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25 June - 1 July 2026

formerly **Militant**



Burnham wins Makerfield, Starmer resigns



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TIME TO PILE ON THE PRESSURE

Trade unions must fight for the working class



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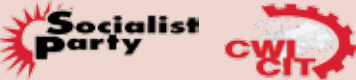
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"The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it."
Karl Marx

After Makerfield, Starmer resigns... Time for trade unions to pile on the pressure



Two years on from a 'landslide' general election victory, Keir Starmer has resigned. Whether through contest or coronation, Andy Burnham is set to be Labour leader and Prime Minister by September at the latest – the seventh in ten years.

With an increase in turnout and a 9,000 majority, the Makerfield by-election that precipitated these events was an anti-Starmer, anti-establishment vote, and a vote against the division peddled by Reform UK. In the council elections just a month earlier, Reform had won significantly as workers expressed their rage. But as soon as a viable alternative that even slightly appeared to be to the left was offered, it was grabbed and Reform was pushed into second place.

In another indication of the volatility in Britain today, how quickly things can change, the Green Party, just weeks earlier winning hundreds of new council seats and bidding to be a party for trade unionists, received just 0.7% of the votes.

In this rapidly changing time of chaos and crisis, one thing is clear. Now is not the time for the working class to step back and wait.

The spokespeople of capitalism, the bosses and the bond markets, are circling, applying pressure on Andy Burnham and the Labour government to try to achieve some degree of stability in their own interests.

The organisations of the working class, the trade unions, must do the same. Now is the time to pile on the pressure.

NSSN conference

It is therefore very timely that on Saturday 27 June, trade unionists will gather in central London for the 20th conference of the National Shop Stewards Network. It will be one of the first opportunities for workers to debate what the unions should do in this new and changing situation, and can then go back into their workplaces and union branches to fight for it.

It is a sign of the depth of Labour's crisis that when the most popular politician in the country won a by-election in a seat that has been Labour since its creation more than 40 years ago, it was met in the party with a huge sigh of relief.

But Andy Burnham's win in Makerfield does not solve Labour's crisis, whether the next steps play out through open combat or a veneer of unity around a coronation, as seems more likely.

Starmer's weakness was not due to personal ineptitude – it is the inevitable result of attempting to rule in

the interests of capitalism in a time of historic crisis worldwide, and especially in Britain.

The capitalist class requires more austerity and anti-working-class measures, but any government that attempts to carry that out is deeply unpopular and loses elections.

Building on the already intensifying campaign to cut 'welfare' in order to pay for military spending, the mouthpiece of the capitalists, the Financial Times, has made it clear. They would prefer a contest to "allow Blairite candidates to square up against the more leftist Burnham."

"He communicates a sense of optimism and hope which seems to resonate with voters. But his economic policies, in particular, remain hazy and a concern to the corporate world and the markets." They say: "In the combustible atmosphere of the gilt markets, candidates must avoid throwing matches in the form of careless comments or reckless spending pledges."

The trade unions must meet the challenge with the same determination. The Makerfield result shows, as the Socialist Party has continually argued, that working-class people desperately want the much-vaunted 'change' - and they want that to be in the form of anti-austerity,

pro-working-class policies that will make their lives better.

So how do workers really win that change? Some may have hopes in Burnham. Those hopes will likely be fanned by trade union leaders who try to use Burnham's victory to hold back the pressure from their own members for action and for a new political direction.

But the best response of trade unionists is the opposite of that: to put demands on Burnham and organise to fight for them.

To win this election Burnham - who was a loyal cabinet minister under Gordon Brown and stood against Jeremy Corbyn for Labour leader - had to feint left.

He talked of "unity and hope", about his victory being Labour's "final chance to change". He said that the model of the last 40 years has failed, referring to the neo-liberal model of privatisation, deregulation and cuts to public spending. He argued against "being in hock to the bond markets"; he says he stands for "business-friendly socialism". He says Thames Water should be nationalised and that public ownership of water companies "absolutely would be an option".

But as the Financial Times has stated in discussing his "tricky



Over a thousand local government craftworkers in Unite, including in Newham, are taking strike action in June in a dispute over pay and attacks on their conditions PHOTO: ROB WILLIAMS



PHOTO: NUMBER 10/CC

fiscal dance", Burnham is giving "big spending vibes, small spending commitments". The fact that the 'progressive capitalist' Wes Streeting, on the most Blairite wing of the Labour Party, is now backing him is an indication of Burnham's lack of a genuinely pro-working class programme.

