

Trade unions must lead

FIGHT AGAINST COST-OF-LIVING CRISIS

BECCA BAYMAN
LIVERPOOL NORTH SOCIALIST PARTY

The overwhelming majority of people are already feeling the impact of another surge in the cost of living. 79% of adults surveyed in April said they were feeling the effects, and prices have only gone up since.

The biggest driver was the cost of food, with 92% of those affected mentioning higher grocery bills, 80% pointed to rising fuel costs. Rents are increasing to record highs too and over a million households are stuck on council housing waiting lists. Wages are simply not keeping pace with the rising costs of essentials.

At the same time, workers face growing economic uncertainty. Unemployment is rising, increasing pressure on workers and making employers more confident to suppress pay and enforce unfair working conditions. Young people especially face the sharp end of this, with around one million currently not in education, employment or training.

With rising prices and job insecurity, living standards are being squeezed from both sides. Keir Starmer's Labour government is overseeing a further driving down of working-class living standards to appease big businesses' need for profit. It is clear the system is broken and workers should not be forced to foot the bill.

We need the trade unions to step up and lead a fight for pay rises to meet the rising cost of living, fully funded in the public sector – and for a minimum wage of at least £15 an hour, with no age exemptions.

Trade union leaders are under growing pressure from members to fight nationally, and to coordinate across unions. This pressure must be carried through and linked to the need for the working class to have its own party to fight in our interests against big business.

Trade unions should demand councils use every power at their disposal to address the cost-of-living crisis – for example by immediately capping council rents and taking steps towards democratic rent controls; by expanding free school meals to all pupils, including during the holidays; and by using emergency hardship grants to ensure no-one goes cold or hungry.

The capitalist system will continue to move from crisis to crisis, so we need a socialist solution. Nationalisation of the top companies would mean energy and groceries can be treated as essentials instead of sources of profit. And a democratic socialist plan could be developed to meet the needs of all rather than to maximise the profits of the super-rich.

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Reject Labour’s cuts to Disabled Students’ Allowance

JAMES GRETTON
SOUTHAMPTON SOCIALIST STUDENTS

The Department of Education’s plans to withdraw Disabled Students’ Allowance (DSA) funding for specialist assistive software are an affront to students everywhere, who continue to burden the cost-of-living crisis with mounting debt and tuition fees. Disabled students struggle with mental health, employment and inclusion, and need both the financial and technological resources like DSA to pursue their studies without fear of roadblocks. These plans are ongoing, with the consultation closing on 18 June, and they reflect a wider pattern of governments neglecting disabilities in education. SEND (special education needs and disabilities) budgets for pupils are underfunded after over a decade of cuts, and councils fail to combat the root causes of why they cannot meet their statutory duties – that the funding received from central government is inadequate.



PHOTO: ALEC THRAVES

A report found that in the 2019-20 academic year, only 29% of disabled students in England and Wales received DSA, based on data from the Student Loans Company (SLC). Some disabled students assume that others are more deserving, and so they shouldn’t apply. These are damaging attitudes which no society should be harbouring, especially not one with the wealth and resources to ensure every disabled student is supported and able to thrive.

Disability campaigners have launched a change.org petition calling for the DSA plans to be halted, already nearly 10,000 people have signed. If we unite and fight against these attacks, we can win. In 2025, Starmer’s government attempted swingeing cuts to Personal Independence Payments (PIP). Restricting PIP eligibility criteria was met with strong opposition from campaign groups and trade unions.

Ultimately, pro-capitalist parties like Starmer’s Labour prioritise short-term savings and the bosses’ profits over the wellbeing and education of the vast majority of society. They must be confronted with a mass movement, linking the fight for disabled students to have the software, hardware and welfare to thrive to the fight for free education and the resources for all of us to access it.



PHOTO: EWAN M/CC

BEN GOLDSTONE
CROYDON SOCIALIST PARTY

A report has found that the poorest areas in England face the deepest cuts to green space under changes to planning law. The report, commissioned by several live and environmental NGOs, found that more than 7.4 million people living in England reside in areas without immediate access to biodiverse nature, including 1.4 million children under 15. This extreme poverty of nature is driven by disparities within towns and cities instead of a rural-urban divide, and a new ‘loophole’ for developers will only make it worse.

Rules introduced in 2024 made it mandatory in England for most new developments to provide at least a 10% increase in the value in biodiversity in order to help mitigate the effects on the environment. The Labour government however has

introduced a series of exemptions for housebuilders after lobbying from the sector, including exemptions for sites of 0.2 hectares or less. There is also an ongoing consultation which would take away biodiversity rules for brownfield sites of up to 2.5 hectares.

Charities have warned that these exemptions would hit poorest communities worst, reducing their access to nature even further, while more well-off citizens continue to enjoy the privilege of green spaces. Nowhere is this shown to be more obvious than in Croydon, London. The report showed that it has the most extreme inequality in access to nature. 73% of richer areas enjoy easy access to nature, compared to 24% in the most deprived areas.

This shows plainly why housing decisions cannot be left up to the private sector. Working-class people deserve access to wildlife and nature.

We need to fight back against any attempt that big housing developers make to take that away from us.

What we need is working-class control over home building as well as infrastructure. This would include a mass council house building campaign of affordable good-quality and environmentally sustainable homes, alongside public leisure facilities, including parks and nature reserves. You just need to look to Liverpool in the 1980s for what can be achieved. The council led by

Militant – the Socialist Party’s predecessor – launched its Urban Regeneration Strategy and built thousands of council houses alongside leisure centres, schools, and parks, then fought the Thatcher government to pay up the bill.

This shows what can be achieved when the working class get organised and take on the bosses and their politicians. Part of that fight is building a new working-class party that won’t just capitulate to demands from private developers and the billionaires.

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HENRY NOWAK MURDER: ANGER ERUPTS OVER POLICE CONDUCT

- Fight for democratic working-class control of police
- For a united working-class fightback, reject racist division

Socialist Party WHAT WE THINK

The footage of Southampton student Henry Nowak’s last minutes in which, with a fatal stab wound, he is dragged by police across the floor from behind a car to be handcuffed, is harrowing. The arresting officer responds to Henry saying he has been stabbed with: “I don’t think you have mate”. Henry, the victim, was initially treated as a suspect. The man who stabbed him - Vickrum Digwa, a Sikh man who has now been sentenced for murder - had lied to police to accuse Henry of racist abuse.

The video, released on 1 June, provoked anger and disgust across society. In response, Reform UK leader Nigel Farage cynically released his own video on the morning of 2 June calling for “cold, hard rage” in response.

Two tiers

In his video, Farage made claims of ‘two-tier policing’. The reality is that the police, courts and the law - the whole justice system - do treat different people differently. We do not experience crime in the same way. So, while working-class victims of crime have little hope of a quick response from police, the rich are paying for their own private security firms made up of retired police officers to patrol their streets. A couple of hundred pounds a month will buy you access to ‘My Local Bobby’ in London’s most exclusive streets. Completely unaffordable for most of us, but peanuts to billionaire residents. Nor do we have the same experience of the justice system. The cost to taxpayers of security provided for the Royal Family is never made public, but is estimated at £150 million a year. Meanwhile, for decades the crimes of the now former prince Andrew were passed over.

At the same time, the police and the courts are increasingly being used to suppress protests and workers organising. For example, the use of court injunctions used against pickets through the Birmingham bin dispute, and police using huge resources and increased powers to disperse pickets preventing scab lorries from leaving depots.

While for many a phone call to police is the first step when a victim of crime, ultimately the police force and



PHOTO: PAUL MATTSSON

justice system are not ‘neutral’ but exist to serve the interests of the capitalist class. That is reflected in their make up. Over 60% of senior judges went to public school, for example, compared to 6% of the population. Because of the justice system’s role in defending the status quo in society, reactionary attitudes and ideas that the capitalist system uses to divide the working class and justify exploitation - including racism, sexism and homophobia - are baked into its institutions.

Racist division

Of course Nigel Farage, whose party has had a record level of donations from crypto billionaires, did not talk about the class character of policing. Instead he whipped up division when

he said that different groups are treated differently by police, claiming that the “rights and privileges of white people are treated differently from those of ethnic minorities”.

Later that day, a protest of several hundred assembled at Southampton central police station. It was addressed by several prominent far-right activists, including Tommy Robinson, spreading racist division. The protest proceeded to march through the city to near the site of Henry’s murder, where there was a violent confrontation with police.

The far-right protest has further provoked fear, especially among Asian and Black communities in the city and beyond, of an increased threat of racist attacks. Steps towards organised community self-defence, for example of places of worship or other facilities serving the

community, should be offered support from the workers’ movement. Like, for example, the role Southampton trades union council played organising stewarding to defend a 2025 march against the Israeli state’s assault on Gaza threatened by the far right.

The events surrounding Henry’s murder will strike another blow to public confidence and trust in the police which, according to a 2024 government report, “has declined in recent years... YouGov reported that 54% of adults in Great Britain thought the police were doing a good job, down from 72% in October 2019”.

The report highlights incidents such as Sarah Everard’s rape and murder - by a serving police officer, and other findings of police vetting failings, as contributing factors. As well as “ongoing concerns about institutional racism and the police’s relationship with some ethnic minority communities”.

Figures from Hampshire Police, which the Southampton officers serve under, show Black men eight times more likely to be stopped and searched than white men, for example. The 2023 Casey Review into Sarah Everard’s murder found London’s Metropolitan Police to be institutionally racist, sexist and homophobic.

Writing in the Daily Mail, Tory leader Kemi Badenoch called for the Southampton case to do the same for institutional change as the 1993 racist murder of Steven Lawrence. What she didn’t say is that it took years of struggle - including mass protests, winning support through the trade unions and determined campaigning from Steven’s family - before the government carried out the Macpherson Inquiry, and 18 years before just two of the gang involved in Steven’s murder were convicted.

