and restores public services. In order to do that, they must be prepared to stand up to the Labour government, and be prepared to argue back to council officials, Labour councillors, the establishment media, and all those who will tell them nothing can be done except to carry out cuts.

Some responses to our letter from individual councillors have been promising, but we are currently awaiting an 'official' response from the local Green Party leader. We hope that it is one of a bold fighting programme that could make a real difference for the working class in Waltham Forest.



Waltham Forest Socialist Party out campaigning after the election PHOTO: WALTHAM FOREST SP

Sign the Greens Must Pledge: No Cuts To Services petition

At the end of January over 20 current and former trade union executive members launched a petition appealing to Zack Polanski "to ensure that in this year's local council elections 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", in the first set of elections being fought since he became the party's leader.

- <https://www.change.org/GreensMustPledgeNoCuts>



Greens lead Haringey, will they resist austerity?

NICK AUVACHE
CAMDEN AND HARINGEY SOCIALIST PARTY

This year's local elections were a disaster for the capitalist establishment parties. The London borough of Haringey was no exception. Labour has controlled Haringey council since 1971. Prior to the recent local elections Labour held 50 council seats out of a total of 57. At this year's election they lost a staggering 29 seats, with the Greens gaining 27. The Greens now stand to win a few more seats in two by-elections due to take place in June.

Labour in power have presided over £143 million in cuts since 2010, an overall reduction in funding by 55%! In March of this year, the Labour council voted through a further raft of cuts totalling £23 million for the year 2026/27, with more to come in future years.

It is no surprise that working-class people in Haringey have completely lost patience with Labour. It remains to be seen what steps the Greens, who have now taken over control of the council, take to resist austerity.

Clearly some Greens are desperate

to put an end to the yearly diet of cuts implemented by Labour. Some have agreed with the demand for the council to set a 'needs-based, no-cuts budget'. Some have endorsed the call for no-cuts budgets outside the council chamber at a lobby of the budget-setting meeting in March. We also know that there have been discussions around this issue amongst Green Party activists.

Now Green councillors have been propelled into power in Haringey. People need homes, young people need services and safe streets to play in, council workers need inflation-based pay increases, education needs to be adequately funded.

We are fighting for the trade union movement in the borough to pressure the Green councillors to use their full powers, to set a no-cuts budget using the reserves and borrowing, and to help to mobilise a mass campaign to demand the money from the government.

A major test will be the dispute at Highgate Wood School, where teachers are currently striking against an attempt to reduce non-contact time and increase class sizes. The school

bosses claim this attack on teachers' working conditions has been forced upon them by a £1 million deficit. This is an opportunity for the new Green administration to show how it is different to the previous Labour one, it could intervene and cancel the deficit. It is an opportunity to translate words into deeds.

Some new Green councillors attended the teachers' picket line and supported the strike. They now potentially have the chance to help resolve the dispute.

The new Haringey Green council leader, Mark Blake, has said: "I look forward to working with the other parties in the spirit of cooperation where possible, for the benefit of the people of Haringey. The circumstances demand nothing less." If this is code for continuing to do what the previous Labour administration did then workers will be bitterly disappointed.

Socialists in Haringey and other boroughs must continue the fight against austerity, including by demanding the new Green councils act to defend services, fight for workers and resist austerity.

Student placement worker – 'we have to fight for basics'

