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# the Socialist

Issue 1370

4-10 June 2026

formerly **Militant**

## ENERGY PRICE RIP-OFF

# BRING DOWN

# OUR BILLS

# NATIONALISE!

**JAMES COLLETT**  
SOUTH WEST SOCIALIST PARTY

**E**nergy costs are about to rise by 13%. The new cap for a typical household will rise to £1,862 annually.

Due to the economic hit of Trump's war on Iran, the government's

regulator Ofgem is raising the energy price cap next month.

Already we are feeling the pain of inflation at the petrol pumps and the supermarkets - and this hike will make all that worse.

Can we afford it? No. The poorest fifth of the population earn £232 a week and spend £378 a week already - the shortfall covered mainly by credit cards. Two million people are already in debt to gas and electricity companies, a combined total of £4.5 billion. When was the last time your wages went

up by anywhere near the prices of essentials?

It's alright for some. Oil giant Shell reported a rise in first-quarter profits to \$6.9 billion and TotalEnergies' profits jumped by almost a third in the same period.

The big banks are also flourishing. The 'Big Six' US banks made nearly \$50 billion of profit in the first three months of the year, while we worried about the devastation and knock-on effects of brutal wars.

Labour's energy secretary Ed Miliband commented: "The rise in

the price cap because of a war we did not choose is deeply unwelcome for households across the country". Yeah, no shit! And what are you going to do about it?

Profits rising for the billionaires while bills go up for working-class people is not a coincidence: it's robbery on a systemic scale. While our wages stay the same, prices go up to protect the profits of a tiny few. And the Labour Party defends the interests of those big bosses. No wonder Keir Starmer's Labour is so hated.

This Labour government is limping

along, a trade union-led fight could win concessions from the bosses and their government. We should demand price controls, hardship funds, free public transport and more - paid for by utilising the wealth hoarded by the big bosses.

We need our own party, a working-class party that takes the fight to the super-rich. We need to nationalise the energy companies, water companies and banks, with no compensation for the fat cats. Fight Starmer's government of the rich, fight for socialism!

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**AUTUMN OF ACTION BREWING - COME TO NSSN CONFERENCE IN LONDON 27 JUNE >>> p6-7**

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editors@socialistparty.org.uk  
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Friday before publication, or Monday morning for urgent news, unless otherwise agreed with the editors.

The Socialist goes to press on a Tuesday night. We publish online on Wednesday and in print on Thursday.

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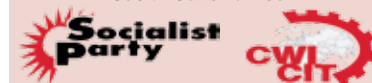
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OUR NEWSPAPER TEAM

<b>Editor of the Socialist</b> Josh Asker <a href="mailto:socialistparty.org.uk">socialistparty.org.uk</a>	<b>Editorial staff</b> Scott Jones Ian Pattison
<b>Circulation manager</b> Mark Best Rachel Cox	Paula Mitchell Mark Best

ISSN 1366-9621

Published by Socialist Publications,  
PO Box 1398, Enfield EN1 9GT  
Registered as a newspaper  
at the Post Office  
Printed by Newsquest

Militant issue 1: October 1964  
The Socialist issue 1: 7 February 1997

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

# Milburn Review prepares bosses' offensive on youth

## Capitalism offers no future – join the fight for socialist change



Where have you lot been? That's what many young people will be asking, watching on as a legion of establishment politicians, CEOs, journalists and thinktank execs seemingly woke up last week to the bleak prospects on offer to young adults in Britain today.

Horror stories of applying for hundreds of jobs without success or even a reply from a human; competing with as many as one thousand other applicants for a single job opening; being forced to rely on inadequate benefits while rent and bills continue to soar; suffering from anxiety and other mental health issues, as society convinces you there isn't a place for you. None of that will be much news for the almost one million 16 to 24-year-olds who are currently not in employment, education or training (NEET).

Still, the publication of an interim report on so-called 'NEETs' by the former privatising health secretary under Blair, Alan Milburn, has opened the floodgates to a torrent of

news items and policy documents outlining what various defenders of capitalism think should be done.

These voices have included prime minister Keir Starmer, who told the BBC that he has "been really worried about young people". But how 'worried' for young people was Starmer when his Labour government decided to raise university tuition fees last year - the first increase in a decade? Has he been worried about the devastating effects of local councils, many controlled by his party, continuing to make cuts to schools, libraries, youth clubs and all public services?

This is a Labour government that since 2024 has sought to rule in the interests of flatlining British capitalism, attempting to restore the capitalists' ability to make profits by driving down the living standards of the working class and young people. For all the representatives of capitalism, inside or outside the Labour Party, any 'solution' to the NEET scandal will seek to make young people and the working class pay.

Swipe at young people

Milburn's report takes special aim at government spending on benefits, which above all he links to more young people either not working or studying as a result of health conditions. The Guardian newspaper has since reported that Milburn has "urged Labour not to shy away from a fresh attempt" at cutting benefits

spending, referring to Labour's previously failed plans to cut £4.8 billion by introducing tighter regulations on Personal Independence Payments (PIP).

Starmer was ultimately forced into a humiliating partial U-turn on those plans to cut disability benefits, faced with a rebellion by over 120 of his own MPs, themselves under huge working-class anger from below.

As a result, the government was forced to postpone attacks on PIP eligibility until the completion of a review by disability minister Stephen Timms, due also to be published this autumn. Clearly both reviews will be used together to try and 'finish the job' on benefits cuts - with the job of the Milburn review being to make the 'compassionate case' for forcing young people off benefits in the name of 'realising their potential'.

Work for free

The day after Milburn's interim report was published, the government announced plans for 300,000 new work experience and training placements, known as Sector-based Work Academy Programmes (SWAPs). These funnel young people on Universal Credit into work placements of up to six weeks while they still receive only benefits: free, publicly subsidised labour for the bosses, and poverty 'wages' for the young! Moreover, these schemes come with no guarantee of a job at the end, as less than half of SWAP participants move

onto sustained employment within six months.

The bottom line is that providing long-term jobs, training and education for 1 million young people would require levels of immediate investment that neither big business nor the government is prepared to concede in an era of stagnating growth, rising inflation, and historically high levels of public and private debt.

In a bid to maximise short-term profits, some capitalists have argued that there would be jobs, if only young people were prepared to accept lower wages. Last week, Labour ministers all but unveiled plans to postpone the scrapping discriminatory pay rates for 18 to 20-year-olds until after the next general election.

What do we say?

The capitalists' spokespersons have used Milburn's interim report to go on the offensive in setting out their solution to the crisis facing young people. Our side, the working class, has to do the same - pointing to the enormous wealth, resources and technology that exist in Britain and internationally, and fighting for that to be in our hands so that we could democratically develop a socialist plan to provide a decent future for all young people.

During the strike wave in 2022-23, workers in Britain took strike action through their trade unions at a level not seen for three decades, forcing



money into workers' pockets that the Tories - and behind them, the capitalists - said was not there.

As rising inflation once again threatens to further erode the conditions of all workers, there is an urgent need for united trade union action that links the fight against the cost-of-living crisis to the fight for good jobs, apprenticeships and education for all.

As part of that struggle, the Socialist Party calls for mass trade union action for the immediate implementation of the TUC demand of a £15-an-hour minimum wage, as a step towards a real living wage, without exemptions. By also sharing out the work across the economy, with a maximum working week of 32 hours and no loss of pay, it would be possible to ensure decent jobs for all, alongside living benefits for all those who need it.

Our alternative

Together with a major programme of increased government investment in public services and socially useful jobs, this would help eliminate unemployment as well as underemployment. Part of that mass public investment should include the creation of high-quality training schemes and apprenticeships with trade union pay and conditions, and a guaranteed job at the end.

Clearly the capitalist bosses, who claim they can't even afford to pay the minimum wage, will not commit to such a transformative programme, although they could be forced to make some temporary concessions if a combative trade union-led movement was built. But the fight for lasting good jobs, education and training for all and a decent future for young people can only be guaranteed through a struggle for a socialist alternative, involving a democratic plan of production to meet the needs

of all, not the short-term profit interests of the bosses.

Just like the Tories in the strike wave, this Labour government is crumbling in office. However, some of New Labour's cheerleaders hope that the government's youth strategy could transform the party's fortunes.

Guardian columnist Polly Toynbee, for instance, has raised hopes that Milburn's report "could be the Beveridge report for our time", referring to the landmark 1942 report published by Liberal economist Sir William Beveridge, which helped lead to the founding of the National Health Service, among other far-reaching social reforms.

But capitalism is in a completely different era today, reflected in the vastly different content of the Milburn report which, far from expanding, wants to cut the welfare state even further.

What workers have won

Back then, working-class people, determined not to return to the chronic high unemployment and generalised precarity of the 1930s, queued around the block to buy a copy of the Beveridge report. Within two weeks of its publication, nine out of ten adults said they wanted its findings implemented. But that level of support is obviously not going to be found for the final Milburn report!

Infinitely more likely than queues around the block will be new youth movements and revolts in response to the recommendations of the final Milburn report.

Youth clubs, libraries and other 'third spaces' for young people have been cut to the bone. The media and capitalist politicians have tried to pin blame for inevitable displays of youth frustration - like so-called 'link-ups' seen recently over the school holidays - onto young people themselves.

# More Mandelson messages make Starmer's mess worse

Keir Starmer's government lacks 'verve' and has a tendency to buckle under pressure. You'd be hard pressed to find anyone that disagrees with these statements. But these opinions have been revealed in the latest tranche of documents relating to arch-Blairite Peter Mandelson's appointment and then, after revelations of his close ties to deceased rapist and sex trafficker Jeffrey Epstein, sacking.