Policing for who?

The so-called ‘Independent’ Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) is investigating officers’ conduct in the Henry Nowak case. The IOPC website lists the directors and their backgrounds; all have long histories throughout the policing institutions and as senior civil servants.

Instead, it should be a body democratically elected from the local community and the trade unions which investigates. The Socialist Party fights for working-class democratic control of the police, including determining operational priorities, as well as with responsibility for vetting, and firing and hiring of officers.

The call for policing to be under the democratic control of the local community was a key demand of Socialist Party member Nadia Ditta standing in the inner-city Southampton ward of Bevois in May’s local elections, responding to concerns over crime and community safety. Nadia came a close second to Labour, standing as part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition, and fighting for a socialist political alternative and a united working-class fightback against austerity.

Working-class organisation, including for a socialist political alternative, is what is required to cut across attempts by the populist and far right to sow racist division.



Striking Birmingham bin workers. After attempts to fire and rehire the workforce, Unite members voted to examine their union's relationship to the Labour Party

Trade Unionists for a New Party

300 registered to attend the Trade Unionists for a New Party (TU4NP) meeting, which took place online on 8 June. The discussion, chaired by former Labour MP and chair of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) Dave Nellist, heard contributions from trade union executive members and activists from ten trade unions. It included Birmingham bin strike convenor Matt Reid, executive members from Unite, Unison, NEU and UCU, as well as PCS Deputy President Dave Semple.

A year ago, the first meeting of TU4NP brought together around 1,000 activists and was followed shortly after by Jeremy Corbyn and Zarah Sultana announcing their intention to form 'Your Party' – to which 800,000 responded.

In the year since, TU4NP has convened groups of activists in the unions to plan how best to campaign within the structures of their individual unions, for steps towards a new party of the working class, led by the trade unions.

Update from the union conferences

As preparation for the meeting, TUSC published a report on its website. The report documents the debates at the union conferences that have taken place to the end of May, with extracts from the various motions and statements that were tabled. In addition there is an update on the situation in Unite, which while it does not have a conference this year, has seen a significant shift in the composition of its executive council following elections that were concluded on 27 April.

There is a report too from the Trades Councils conference which took place 30-31 May. There are also important conferences coming up in June which will be covered in future updates – in the GMB, the BFAWU bakers' union, Unison, the RMT and, in October, NAP0.

● Read report in full online at tusc.org.uk: 'Trade Unionists for a New Party campaign progress report: a union-by-union round up'

Trade Unionists for a New Party

Scan the QR code to sign the petition and find out more:



Port Talbot Steelworks fire: a steelworker speaks

JASON WYATT

UNITE REP, TATA STEEL, PORT TALBOT

“The British steel industry is forever in crisis. Decades of deindustrialisation have hollowed out once proud steel towns, and every time the industry is hit by another blow, it's workers, never shareholders, never governments, who are left to pay the price. The fire at Port Talbot on 5 June is just the latest reminder of how fragile Britain's industrial backbone has become.

The blaze tore through the Pickle Line on Wednesday evening, forcing the shutdown of the Port Talbot Hot and Cold Mills, and triggering a major emergency response. Thankfully no workers were injured, but the damage to a vital production line has deepened anxiety in the workforce and in a community already living through a slow-motion industrial collapse.

Port Talbot has been in limbo since Tata shut down ironmaking in 2024. Steelmaking itself is paused until

the new 3.2Mt electric arc furnace is commissioned. In the meantime, the company is importing slab and hot rolled coil just to keep downstream operations alive. For a town built on steel, it feels like watching the foundations being dismantled piece by piece.

Unite

Unite general secretary Sharon Graham has called for urgent guarantees to protect jobs, not just at Tata, but across the supply chain, and for Port Talbot's Pickle Line project (part of the £1.25 billion investment) to be accelerated. Workers cannot be expected to shoulder yet another period of uncertainty while investment decisions are kicked further down the road.

And she's right. The fire isn't an isolated incident, it's a symptom of a system that has allowed a strategic industry to wither. Successive governments have talked endlessly about 'green steel', 'transition', and 'levelling up', yet the workers – the people who actually make the steel

– are left navigating crisis after crisis with little more than words from Westminster.

If the UK is serious about having a steel industry, not just in press releases but in reality, then this moment should be a turning point. The events of this week underline what many in the labour movement have argued for years: private ownership alone cannot deliver the stability, investment, or long-term planning that steel communities need.

A strategic industry requires strategic commitment. That means substantial government support, and a meaningful public stake in steel. Not as an ideological gesture, but as a practical necessity to safeguard jobs, rebuild capacity, and ensure that towns like Port Talbot aren't left to absorb the cost of every corporate decision and every industrial setback.

The fire may be out. The crisis is not. And unless the government steps up, Britain risks losing not just a steelworks, but the future of an entire community.”



Protest against Port Talbot steelworks closure in 2024. SCOTT JONES

The Socialist Party fights for the steel industry to be nationalised, with no compensation paid to the bosses that have enriched themselves running down the industry, and placed under the democratic control and management of the working class. With workers themselves making the decisions about investment, we could draw up a plan based on what we actually need not what satisfies shareholders. Nationalising steel, alongside the big banks and businesses that dominate the economy, would mean we could restore crumbling infrastructure, build the council houses we need, and transition away from polluting fossil fuels without workers having to pay the price.

NHS: Fully fund primary care, no to two-tier privatisation

JUDE BYRNE

BIRMINGHAM SOCIALIST PARTY

A move towards a more privatised GP service, similar to NHS dentistry, has been proposed by GP Committee England (GPCE). A ballot of GPs will take place in the next year.

The so-called 'Plan B' would allow GPs greater freedom to provide private services to their patients – a means-tested subscription-based service, as currently offered by NHS dentists – resulting in a two-tier system. (We all know how dentistry has turned out!)

If GPs did vote to proceed with this plan, we would see inequality in primary healthcare returning to what it was 80+ years ago.

GPCE have taken this decision at a time when morale is at an all-time low. Hardly surprising after years of underfunding to the service, coupled with increasing workload and more complex cases. GPs no longer feel able to deliver safe and sustainable care. Patients and their families find it harder to access the care they need, so some can become frustrated with GP practice staff.

Decades of underfunding are responsible, with more and more party-political donors linked to private healthcare companies and right-wing think tanks.

'Plan B' shows some GPs have now halted demands of politicians to build a properly funded primary healthcare service in the NHS.

Chaos in A&Es would worsen if we lose this primary healthcare service. We must increase awareness of what is happening, oppose this plan and, crucially, get behind GPs and NHS staff campaigning for full funding urgently.

The BMA (British Medical Association) should campaign with other unions, informing the public about the situation in GP practices and pushing for the government investment needed to cope with the massive workload.

WHAT'S YOUR VIEW?
editors@socialistparty.org.uk

Middle East: Netanyahu pushed for escalation in his 'forever war'

YASHA MARMER

GUEST AUTHOR FROM SOCIALIST STRUGGLE MOVEMENT, ISRAEL-PALESTINE

The already undermined daily routine of tens of millions of residents in Tehran, Beirut, and in Israel was once again completely disrupted. Benjamin Netanyahu's Israeli government, with the far right, had consistently pushed for an escalation in military aggression – both in Lebanon and in Iran – out of a transparent desire to torpedo the emerging agreements in the negotiations for a permanent ceasefire between Tehran and Washington.

Netanyahu's threat of a provocative show-strike on the Dahieh suburb of Beirut was finally carried out on 7 June and, as expected, it rapidly dragged the region into a dangerous escalation to the brink of a full renewal of a 'multi-front' regional war.

Iran's counterattack began the following evening. Did Netanyahu, Minister of Defence Israel Katz, and the arrogant generals underestimate the threats of the Iranian regime? It is more reasonable to assume that the provocative strike on Beirut was designed to drag the Iranian military into renewing fire and to provide the Israeli government of death with an opportune moment to renew the attack on Iran, despite the pressures from Washington.

Desperate Donald

Donald Trump, who emerged humiliated and desperate for an agreement and a diplomatic achievement after 40 days of a barbaric imperialist offensive on Iran, and a further 60 days of fruitless negotiations with the Iranian regime, urged Netanyahu not to respond to the symbolic missile barrage from Iran. Although Washington

itself has recently attacked Iran on several occasions during the ceasefire, the crisis in the Strait of Hormuz continues to exert pressure on the global economy and, through this, also on Trump; moreover, mass revulsion in the US over the continuation of the war is expanding. Added to this was Trump's desire to arrive at the start of the football World Cup with a binding ceasefire agreement in hand. Yet Washington's ability to dictate moves is limited, and it is failing to fully control the height of the flames of the regional conflagration it ignited with the US-Israeli offensive that began on 28 February.

Attacks on Iran

Dozens of fighter jets of the Israeli Air Force attacked Iran – in two waves of strikes – and local news agencies reported a series of explosions in Tehran, Tabriz, and Isfahan. In Mahshahr, south-west Iran, the Air Force struck the Karoun petrochemical plant – which underscores that the Israeli government is not satisfied with only military targets. At the same time, the Israeli military attacked villages in the Nabatieh and Sidon governorates in southern Lebanon. The regional escalation was also exploited to tighten the siege on Gaza and to prevent the entry of aid to the surviving population in the Strip.

The Iranian regime's counter-response included missile barrages aimed at Israel. Also, a Houthi spokesperson in Yemen threatened to attack Israeli vessels in the Red Sea after claiming responsibility for firing a missile at territories under Israeli rule.