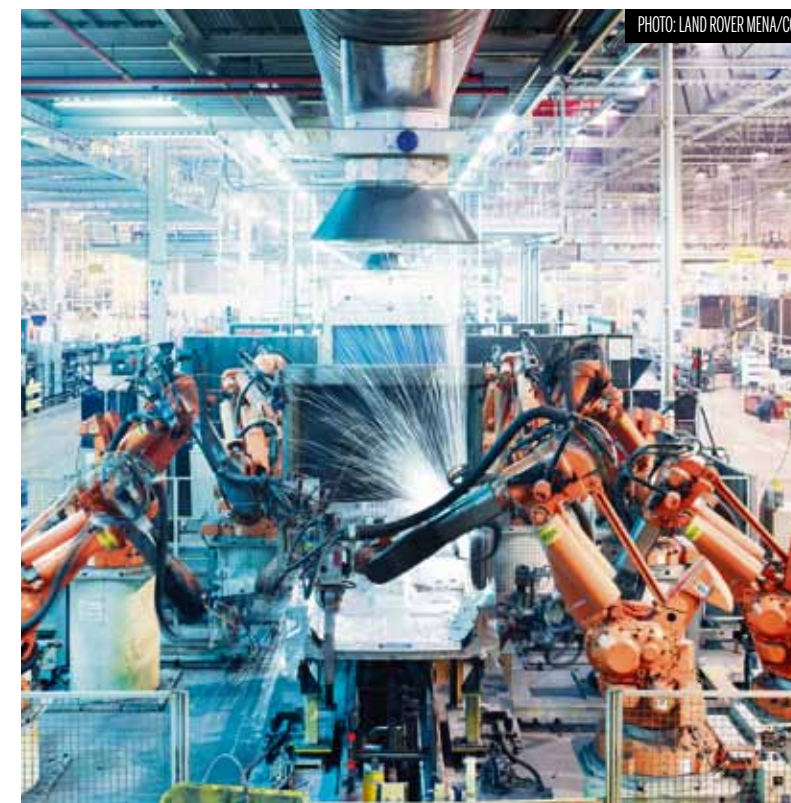


PHOTO: LAND ROVER MENA/CC

YOUNG FACTORY WORKER AND
ENGINEERING STUDENT

In my uni degree, engineering, it is almost imperative to get a work placement while studying, as the number of post-grad jobs are extremely competitive.

I was lucky to get a paid placement this year. But entering the world of work has been eye-opening.

When I say 'paid placement', I'm on the minimum wage I can be legally paid, with the minimum number of holidays I can be legally be given, and with little-to-no benefits.

In my role, I work independently, my responsibilities impact the business, and I am relied upon in some situations. The experience is great. However, this sense of being relied upon, leaves me feeling that my labour is being used.

Cheaper labour, of course, helps the business make more money. The managing director is on a £350,000 salary, whilst workers have not had a pay rise, or much of a bonus, in the last 12 months. It feels unjust.

An example of the lesser treatment of younger, placement employees, is that we were never issued work phones. We have to be on our feet, keeping facilities running. Not being able to use anything but our personal phones to make notes, take photos, communicate, or anything, impacts our ability to do the job.

The predecessor in my role brought this up in their exit interview. But

this was not moved forward after being raised. The excuse was costs, of course.

So to save the company a few hundred quid, we would have to suffer not being able to keep up to date with elements of the job, meetings, communication, either tied to our desks, or forced to hand over our personal mobile number to work colleagues.

Other placement students and I challenged this at a quarterly 'town hall' meeting. We could write in questions anonymously, or with our names, that would be put to the HR (human resources) and management team.

We kept this anonymous. It was obvious it came from students. But we didn't want to risk anything at all individually in the jobs we have or could be offered in the future, as we know how difficult it will be anyway, it is important not to limit chances.

The question was put forward. Management agreed that students should have work phones.

We did have to ask for an update, as no more was communicated to us after the town hall. Since then, this has gone forward, and we are waiting on new work phones to be issued.

This shows the struggles of young workers, or a student, trying to get by, whilst the cost of even living is so high, and the system is using us as cheap labour. And the need to get properly organised in trade unions that fight for us.

Join the fightback
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to find out more about joining us today!



DMU students organise against cuts

SOREN AND ODUN
LEICESTER SOCIALIST PARTY

Socialist Party members attended a demonstration at De Montfort University in Leicester on 21 May, against the newly proposed cuts set to make approximately 20 technicians in the arts department redundant.

Approximately 100 people attended, most of whom were arts students whose education would be compromised by these cuts, as well as other university staff and members of the University and College Union (UCU).

A Socialist Party member addressed the rally, highlighting the increasing prevalence of cuts to education, the growing wealth gap as a result of intensified austerity measures, and the importance of building a workers' party of working-class people, students and trade unions in order to fight austerity. This need to coordinate the fightback with staff and students, and across

other campuses like the University of Leicester where staff have recently organised strike actions to fight job cuts, was put forward as a necessary step to escalate the struggle. The speech went down well, we sold eight copies of the Socialist immediately after it finished.