For Mandelson, he wanted the Starmer government to go faster and further in attacking the working class. Starmer's hand has only been stayed due to the threat of mass anger being expressed by workers and young

people across the country. Starmer does buckle under pressure - the pressure of the big bosses and the bond markets to keep their profits safe!

One Labour MP anonymously described the release like adding a scratch to a car that has already been totalled. Starmer is toast. But as files reveal, the Labour Party is rotten to the core. We need a real working-class alternative. A party that doesn't have shadowy business lobbyists stirring up trouble and looking after the interests of the rich. One that will fight to break the power of big businesses and the banks and put the working class in power.

## SOCIALISM TODAY

Monthly magazine of the Socialist Party

June issue includes...

- May's seismic elections - what now for workers' politics?
- Greens' evolution - towards a workers' party?
- Greens debate anti-Zionism

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## 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](http://tinyurl.com/yc8hzepx)

Register for the meeting

Sign the petition



# Student loans: unfair and confusing We need free education



PHOTO: SHEFFIELD SOCIALIST PARTY

HAMZA KHAN  
WEST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

Over a decade since tuition fees were trebled and amongst mounting graduate anger, a parliamentary inquiry was launched to examine the impact of the student loan repayment system. The inquiry was conducted following controversy over Plan 2 loans, which were created by the Tory-Lib Dem coalition government in 2012. A Plan 2 loan means that if you earn over a minimum threshold, 9% of your income above that amount is deducted toward student loan repayments. In November last year, Rachel Reeves fixed the minimum repayment threshold to £29,385 from 2027 to 2030, while the loans themselves continue to rise by at least the RPI inflation rate.

Of the 49,357 respondents to the inquiry who had taken out student loans, 40,373 said the financial impact of repaying their student loan was worse than they expected. 28,275 said that they did not understand the terms and conditions of their student loans before they took them out, a statistic that is wholly unsurprising when you consider that the majority of people signing up for this loan are 17 or 18 years of age, signing on to a potentially 40-year-long commitment. 45,843 said that they think the repayment terms were not reasonable and 25,291 said they would not take their student loan out if they were given the choice again.

These numbers reflect the dire reality of a generation of graduates who were promised that a university degree would give them a reasonable route to gainful employment, only to be met by an incredibly harsh job market. A generation was told that student loan repayments were nothing more than a small graduate tax and more than worth the amount of extra money you would be earning from entering the working world

with a degree. They have been met by graduate salaries that have been unable to keep up with years of inflation and an ongoing cost-of-living crisis that makes any deductions from your wages increasingly difficult to manage.

**93%**  
of students, 45,843, said that they think the repayment terms were not reasonable

Free and fully funded university education would irrefutably benefit society. Yet scrapping tuition fees seems utopian for a government that is more than willing to waste billions of pounds on wars and protecting the wealth of the super-rich. Tony Blair's 'New Labour' introduced tuition fees in the first place, then the Tories and the Lib Dems created even more of a mess, which Starmer's Labour has done nothing but preserve. Most of the graduates surveyed said they had no other choice but to take out student loans with hard to understand and unreasonable conditions. We need fully funded, free education with maintenance grants that students can actually live on, instead of loans. Student loan debt should be abolished, paid for by taking the wealth that the super-rich bosses make at all of our, including graduates, expense.

Join the student fightback: join...  
socialist students  
● Visit [socialiststudents.org.uk/join](https://socialiststudents.org.uk/join)  
● or call 020 8988 8777  
● or text your name and school, college or uni to 07958 032 071

# We need free, reliable and publicly owned public transport for all

YORKSHIRE YOUTH FIGHT FOR JOBS (YFFJ)  
PRESS RELEASE

The cost-of-living crisis continues to have devastating effects on workers, students, and families throughout West Yorkshire. The Labour government refuses to commit to fully funded, publicly owned, bus and transport services – YFFJ says it must.

Chancellor Rachel Reeves has announced children aged 15 and under will benefit from free bus travel in August. YFFJ welcomes this announcement but the Labour government must go further.

Bus travel should be free for everyone, starting immediately with under 25s. Funding cuts must be reversed, and routes should receive investment and expansion, not closure. Travelling by bus shouldn't be a chore, it should be safe, reliable, and affordable.

Both Rachel Reeves and West Yorkshire Mayor Tracy Brabin stood for election under Jeremy Corbyn's manifesto in 2017 and 2019. It included a policy of free travel for

under 25s, so why can't this be implemented now?

Private companies shouldn't run bus services for profit, with ever-increasing fares. Public ownership would put an end to this, and workers and service users would have a democratic say in how their public transport is run and delivered.

One YFFJ spokesperson said:

"Bus services in West Yorkshire are being rapidly cut, yet private companies rake in profits from high fares – all while receiving public handouts. Infrequent buses and unreliable services make travelling by bus a dreaded task.

"Families, students, workers, and vulnerable adults should not dread having to make a bus journey, or carve out extra hours in their day just in case the bus doesn't turn up. Taking the bus should be a cheap, comfortable, safe, and reliable way to commute around West Yorkshire.

"This is why Youth Fight For Jobs is calling for a reversal of bus service cuts, free travel for all, and a fully

funded service that is publicly owned by workers and users."

Another spokesperson said: "I have used buses for around seven years, six of those as a full-time student and then after during my search for work. Buses are an important part of my daily life, but because I use them so frequently I notice the decline in quality and increase in prices. My annual student bus ticket went up by hundreds of pounds while buses became less frequent and more likely to be late. The increase in ticket prices is only making the cost-of-living crisis worse.

"YFFJ campaigns to make buses free and publicly owned under the democratic control of workers and service users. We are met with a warm response from ordinary workers who, like us, want to fix the bus services. Buses should be run by the working class for the working class and not by corporations who hike up the prices. A fully funded bus service that reaches every corner of Britain is the first step to a truly public and effective transport system."



PHOTO: MARTIN ARRAND/CC

# War rages in Lebanon as masses pay price for Israeli state's onslaught

OSCAR PARRY  
HACKNEY AND ISLINGTON SOCIALIST PARTY

Trump and Netanyahu's war on Iran has unleashed fresh horrors across the Middle East, particularly in Lebanon, to which the Israeli state has now turned its murderous attention. One in five people, over a million, have been driven from their homes.

The UN's World Food Programme warns of a "deepening humanitarian emergency": 1.24 million people, almost a quarter of the population, no longer have enough to eat. Over 80% of markets in southern Lebanon have stopped functioning. Bombed roads, ruined homes and children sheltering in schools – this is daily life for thousands of families. When

the Israeli military issued evacuation orders, it told Christians they could stay and Muslims must flee, illustrating the sectarian poison of its war.

At the start of May, Israeli forces drove their deepest incursion into Lebanon in 26 years and threatened to bomb Beirut's southern suburbs, sending thousands fleeing in panic. Even Israel's imperialist backers are split. Trump reportedly raged at Netanyahu over the phone, branding him "fucking crazy" and ordering him to halt the assault on Beirut. But the row is not about Lebanese lives. It is about oil and profit: Iran refuses to reopen the Strait of Hormuz, a chokepoint for the world's energy, without a Lebanon ceasefire, and markets panicked as crude prices spiked.

The hypocrisy is staggering. The same Western governments now wringing their hands over Lebanon have backed Netanyahu's Israeli regime through years of genocidal slaughter in Gaza. Their 'concern' reaches only as far as their balance sheets.

No capitalist politician, in Washington, Tel Aviv, Tehran or Beirut, will end this nightmare. Only the working class can. Workers across Lebanon, Israel and the whole region must organise independently of every capitalist elite.

Working-class struggle for socialist change to meet the needs of all can be the basis of a future voluntary, equal federation of socialist states in the region that can end war, oppression and poverty.



PHOTO: MEGAPHONE/CC

# Support for working-class students on the chopping block We need funding not fees

JAMES TAYLOR  
BIRMINGHAM SOCIALIST STUDENTS

Student life has only become more expensive over the last decade, with tuition fees rising and the cost of living skyrocketing. During this same period, successive governments have chipped away at maintenance grants, replacing them with loans which burden students for life.

Now, university vice-chancellors are threatening to cut what few meagre bursaries are still available. A Universities UK poll found that hardship support for working-class students could be on the chopping block, with around one third of vice-chancellors saying they would cut grants and outreach programmes if the funding crisis isn't resolved.

Students are increasingly having to take part-time jobs to the detriment of their studies in order to afford food, rent and bills. It would be unforgivable for university management to cut support to these students who need it most, especially while the same vice-chancellors talking about the lack of money in universities continue to make upwards of £400,000 a year.

The impact of decades of cuts and tuition fees means higher education floats from one funding crisis to another, with its financial dependence on international students looking increasingly precarious.

This same survey found 90% of universities are looking at hiring freezes or voluntary redundancies. As many university employees discovered the hard way in the last few years, it is a

slippery slope from hiring freezes to the closure of entire departments.

Socialist Students are fighting back against cuts to jobs and grants. In the short term, action by students in conjunction with industrial action by education unions can prevent cuts. But we also must provide a vision for what education could be if provided for the good of society. The wealth is there in society but it is sucked away as profits are hoarded by a few.

Tuition fees should be scrapped, grants reestablished, and staff jobs made secure. This change is achievable if we fight for it.