The war on Lebanon continues, and the aggression against Iran has been halted only temporarily. “At

the moment the fire on this front is held,” said Netanyahu. His speech was a combination of boasting, “Iran and Hezbollah are weaker than ever,” and cynical security scaremongering. There was no expectation that he would address the thousands of victims who perished in his attacks this year on Lebanon and Iran, or the millions uprooted from their homes. The families in Israel, both Jewish and Arab, who lost loved ones in the barrages both in June 2025 and in March-April of this year, were also entirely absent from Netanyahu's speech, perhaps to make people forget his declaration from last year regarding the elimination of the ballistic threat, alongside the nuclear threat.

In reality, the Iranian regime has strengthened its regional position as a result of the strategic failure of the Israeli-US imperialist offensive to bring about its downfall, and motivation to acquire a military nuclear capability as a means of self-preservation can only have grown.

In Israel, action must be taken to promote protest and towards building a cross-national socialist left-wing force of working people that will work in the coming general election campaign to strengthen the struggle for a total halt to the war and regional aggression; for the withdrawal of Israeli military forces from Lebanon, Syria, and Gaza; and for an end to the siege of the Strip and the occupation in the West Bank. This needs to be part of a socialist programme that will advance a root-and-branch solution based on equal rights to existence, to self-determination, and to a life of dignity, welfare, and personal security for all.

● See socialiststruggle.org for the full version of this article



Smoke billows in Beirut following Israeli missile strikes in April 2026. MEGAPHONE/CC

Starter jobs halved: we need action on the youth jobs apocalypse

JACK

TOWER HAMLETS SOCIALIST PARTY

Young people today face a labour market increasingly unable or unwilling to provide them with a route into work. Online adverts for so-called 'starter jobs' – jobs aimed at people who have never worked before – have almost halved over the past decade, falling from an average of 139,300 vacancies per week in 2016-17 to just 71,100 in 2025-26. The consequences are clear: in the final months of 2025, there were three times as many young people not in education, employment or training as there were advertised entry-level jobs. Far from being a problem of motivation or skills, youth unemployment increasingly reflects an economy that offers fewer opportunities while demanding more experience from those who have never been given the chance to gain it.

As a recent graduate looking for

work, I found the job market extremely difficult to break into. Many jobs advertised as entry-level still demand significant amounts of previous experience, creating barriers for those trying to get started. When applying for jobs, even receiving a response is rare. With relatively few, genuine entry-level opportunities available, competition becomes intense, and candidates with far more experience often end up securing these positions instead. From speaking to others my age, this does not seem like an isolated experience, but a common struggle shared across an entire generation entering the workforce.

With government proposals placing young people on Universal Credit into temporary training programmes where they receive only benefits and no guarantee of work afterwards, it becomes clear that the rotten capitalist system has no real answer to the crisis of youth unemployment, only serving the interests of the super-rich bosses.

To end this crisis, we need a £15-an-hour minimum wage for all as a step towards a real living wage, mass public investment in jobs and public services while sharing out the work, and the creation of training schemes that come with guaranteed jobs at the end.

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Young workers - come to NSSN conference in London, 27 June

NIVEN DAY

LIVERPOOL SOCIALIST STUDENTS

For most of us, life after high school, no matter the direction that's taken, puts us into a capitalist trap that is difficult to escape from. Some will go straight into work, where they are paid less than a 21-year-old for the same amount of work, while others will go to university, with measly maintenance loans, and end up having to get one, even two, jobs, mostly consisting of minimum wage on a zero-hour contract.

The lack of trade union representation in these jobs is worrying. Young workers can be replaced with ease, or 'quiet fired', where they are given no hours for the most minute of reasons. It is why it is important that young workers get organised.

If you are a young worker, or a university student, get involved in your trade union. Find the best fit for your workplace, or get involved in a Unite Community branch for those who are unemployed. Being a part of a union is how to use the collective strength of workers rather than facing the bosses alone. If you are a part of a trade union already, get your branch to affiliate to the NSSN.

The National Shop Stewards Network conference is taking place on 27 June in London, bringing together rank-and-file activists from across the trade unions to discuss how we build the working-class fightback.

Come along to meet and discuss with other young workers, and learn from the experiences of class fighters from across our movement.

• See back page for conference details



PHOTO: MARY FINCH

Unison conference 2026: Labour failing members, build a fighting strategy



PHOTO: PAUL MATTISSON

Public sector union Unison's conference is taking place against the background of a massive collapse in Labour's vote in the May elections. Labour has enraged workers by openly attacking sections such as the elderly and those with disabilities, while continuing with Tory austerity measures.

Since Unison's formation, the right-wing dominated leadership has had one strategy - get Labour into power and work with them to try to change things. This strategy was always flawed. Even during the Blair years it meant privatisation, pay stagnation and cuts to services.

A union of 1.3 million members has the ability to organise mass nationwide militant campaigns on all the crucial issues that face the working class.

To win we need a national fightback

Unfortunately, on the whole, this year's conference agenda fails to present delegates with serious options for building a national strategy to fight. While it's true that the leadership is moving the union onto an 'organising' agenda - aiming to build strength through industrial campaigns as opposed to a union that just excels at individual representation, services and lobbying politicians - there is still a reliance on doing this branch by branch.

Although the right-wing dominated National Executive Council (NEC) motion on organising doesn't roll back the clock to the days of Unison being a 'service' union, it does limit the organising strategy to winning smaller, localised disputes in key sectors for the union. However, in all of these sectors - schools, Adult Social Care and the NHS - there has never been a clearer need to bring these groups of members together for a national fight.

The union still struggles to win ballots for national action, especially

on the crucial issue of pay. A whole series of nationally co-ordinated ballots have failed to beat the Tory 50% ballot threshold in all sectors, despite substantial majorities in favour of action in all cases. Yet the NEC is presenting the new Employment Rights Act, that has failed to remove these thresholds, as "transformative". However, members will be demanding that the union goes into battle against Labour over pay as the cost of living spirals out of control.

Fighting Reform

The collapse in support for Labour has benefited Reform UK in some local authorities. Reform has gained from the despair of many, including workers and trade unionists in some instances, at the attacks they face from all the establishment pro-capitalist parties, including Labour.

Unison must confront the serious implications this has for members' jobs, pay and conditions and services by bringing members together to fight - with industrial action if required. But the NEC's motion, while recognising the root causes of the rise of Reform, fails to put the case for an ongoing campaign against austerity which is the breeding ground for this expression of frustration.

The Surrey County amendment, if carried, would set the ground for Unison to organise a militant campaign against austerity, drawing workers into a coherent opposition to Reform UK, and could establish a national movement against the far right, around the theme of 'Jobs, Homes and Services not Racism', as the TUC agreed to in 2018, but has not implemented.

Developing an industrial and political strategy

Andrea Egan will address her first conference as general secretary with big expectations following her victory as a lay member over the 'continuity' candidate and previous right-wing,

pro-Starmer general secretary Christina McAnea.

Most activists will want to hear how Andrea plans to transform Unison into a fighting trade union. She has made remarks that many Unison members would welcome - the implementation of a wave of insourcing, developing support to deliver national action over pay, and for a radical change of direction over the funding of public services.

Most members do not see the Labour Party as a vehicle for change. Andrea Egan addressed this in her general secretary election manifesto when she pledged to "end subservience to Labour", and "launch a comprehensive review of our relationship with the Labour Party including the role of the Labour Link". Conference will hear that fewer than 14% of members pay into Labour Link. Many members will want to know when will this comprehensive review start?

With Labour in crisis and potentially heading for further defeats, members will want to know how they can back political representatives that are prepared to deliver on our union's policies and not back down to big business bosses once they get power. Andrea has a choice, she can either fight to change the direction of the Labour Party or fight to allow Unison members to work alongside other trade unionists to build a working-class, trade union-based and socialist alternative.

Unison members deserve a bold, militant campaigning union to meet all of the challenges we face. Socialist Party members in the union will be fighting at conference for the best positions to push a militant agenda that helps members organise to win. Increasingly the union will need to adopt socialist policies and join the fight for new working-class political representation.

● Extract from the Socialist Party bulletin to be distributed at Unison conference

Socialist Party fringe meeting

Labour in crisis - building a fighting alternative

Wednesday 17 June, 5.30pm or end of conference at St Paul's Church, West Street, BN1 2RE (at the rear of the conference centre) all welcome

Speakers: Hannah Sell, Socialist Party general secretary, and Jim McFarlane, Unison NEC member (pc)

Resident doctors strike to continue

A RESIDENT DOCTOR

Resident doctors will strike again from 15 to 19 June. The strike comes after meetings with Labour's new health secretary James Murray ended with the government just re-presenting the previous offer. It shows how the government fails to take seriously the issues facing resident doctors - and the NHS as a whole.

This wave of strike action is not just about pay restoration. Resident doctors are asking to be paid equivalently - after inflation - to resident doctors in 2008. A letter by a consultant to the Guardian newspaper tried to justify this real-terms pay cut by

pointing out that resident doctors in 2008 worked longer weeks (56 hours instead of 48). However, they failed to take into account that hospitals are significantly busier - in both outpatients and emergency departments - as well as the exponential rise in the cost of living, and that resident doctors now owe tens of thousands more in student debt.

The other issue facing resident doctors, especially at the start of our careers, is the bottlenecks in career progression. There has been an increase in the number of medical student places as well as an increase in doctors migrating from abroad, but no proportional increase in training jobs for them to have meaningful job security or progression. With

the NHS under more pressure than ever and an aging population, we will need more resident doctors and consultants to care for them. Keeping these doctors in the NHS will require paying them competitively. Unfortunately, at the moment, only resident doctors seem aware of these looming threats.