It was generally a lively protest with chants of "Save our Techs" drawing the attention of other students and staff around. One of the protesters had a placard with the inscription "£2.2m for the Innovation Centre but £0 for the innovators", highlighting how the university management is spending money on a centre to promote business ventures while implementing job cuts. Last year, UCU members at DMU called out management for spending money to establish international campuses in Dubai and Kazakhstan while carrying out redundancies here. This brings to the fore the question of democratic control of universities.

York students protest against far-right Restore Britain society

Students at the University of York protested against the ratification of an official Restore Britain Society on 22 May. The society has been getting lots of attention for its provocative social media posts. One, for example, advertises a 'detain and deport pub social', showing their racist scapegoating.

Speaking at the demo, I raised the role that all capitalist politicians, including the Labour government, are responsible for the growth of the right. By implementing austerity, and themselves using racist scapegoating to divide the working class and young people. Thousands of young people and students attended the March demo against the right, organised by the Together Alliance. But its slogan of "love, hope and unity", won't cut across the right - students need a better plan of action.

In York we have been calling for an open forum that students can use to debate and discuss the issues we are faced with. By putting forward a fight against cuts, for free and fully funded education and a united working-class fightback, we can cut across disillusionment and the ability of Restore to get an echo. We can't just oppose the far-right, we need to get organised to strike at the heart of austerity and brutal student cuts.

York Students' Union (YSU) does not play that role, and has defended its decision to ratify the Restore society as protecting free speech. One chant read: "How do you spell useless: YSU." We completely agree. YSU has done nothing to help with the fight against bursary cuts this year. We've got to build the pressure and fight for the reimbursement of the bursaries.

LOUIE NARDINI, YORK SOCIALIST STUDENTS

Birmingham families protest against SEND changes

REFAT
BIRMINGHAM SOCIALIST PARTY

Families across the UK are angry about changes proposed by the Labour government which could lead to attacks on the legal rights of children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). Parents have organised protests across the country.

On 9 May, as part of a national day of action, there was a regional protest in Birmingham. Several parents with their kids' shared their experiences and stories, about how the current system is unable to meet the needs of children, and including how changes will affect them.

They explained how the changes proposed will not aid them, but will actually make it more difficult for families to receive the support needed. Parents organised the protest, supported by the National Education Union.

Socialist Party members in Birmingham attended, setting up a stall and speaking to protesters. One mum explained to us that her family had remortgaged their house and spent £60k for lawyers to fight against the local council, in order for their son to go to a special school. Their view was that this was worth it, as their son ended up studying Music at the University of Brighton. Many shared similar struggles against the current system and many more emphasised the proposed changes will impact them more.



Green Party councillors have visited the NEU picket line at Highgate Wood School PHOTO: NICK AUVACHE

Sudan: Three years of counter-revolutionary war but struggles continue

SEAN FIGG
COMMITTEE FOR A WORKERS' INTERNATIONAL

The civil war in Sudan has entered its fourth bloody year. It has brought death, the massive displacement of peoples, hunger and famine to the people of Sudan. The eighteen-month siege of the city of El-Fasher, and the genocidal massacre of tens of thousands after its fall, stands among the most barbaric atrocities of this century. The break-up of the country is emerging as a fact on the ground. All this horror is rooted in the capitalist social relations of Sudan, the wider region, and world capitalism.

From the end of 2018, revolution ebbed and flowed in Sudan. A determined mass movement forced the military to remove Omar al-Bashir, dictator for thirty years. Despite bloody repression, the military was forced to allow the formation of a transitional government in which civilian politicians could participate, but alongside the leaders of the military factions. However, the transitional government was incapable of meeting the demands of the masses and protests continued. In October 2021, the military carried through a coup, removing the civilians from the government. This was partially reversed under the pressure of a new wave of mass protests but it brought the revolution and the counter-revolution to a deadlock that was only broken by the start of the civil war in April 2023.