It is possible that he could endeavour to make concessions that don't involve big spending, for example increasing the number of homes that must be 'affordable' in new building developments.

But the "tricky" bit is that any concessions will only increase the appetite of working-class people, and increase the fears of the bosses and the bond markets.

So he also attempts to reassure the capitalists and hold down workers' expectations: he says he is willing to cut benefits to fund defence; he has already let down the WASPI women; his team is discussing breaking the triple lock; he says he will respect the fiscal rules, the 'red lines' – what is that if not being in hock to the bond markets?

But that's also tricky: it is not through lack of will that Starmer has not made the welfare cuts the bosses want and has still not been able to publish a new defence spending plan - it is because he can't do it without provoking enormous anger. Burnham may find he is allowed a little bit of leeway by both workers and the bosses - but it can't hold for long.

The trade union leaders who will want to clear a space will be under huge pressure. The cost of living and the crisis in public services are enormous issues. There is an unfolding catastrophe in education, the NHS, local government, and the civil service. What will Burnham do about the defence investment plan? What will he do about councils continuing eye-watering austerity? What will

he do about public sector pay? What will he do about the Tory 50% strike ballot turnout threshold, which two years after Labour's victory on a pledge to repeal it is still on the statute book?

Unison and Unite are balloting local government members; the NEU is planning to ballot its members in October; PCS and UCU both have conference decisions to launch national campaigns. Members must be ready to fight to ensure there is no backtracking.

Trade union demands

Trade unions must place their demands on Burnham and build a massive national fightback to defend workers, including preparing for national strike action. The agenda of the NSSN conference includes debating an action programme – see right. This can form the basis of workers' demands on the Labour government and on councils.

Affiliated unions such as the GMB, CWU, Unison and Unite have all seen increased pressure from members and hot debate at conferences about changing the relationship of the union with Labour.

It will not be long before the May elections come around, the biggest set of elections of councils on the four-yearly cycle - and before then there could be resignations, by-elections - even calls for a general election are already being made in some quarters. The trade unions, both affiliated and non-affiliated, cannot avoid the discussion about the need for candidates that stand in workers' interests.

Trade unionists should still campaign for a conference of trade unions to debate working-class political representation. The Socialist Party will argue that the working class needs its own political voice, a

workers' party based on the trade unions with socialist policies.

Those who want to argue that Burnham's victory now means that can be the Labour Party can make their case. What would it actually take for trade union leaders to convince members that Labour is really about to change? It would require not just raising general hopes and 'giving time', but launching an almighty struggle against the Blairite defenders of capitalism who have driven out all semblance of a workers' voice or socialist policies. It would require organisational change to restore the collective voice of the trade unions. It would require removal of the Blairites and the readmittance of socialists including Jeremy Corbyn and Zarah Sultana. It would require the adoption of socialist policies. These issues will also be debated at the NSSN conference in a forum on the fight in local government after the May elections.

The fight must be on – for real change in the interests of working-class people we need to maintain the campaign for national action and struggle for a genuine working-class political voice.

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nationalshop stewardsnetwork



NSSN CONFERENCE 2026

Saturday 27 June

11AM - 1PM:

WE WON'T PAY FOR THE BOSSES' CRISIS!

Come and discuss the NSSN proposed Action Programme to defend workers from the cost-of-living squeeze:

- Above-inflation pay rises for workers – automatic rises in pay as inflation increase. In the public sector, for these to be fully funded by central government.

- Scrap all age exemptions on pay, including the national minimum wage. 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.

- Stop the profiteering: nationalise the energy & water companies.

- Freeze rents and energy & utility bills.
- Demand that councils refuse to implement cuts, and instead pass no-cuts needs budgets.

- Oppose disability benefit cuts and attacks on pensions and campaign for a fully resourced, supportive social security system to meet the needs of working class people.

- Demand that the TUC enacts Congress 2025 policy by calling

an Autumn national demo against Labour austerity. If not, for a trade union 'coalition of the willing' to step in to organise such a demonstration.

- Support the NSSN lobby of the TUC Congress in Brighton from 1pm on Sunday 13th September, in the Holiday Inn Hotel.

- Strike together: co-ordinate the fight on national public sector pay – unite workers across the public and private sectors.

- Repeal all the Tory anti-union laws – immediate scrapping of the undemocratic 50% strike ballot threshold.

- Restore the right to strike to the POA.

- Workers' unity to face down Reform and the far-right: for the unions to implement 2018 TUC Congress policy 'to launch a campaign of Jobs and homes not racism'.