It should be noted some resident doctors have reservations regarding the approach of our union the British Medical Association (BMA). It is also important to point out that BMA staff are themselves striking for better pay and have not yet reached a resolution. This does not negate the need to address the very real crisis we face, and our determination to fight to resolve it.



PHOTO: PAUL MATTISSON

Newly elected Unite Executive discusses Labour affiliation

SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBERS ON THE UNITE EXECUTIVE

The first regular Executive Council took place following elections to the union's leadership body, although shorter than normal, with two days held for training.

One of the major items running through discussions was the focus on combines - a means of bringing together a mass of reps and activists around a particular theme to plan a strategy. This could be on an industrial basis, for example the successful Finance Sector combine, or an equalities strand, for example on Women. Aimed at increasing engagement, they move away from the system of formal delegations and contested elections for a limited number of positions.

On the political side, there were discussions on democratising the political committees within Unite, and further detail on the consultation with members over Unite's

future political direction. This was part of a commitment to review the relationship with the Labour Party, in particular following an emergency motion at last year's Policy Conference related to the Birmingham bin strikes. However, it is clear that the discussion will extend beyond just our affiliation to Labour, extending to a detailed survey of members' political views and priorities.

The Socialist Party has continued to argue that there should be a Rules Conference as soon as possible to determine how our union should be represented politically. The rules of affiliation currently prevent Unite from supporting candidates other than those from the Labour Party in any elections. The imperative for such a review is clear. Labour has consistently expelled its most Left-leaning MPs, councillors and activists - those most aligned to Unite's policies. Labour Party policy has shifted to the right, and the right populists have moved to fill the vacuum

by misrepresenting themselves as defenders of working-class interests. Exclusive affiliation no longer makes industrial sense, and the survey of members takes place at a critically important time.

By the time of the next Executive Council meeting in October, the General Secretary elections will have concluded. Sharon Graham is standing for re-election on her strong industrial and political record, but Unite members cannot be complacent. Work is still needed to make sure we get the vote out.

A decisive win is needed against the only other candidate so far declared - Simon Dubbins. Dubbins is backed by the United Left who continue to argue for retaining the Labour link. Crucially, Dubbins lacks the vision and drive needed to transform Unite so that it more effectively represents members' interests, including being prepared to take on the fight against New Labour austerity.

Labour workers' rights retreats, Usdaw leaders under pressure

Since the general election, the advocates of the Labour government have sought to deflect criticism of its many attacks on the working class. This has been mostly done by pointing to the 'Employment Rights Act' as a major step forward.

But whilst some of the changes brought in by the Act are welcome, the reality is that it has been watered down at every step. This includes allowing loopholes around fire and re-hire and zero-hour contracts before the general election, causing Unite the Union to refuse to sign off on the proposals.

Since the Act has passed, the government has delayed scrapping the 50% turnout threshold for strike ballots.

They have since faced pressure from big business to water down further or not implement parts of the legislation.

This started with attacks on the proposals to guarantee contracts reflecting the hours workers work. This proposal emanates from Usdaw, linked to the question of a right to a minimum contract of 16 hours, unless workers genuinely opt out.

This formed the core of Usdaw's campaigning for better jobs in retail, alongside a £15-an-hour minimum wage, ending zero-hour contracts, full sick pay from day one, and other measures.

Members of the Usdaw Broad Left, including Socialist Party members, played an important role in arguing for those policies at the union's conference and on its NEC. Therefore, a retreat on these issues could not be passed over the in the same way Usdaw's leadership bodies have previously.

After writing to Keir Starmer earlier this year, Usdaw General Secretary Joanne Thomas has now written to

Labour MPs asking them to oppose proposals to water down minimum hours guarantees. She goes on to state: "If the outcome of the consultation breaks the commitment made in Labour's 2024 manifesto, Usdaw will write to you again to ask that you oppose the delegated legislation on the grounds that it will make working people worse off."

Labour affiliated trade unions, including Usdaw, are petitioning their own Labour government to fully implement a key election pledge!

Since then, reports have emerged of the government backing off from its commitment to equalise youth rates of the minimum wage.

Usdaw has been forced to criticise the government again: "We are deeply concerned by voices within the government suggesting that Labour's manifesto commitment to end minimum wage rip-off youth rates should not be delivered in full", Thomas said.

It is an important achievement that Usdaw has in effect abolished lower youth rates of pay in the big-four supermarket chains it organises in.

We would argue Usdaw should go beyond the correct call for MPs to vote against delegated legislation if it undermines workers, and say that such cuts should be a touchstone for membership of the union's parliamentary group.

Why should any MP be a member if they cannot commit to basic policies that have been at the forefront of the union's campaigning for over a decade?

USDW ACTIVIST EDITORIAL BOARD

● A full version of the article available online: usdawactivist.wordpress.com



PHOTO: PAUL MATTISSON

HOW DO WE FIGHT FOR LGBTQ+ LIBERATION IN 2026?

SOCIALIST PARTY LGBTQ+ MEMBERS' GROUP

In 2026, the rights won by lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, non-binary, and all queer people (LGBTQ+) would be unimaginable to many of our forebears in the 20th century. However, in a world dominated by crisis – social, political, economic, environmental – none of the gains won through struggle are safe. Attacks on trans+ people are a warning that LGBTQ+ rights and services are not permanent while society is dominated by billionaires.

But it is important to acknowledge how much things have changed. Today equal marriage is supported by 78% of the UK population. At the time of the first Pride march in 1972 it wasn't even a question that got asked. Homosexuality had only been decriminalised for men over 21 in England and Wales in 1967.

That Pride followed the Stonewall uprising in 1969 when 4,000 of New York's LGBT community took to the streets and fought back in a running street battle against police harassment that lasted several days.

The backdrop then was an inspirational revolutionary wave challenging the powerful elite – including wars of liberation in Africa and Latin America, the civil rights movement, and the fight for women's rights. We again need Prides that are protests against an elite and their system that is today represented by Starmer's Labour.

Today, openly LGBTQ+ people appear on our televisions every day, not as figures of fun as in the past but as part of society. For young people especially, this positive visibility can be very important. Social attitudes have been transformed. But the need to continue the fight for liberation from oppression and to defend what has been won remains.

There are still parts of the world where it is not safe to be LGBTQ+. Consensual same-sex sexual acts are still criminalised in 65 UN member states, increasing in 2025.

In Britain, despite winning many legal rights LGBTQ+ people still do not all feel safe to live their lives freely. Less than half (44%) of LGBTQ+ people feel safe holding their partner's hand in public according to research by Stonewall. TUC research in 2024 found that more than one in four LGBT people (29%) aren't open with anyone at work, with bisexual workers feeling this most acutely (39%). Feeling unable to speak freely about your personal life is a big burden to bear.

Trans rights continue to be under attack. A draft code of practice on the Equality Act by the Equality and



PHOTO: PAUL MATTHEWSON

side, here are LGBTQ+ workers and young people demanding an end to oppression, with widespread support among the population. So they celebrate Pride in parliament and attend LGBTQ+ events.

On the other side is the capitalist class which demands that Labour seeks to defend and restore the capitalists' ability to make profits. This means driving down the living standards of the working class and young people.

One of the tried and tested means of doing so is by whipping up division and seeking to weaken the ability of the working class to unite in struggle for our collective interests, against the interests of the billionaires, bosses and bankers.

Anti-trans division is based on an appeal to the fear of male violence and of attacks on women's rights, including women-only spaces. As with all culture-war appeals, the invitation to feel this fear can appeal to women's experience of capitalist society where male violence against women remains deeply ingrained, notwithstanding legal improvements in recent decades.

Because of pre-existing oppression, women are hit hardest by austerity. Capitalist politicians – and the institutions that serve the capitalist class's interests – point to trans women as the main threat to safety within the very public services whose funding they cut and privatise and make unsafe and unreliable.

Cuts and cost of living

LGBTQ+ people have no reason to have any confidence in this government. It has sought at every point to pursue the bosses' agenda of cuts to benefits and privatisation, only U-turning under the massive pressure from working-class rage reflected in the rebellion of his own MPs, such as on the plan to cut disability benefits.

Labour MP Jonathan Hinder on BBC Newsnight on the day of the debate asking: 'Are we for working-class people or are we obsessed with certain middle-class hobby horses, worthy sectors, worthy stakeholders, the stakeholder state, all of that stuff? Or are we actually focusing on the hard-working majority in this country?'

The answer to Hinder is that Labour is definitely not focusing on the working-class majority, which includes most LGBTQ+ people. This is shown in its failure to prevent a new wave of cost-of-living crisis ravaging all our living standards.

While serving the interests of the capitalist class, it is not possible to meet the needs of the working class

and so scapegoats are sought – including migrants, young people on benefits, and trans people.

The EHRC draft's proposal to exclude trans men and women from toilets and other services will not change that situation. And the idea that Labour has women's safety as a priority cannot be taken seriously given what we know about Peter Mandelson's relationship with known serial abuser Epstein.

Instead, what is needed is a campaign to unite the struggles of LGBTQ+ people with the wider working class through a programme of jobs, homes, and public services for all, including minorities. A campaign to enact the Trades Union Congress resolution agreed last September for the trade unions to build a national Saturday demo against Labour's austerity would show the potential to cut across this division.

Right-populist Reform

That includes cutting across electoral support for Nigel Farage's Reform UK. It has been able to take advantage of the anger at Labour and the rest of the establishment parties representing the interests of the elite. Labour's own attacks on migrants and minorities has given it legitimacy. The fact that Reform has no solution to austerity will also not be challenged by Labour.

But Reform councils have not gone unopposed by the working class. Local government trade union Unison reported a 200% growth in membership in areas where Reform won. In Lincoln, when Reform took down the Pride flag, members covered their desks with rainbow flags in defiance.