At the war's outbreak, the CWI explained that it was not a development independent of the class struggle and the revolutionary process. It was a symptom of a revolution at an impasse. The two warring military factions represented rival counter-revolutions. On the one side, the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) led by General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, and on the other, the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) led by General Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo (aka Hemmedti, or 'little Mohammed'). (See 'Revolutionary masses must end generals' counter-revolutionary violence' at socialistworld.net for analysis of the outbreak of the civil war)

The civil war has enormously complicated the struggle for a democratic Sudan, causing immense suffering, but the forces of revolution and counter-revolution have continued to vie with each other throughout the three years of civil war.

Evolution

The Neighbourhood Resistance Committees (RCs) were the energy of the revolution, with the Sudanese Professional Association (SPA), a coalition of trade unions, playing a crucial coordinating role. More than 5,000 RCs existed at the height of their influence. They acted as local political centres, organising protests



PHOTO: MOHAMMED ABUELGASIM/CC

and developed a significant level of regional and national coordination. Even before the revolution, they had developed an administrative role in local communities, ensuring the provision of services. A nascent alternative to the capitalist state and its military factions was emerging, what Marxists refer to as 'dual power'.

To respond to the catastrophic situation, activists 'retooled' the RCs to operate in the conditions of civil war through the creation of Emergency Response Rooms (ERRs). These have stepped into the vacuum as government services have collapsed, organising the distribution of medicine, school classes for children and public kitchens to feed the displaced and share out aid. The ERRs have also played a role in supporting small farmers to counter the threat of famine from crop failure. Fully aware of the continuity between the RCs and

the ERRs, both counter-revolutions have used the cover of war to try and 'settle scores' with the revolution. The CWI warned of this at its outbreak. Both warring factions have arrested, assassinated and disappeared activists.

Regional proxy war

Throughout the revolution regional, and world powers applied relentless pressure to limit its scope. Compromise with the military - the real power behind al-Bashir's dictatorship - was demanded at every turn. This was not only a counter-revolutionary policy but a fundamentally anti-democratic one, insisting that a place must be found for the military regime in any future 'democratic' Sudan. This policy has continued throughout the civil war, which, after



The Committee for a Workers' International (CWI) is the international socialist organisation which the Socialist Party is affiliated to. The CWI is organised in many countries. We work to unite the working class and oppressed peoples against capitalism, and to fight for a socialist world.
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three years, has evolved into a regional proxy war as a result.

The 'Quartet' of the US, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) has initiated several rounds of ceasefire negotiations. What unites the Quartet powers, whatever different emphasis each individual government gives to 'stability', 'peace', 'democracy' and 'civilian rule', is that the counter-revolution must triumph in one form or another. All four powers are warmongering counter-revolutionary governments.

This rivalry between the Saudi and Emirati ruling classes for influence in the region has been carried into the Quartet. Egypt and Saudi Arabia back the SAF and the UAE backs the RSF, each manoeuvring to entrench their influence when the guns fall silent. But both the Saudi and Emirati ruling classes are key allies of the US too. The US itself, preoccupied with waging its war on Iran alongside the Israeli state, and backing the Israeli state's wars on Gaza, Lebanon and other neighbouring countries, wants to keep both onside. Predictably, the Quartet has solved nothing. Its abiding achievement has been prolonging the civil war.

Since the 2011 Arab Spring, the Emirati ruling class has attempted to extend its influence in the region by backing different factions in conflicts in its larger neighbours. The ruling class of this small, though extremely wealthy country, wants a region in its own image - a patchwork of small statelets dependent on its largesse and therefore more easily coerced. One commentator has described the Emirati ruling class's network of support as an "axis of secessionists", drawing a parallel with the Iranian regime's 'axis of resistance'. To this end, the Emirati ruling class has built relations with the rulers of Somaliland, Puntland and Jubaland, three regions with ambitions to secede from Somalia. In Yemen, it has backed forces fighting for the independence of the south and in Libya has helped maintain the eastern statelet that emerged from the civil war there.