Join the student fightback  
JOIN socialist students  
[socialiststudents.org.uk/join](https://socialiststudents.org.uk/join)

# New survey shows social housing unaffordability

PAUL KERSHAW  
CHAIR UNITE HOUSING WORKERS LE11111 BRANCH

Nearly three-quarters of residents surveyed by the Scottish Housing Regulator over the past year said they were concerned they will not be able to pay their rent over the next few years. The Social Housing Regulator in England does not have a similar survey but it is clear that there are affordability concerns across the country. In England, social landlords have successfully lobbied for a government commitment to above-inflation rent increases every year for the next decade. Unaffordable rents are a growing concern for many Unite members.

The research from Scotland shows that more than half of those polled cited rent rises as the reason for their worries. The English Housing Survey highlights that over a quarter (27%)

of social renters find it difficult to pay their rent. The figure is significantly higher for young renters and for London tenants.

Unite Housing Workers' branch members who work in social landlords and homelessness agencies report that people are increasingly excluded from social housing because their incomes are too low. In a survey for the homelessness charity, Crisis, around a third of English housing associations said that pre-tenancy affordability checks often brought to light information which led to an offer of housing being deemed unsuitable for an applicant. Around a quarter of responding housing associations also said that households below a certain income threshold are sometimes excluded from the housing register from which they receive applications for social housing lettings.

The government hopes to counter

long-term underinvestment in the housing stock and to achieve their housebuilding targets on the basis of attracting private investment.

The key justification for the decade-long commitment to inflation-busting rent increases is the 'need' to offer the banks and investors a guaranteed long-term profit – at the expense of social tenants.

As a renewed cost-of-living crisis deepens in the autumn due to the impact of the Iran war and other causes; the crisis of housing affordability is set to deepen. The model of privately funded social housing is broken; we need an end to austerity housing policy with public investment to retrofit and upgrade the existing housing stock and a mass building programme of actually affordable council houses. Local councils should set needs-based budgets and protect their tenants with rent freezes.



PHOTO: TIM GREEN/CC

# UCU CONGRESS VOTES FOR NATIONWIDE STRIKE ACTION

## Delegates to UCU Congress report

University and College Union (UCU) Congress met at a time of escalating crisis for post-16 education. 24 universities are now at risk of insolvency; an unprecedented situation and a direct consequence of the failed marketised fees model in higher education. Labour's only response has been to increase fees. Further Education Colleges face deep crisis too. The government has announced a funding increase of just 0.5% per student, at a time when costs are increasing at a much faster rate. In real terms, this amounts to a savage cut in funding. Adult and Community education is even worse off.

General Secretary Jo Grady spent her commencement address listing all these issues and more, spelling out the dire situation for our sector. She described the funding crisis

engulfing higher and further education as catastrophic and called the university funding model "totally broken". She did not mention that her leadership has sown illusions in Starmer's Labour, forestalling a national fight on the promise of more funding from Westminster that has now failed to materialise. Even now, she described Labour's leadership election as the "last chance saloon".

Neither did Grady set out any serious strategy to fight now. Her proposals are for a 'raising awareness' campaign. We're already aware! So are Starmer and all the other bosses' politicians, who are making a choice to cut funding for education and other vital services to preserve the profits of the super-rich.

**SCOTT HUNTER**  
SWINDON COLLEGE UCU, PERSONAL CAPACITY



Strikers at London Met uni PHOTO: LONDON SP

## Sector conferences vote for nationwide strike action

The urgent need for post-16 education to fight back exploded into view on the second day when, in both sector conferences, delegates resolved to prepare for nationally coordinated strike action in 2026-27, without the delays and hesitations attempted by Grady's supporters.

The UCU is now committed to ballot for strike action across both sectors. Socialist Party members will argue for maximum coordination with our sister union Unison, which organises support staff in universities and colleges, currently running an indicative ballot of members in HE with a recommendation to reject employer association UCEA's pay offer of 2%, and with the National Education Union, which is launching a formal ballot of school teachers and support staff this autumn. The potential exists for an education-wide strike to force the Labour government to

address the crisis in schools, colleges and universities.

This will not be an automatic process, however. Significantly, the motions and arguments calling for delay or retreat from national action in both sectors came from the incoming vice presidents of both further and higher education in the union. Both sector committees on the NEC are majority controlled by supporters of the current general secretary Jo Grady, who have consistently voted against escalating industrial action. Members will need to prepare to defend the important resolutions passed at the union's supreme policy-making body, by organising to put maximum pressure on the leadership to implement Congress decisions.

**DUNCAN MOORE**  
NEC MEMBER

• Read more at [socialistparty.org.uk](http://socialistparty.org.uk)



Strikers at the Working Men's College PHOTO: LONDON SP

## Fighting for working-class political representation

The elephant in the Congress hall was the need for more political representation for UCU and the wider trade union movement, given that, as general secretary Jo Grady said, Labour "is unable or unwilling to deliver real, material change". The logical conclusion is to be drawn from that insight is surely that our policies need some sort of serious alternative representation to Labour in parliament.

If Grady had any thoughts on that, they were glaringly absent from her address. Though she did refer to her new cross-party parliamentary group, co-chaired by Labour MP Rachael Maskell and Labour peer Baroness Blower.

At a fringe meeting with Grady and Maskell herself, after a lot of Starmer disparagement by both, I asked: "Besides raising the profile of our crisis in parliament, how is your group planning to win the full funding we need from this government? That surely requires not just begging Starmer to redirect a few crumbs from another equally needy public sector to our own but fighting for him to increase public spending generally and massively?" My question was not answered.

My own college's motion 39, resolving that UCU support a cross-union conference to discuss political representation for the working class and trade unionists, disappointingly did not get heard for lack of time. Like West London College's motion 63 last year, calling for UCU to start looking for an alternative political voice to Labour - which did get heard and carried overwhelmingly - this motion lay ready to explode that elephant into view, and resonate with delegates.

I'm convinced the motion would have carried. The membership is bolder than Grady at the moment, and its rage is groping for real solutions.

Undiscouraged, Socialist Party members in UCU will continue to promote motion 39's call with UCU members. Two immediate opportunities are at the Trade Unionists for a New Party meeting on 8 June and the NSSN conference on 27 June. Onwards!

**MARCO TESEI**  
NEC MEMBER

**SOCIALISM**  
the podcast

The Marxist podcast from the Socialist Party

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## For a class-based fight against racism and division

There were a number of motions debated on the rise of Reform and the threat to further education. For example, Motion 2, moved by New City College in Hackney and South and City College in Birmingham, raised the threat that Reform-led councils pose to education and called on the UCU to campaign for ESOL to have protected funding and to produce campaign materials to combat the far-right in workplaces and elections.

I moved an amendment from my college which explained the role of the Labour government and the need for a programme calling for homes, jobs and services for all.

The ground for dangerous far-right thugs like Tommy Robinson, and for racist right-wing populists like Nigel Farage, has been prepared by years of austerity and a soaring cost of living. The pro-big business, anti-working class, austerity policies of Keir Starmer's Labour government have compounded that.

The trade union movement must be at the front and centre of the fight against racism. The Together Alliance has recognised that Reform and the far right "seize on the very real economic problems people face, in order to scapegoat migrants, Muslims and refugees." But proposing 'love' and 'unity' falls far short of what is needed. To stop the growth of the far right, the trade union movement needs to take a lead, linking the fight against racism to the fight for jobs, homes and services. In 2018, the TUC agreed to launch a campaign for 'jobs and homes not racism'. They did not follow through on their proposal - it's up to us to do that now.

The amendment also included for the union to "Compile a list of UCU member volunteers in each region to steward antiracist demonstrations and counter demonstrations where the local trade union movement thinks it is necessary, and to encourage other unions to do the same".

Congress voted overwhelmingly in favour of the amendment and motion.

**DAVID KAPLAN**  
WORKING MEN'S COLLEGE UCU, PERSONAL CAPACITY

## Why you should come to the National Shop Stewards Network conference

There is enormous anger against Labour austerity and the ongoing cost-of-living crisis. Trade union leaders are beginning to respond to pressure from members for national strike action. So far, there have been flurries of local action, including recently across West Yorkshire.

Building rank-and-file solidarity across the trade union movement is a vital part in maintaining momentum as struggle ebbs and flows, cohering working-class anger. The NSSN conference provides a forum for trade unionists to share experiences of workplace organising and discuss how best to build the fightback, including among new layers who will be drawn into the workers' movement and develop as activists.

There are burning questions for the workers' movement to discuss: how can austerity be defeated? How best to oppose war and fight against racism? What is needed to develop an independent political voice for the working class? The NSSN conference will be an opportunity to discuss both how we can build the fight in each of our unions, and how we can campaign for coordination to take the fight to the bosses and their system of austerity, war and division.

**ALI MANSFIELD**

**NSSN CONFERENCE 2026**

**WE WON'T PAY FOR THE BOSSES' CRISIS!**

**nationalshop stewardsnetwork**

**SATURDAY 27 JUNE**  
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Scan here to register to attend the conference. £10 attendance fee payable on arrival

**shopstewards.net**

# Potential for autumn of action as PCS sets course for battle on pay and more

## SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBERS IN PCS

On 28 May, Unison, Unite and GMB unions wrote to the employer's body that coordinates local government pay negotiations to reject their final offer of a 3.3% pay rise for local government workers. Unison has already announced that it intends to ballot, beginning in June. This follows the decision to ballot by the teachers' union NEU on 9 May, in opposition to a 6.5% deal over three years.

Action is also in preparation at the Public and Commercial Services (PCS) union, which represents civil servants, public sector workers at national public bodies and private sector staff on national government contracts. The union's newly elected Left Coalition-led National Executive Committee (NEC) met for the first time on 29 May, and agreed initial steps to prepare for a wide-ranging battle on civil service pay, jobs, office closures and more.