When Reform cancelled its grant to Durham Pride, Stephen Guy, the chair of the Durham Miners' Association (DMA), reportedly took it upon himself to "encourage the trade union movement to step up and do the right thing, and stand shoulder to shoulder with the LGBT+ community". The event was put on with trade union donations and had more trade union banners than ever.

Want to get involved with the Socialist Party LGBTQ+ members' group?

Email: info@socialistparty.org.uk

The next step in this struggle needs to be trade union, LGBTQ+ and community defence of all our rights and services – not by fundraising but by fighting for central government funding of what is needed. Fighting together against councils of all stripes making cuts and the government will do more to develop solidarity than anything else.

Trade union struggle

Trade union members must fight for their unions to not only express solidarity, but to prepare to engage on how the EHRC guidance is interpreted. Across the 340 pages of the document there are 192 uses of the word 'likely', indicating that much of its guidance will have to be worked out and tested in real-life scenarios.

That poses the question of who decides how workplaces, education, health, and other public services are run. It poses the question of how to prevent this ruling ramping up discrimination and division, while meeting the needs of different sections of the workforce and service users. It poses the need for meetings to allow all workers, and or service users, to explain their needs and collectively find a way forward on the basis of collaboration and campaigning for all needs to be met – not division.

But that can't only be a workplace-by-workplace struggle. Socialists in the trade unions are demanding that the leaderships provide support, training, resources, and guidance for organisers, negotiators and lay reps on how to defend trans+ members' rights of access to workplace facilities; protect trans+ members from discrimination and harassment; challenge transphobic and homophobic behaviour; and increase awareness on trans+ issues in the workplace and wider society, as part of a campaign to unite workers against all the attacks from the capitalist class.

But the debate on our strategy has to go further than the immediate fight to defend our rights and resist attacks. While mass movements have forced progress and improvements in social attitudes on all these issues, they have not been able to eliminate oppression or prejudice, with all the horrific consequences for the oppressed. Capitalism is incapable of overcoming LGBTQ+phobia just as it cannot end the racism, sexism, or other forms of oppression that are built into its foundations. We also need to fight for a socialist alternative to remove the basis for oppression.

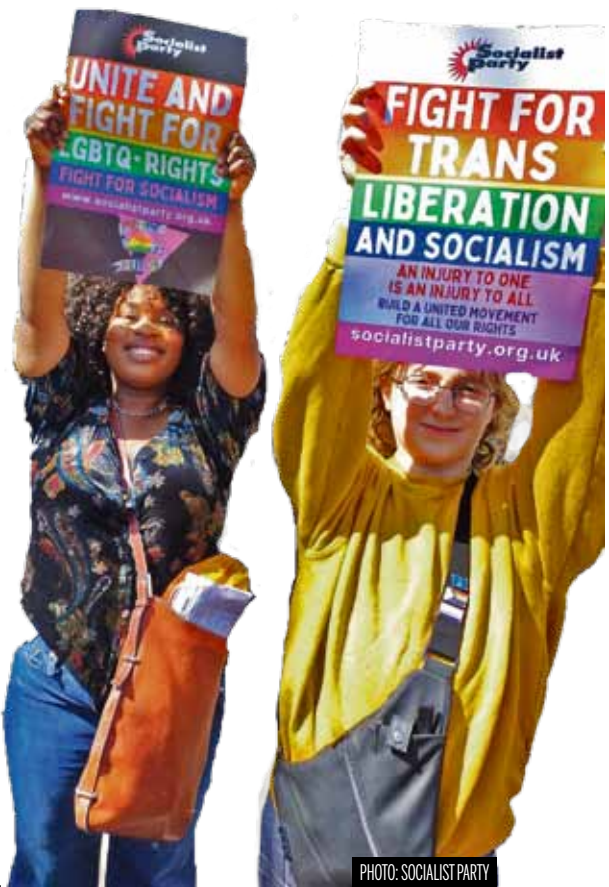


PHOTO: SOCIALIST PARTY

Human Rights Commission (EHRC) was put out for a 40-day consultation by the government on 1 June. It is a rewrite of a previous attempt at guidance following the Supreme Court ruling of April 2025.

Scapegoating

While this version pulls back on some of the most unworkable proposals in the original, it still confirms that under this New Labour government, like its Tory predecessor, minority rights are not secure in a society in which a capitalist elite relies on scapegoating to maintain its rule.

In 2021, ie before the ruling, 70% of trans people reported being impacted by transphobia when accessing general health services. Two in five trans people had experienced a hate crime or incident because of their gender identity.

Justifiable fear that things will get worse is rising among this section of the population, estimated at 262,000 people, 0.5% of the population. But there is also defiance. The number of people attending London Trans Pride in 2025 doubled on the previous year's big turnout to a record 100,000.

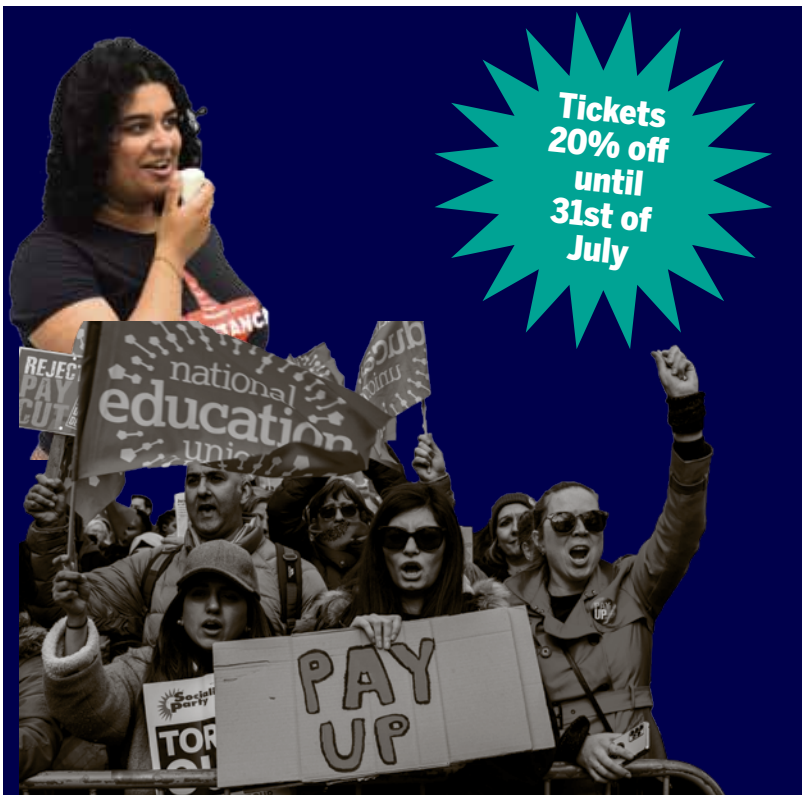
The Labour government's approach to LGBTQ+ rights reflects the two main pressures it faces. On the one

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London Trans Pride PHOTO: JWSLUBBOOK/CC

Fighting youth unemployment crisis at Leicester Riverside Festival

TOM PORTER-BROWN
LEICESTER SOCIALIST PARTY

We went to Leicester's Riverside Festival to campaign on the youth unemployment crisis – with over a million young people currently not in employment, education, or training.

Keir Starmer's Labour government would have working-class people doing jobs for no pay, instead working for their benefits. That won't resonate with young working-class people, as demonstrated by their reaction to our Socialist Party campaign stall.

The fact that over a million young people can't find a job is frustrating enough. But the conditions we're forced to accept on the chance we do get employed are hardly reassuring. Zero-hour contracts, insufficient

minimum wage, and lack of job security. Capitalist political parties think they can get away with offering us meagre compensation.

On the stall, our members called for a £15-an-hour minimum wage – regardless of age or nationality – for education to be funded by big businesses at no cost to the students, and made the argument that understaffed workplaces should be employing more workers, using the influx to reduce the hours everyone has to work, with no loss of pay.

If young people want to win a better future, where they're guaranteed a job and are not living paycheque to paycheque, they should join the Socialist Party.

● Read more 'Milburn Review prepares bosses' offensive on youth' at socialistparty.org.uk



Tom (second right) campaigning with Socialist Party at Riverside Festival
STEVE SCORE

Kent campaign forced establishment parties to restore our library

ERIC SEGAL
KENT SOCIALIST PARTY AND FOLKESTONE RESIDENT

Tory Kent County Council first tried to close Folkestone libraries in 2022. So Socialist Party members initiated a campaign against this, led by South East Kent Trades Union Council.

The anger against the closure erupted with a demonstration of hundreds. Over a month, there were queues at our stalls to sign our petition against closure. 2,800 local people did, crashing through the 2,500 necessary to force the council to review its decision.

Disaffected Tories, a local millionaire philanthropist, right-wing Labour councillors, the Greens, and a Lib Dem councillor then tried to

hijack the campaign. Their campaign finally degenerated into an attempt to only save the old library building, rather than stop the cuts to library services.

Time has marched on since closure was first announced. The Tory Party has imploded in Kent. Reform has taken over the council.

However, we now have a new library in the centre of town. Reform – fearing being kicked out like the Tories before – has been forced to provide us with a fully functioning library, with adult education, archives, and a children's centre.

We thank those in our community who never lost faith. But we must remain vigilant to defend our public services.



Socialist Party campaigning with TUSC candidate Elaine Brunskill (right) ANDREW EWART

Gateshead by-election – Stop Reform council carrying on Labour cuts

ELAINE BRUNSKILL
TUSC CANDIDATE IN HIGH FELL WARD

Gateshead's newly elected Reform council has found to its own cost that 11 days is a long time in politics. That's how long it took for one of their councillors in the High Fell ward to resign.