Behind this policy, a key objective of the Emirati ruling class is greater control over the Red Sea and the Bab-el-Mandeb strait through which all Suez Canal shipping must pass. The value of this 'chokepoint' has been underlined by the Iranian regime's 'weaponisation' of the Strait

of Hormuz as an extremely effective lever against American imperialism. The UAE's withdrawal from the OPEC oil consortium also reflects the Emirati ruling class positioning itself for a more independent role. These developments are a symptom of the multipolar character of world capitalism in this era.

Counter-revolutionary governments

After the SAF's recapture of the Sudanese capital Khartoum in March 2025, the idea that the RSF could take control of the entire country is, for now, a distant prospect. Denied first prize, the UAE is comfortable pursuing a policy that encourages the break-up of Sudan. It backed the formation of an RSF-supported government based in Nyala in South Darfur. On the other side of Sudan, the Sovereignty Council, formed in Port Sudan, is backed by the SAF and its international allies.

From the moment al-Bashir was removed, different wings crystallised amongst the civilian political forces which had opposed his regime - one willing to compromise with the military and another opposing compromise. In the context of the civil war the logic of compromise has led to the splitting of the 'pro-compromise' civilian political forces. One section, now organised as the Sudan Founding Alliance (Tasis - 'Foundation' in Arabic), has supported the establishment of the RSF-backed government. The other section, now organised as the Civil Democratic Alliance of the Forces of the Revolution (Somoud - 'Resilience' in Arabic), is supporting the Sovereignty Council. Both civilian factions feel compelled to posture as the inheritors of the revolution, maintaining its pro-democracy language and claiming some distance from the warring parties. Both counter-revolutions still feel sufficient pressure from the masses to humour this, seeing a civilian fig-leaf as useful.

However, the civilians will be tolerated only as long as necessary. Other reactionary political forces are waiting in the wings that the counter-revolutions will lean on against them. The discredited right-wing Islamist political organisations that supported the al-Bashir dictatorship - and drove the reactionary agenda of his dictatorship, especially in its first decade - are attempting a comeback through support for the Sovereignty Council. Organisations supporting the Nyala government include various armed ethnic and tribal militias.

Programme

The creation of the ERRs and the role they are playing in the civil war is maintaining the link between the Sudanese masses and the politically conscious revolutionary activists. Their selfless and courageous role is strengthening their political authority, which remains a threat to the counter-revolutions, despite all the violence and repression thrown at them. Recognising the authority of the ERRs, other imperialist powers, especially those in Europe, have seen it prudent to court their leading activists with the hope of coopting them in the future.

During the revolution, the RCs adopted the slogan: "No negotiation, no compromise, no partnership with the military." In December, on the seventh anniversary of the first mass protest of the revolution, a press statement was issued in the name of the RCs holding firmly to this position. After condemning the civilian politicians that have sided with one or other counter-revolution, the statement renews the RCs' call "not to support either side of the war, and to engage in the broadest grassroots mass front to end the war and address its roots - grounded in the widest popular mobilisation - so as to complete the revolutionary path and achieve its objectives."

Up until the start of the civil war, leading organisations in the revolution, like the SPA, advocated a policy of 'non-violence'. Appeals were correctly made to those under arms to refuse to be used against the revolution. However, in a video interview published online in November 2025, Marwan Osman, a founder of the SPA and activist in the Khartoum RCs, explained that there was an ongoing debate over how armed resistance could "eventually become necessary". In the CWI's view, the point at which it became necessary for the RCs and ERRs, the SPA and other

revolutionary organisations to create their own armed self-defence force has long been passed.

Such a step would not contradict the spirit of the revolution if such a force was democratically controlled by local communities and organised on a multi-ethnic and multi-tribal basis. Any armed actions that moved beyond simple self-defence would need to be firmly harnessed to the action of the masses themselves, such as strikes, sit-downs, occupations and marches. In other words, all elements of armed struggle would need to be based, as the RCs put it, on "the widest popular mobilisation". This would make appeals to the rank and file of the military and militias more concrete. The revolution would be inviting them to bring their military training to the side of the revolution. To assist with splitting the ranks of both the SAF and RSF, the RCs' demand for the "principle of non-impunity" for the perpetrators of atrocities in the civil war and before, is most effective if clearly directed at military officers and militia commanders. The CWI believes this is the route to imposing a ceasefire on the revolution's terms, halting the civil war and rebuilding a Sudan in the interests of the working class, the poor and oppressed.