PCS annual conference, 18-21 May in Brighton, voted for a serious fight on pay, and the newly elected NEC majority, including six Socialist Party members as part of a broad left coalition for change, intends to deliver this.

On the final day of PCS conference, the Cabinet Office published the UK civil service's pay remit for 2026-27. This remit is a cost control mechanism, set this year at 3.5%, which caps the overall increase to spending on pay by each civil service department, executive agency or other body. This headline figure is not fully funded either; up to a 2% increase is funded, the remainder will be made up via cuts to jobs and other "savings".

The reaction from PCS members has been negative; 3.5% will not be enough to address longstanding issues of low pay, of repeated

below-inflation pay awards dating back years. Even using the government's Consumer Price Index (CPI) measure of inflation, which does not include housing and routinely underestimates real inflation, prices are set to rise by 3.5% by the end of 2026.

The NEU and Unison have shown the way - we need to demand more from the Cabinet Office and we need to prepare for a serious national campaign on pay and more besides.

## Pay 'flexibility' in 2026-27: myth versus reality

This year's pay remit also contains some additions - which are being touted as successes by the union's General Secretary Fran Heathcote. In her eyes, this 'flexibility', and the 3.5% itself, are results of her off-the-record chats with the Cabinet Office. Socialist Party members are rightly wary of this approach. Concessions are not won by honeyed words; they are won by leverage and hard campaigning work. Where employers make concessions without a campaign, it is the surest bet in the world that they would have given up a lot more if a campaign had been deployed.

Neither do we describe either the 3.5% itself, or much of the 'flexibilities' being touted in this year's pay remit, as major 'concessions'. This year's pay remit is accompanied by a 'Pay Compression Framework'. This framework - which is voluntary - permits government departments to develop plans to ensure a 5% pay gap between each of the bottom three grades AA, AO and EO. Whilst this can be funded on top of the 3.5%, the latter is not fully funded and departments will need to find the money from existing budgets, likely leading to job cuts.

Restoration of national pay bargaining, which was abolished in the early 1990s, has been a feature of



**“**  
**The entire union must be put on notice that we are readying for a fight**  
**”**

PCS campaigning since the union was formed in 1998. Far from being a means to provide harmonisation of pay, in a manner favourable to half a million civil servants, the pay compression framework seems designed to ensure the permanency of low pay by tying the lowest grade to the national living wage.

Nor does the pay remit contain anything for higher grades - they will have to fit under the 3.5% cap. These workers have loyally stuck with the union despite below-inflation pay rises and no PCS campaign to remedy that.

Despite the inadequate 3.5% civil service pay remit, which cannot provide a basis for meeting any of our

key demands, the PCS General Secretary attended the union's NEC to propose that we move immediately to delegated, i.e. employer by employer pay talks, essentially foregoing a campaign.

The union's NEC voted no to this. Instead, a short pause to delegated talks has been ordered while we seek to reopen talks at the Cabinet Office level, a task which has been made harder by Heathcote's acceptance of 'informal' chats rather than genuine negotiations with Cabinet Office officials overseeing the government's strategy on civil service pay. The entire union must be put on notice that we are readying for a fight.

A new national negotiating team has been appointed, including the union's newly elected President, Bev Laidlaw, and newly elected Deputy President, Dave Semple, along with the General Secretary and John Moloney, the Assistant General Secretary. Training and information for delegated negotiators and for activists more generally is in preparation, and the Cabinet Office has been put on notice.

These are the first steps towards accomplishing the demand of three successive PCS annual delegate conferences: build a serious national campaign.

• Read more at [socialistparty.org.uk](http://socialistparty.org.uk)

## GKN aerospace workers strike for a proper pay rise

**TOM BALDWIN**  
SOUTH WEST SOCIALIST PARTY REGIONAL SECRETARY

600 workers took to the picket lines in Bristol as Unite members in GKN struck for the first time in 40 years. A 3.3% pay offer was the final straw after years of pay suppression and 98% of members voted to strike.

GKN claims it can't afford to pay the union's demand of 5.5% but it is a very profitable company with a large and growing mountain of cash. So much so that the CEO of parent company Melrose was paid the highest bonus in the FTSE 100 - a massive £45 million! He pleads poverty on behalf of the company while 'earning' over

a thousand times more than the average GKN worker. Just 2% of his bonus would cover the union's pay claim.

The strike rally was addressed by Unite general secretary Sharon Graham, who talked about what the union has won for workers across hundreds of disputes. She affirmed her support for the GKN workers and talked about the possibility of escalation.

• **Branch nominations in the Unite general election open on 4 June and run until 28 June. The Socialist Party is supporting Sharon Graham. Read more at [socialistparty.org.uk](http://socialistparty.org.uk), search 'Unite general secretary election: re-elect Sharon Graham'**



PHOTO: TOM BALDWIN

## London tube drivers strike again over working conditions

### Arnos Grove, north London

On 2 June, Socialist Party members joined an RMT picket line in support of striking tube drivers at Arnos Grove station. The strike is as a result of unagreed changes in working conditions.

Transport for London (TfL) had plans to shift drivers' hours away from the current working model of five working days of ten-hour shifts per week to four working days of 12-hour shifts.

When balloted, RMT workers overwhelmingly rejected the proposal with a nine-to-one majority.

Members on the picket line explained that, at the time of balloting, this offer was "portrayed as a take it or leave it offer, and members said leave it". However, management is determined to impose it.

While TfL maintains that this change is entirely voluntary, when pressed by the RMT on what protections would be given to workers who refused to accept this change, the management have failed to give assurances.

Workers on the picket line made it clear that the actions of TfL management in essentially imposing unagreed changes to working conditions

is "not acceptable" and that their failure to offer assurances that those who didn't accept the changes would be protected leaves no option but to take strike action.

RMT members on the picket line explained "action is well supported by members of the union as well as members of sister union ASLEF who unfortunately at senior level have decided to accept and pursue this arrangement".

There was a clear message of solidarity from the workers on the picket line, with RMT stating that "we remain united and solid until we get a reasonable outcome which our members can support".

**HANNAH PONTING**



Arnos Grove PHOTO: IAN PATTISON



Morden PHOTO: APRIL ASHLEY

### Morden, south London

Most drivers want a four-day week but not this one as the shifts are too long.

Workers called off the last strikes for talks but got nothing hence the further action.

The ballot mandate runs out in August so workers have to reballoon then and warn that this could be a long-running dispute. But they are ready for that.

**APRIL ASHLEY**

Get all the latest union news  
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NSSN bulletin: [shopstewards.net](http://shopstewards.net)

# GMB Congress: Labour relationship under scrutiny as members at sharp end of continued austerity

SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBERS IN GMB

**G**MB Congress takes place after the hammering of Labour in the local elections.

Labour is continuing Tory austerity and cuts, scapegoating migrants, and has abandoned the working class. Public services continue to be cut to the bone, unemployment is on the rise, our wages fail to keep up with the cost of living.

GMB members have been at the front line. Our members' demands in local government have been rejected by the Local Government Authority, including a £15 minimum wage, instead offering just 3.3%, when members are facing another energy bills spike. GMB members have voted to reject, so too have members of other local government unions. Unison has announced a strike ballot to run over the summer. GMB should do the same, opening the possibility of coordinated action to really pile pressure on the employers.

In the NHS too, GMB members face a ramping up of attacks on their wages and conditions, and further privatisation.

In the May elections, 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 danger of growing racism and division in the working class is clearly increased by Reform's gains.

A recent poll of 1,000 public sector union members last week found that support for Reform among trade union members has risen as support for Labour has collapsed. In GMB, more



PHOTO: BIRMINGHAM SP

members were found to support Reform than Labour.

This is a reflection of the fact that Labour has abandoned the working class who are desperate for change, leaving a vacuum being filled by the charlatans of Reform who falsely pose as the new party of the working class.

Some union leaders, including in GMB, argue the only way to stop Reform is to continue to back Labour. But this is a grave mistake - Labour austerity is fuelling support for Reform.

By sticking with Labour, the trade union movement is at risk of

### PUBLIC MEETING: AFTER THE MAY ELECTIONS - HOW DO WE DEFEAT REFORM?

Hosted by 'Trade Unionists for a New Party'  
Come and discuss how GMB activists and members can be part of that fightback at the Melville Hotel, Blackpool on Sunday 7 June 5:45pm (after close of Congress)

undermining our credibility and weakening our support amongst workers desperate for a working-class political alternative.

Voting Reform was not the only way Labour was opposed on 7 May. Many voted to protest against both Labour and Reform by voting Green.

But the working class defeating Reform will not be achieved by simply switching from Labour to the Greens. The Green Party's current structure would not give any trade unions that decided to affiliate to it a democratic say, nor can its elected councillors

and MPs be held to account by trade unions via its structures.

Moreover, Greens have just won control of five new 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 any more austerity, arguing that councils have 'no choice' but to implement cuts.

Despite Labour's attacks on GMB members, the GMB donated £356,632 to Labour MPs in 2024. And what do our members get in return? Labour tramples over GMB policies - including by keeping some of the main Tory anti-trade union laws on the statute books, including the 50% threshold for industrial action ballots, approaching two years into term.

Several motions were submitted by GMB branches to Congress questioning, or even opposing, our union's support for Labour. Urgently needed is a discussion across the trade union movement as a whole to put on the agenda how a working-class political alternative can be built.

Motions to Congress include motions 231 and 232, which both call for discussions across the GMB about our relationship with Labour, and the need for a political strategy that supports our members to take action on the basis of agreed GMB policies.