A lot of people are rolling their eyes at the lame excuse for the resignation. In a letter sent out to households – not even written by the councillor throwing in the towel – it cites that her business interests have now grown across the south of England. So clearly she doesn't have time for us in High Fell!

We have been out on campaign

stalls and knocking on doors to canvass support for our Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) candidate in the by-election.

The only hostile response we have had was from a woman who thought we were Labour. Once she realised we weren't, she was interested in our policies, including opposing all cuts in council services.

Just before we knocked one young woman's door, a Reform leaflet had been pushed through her door. She had immediately pushed it back outside. We found it on the ground!

The young woman was very interested in what we put forward. We're hoping she gets involved in our campaign.

We've had quite a few people come up to say they've voted for us for years, including a retired member of Unite. He supports Sharon Graham, the union's general secretary. But wished she'd stop funding Labour, rather than just threatening to.

Our campaign stalls are attracting young people. One 16-year-old told us everyone else in his house was Reform, but he definitely was looking to socialist ideas.

Even people who said they had voted Reform, and intend to do so again at the 9 July by-election, were prepared to listen to us. Many of these people could definitely be won over by a mass workers' party, fighting for socialist policies.



Hackney Socialist Party at the lobby of the new Green council

Hackney Socialist Party wrote to newly elected Green councillors in the east London borough. It is based on a similar letter sent to Greens in neighbouring Waltham Forest.

Dear Councillor XXX, You have been voted into the council chamber, because working-class people want a change from the politics of austerity and hopelessness, conducted by the previous Labour administration. In Hackney, many people are struggling with rising rents and insecure housing. Your councillors must change things, and change them fast.

The Renters Reform Act now prevents private landlords from sending no-fault eviction notices to tenants. However, it does not go far enough. Some landlords have already found a way round these restrictions by simply issuing huge rent increases, which tenants can't pay. Tenants are then forced to move or have proceedings started against them due to non-payment of rent.

We are asking all Green Party councillors to take urgent action by:

- Introducing a compulsory register for ALL private landlords, and making rent controls a requirement of registration
- Setting rent levels after a debate by the full council, and after an open

consultation with renters, tenants' organisations, trade unions, and other anti-poverty campaigners about what that rent should be for a room, a flat, or a house. Landlords should not be allowed to charge whatever they like while local people are priced out

- Freezing council rents. At a time when so many people are already struggling, increasing rents for council tenants will only make things harder
- Building mass council housing. Kick out private developers who use social housing to boost their own profits. Housing for all is a social need and should not be a commercial venture. Create a campaign to fight for funding from the central government

Rent control

We very much welcome the Green Party policy of Rent Control and note the inclusion in the Hackney Green Party manifesto of local rent control, and the promise to protect private renters from rogue landlords.

Hackney Green Party also promised to "Work with neighbouring boroughs to establish a 'Housing for London' building company to build new, quality council homes and create local jobs." Hackney, Waltham Forest, Haringey, and Tower Hamlets have new councils pledged to end

the 'do nothing' Labour local council approach. This policy is now a serious possibility if the willingness is there to see it implemented.

As the controlling party on the council, you can push for these measures. To be clear, you have the power to do all the above as a council, you do not need to wait for a Green Party government to enact these changes. We are asking you personally to publicly support these measures and to fight for them within the council chamber.

There is growing anger locally about the cost of housing and the lack of affordable homes. Many people will be looking to see whether this new council is prepared to stand up to developers, big landlords, and act in the interests of working-class residents.

We ask that you respond to our letter without delay. We want to meet with you and discuss. We could assist in mobilising trade unions, the largest worker-led bodies in the region, to lend their support to this campaign.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely, XXX, on behalf of Hackney Socialist Party

● Read more 'New Green council in Waltham Forest pressed on rent controls' at socialistparty.org.uk

● York St John uni socialists 'Pride' film

ANNA BEISHON
YORK ST JOHN SOCIALIST STUDENTS

York St John Socialist Students had our first official meeting, a film showing of 'Pride', to kick off Pride month. It's based on the true events of solidarity between miners and LGBTQ+ activists during the 1984-1985 strike.

25 students attended and the film was well received, provoking thought on the importance of unity between different sections of the working class, and how collective struggle can overcome prejudice and build long-lasting solidarity. £66 was raised for our campaigns.



PATHE/BBC FILMS/ANGENOUS MEDIA/BRITISH FILM INSTITUTE/CALAMITY FILMS/CANAL+/CINE+

The story of 'Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners' (LGSM) is testament to how common struggles against oppression can bring people together. The positive response to this screening shows the continued interest in socialist principles among young people, and the need for solidarity in the battles ahead.

● socialiststudents.org.uk



Youth marching for a future

Why I joined the Socialist Party Rigged system and rising right brought me back to socialism

CHRIS CANNON
LIVERPOOL NORTH SOCIALIST PARTY

It wasn't a sudden awakening or a phase I stumbled into. It was a foundational belief that society should be built on solidarity, equity, and collective wellbeing, rather than individual greed.

That conviction solidified when I turned 18. I met my former primary school teacher, who was running a Socialist Party campaign stall on the high street. After a catch up and a brief talk about the Socialist Party, I decided to join up there and then.

However, as life progressed, I moved away for university. My formal membership lapsed, as I focused on navigating higher education and building a career.

I did what we are all told to do. I worked hard, climbed the ladder, and secured a good, stable job at a credit card company.

Objectively, I was doing well. I had a steady income in a professional industry.

But it didn't take long for a harsh reality to set in. One that millions of working people face every single day.

The numbers didn't add up

Despite my comfortable corporate salary, the numbers simply did not add up. The cost of living and the skyrocketing housing market created a rigged system. I was trapped in a cycle paying exorbitant rents, where it was functionally impossible to save for a home of my own.

I was working in the finance sector, watching capital flow, realising that the basic human need for secure housing was entirely out of reach for my generation.

In 2008, faced with a stagnating UK economy, I had to make a drastic choice. I left my career behind and moved abroad. But returning to the UK, anger at that systemic failure stayed with me.

While economic hardship laid the dry tinder for my return to organised politics, the final straw was the terrifying, unchecked rise of the far right.

Seeing the surge of Reform UK nationwide was alarming. But it truly hit home when Sarah Pochin was elected MP in my own backyard.

Watching a right-wing populist capture a local seat by exploiting people's genuine economic anxieties with divisive rhetoric was a painful wake-up call.

For months, I found myself locked in exhausting, endless arguments on social media, trying to counter the deluge of misinformation and reactionary points from Reform supporters. It was a draining, isolating experience.

I grew tired of shouting into the void, while the political landscape shifted beneath my feet. Writing angry comments online wasn't going to stop the right.

We can't fight alone

If you want to fight a coordinated, organised political force, you can't do it alone. You must organise. I decided to do something tangible.

My journey away, the economic gymnastics required just to achieve a basic milestone of adulthood, and the encroaching shadow of right-wing populism have completely reaffirmed my lifelong beliefs. Capitalism cannot solve the crises it creates, and it is those very crises that feed the far right.

I have officially rejoined the Socialist Party. I am back because the fight for a world where people are prioritised over profit is more urgent than ever. I am ready to stand shoulder-to-shoulder once again.



Home Office blocks pro-Palestinian streamers' visas

SCOTT HUNTER

SWINDON SOCIALIST PARTY

Two popular online political commentators from the USA have been blocked from entering the UK by the Home Office.

Hasan Piker, who has an average audience of 30,000 for his daily twitch.tv streams, and Cenk Uygur, whose podcast The Young Turks has over six million subscribers on YouTube alone, were due to speak at the SXSW London festival but found they could not board their flights to London. The Home Office has not yet commented on its reasoning, but the pair and wider media have interpreted the ban as a response to their criticisms of the Israeli state and support for Palestinians. Visas can be removed if the government deems someone's visit to be 'not conducive to the public good'.

Mainstream opinion

The fact is, Piker and Uygur are more likely to be reflecting the existing views of their UK audiences rather than whipping them up into a frenzy. Even right-wing commentators like Piers Morgan have observed that their views are well within the political mainstream.

We also have to point out that the Labour government had no problem rolling out the red carpet for Donald Trump when he made a state visit last September. Whose presence in the UK is less 'conducive to the public good': two streamers or the President of the United States who is actively carrying out state terror at home and

abroad? It's also the same government which allowed central London to be handed over to far-right thug Tommy Robinson in May, when he organised a march in opposition to the Palestinian Nakba Day demo.

Paranoid Starmer

Clearly, 'public good' has nothing to do with it. Two years in, Starmer's government is embattled and paranoid. Deeply unpopular and facing huge pressure from the super-rich to make attacks on the working class, the government is incredibly weak and fears even mild criticism. What they fear most of all is not individual speakers, but the potential mass movement they're speaking to. They fear a mass anti-war movement drawing conclusions about the nature of the capitalist system, which is built on exploitation and division and inevitably leads to bloody conflicts.

The working class needs to organise to oppose all attempts at censorship and repression. These travel bans have happened at the same time as attacks on our rights to protest have increased. Trade unions - which organise more than six million workers in Britain and have the power to bring society to a standstill - should play a key role alongside anti-war and civil rights organisations in fighting against this. Not least because the government may attempt to use the same censorship against the workers' movement, for example denying travel to visiting workers' leaders. An injury to one is an injury to all.



FIFA president Gianni Infantino presents Donald Trump with 'peace prize'

Most political World Cup ever? 'A World Cup for them, not us'

IAN PATTISON

ENFIELD AND LEA VALLEY SOCIALIST PARTY

Is this the most political World Cup ever? 'A World Cup for them, not us'.