In his interview, Marwan Osman expresses frustration with the lack of international solidarity with the people of Sudan. It is not entirely clear to whom this complaint is directed. If it is to the regional pro-capitalist governments and the imperialist powers, this 'solidarity' will never come. The only force that offers genuine solidarity and stands with the people of Sudan, rather than one or other faction of the ruling class, is the working class of the region. Especially in the countries whose ruling classes are fuelling the civil war, it is the working class which has the power to stop the war machines dead in their tracks.

The masses of the region can be inspired to respond to such an appeal if the democratic demands of the Sudanese revolution are fused with a programme that can answer the demands of the working class and poor masses for a fundamental transformation of their living standards. This will only be possible with the overthrow of the ruling classes of the region, their dictatorships and the rotten capitalist social relations they defend. This need to be replaced by governments of workers and the poor, placed in power by the masses with a programme to end capitalism and start building socialism.

Class basis

Upon this class basis the masses of the region could be united in defence of the Sudanese revolution, seeing its victory as a step toward their own liberation from poverty, insecurity and oppression. In other words, the goal of the Sudanese revolution needs to move beyond the struggle for a political revolution and embrace the struggle for a social revolution.

But such a programme needs a vehicle to fight for its implementation. This vehicle can only be a revolutionary party which wins mass support. Throughout the Sudanese revolution the absence of a party uniting the activists of the RCs, the SPA and other workers' organisations, and now the ERRs, has repeatedly allowed pro-capitalist politicians and parties to step into the political vacuum and pursue compromise. Because of the complete discrediting of the established political parties and civilian politicians, revolutionary activists have rightly remained determined not to become 'politicians' and to maintain 'people's power' through mass mobilisations on the streets.

Taking steps toward the creation of a revolutionary party does not contradict this - rather, it is the best defence against co-optation by rotten Sudanese capitalism. First and foremost, a revolutionary party would be a party of struggle. But simultaneously it is an instrument through which the masses can win and consolidate political power.

A revolutionary party would not stand in opposition to the institutions of 'grassroots democracy' - the RCs and ERRs. The RCs had the potential to develop into an alternative state power based on the majority of the people - the working class, the poor, the small and subsistence farmers, the small-scale mineworkers, the marginalised tribespeople, and the revolutionary women and youth. It would be the task of the revolutionary party to win the RCs over to struggle for political power and socialism.

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HOUSING COSTS CRISIS FIGHT FOR RENT CONTROL AND COUNCIL HOUSING

PENELOPE DAWBER
LANCASHIRE SOCIALIST PARTY

As housing and renting costs continue to rise while wages stagnate, the eyes of the working class are rightly focused on the housing market and if it will change for the better. Predictably, the King's Speech showed that very little will actually change.

In his speech, a new Social Housing Renewal Bill was announced, alongside two others attempting to curb the sale of council housing, and incentivise the building of new council houses. On the surface this sounds fantastic, but a closer look at the details shows where it is lacking.

While it increases the eligibility of social housing to apply for Right to Buy to ten years, and will exempt

newly built houses from the programme for 35 years, this does not outright abolish the practice that takes much needed houses out of council ownership.

Similarly, though a sister 'Remediation Bill' will put a requirement on building manufacturers to fix any unsafe cladding, alongside the Renewal Bill streamlining housing construction consent and removing the requirements for local authorities to sell off 'high-value' homes, the requirement to fix unsafe cladding does not go far enough to address the many issues and safety hazards faced in social housing.

But councils don't have to wait. A willing council could act now to invest in building council homes, using borrowing powers and reserves – demanding Starmer's weak-and-divided government pays up. And it is also possible for councils to take steps towards rent controls. Council rents should be frozen and private landlords made to register and comply with safety and affordability standards.

While housing continues to be used for big business speculation, the housing cost crisis will continue. We need a socialist plan to meet needs, based on nationalisation and workers' democratic control.

PHOTO: PAUL MATTSSON



WHAT WE STAND FOR: THE SOCIALIST PARTY'S MAIN DEMANDS >>> see column on p12



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