Both motions also instruct regional councils to call in members of the GMB's Parliamentary group, as well as other potentially pro-trade union MPs, to discuss where they stand on GMB policy and their voting record in support of GMB policies - as a step towards forming a strong parliamentary voice for the GMB and the trade union movement as a whole. Motion 232 also calls for a cross-union conference to discuss building a political voice for the trade union movement. At the time of writing, both motions remain on the agenda, and we call for them to be supported.

## Students stand with Sheffield Hallam UCU strikers

**JAMES**  
SHEFFIELD HALLAM SOCIALIST STUDENTS

27 May marked the start of 18 days of strike action led by the University and College Union (UCU) at Sheffield Hallam University. As a student of the university, it would be easy to overlook the reasons why and just ask the question "will this affect my education?". Talking to lecturers on the picket it was clear they are fighting for more than job safety, they are literally fighting for the future of their institution.

Coming on top of over a thousand job losses in the last few years, the restructuring of key departments

such as the school of English and the school of medicine has left staff wondering if voluntary redundancies will become compulsory and, for those who remain, this will mean increased workload pressure.

Approximately 88% of UCU members who voted supported strike action, with a turnout of 73%, showing that it's not only the departments in the firing line that are fighting back to defend themselves. Alongside the restructuring of certain departments, aggressive cuts to the staffing budget university-wide are beyond what is financially necessary, suggesting this is a money-making exercise for the executive board. We are already

seeing buildings being sold off with no visible reinvestment into students or staffing.

Lecturers on the picket line told me their concern was that 'selling' the staff to a subsidiary company to take them out of the Teachers' Pension Scheme and create a two-tier workforce would erode teaching conditions and effectively make it harder for them. On the picket they were asking how my assignments are going and to contact them if I needed help.

Now is the time to support them, by demanding no cuts to staff costs and no compulsory redundancies. The students stand with the UCU.

## Trades Council conference Determined mood to play a militant role in struggle



PHOTOS: SHEILA CAFFEY

**KATRINE WILLIAMS**  
DELEGATE FROM CARDIFF TRADES COUNCIL

There was a determined mood at this year's Trades Council conference in Leeds, with a much larger turnout of delegates from more trades councils than we had seen for the past few years, and a good number of younger delegates.

Showing our role in building trades councils, 11 Socialist Party members were delegates and intervened positively in all the key debates. At the evening social looking at the 1926 General Strike, it was fascinating to hear the research done by various trades councils about their role in the strike.

As well as the clear recognition of the role we can play in the movement going forward, we had a glimpse during the strike wave a few years ago of the key role we can play mobilising solidarity and linking up workers in our communities.

Delegates took the key issues for workers struggling in a cost-of-living crisis very seriously, recognising the need to press hard for the immediate repeal of the anti-union legislation including the 50% strike threshold. Trades councils are in a key position to build up the anger over low pay and

to promote the need to fight back on the continuing attacks on public sector pay and services.

The debates on tackling the far right made clear the role our trade union movement can actively play fighting the cuts and delivering a positive strategy to fight for what is needed under the slogan of 'jobs and homes not racism'. This can cut across the way that Reform is trying to tap into the anger and frustration in our areas. The need to steward and defend protests properly is also a key issue we must take up in the movement.

A number of delegates and motions made clear that the TUC should have given a lead as demanded by congress policy passed last year to organise a national demo against Starmer's austerity. That would have been an ideal opportunity to harness working-class frustration in a positive direction and demonstrate the strength of our movement to tackle the attacks on pay, jobs and services. The emergency motion from Coventry Trades Council highlighted the need for the TUC to act, and for trades councils to play a leading role in discussing a new political direction in advance of the council elections next year.

• [Read more at socialistparty.org.uk](http://socialistparty.org.uk)

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Cheltenham HOLLY WHITLEY PHOTOGRAPHY

# Trans protest in Cheltenham

## 'We have to tackle these problems at their roots'

**BILLY JONES**  
GLOUCESTERSHIRE SOCIALIST PARTY

Following last year's Supreme Court ruling against trans peoples' rights, the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) has published guidance which can be used to restrict trans people from accessing single-sex spaces.

On Saturday 30 May a newly formed group called Trans Liberation Gloucestershire organised a protest against the new guidance. It drew around 75 people, with members of the public stopping by and joining in too.

Several members of the Socialist Party went along, and I was invited to make a speech. We raised how the establishment has been using trans people as a scapegoat for the crises that capitalism creates: the crisis in our NHS, the crisis in the housing market, and cuts that affect our whole communities.

Already the way the ruling and

guidance has been used has emboldened a layer to attack the trans community, including through violence and intimidation. We said that the only way we can tackle these issues is by organising collectively, which involves bringing community groups and unions into the fold. Our ideas were met with a good reception, and we helped collect the names of those who are interested in joining in further action.

One of the organisers spoke to us, saying: "I was pleasantly surprised with how engaged the people of Cheltenham are with our ideas. Trans people face austerity very sharply - we're twice as likely to be unemployed, and have difficulty accessing housing, not to mention lifesaving medical care."

"The goal of our group isn't just to tackle these issues on the surface, but to stop them at their roots. Ultimately, the root cause of all these issues is the capitalist system and the ruling class."

# Cardiff Trans Pride: 'Divide and rule will be their tactic - solidarity will be ours'

**EIRA EKENBERG-JONES**  
RHONDDA CYNON TAFF SOCIALIST PARTY

Cardiff Trans Pride called an emergency demo in response to the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC)'s new guidance. Despite the extremely warm weather, the demo saw a great turnout of around 400 people.

The organisers unfortunately declined to associate with any trade unions or parties. We agreed to attend regardless, making ourselves visible by holding copies of the Socialist paper, and we appeared to be the only party there. Trade union members also attended, including Socialist Party members marching with a PCS

banner - the trade union turnout was limited.

### It's all our fight

The speeches at the end of the march called for small grassroots LGBTQ+ groups to join together to fight the EHRC's guidance. The work these organisations do is often vitally important, but transgender people cannot separate our fight for liberation from the wider working class. The trans community is currently a key target for divide and rule - a tactic to drive wedges between working-class people to weaken our collective strength. Separating our marches just makes this tactic more effective.

Speakers also highlighted the

Good Law Project, and its attempts to overturn the guidance. However, the courts cannot be trusted to grant our rights back to us after stripping them away. Legal suits can only be successful as part of a larger movement.

Eilonwy, Socialist Party member and delegate to PCS Proud National Committee, spoke in a personal capacity, and put forward a platform to build this movement. She highlighted that this guidance isn't law - the decision whether to implement it will be made by individual employers, who can be pressured into action through trade unions. Eilonwy ended by saying: "Divide and rule will be their tactic - solidarity and class politics will be ours."



Cardiff EIRA HADFIELD-JONES



Green leader Zack Polanski IAN PATTINSON/CC

# South East Young Greens discuss cuts

**CLEO SHARP**  
BRIGHTON AND EAST SUSSEX SOCIALIST PARTY

The Green Party has recently won hundreds more council seats and taken control of 6 councils, they take part in the leadership of more, with many of its supporters anticipating change.

We visited the South East Young Greens conference in Guildford on Saturday 23 May to discuss with Green Party members.

### Success?

The event included a panel of three councillors: Jimi and Katie from Worthing and Sam from Southampton. Questions were asked from the floor but largely focused on successes they'd had and priorities in their areas. Sam talked about affordable council housing in Southampton, Katie mentioned fostering pride in communities in Worthing to combat disillusionment, and Jimi talked about local government

reorganisation and how it will make Worthing's council less confusing.

Eventually we were able to ask a question on opposing cuts in line with Zack Polanski's vision for a working-class Green Party, the councillors seemed to get stuck. Sam answered first and was clearly the most trained to do so, calling it 'idealistic' and 'unfeasible', citing the reduction of Southampton City Council's government funding from £300 million to £100 million. We retorted instantly, bringing up his council's reserves, which consist of £133 million. He was then essentially forced to agree, saying that although they shouldn't be sitting on that money, he can't pledge against cuts, rather that they would cut from areas which affect the smallest number of people (which tend to be marginalised groups and minorities).

It was becoming apparent that they had no serious plan to counter the establishment's endless austerity and council tax increases.

Jimi led the response on cuts in Worthing, saying that a no-cuts budget was impossible since Worthing Borough Council is 'bankrupt', but that he would vote against cuts to safe roads, council housing and cultural services in the county council. He said it was a difficult question to answer before one of the chairs quickly moved on to a new question.

### What will they do?

There were several party members who came up to me after the discussion to applaud me on challenging them. It revealed to them a worrying lack of a strategy to fight austerity. Something that will have to change if they are to act differently to previously elected Green councillors who have voted for cuts to services and hiked up council tax, almost without fail.

We hope that in future, those hopeful young Greens will challenge their leadership and push them to serve the working class.

# Central Hill staff strike to save day centre - Green council must act

**SOFIA PANDOLFI**  
LAMBETH AND SOUTHWARK SOCIALIST PARTY

Central Hill is the only adult day centre specialised to assist people with dementia in the south London borough of Lambeth. Despite the essential services it provides, the centre is at risk of closure.

This closure is only part of the continued cuts to services by Lambeth Labour council, which has now been kicked out. Labour justified the closure by claiming not enough people use the service.

In reality, the number of people with dementia in the borough is increasing. But referrals to the centre have been turned away in recent months. With the potential closure, people with dementia and their families reliant on this service will have to seek support elsewhere.

Union members working in Central Hill have been taking strike action, fighting to protect their jobs and the services the centre provides. They are on strike again on Friday 5 June. Socialist Party members have been supporting the picket line, and campaigning in support of the workers' demands.