It's certainly the most expensive World Cup ever. The football tournament is taking place in the US, Canada, and Mexico.

"I wouldn't pay it", was US President Donald Trump's response, when asked about astronomical ticket prices. The cheapest ticket for the opening match was \$560. Many World Cup final tickets cost \$9,000.

'Too low'

Out-of-touch Gianni Infantino, president of football governing body FIFA, has defended these outrageous prices. He says 'resale' is common in the US. So if the price "is too low, these tickets will be resold at a much higher price." But some resale tickets for the final were selling at \$2 million. Infantino has defended this too.

Pricing out working-class fans means that, despite unprecedented demand, tickets are still available at 86 of the tournament's 104 matches - 180,000 tickets as the World Cup starts.

Facing backlash, FIFA was forced to introduce a handful of 'cheap' \$60 tickets. But so few of those were available that you had to zoom way in to see that section of the stadiums

on ticket websites. They were immediately sold out.

Football's origin is in working-class communities - 'the people's game'. But football on the basis of free-market capitalism is far from that today.

We don't have democratic control of our sport by fans, players, staff, and local communities, like there should be. Instead, rich FIFA executives want to host their tournaments in countries where profit isn't curtailed, hard-won rights can be cast aside, and democratic scrutiny is minimal or non-existent. Recent and future World Cup hosts include Russia, Qatar, US, and Saudi Arabia.

It can feel like football fans have no power. But fan and player protest beat the profiteering breakaway Super League in 2020.

FIFA's price gouging in this World Cup is being challenged in the US courts. The US initially promised free public transport in its World Cup bid. But that concession has been reversed.

New Jersey initially increased rail prices by 1100% for football fans. The right-wing New Jersey Democrat governor is under pressure from New York's new left-wing populist mayor, Zohran Mamdani. He has set aside tickets for poorer New Yorkers, and is putting on free showings of World Cup games.

New Jersey has now been forced to

reduce rail prices. Although, they're still far higher than normal. Some Democrat cities haven't dared touch transport fares, fearing backlash.

Some say: "Keep politics out of football". But, under capitalism, it is political.

Trump is growing unpopular in the US. And his racist deportation policies are abhorrent to working-class football fans.

Half a million people in the US have been rounded up by Trump's ICE agents. With ICE agents murdering two protesters in January. ICE is now helping with tournament security.

Deported

Thousands and thousands of football fans from around the world have been denied entry into the US to watch the World Cup. Even football referee Omar Artan, who is from Somalia, and was due to work at the World Cup, has been barred. FIFA has defended the US's right to do this.

World Cups are becoming more political. There was a time when the political discussion would stop when the football kicked off, like in 2018. But that's changed.

Football fans live in the same world as all of us. A capitalist system that's incapable of providing for the vast majority. Whether that's jobs, homes, and services, or access to the beautiful game.



Popular streamer Cenk Uygur has been barred from the UK by the Labour government GAGE SKIDMORE/CC

German capitalism's rearmament drive faces resistance

School strikes against conscription, and developing protests against cuts

CHIARA STENGER

SOL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE (CWI IN GERMANY)

Over 110 years after the start of World War One, Germany wants to have the strongest army in Europe once again, according to the government's new military strategy. The so-called 'Zeitenwende' was proclaimed in Germany whilst Chancellor Olaf Scholz was still in office. It was heralded in 2022, following the start of the war in Ukraine, with a special fund of 100 billion euros for the Bundeswehr (military). Military spending had already been rising in recent decades, but since then there has been a significant shift towards open rearmament and the militarisation of society.

It did not stop at 100 billion euros. Since the last general election saw the traditional bourgeois parties losing their two-thirds majority required for constitutional changes, the German Bundestag - using the old, deselected majorities - undemocratically decided to lift the so-called 'debt brake', but solely for defence spending. Theoretically, unlimited rearmament thus became possible, and on top a special infrastructure fund of 500 billion euros was established, which is also intended to finance infrastructure relevant to warfare in particular. Germany's military expenditure is set to exceed that of the UK and France combined by 2030.

Multipolar global situation

This reflects how Germany intends to expand its imperialist influence in the coming years. It is happening in light of the multipolar, crisis-ridden global situation and deteriorating relations between Europe's major powers and the US, including inside NATO. Russia's war on Ukraine is being exploited for propaganda purposes to legitimise the need for the largest-scale rearmament in the history of the Federal Republic, and fears of imminent attacks by Russia on NATO states are being whipped up. But the new military strategy also includes preparations for operations in the Indo-Pacific against Russia. In the debate, the concept of 'defence' is at the forefront. Yet this is primarily about defending German capital interests - that is, influence, sales markets, access to resources or trade routes. The safety of workers and young people, on the other hand, is of no concern - otherwise hospitals would not be closed, housing would not be becoming increasingly expensive, and cuts would not be made in youth services in favour of military spending. Rearmament is supposed to secure profits for the arms industry and the economic and geopolitical interests of the capitalist elite.



Mainz protest against conscription PHOTO: SOL MAINZ

Cuts are the other side of the coin

The federal government is currently planning the biggest wave of attacks in recent years. Under discussion and set to be implemented are longer working hours, the abolition of the eight-hour working day, lower pensions and a higher retirement age, as well as massive cuts to the healthcare system that will further undermine universal healthcare provision and decent working conditions in a system that is already in a state of despair. Added to this are cuts to social inclusion and youth services.

Job cuts and the question of conversion to arms production

At the same time, hundreds of thousands of jobs, especially in the automotive and supplier industries, are slashed as a result of a crisis of overcapacity. Some companies like Volkswagen (VW) have announced plan to switch to arms production. IG Metall, Germany's largest industrial trade

union, has not taken a clear stance on this and the leadership is not fighting to preserve all jobs. For many workers, a switch to arms production seems a better alternative than losing their job. Yet resistance is stirring, albeit still from a minority. For example workers at VW have issued statements declaring that they "do not want to produce death at VW" and are collecting signatures against the conversion to arms production. What is needed is a real struggle by the trade unions to preserve all jobs by nationalisation, against the government's militarist course, and for a shift in production towards socially useful goods under democratic control and management of the working class.

Fight against the reintroduction of conscription

At the last congress of the German Trade Union Confederation (DGB, the largest trade union federation in Germany with 5.4 million members), the majority did at least vote against

the reintroduction of conscription. Conscription was suspended in 2011, but its reintroduction is currently under discussion. Whilst Marxists in the past have opposed moves towards a 'professional' army that is more isolated from the broader working class and therefore more easily deployed against it, the reintroduction of conscription will not alter the undemocratic character of the Bundeswehr but simply help the government to find new recruits for it. After all, those who buy large quantities of weapons and prepare for potential overseas deployments will, if necessary, also need young people to operate these weapons. But there is also resistance: since December 2025, there have been three school strikes so far, in which around 55,000 pupils from over 150 cities took part.

Perspectives and programme

Class struggle from below against the attacks from above, militarisation and job cuts is ever more necessary. Following its resurgence last year and a doubling of its membership, Die Linke (the Left) has the potential, together with the trade unions, to organise serious social protests that could well pose a threat to the government. The government, which is now carrying out these attacks in the interests of capital, is anything but a strong government. Hardly any chancellor has ever been as unpopular as Friedrich Merz.

Die Linke has started to build local alliances with trade unions and social activists, but its leadership seems to avoid pointing towards the connection between the arms race and the cuts. Whilst this should not be a precondition for broad protests against the government, a socialist party needs to explain how the capitalist crisis leads to war, rearmament, economic crisis and attacks on living standards of the masses, and offer an alternative. This would also attract those striking school students that should link their fight against conscription with the struggle against cuts and job losses.

Working-class power is key in all struggles. The DGB congress was a missed opportunity for the immediate preparation of coordinated economic and political strikes to be waged against the government's and capitalists' attacks. This is overdue. What is needed is a programme calling for massive public investment, as well as radical redistribution of wealth of the super-rich and the transfer of key sectors into public ownership. In this way, attacks could not only be repelled, but real improvements fought for. This could also halt the rise of the right-wing populist AfD, which is currently capitalising on public discontent and is by far the strongest force in some federal states. Sol members are actively promoting a militant programme within unions, Die Linke and the school strike movement whilst at the same time making it clear that militarisation and social cuts are linked, and that capitalism, as a crisis-prone system based on competition and exploitation, will repeatedly lead to wars, whilst improvements can always be rolled back. Only by simultaneously fighting for a socialist democracy can we lay the foundations for a good life for all, in peace, freedom and security.



PHOTO: JOLLYROGER/CC

SOUTH AFRICA: THE SOWETO UPRISING 50 YEARS ON

The following is extracts of an article by **Weizmann Hamilton**, a member of the Committee for a Workers' International in South Africa. It was originally published in Inqaba Ya Basebenzi (the journal of the Marxist Workers' Tendency of the African National Congress, the then name of the CWI section) in September 1986.

At about 7am on 16 June 1976, thousands of African school students in Soweto gathered at prearranged assembly points for a demonstration. They launched a movement that began as a local expression of opposition to the imposition of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction in African schools, and developed, over twenty months, into a country wide youth uprising against the apartheid regime.

This movement cost the lives of more than 1,000 youths, shot by the police. But, like an earthquake, it opened up a huge fissure in South African history, separating one era from another. It politicised a whole new generation of youth, and consigned beyond recall the era of defeats in the 1960s. It announced the determination of the youth to end one of the most barbaric examples of modern capitalist slavery.

Since February 1976, anger had been mounting over the attempt by the regime to enforce Afrikaans as a medium of instruction - an anger very rapidly directed against the whole system of Bantu Education. First introduced in 1955, Bantu Education was designed not merely to place every possible obstacle in the way of the intellectual development of black Africans, but consciously to create an enslaved working class exploitable as cheap labour.