Following the May local elections, Green councillors are now the biggest party in Lambeth council. Greens now run the council, with the support of the Lib Dems.

### Meet the strikers

Green councillors must now make it public that they will reverse the decision to close the centre, sending the bill to the crisis-ridden Labour government at Westminster. Green councillors must meet the Union strikers to discuss implementing their specific demands - reverse the day centre closure, stop planned redundancies, and expand and fund dementia services.

It is crucial that Green councillors oppose all cuts to our public services. This includes fighting alongside workers to save Central Hill, and prevent people with dementia from being left without specialised assistance.

Taking such a stand, meeting with the trade union movement locally, would mark a chance for Green councillors to build a campaign to win back the funding stolen from Lambeth by Tory and Labour governments since 2010.



Union members at Central Hill day centre striking to save their jobs and the service BERKAY KARITAV

### Selling the Socialist

Just some of the events where the Socialist newspaper was sold in the past week...

# 'We won't pay for Trump's war'

**ADAM GILLMAN**  
SOUTH EAST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

Our recent stall at the Sainsbury's in New Cross Gate, south east London, was great! We engaged using a petition on the issue of food prices going up, as profiteering private companies take advantage of a horrific war in Iran to make us pay.

Many people were angry that we had to keep on paying while oil companies increased their profits. Lewisham council went from Labour having every seat to a Green Party

majority at the local elections in May. Lots of people were also hopeful that the new administration would do something, but also agreed that the community needed to put pressure on the council to implement measures to help with the cost of living, such as reintroducing the Education Maintenance Allowance for college students.

The petition was really useful at engaging with the local working-class community, and allowed us through discussions to link the national issue of prices going up, to the local issues of what councils and linking all of that to the need for a socialist transformation to end profiteering and war for good. Lots of people signed, including two school students and four people interested in joining the Socialist Party

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# 'Of course I am a socialist'

**ALEX SAMPSON**  
PLYMOUTH SOCIALIST PARTY

It may be close to the end of the academic year, but there were still plenty of students around Plymouth Arts University on Friday 29 May who were willing to come and discuss politics with us and buy our Socialist paper.

In a city where Reform recently took 16 out of 19 seats at the local elections, understandably there was some concern among the students over Reform's popularity. Students also asked questions about how the Socialist Party differs from the Greens.

In conversation, the young students supported our stance on nationalisation of major industries, mass council house building programme, £15-an-hour minimum wage and, of course, free education.

AREA	£ RECEIVED	£ TARGET	Q2: APRIL-JUNE 2026	DEADLINE: 30 JUNE 2026
Wales	1,802	2,400		75%
London	3,743	5,000		75%
Southern & SE	1,593	2,400		66%
North West	796	1,200		66%
Eastern	735	1,300		57%
South West	996	2,100		47%
Yorkshire	1,041	2,650		39%
East Midlands	690	2,050		34%
Northern	242	800		30%
West Midlands	547	2,700		20%
Other	5,971	2,400		249%
TOTAL	18,156	25,000		73%

The students who spoke to us can see how little of a future capitalism has to offer them. It can only give them insecure housing and jobs as well as massive debt, and they want better.

As one student put it: "Of course I am a socialist, there really is no alternative is there?" For working-class students, there isn't.

That is why we encourage students to help build the Socialist Students

movement on their campuses and the Socialist Party too, in order to join the fight for the socialist transformation of society that we need.

Help fund the fightback  
**DONATE**  
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# East Midlands Socialist Party conference

Socialist Party and Socialist Students supporting Leicester DMU uni protest against job cuts

# 'Positive about building our party over the next year'

**ASH RITCHIE**  
NORTHAMPTON SOCIALIST PARTY

Opening with a session on 'Capitalism in crisis - the turmoil to come', Isai Marijerla, from the Socialist Party Executive Committee, opened the East Midlands regional conference on 31 May with members from branches across the region in attendance. In the afternoon, East Midlands Socialist Party organiser Seamus Smyth led a session on building our party in the region.

A major focus of the conference was the local elections and how we build our party - locally, regionally and nationally. From the recent election results, it is clear that the working class is searching for a political alternative.

### Reform

While Reform gained council seats, its support is broad but shallow. This reflects a mood for change - and the urgent need for us to get boots on the ground, speak to working-class people, and put forward a real political alternative: the trade unions taking the lead in building a mass working-class party.

Only by challenging the capitalist system can we lay the foundations for the struggles the working class will face in the period ahead.

After hearing reports from all the branches, we left feeling very positive about our prospects for building the party over the next year.

# Come to a Socialist Party meeting near you

The Socialist Party has regular meetings in towns and cities across the country.

If you would like to participate:  
• [socialistparty.org.uk/events](https://socialistparty.org.uk/events)  
• Or text 07958 032 071 with your name and postcode.

# Indyref powers, the stolen £400k, SNP cuts to continue at Holyrood

## SOCIALIST PARTY SCOTLAND

The Scottish Parliament has voted to demand from Westminster the powers to hold a second independence referendum. The 72 to 55 vote among MSPs was no surprise. This is the fourth Holyrood parliament in a row that has seen the election of a majority of independence-supporting MSPs.

Neither was it a shock that the Starmer government at Westminster immediately refused to grant a Section 30 order. A Downing Street spokesperson said: "The UK Government does not support independence or another referendum." So far, so undemocratic; so predictable.

The fact that John Swinney has only requested the powers for a referendum, but has not signalled any proposed date for one, reflects the current malaise facing Scotland's largest party. Despite winning the Holyrood election, it did not have the numbers to form a majority government.

While support for independence is currently just over 50%, it has fallen behind other priorities, such as the

cost of living, cuts to public services, and the housing emergency.

At the same time, support for the Scottish National Party (SNP) has fallen significantly. The party lost more than 850,000 votes on 7 May, compared to the 2021 Holyrood election when constituency votes and regional list votes are taken into account.

Confidence in the SNP prosecuting a struggle on self-determination is about as low as expectations that Swinney will lead a movement to end austerity.

Not for nothing did he appoint to the cabinet, for the first time ever, a minister for public service cuts - sorry, 'reform'. As clear an indication as ever that the attacks on jobs and services will increase dramatically under his government.

And this at a time when Starmer's job as prime minister is hanging by a thread. Never has there been a weaker UK government - and that's saying a lot. Yet the SNP leadership has never been prepared to confront British capitalism by mobilising a mass movement on any issue, be that democratic rights or defying the cuts.

In contrast, the working class and

the trade unions are the key to breaking the logjam on cuts, the cost of living, and the right to decide. But that means relying only on their own strength and putting forward their own demands.

For example, demanding that elected politicians refuse to make cuts; organising strike action to win pay rises that fully match inflation; fighting for full funding of public services; and for the right of Holyrood to organise a future indyref2. And that also means forging a political vehicle to fight for working-class interests in the shape of a mass workers' party.

## Missing SNP money

That there can be not an iota of reliance on the SNP leadership was underlined by the news this week that the former CEO of the party has admitted embezzling £400,000 of SNP money between 2010 and 2022.

Peter Murrell, who was then the partner of SNP First Minister Nicola Sturgeon, spent the money on cars, campervans, and luxury goods. This went on for more than a decade. When questions were asked - including by NEC members of the party

Nicola Sturgeon and Peter Murrell PHOTO: SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT/CC



- about where the money had gone, there were no answers.

The fact that the SNP appointed a CEO of their party says a lot about their pro-business nature. That even the NEC and the finance and audit committee of the SNP were refused access to accounts also says a lot. This was defended and overseen by Nicola Sturgeon. It's about as far away from a democratic party as it's possible to get.

Socialist Party Scotland would argue, for example, that all elected MSPs should live on the average wage of a skilled worker, and that a mass workers' party would have fully democratic and accountable structures and practices in place, including the right to immediately recall any elected officials if they were not carrying out their role properly.

The Scottish Government is demanding not only the powers to organise a new indyref, but also the devolution of powers on a range of other issues, including energy, amid rising household costs. The SNP energy minister argued: "That is why powers over Scotland's energy must be in Scotland's hands - so we can make our vast energy wealth work for us and bring down bills."

Yet not a word from him on using those powers to nationalise the energy sector. At a time when bills are increasing again, a consequence of the conflict with Iran by the US

and Israel, that demand takes on even more urgency.

Socialist Party Scotland supports full powers over the economy being held at Holyrood as part of an independent socialist Scotland. But using those powers to bring the entire energy sector, currently dominated by multinationals, under democratic public ownership is the only way to lower bills and ensure a worker-led transition away from fossil fuels to sustainable forms of energy. This is something the SNP will never support.

All in all, on public services, on the cost of living, and on the fight for self-determination, the SNP is not fit for purpose. The building of mass working-class struggle and a trade union-led mass workers' party on a socialist programme is essential.



# Turkey solidarity: Union leader jailed for speaking out on safety

## Mehmet Türkmen released but the fight for workers' rights continues



Mehmet Türkmen



Mehmet Türkmen and supporters including Paul (second from right)

**PAUL KERSHAW**  
UNITE HOUSING WORKERS (LE1111) AND NATIONAL SHOP STEWARDS NETWORK

On 17 March, Turkish trade unionist Mehmet Türkmen was jailed for speaking out about serious workplace health and safety abuses resulting in workers' deaths and loss of limbs. I was honoured to join an international delegation of trade union observers to attend his trial.

In the trial, Mehmet spoke out in defence of workers; his speech was powerful. He spent 57 days in an overcrowded prison and was subject to ill treatment.