Beginning with the boycott of Afrikaans classes, students rapidly began boycotting all classes. By early June, several thousand pupils from a total of seven schools were on strike

Against the background of a general shortage of accommodation, the result was chaos. In 1976 the government expected 149,000 students to enrol for secondary education - but had accommodation for only 38,000. In the event more than 250,000 enrolled!

This state of affairs caused enormous bitterness amongst parents. Many regarded education, despite its deficiencies, as the hoist that would lift their children out of the poverty that seemed the unavoidable lot of the black working class.

In these conditions, the attempted imposition of Afrikaans - the language of the apartheid state - into the schools, added insult to injury. It sparked-off opposition even amongst conservative elements on the school boards created by the state to oversee Bantu Education, who had tried to negotiate with the authorities to mitigate the effects of this measure.

Beginning with the boycott of Afrikaans classes, students rapidly began boycotting all classes. By early June, several thousand pupils from a total of seven schools were on strike.

On 8 June two policemen visited Naledi High School, where the South Africa Students Movement (SASM), which was organising high school students, had written a letter to the South African Student Organisation (SASO - led by Steve Biko), its black university counterpart, asking for assistance in the campaign.

Resentment

The policemen were trapped in the principal's office, the telephone wires were cut and their car burned when compromising documents were found in it. Reinforcements were fought off by the students although the two police managed to get away. The story of this incident spread like wildfire through Soweto. Like the small stones which roll down a mountainside before an avalanche, it was a sign of the resentment and hatred that was to be launched against the police.

On 13 June, SASM called a meeting at the Donaldson Community Centre in Orlando. 300 to 400 students representing about 55 schools decided to stage a mass demonstration on 16 June. An Action Committee, later known as the Soweto Students Representative Council (SSRC), was elected to lead the campaign. It consisted of two delegates from each school, meeting in secret and using pseudonyms.

On 16 June, columns departed from selected assembly points at a specified time to maintain discipline and to stretch police lines as much



Hector Pieterson carried by Mbuyisa Makhubo after being shot by the South African Police. His sister, Antoinette Sithole, runs beside them. Pieterson was rushed to a local clinic, where he was declared dead on arrival. This photo by Sam Nzima became an icon of the Soweto uprising PHOTO: PUBLIC DOMAIN

as possible. A dozen schools served as rendezvous points, with the final destination Orlando Stadium for a mass rally. Despite brushes with the police en route, most marches managed to reach the last meeting point in Orlando West.

However, as hundreds were still marching into Orlando, a large contingent of police arrived in police vans and spread out in front of the marches in the form of an arc. Defiantly, the students kept on singing freedom songs.

Suddenly a white policeman threw a tear gas canister in front of the students. The students retreated slightly but stood their ground singing and waving their placards, reading "Away with Afrikaans"; "Blacks are not dustbins"; "Afrikaans is a tribal language" etc.

The Uprising

Then a white policeman drew his revolver and shot straight at the unarmed, singing students. Hector Petersen, the first victim of the uprising, fell in front of his comrades. Other police then opened fire.

The students, many of them girls as young as 10 to 12 years old; were stunned at first, and stood looking at the bodies of the dead and wounded. Then their rage and fury erupted. Picking up stones, bricks or any missile they could lay their hands on, they advanced towards the police lines and threw them at the police.

the previous days; possibly hundreds dead. Indiscriminate shooting was the order of the day. Raising a clenched fist and shouting the slogan "Amandla!" [power] was sufficient to warrant a bullet in the head.

Parents and workers

Parents had returned home the previous evening to find the townships in flames and their children either dead or missing. Many spontaneously stayed away from work on 17 June. White students at the University of the Witwatersrand staged a demonstration with one of the placards reading: "Don't start the revolution without us."

In Soweto itself, the Minister closed schools on Thursday (17 June). By Friday, Soweto was effectively sealed off, saturated with police in armed convoys, firing at any group they saw on the streets.

In the meantime, clashes had broken out in Tembisa, Kagiso and elsewhere along the Witwatersrand. At the universities of Ngoye and Turfloop, there were solidarity boycotts. Turfloop was closed on 18 June.



Thus took place the political baptism - with bullets and tear gas - of a whole new generation of working-class youth in struggle

Thus took place the political baptism - with bullets and tear gas - of a whole new generation of working-class youth in struggle.

After a relatively quiet weekend, the townships near Pretoria joined the struggle. By 22 June over 1,000 workers at the Chrysler (auto) factory had stopped work. This was the first conscious strike action in support of the students.

As in Alexandra, the working class youth of Soweto quickly sensed the need to involve their parents. They also saw that to confine the battle-front against the state to the townships was a limitation. Consequently, the SSRC took on the responsibility of organising simultaneously for 4 August a student march into Johannesburg and the first political general strike in South Africa since 1961 - called for three days.

Such was the mood in the townships that the regime's concession on the language question on 6 July made absolutely no difference. The revolt was now directed against the government itself. To ensure the success of the stay-away a key signal box was sabotaged, and all Soweto trains came to a standstill. The youth mounted pickets at bus stops and railway stations in many instances, trying to force workers not to go to work. Between 20,000 and 40,000 marched towards Johannesburg, but were dispersed a few kilometres outside of Soweto. The stay-away over all three days was 60% successful.

Encouraged by this, the students prepared to organise a second three-day stay-away, to begin on 23 August. Meanwhile the revolt spread to students in the Western and Eastern

Cape for the first time. The regime tried new tactics: a nationwide clampdown was unleashed against the student leadership with scores placed in indefinite detention.

In the second stay-away there was an 80-90% success rate. Moreover, while the stay-away was confined to Soweto, the second one received support in other areas of the Witwatersrand.

A third stay-away was called, the most successful of all. In the Transvaal, a solid 75%-80% support was sustained over three days. In all, three-quarters of a million workers participated in this near national action.

Increased strike action

The generation of youth who led the 1976-77 revolt displayed an almost unparalleled heroism.

But the Soweto revolt of 1976 did not occur like a bolt from the blue. The militant defiance of the black youth of Soweto - an indispensable ingredient for sustaining the revolt over twenty months - reflected the changes which had taken place in South Africa.

In April 1969, 2,000 dock workers in Durban struck for higher wages. Defeated, they struck again in September-October 1971, and this time achieved a victory. There followed the month-long general strike in Namibia in December-January 1971-72. Though the demands of the workers were not met, it was much discussed in the South Africa townships as a demonstration of the power of the working class.

A strike wave started on 25 January 1973. This strike of 7,000 workers at Frame Group textile factories spread rapidly throughout Natal and to other provinces. In February alone 60 strikes took place involving 40,000 workers. By the end of March, the figure had risen to 60,000 workers in more than 150 firms. Nationally, at least 100,000 workers took strike action. Largely successful, these strikes drew a clear line of demarcation between the era of defeat and passivity and a new era of militant defiance.



Between 20,000 and 40,000 strikers marched towards Johannesburg

Thus the volcanic eruption of June 1976 was preceded and prepared by the necessary subterranean shifts that had taken place within the consciousness of the African working class.

Following Soweto, COSAS was born in 1979 - the first national organisation for school students. A 1980 school boycott heralded a new era of struggle among the youth, linked from the start more closely with the workers, preparing and steeling them for the revolutionary upsurge of 1984-86. The outlook of the youth became firmly anti-capitalist, linked to a clear realisation that the main arena of the struggle was in the industrial centres of South Africa.



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.

out the privateers. Bring private social care and childcare facilities into public ownership under democratic control, in order to provide free, high-quality services for all who need them. Expand services for all women suffering violence.

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

ENVIRONMENT

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

PUBLIC SERVICES

- A massive expansion of public services including the NHS and council services. Reverse all the cuts, kick

are set by consumers, small farmers, and all workers involved in the production, processing, distribution and retail of food.

DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS

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

SOCIALISM AND INTERNATIONALISM

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

Do you agree? Join the fightback!

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the Socialist

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NSSN CONFERENCE 2026

WE WON'T PAY FOR THE BOSSES' CRISIS!



‘We won't pay for the bosses' crisis', is the strapline for the 20th NSSN conference in London on 27 June.

Across the trade union movement, workers are anticipating what will be necessary to defend living standards from a new surge in inflation.

With profits as their priority, the capitalist bosses will raise their prices but not our wages. In the public sector, the government austerity squeeze will continue under Starmer's Labour to try to satisfy 'the markets' and the capitalists' demands for cuts.

The NSSN conference will discuss what is needed in response from the union movement. Already, local government unions have rejected the government's pay offer. Unison is preparing for a strike ballot of its members.

Civil service union PCS conference voted for a serious national campaign on pay. A battle is on at the top of

that union on how to respond to the government's insufficient 'pay remit' of 3.5%.

Meanwhile, the National Education Union has agreed an autumn ballot on pay and funding, which would allow for strikes at the start of next year. Also in education, University and College Union congress has voted for a nationwide ballot for strike action in both further and higher education.

A key demand that emerged at last year's NSSN conference, which was demanded by the NSSN lobby of the September Trades Union Congress (TUC), was for the trade unions to organise a weekend national demo against Labour austerity.

That position was agreed, but remains on paper. Clearly, were such a demo to take place this autumn, coinciding with key strike ballots taking place across the public sector, it would strengthen our class in its position to face down a new wave of inflation and austerity.

SATURDAY 27 JUNE
11am-4:30pm

Conway Hall, 25 Red Lion Square, London WC1R 4RL

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



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WHAT WE STAND FOR: THE SOCIALIST PARTY'S MAIN DEMANDS >>> see column on p15



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