### Initiated by factory owner

He explained that he was first detained for 'inciting the public to hatred and hostility', but the charge was changed to 'publicly spreading misleading information' at the police station. This was a way of silencing him. At no point was evidence given that anything he said was untrue.

Mehmet said the trial was initiated at the request of the factory owner. "I know as well as my name that this investigation was opened upon the complaint of the boss. I have been detained 30 times in the last six years, and every time it was because of a phone call from a boss," he said. Pointing to reports from the Health

and Safety Labor Watch Assembly, Türkmen noted that at least 555 workers have died in Gaziantep in the last 13 years. "All 555 names are there. Not a single boss served time in prison; not a single boss was detained. Although the textile sector is one of the least risky, why is someone's hand or arm severed every day? Because the bosses' greed for profit is more valuable than the worker's life."

As he explained in his defence: "For two months, I have been away from my union duties and my family. You are sending a message to the bosses: 'Exploit as much as you want, we will imprison whoever speaks out.' This must end; the trust in justice, which is already struggling, should not be shaken further."

During the trial, one worker held up his hand showing his fingers had been severed. His child had asked how long they would take to grow back.

### International delegation

It is good to report that Mehmet was acquitted and free to go back to his work organising workers. The struggle will continue and it is important that we step up our solidarity work with Turkish workers and Mehmet's union, the United Textile Workers Union (BIRTEK-SEN). The British part of the international delegation

- which also included trade unionists and a Left Party MP from Germany - was organised by Solidarity with the People of Turkey, SPOT. I attended as a Unite branch chair and a NSSN representative.

The trial, and the delegation, were widely reported in the London Turkish press and Turkish television news and press.

As SPOT comments: "Türkmen's release is welcome and long overdue. But the conditions he exposed remain unchanged. Workers in Turkey continue to face dangerous workplaces, anti-union repression, poverty wages, and increasing attacks on democratic rights. International solidarity therefore remains essential.

"Consumers, trade unions, labour rights organisations, and political movements across Europe and beyond must continue demanding accountability from companies profiting from unsafe labour conditions.

"The struggle in Gaziantep is not only a Turkish issue. It is part of a global struggle over who pays the price for the products consumed around the world.

"Mehmet Türkmen is free today because workers and supporters refused to stay silent. The task now is to ensure that the workers risking their lives in Turkey's factories are no longer silenced either."

# CWI general secretary guest speaker at NIPSA conference, Northern Ireland's biggest union



A video of Tony Sauniois' speech to Nipsa conference will be available to watch online at socialistworld.net

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- Romania: Union Leaders Back Away from Fight to Defend Education
- Over 3,000 workers at Long Island Railroad, New York, take strike action

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# 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.

- Agribusiness to be taken into democratic public ownership. For a food processing and retail industry under workers' control to ensure that standards

### 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.

- 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

### ENVIRONMENT

- 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.

- No to imperialist wars & occupations!
- Take the wealth off the super-rich!

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Do you agree? Join the fightback!

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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.

- 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.
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# FRANCE 1936: SIT-IN STRIKES

This year marks the 90th anniversary of a wave of mass strikes in France, following the election of a Popular Front government. To mark the occasion, we publish an edited extract of an article by **Peter Taaffe** from 1978, reprinted in *Socialism Today*, July 2024 ([socialismtoday.org/popular-frontism-in-france](http://socialismtoday.org/popular-frontism-in-france))

**T**he titanic sit-down strikes of May-June 1936 stand as a crushing condemnation of the policy of Popular Frontism.

Between 1931 and 1936, the French working class had seen their already meagre wages reduced by an average of 30%. Their growing radicalisation was reflected in the elections of 1936. The Popular Front [a coalition between workers' parties such as the Communist Party and 'liberal' capitalist parties such as the Radical Party] received over 5.5 million votes, compared to the 4.5 million for the right-wing National government.

The revolutionary ferment among the masses was reflected in the capitalist Radical Party's loss of half a million votes, its reduction to third place in votes, while at the same time the Communist Party (CP) doubled its vote to 1.5 million.

Throughout the election campaign, the CP leaders covered the Radicals with a revolutionary aura - in complete contradistinction to Lenin, who used elections to unmask liberal capitalists before their middle-class supporters. The Radicals openly boasted that they would be a brake on the 'excesses' of the socialist ministers.

The Popular Front's programme promised important reforms such as the 40-hour week but came out only for the nationalisation of war industries and the banks. The suspicion of the masses - and their doubts about the willingness of their own leaders

to implement the programme - was shown in the events which followed the election.

On 25 May 1936, half a million workers marched past the spot where the Communards (the workers who briefly took power in the Paris Commune of 1871) were shot "carrying red banners and wearing red flowers, and including many women and children..." The procession was nearly two miles long and lasted from early afternoon till late evening.

Then, in the last week of May and the first two weeks of June, a mighty wave of sit-in strikes was begun by the French working class. Beginning with the metal workers in Paris, all corners of France and all layers of the working class joined in. On the eve of the strike, trade union membership stood at 1.2 million - just 20% of the labour force. Yet upwards of three million joined the strike.

## Occupied

The Manchester Guardian reported on 11 June: "Coachwork factories in Paris, several cinemas and two or three dressmaking firms which were 'occupied' by the 'midinettes' who went on strike today... the stable lads have 'occupied' the racing stables and several hundred undertaker societies and tombstone manufacturers have joined in the movement..."

The syndicate of concierges has asked for holiday with pay and automatic buttons for opening front doors at night!"

The loss of production was bad enough, but the occupations and strikes began to affect the stomachs of the rich: "The rather abrupt manner in which the waiters' strike began in some of the restaurants while some of the customers were in the middle of lunch was rather unpleasant."

The Times reported: "The lifeboat men on the Seine have put up a notice to say that they are on strike and forbidding passers-by to throw themselves into the water."

In the ports, sailors marched through the towns with arms linked singing the 'Internationale', and the police fraternised with the workers. Here was a unique opportunity for the French working class to have taken power peacefully! The forces of French capitalism were completely paralysed.

The French working class was looking in the direction of power. One picket commented to a reporter from the Manchester Guardian: "Our boss has been treating us as dictators. Well I told him that we preferred this sort of dictatorship within the framework of a democratic regime to the dictatorship of Hitler and Mussolini."

The leaders of the French workers' parties were terrified by these developments, which had taken them by surprise and were threatening to get out of control: "Several Communist deputies to whom I spoke were visibly embarrassed and alarmed. They declared the strike to be 'untimely', described it as an uncontrollable mass movement, and declined all responsibility for it."

The French army was a conscript army. Demonstrations and upheavals were sweeping through the barracks, with the conscripts

**Metal workers occupy their factory in the Paris suburbs, summer 1936**  
PHOTOS: PUBLIC DOMAIN

demanding, among other things, the reduction of army service to one year. Any attempt by the French ruling class to use the army against the working class would have resulted in it splitting in their hands.

In a much less favourable situation than this, with the actual armed intervention of imperialism, Lenin and the Bolsheviks were not deterred from taking power in Russia in 1917.

The British Communist Party's Daily Worker, speaking of the effects of the French events in Germany, reported: "The Nazi press at first 'played up' the strikes saying they were an example of the 'chaos' from 'Bolshevik' influence in France. After a few days it became noticeable that workers were beginning to say they saw the huge gains won by the strikers as an example it might be a good one to follow."

## Overthrown

If the German workers were inspired just by wage increases gained by their French brothers and sisters, imagine the effect on them of socialist revolution. Both Hitler and Mussolini would have been overthrown. The Spanish workers, who rose and were initially victorious in four fifths of Spain just one month later, would have joined, as would the working class throughout Europe.

The ruling class of France, and of Europe, together with their shadows within the labour movement, were paralysed by fear, some of them believing that the hour of their downfall had arrived. For instance Prime Minister Léon Blum remarked: "I am being spoken of as a Kerensky who is preparing the way for a Lenin."

But there was no Lenin to be found

in the ranks of the French Communist Party leaders. The methods, the programme and the tactics of Lenin were a book sealed with seven seals so far as the French CP leaders were concerned. They bent every effort to derail the movement of the masses. In the process, enormous suspicion and hostility towards these leaders developed, at least among the advanced workers.

The Manchester Guardian reported: "The revolutionary temper... is undeniable as may be seen by the extraordinary incident that occurred at Renault yesterday. The local Communist deputy who urged the strikers to resume work on the basis of Monday's agreement... was howled down and driven out of the works. There is no doubt that not only the CGT (trade union federation) but even the Communist leaders have no control and no authority over the strikers of several engineering concerns."

Seeing power slip from the hands of his class and no doubt gnashing his teeth, one worker commented: "It is strange to think that in a few days everything may go back to 'normal' and Renault will come into their own again; and the posters and drawings and flags and wireless set and everything will be gone. Foremen will be able to order you about and glare."

The French capitalists were forced to concede the 40-hour week, at least in words, as the price of getting the strike called off. But what the capitalists gave with the left hand they took back with the right later on. The wage increases were gradually cancelled through inflation. No sooner was the ink dry on the agreement than the

individual employers began to resist the implementation of the reforms.

But The Times urged the French capitalists to bide their time: "The general terms of Monday's settlement are being resisted in detail, with the risk that disappointment following apparent victory may produce a fiercer temper in the working class than a period of waiting would have done."

Power for the French working class was there for the taking in 1936, but for the treacherous role of the workers' leaders, particularly the Communist Party leaders.

Hiding behind the Popular Front, the French capitalists prepared their revenge. Later, thousands of militants were victimised. In October 1936, further sit-ins took place and this time the police were used to evict the strikers.

The French capitalists, moreover, heaped on the shoulders of the working class the responsibility for inflation, thereby alienating the middle class from the workers. This shows the futility of attempting to win the middle class on a programme which does not go beyond the framework of capitalism.

By taking power, by taking over the assets of the ruling 200 families and establishing a planned economy, the French working class would have shown in action that it was the only force capable of solving the problems of the middle layers. A planned economy would have allowed for cancellation of the debts of the small people in town and country and the extension of cheap credit and aid.

Instead, Léon Blum was forced out of the premiership of the Popular

Front government in 1937 and the Socialists were completely excluded in 1938. The French working class, as with their Spanish brothers and sisters, were thus delivered into the arms of Fascism. The French Popular Front prepared the way for the enslavement of the working class by the Nazis and their French collaborators in the Vichy regime.

In the immediate post-war period, the European capitalists used the Communist and Socialist Party leaders through the medium of coalition government to save themselves from the wrath of the masses. When the danger had passed, however, the CP and socialist leaders were unceremoniously booted out.

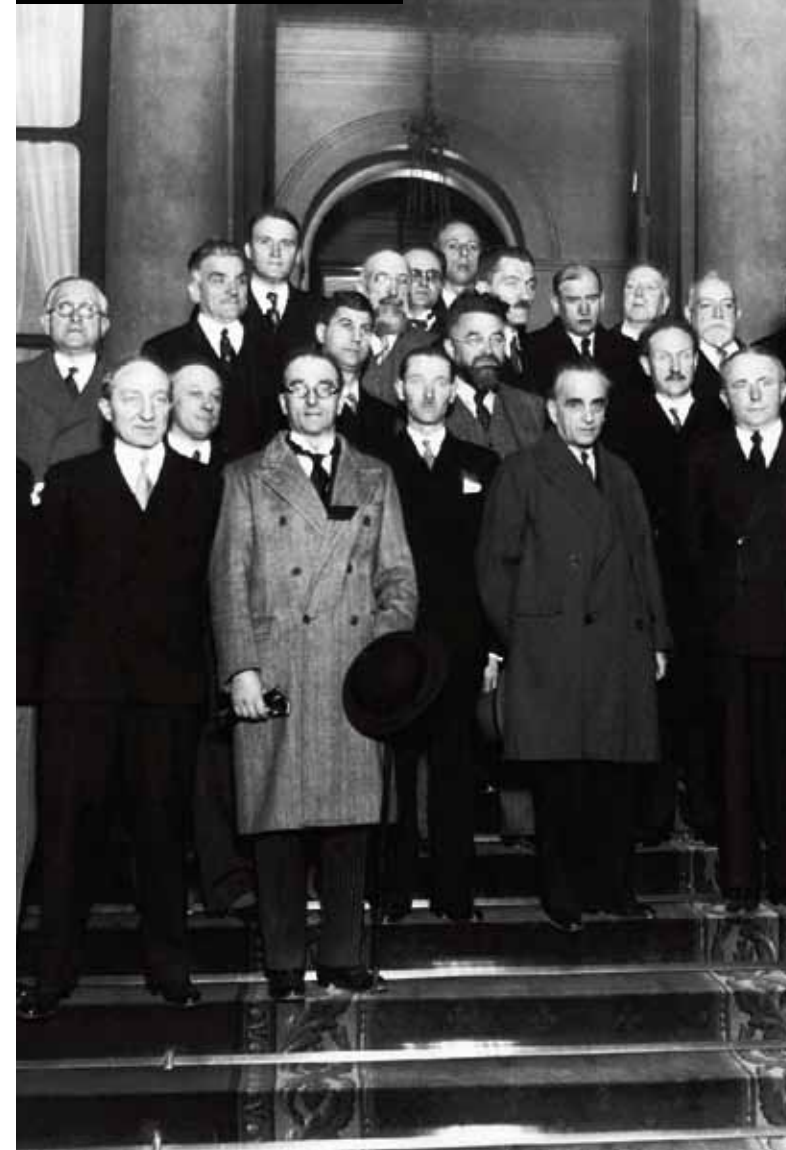
The legacy of the Popular Front is one of defeats - sometimes bloody and terrible, as in Chile in 1973.

## Stronger

But the 1970s are not the 1930s, or even the 1940s. The Italian, French and Spanish working class are immeasurably stronger than in the past. Stalinism no longer exercises a mesmeric effect on the rank and file of the Communist Parties. On the basis of the great events which impend in Europe, the rank and file will see that only disaster lies at the end of the road of the 'Popular' or 'National' Fronts.

The workers in these organisations will seek a return to a programme capable of giving them victory in the struggle to eliminate capitalism. As a step towards this, the advanced workers must absorb the lessons of past popular fronts in order to prevent catastrophe in the struggles which are now opening up.

The Léon Blum government in June 1936



## Popular Frontism

**T**he capitalist establishment in 1930s France faced deep political crisis, based ultimately on the deep crisis of world capitalism. In February 1934, mass discontent found its expression in the form of riots, with the involvement of authoritarian and far-right forces - and in the context of fascism on the rise in Europe.

Writing in November 1934 (Whither France?), Leon Trotsky describes how across Europe, at different rhythms in different countries, capitalism's complete bankruptcy was being revealed. The working class taking power was posed or, where the working class - as a result of faulty leadership failed to do so - the capitalists were resorting to fascism. He put it: "The historic function of fascism is to smash the working class, destroy its organisations, and stifle political liberties when the capitalists find themselves unable to govern and dominate with the help of democratic machinery."

"The fascists find their human material mainly in the petty bourgeoisie [middle class layers]. The latter has been entirely ruined by big capital... Fascism is the act of placing the petty bourgeoisie



The strike at the Louvre

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at the disposal of its most bitter enemies."

For the Stalinist leadership of the Communist International, acting according to the narrow self-serving interests of the Soviet bureaucracy, had swung from its disastrous 'third period' in which it denounced social democratic organisations as 'social fascist' to support for 'popular frontism', an uncritical alliance of all the workers' parties with the liberal capitalist parties 'against fascism'.

In France, the Radicals were the liberal capitalist party "with whose aid the big bourgeoisie preserve[d] the hopes of the petty bourgeoisie in a progressive and peaceful improvement of its situation... only so long as the economic situation of the petty bourgeoisie remained supportable and tolerable." But under the blows of capitalist crisis, support for the Radicals was collapsing.

Trotsky said: "The working-class party must occupy itself not with a hopeless effort to save the party of the bankrupts. It must, on the contrary, with all its strength, accelerate the process of liberation of the masses from Radical influence."

"To bring the petty bourgeoisie to its side, the proletariat [working class] must win its confidence. And for that it must have confidence in its own strength. It must have a clear programme of action and must be ready to struggle for power."

90 years later, we are in a very different situation. Fascism coming to power is not currently posed. Nonetheless, there are many lessons from this period for today. Under the blows of capitalist crisis, British capitalism is faced with the collapse of its establishment parties. Faced with the threat of a right-populist Reform-led government, leaders of the trade unions speak of the need to support Labour to keep Reform out. Green Party leader Zack Polanski, seen by many as an anti-establishment left winger, has spoken of being willing to take part in a future 'progressive alliance' with Labour to stop Reform.

Such developments could succeed temporarily in limiting the number of Reform MPs elected, for example. However, a popular alliance - with support from the leaders of the trade unions - of the Greens with Labour, even potentially involving the Lib Dems, would in fact only prepare the ground for further future growth of Reform and the right.

The Socialist Party fights for independent working-class politics, including for the trade unions to lead in the building of a mass workers' party. By showing a lead in fighting to defend the working class from the bosses' attacks, armed with a programme for the socialist transformation of society, the workers' movement can cut across support for the right.

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# the Socialist

Issue 1370

4-10 June 2026

formerly **Militant**

# UNITE AND FIGHT FOR A FUTURE

# Against bosses' division



PAUL MATTSSON

**ARCHIE BETTS**  
LIVERPOOL SOCIALIST STUDENTS

**A** new surge in the cost-of-living crisis is beginning to bite, and its getting even harder to find a job, especially for young people.

Over one million people aged between 16 and 24 are not in education, employment or training (NEET), according to the latest government report. The climate crisis continues to get worse, and all the horrors of war fill our screens. This is a system that can't provide us with a decent future.

People are angry - and rightly so. The capitalist system makes the rich richer but our services are crumbling and we keep being asked to pay more for the basics. There is a deep discontent and a complete lack of trust in the establishment.

### Is Reform an alternative?

In the May elections, some working people used a vote for Nigel Farage's Reform UK as a way to express anger against the status quo and what is seen by many as the Labour-Tory uniparty.

A vote for Reform however, is anything but a vote against the status quo. As with the many other failed ventures of Nigel Farage, Reform plays up to the anger of the working class. It doesn't point towards how we can win a fight against the bosses getting richer at our expense though.

In fact, it deliberately helps the bosses by trying to divide the working class and young people - something Labour and the Tories do too. Asylum seekers, trans people, disabled people - all are being scapegoated by the bosses and their politicians. And now the Labour government is preparing the ground to attack young people, arguing that we should be paid a lower minimum wage and be forced to do unpaid work placements.

What is needed is a united struggle of the whole working class, together with young people - fighting for decent jobs, a home for all, fully funded services, and against the bosses' division. The trade unions should lead that fight, and put forward a clear socialist programme to address the real needs of society, one that vehemently rejects the current wave of fearmongering and scapegoating.

WHAT WE STAND FOR: THE SOCIALIST PARTY'S MAIN DEMANDS >>> see column on p13