- Launch the discussion for a Workers Charter, and how we can fight for it, against the attack on our living standards.

2PM - 4:30PM:

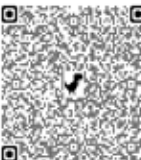
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Featuring speakers from 'Greens Organise' and the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition

Late speaker announcement: Padraig Mulholland, NIPSA Deputy General Secretary

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BBC Broadcasting House ALEXANDER SVENSSON/CO

The link with Labour looms over Unison conference

SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBERS IN UNISON

Over 1,300 delegates gathered for Unison's 2026 National Delegate Conference (NDC), the first since the election of new left general secretary, Andrea Egan, elected after years of a lack of a national fight against austerity by Unison's leadership.

This conference is the sovereign decision making body of Unison, the UK's biggest trade union, with over 1.3 million members, and one of the Labour Party's main affiliates.

But one thing that was not allowed to be debated, evidenced by 15 motions and rule changes on the issue being ruled out of order, was Unison's relationship with Labour.

This relationship is entirely governed by members who pay into the Labour Link fund, which currently sits at just 13.7% of Unison membership. But even the Labour Link members themselves lack control – the decision to back Starmer as Labour leader was made by just 23 members, the National Labour Link committee.

The only place the Labour Link could be discussed the entire week was at a 'Trade Unionists for a New Party' fringe meeting during the Local Government conference.

Debate needed

Surrey County branch delegates tried to raise the Labour Link question at the beginning of conference, exercising the right to ask a supplementary question on the conference floor, wanting to know how low the Labour Link payer percentage could get before Unison would review Labour affiliation. This was blocked by the president.

Ellie Waple raised a 'reference back' seeking to enable discussion of motions dealing with the union's relationship with Labour, and won support of nearly half the conference.

After much pestering, Surrey delegates were invited to have a conversation with an Assistant General Secretary on the issue. They explained that this 'ring of steel' had been in place since the formation of Unison and agreed it was a 'Catch-22'-type situation. We were encouraged to join the Labour Link and change it from within!

If Unison's Labour Link had a true influence on Labour, or if any of the affiliated unions did, then the Labour government would have scrapped Tory anti-trade union laws, enacted a real living wage, built council homes, renationalised services, and Unite wouldn't have cut its affiliation fees by 40% (£580,000).

Andrea Egan stated in one of her

speeches that Unison is a 'member-led union' – on Labour affiliation at least, it doesn't look that way to the members.

Socialist Party members at conference attended the Green Party Trade Union Group fringe meeting and asked them about going into coalition with Tories and Lib Dems in some councils, and propping up New Labour in Newham instead of working with anti-austerity Independents.

Despite the ban on discussing motions, whenever Socialist Party members raised the need for Unison to be able to support candidates that support our policies, and the need for a new workers' party, rooted in the trade unions, committed to ending austerity and cuts, we received applause from the conference.

Angela Rayner, former Deputy Prime Minister, suspended by Unite for backing the strikebreaking actions of Birmingham's Labour council against the bin workers, was invited to give a speech at conference, with no criticism. Even though conference only found out that Rayner would be attending a few hours before, Socialist Party members were part of an impromptu walkout in protest.

Andrea pledged to open up a discussion about the relationship with Labour in her election manifesto, and members must keep up the pressure for this to be enacted.

An important topic discussed and intervened in by Socialist Party members was the worrying shadow of Reform UK. Many migrant workers in Unison are raising their fears of impossible living and working situations. An amendment submitted by Surrey County and passed at conference commits Unison to a campaign of 'Jobs, Homes and Services, Not Racism', and to lobby the TUC for a demo to this effect and against Labour austerity.

Fighting leadership

Andrea was elected because members want a fightback. She confirmed that she is only taking a social worker's salary, and giving the rest of the £181,000 salary to the industrial action fund and Unison's charity There For You. The workers' wage is an issue campaigned for by the Socialist Party.

But for a left leadership to be maintained, and for the left to win next year's National Executive Council elections, it is vital that under Andrea's leadership an industrial and political fightback is mounted.

Electing more Socialist Party members onto the NEC next year, to join Socialist Party Scotland member Jim McFarlane, will be a vital part of winning a fighting strategy for Unison in this turbulent time.



Some of the Socialist Party members at Unison NDC



Socialist Party members were able to intervene, putting a fighting way forward, in the discussions on low pay, the gender pay gap, housing, winning for members in the private sector, union organising and much more.

Angie Waller argued: "The strike wave a few years ago saw a number of women workers in health and education taking strike action. They were uniting around demands to save jobs, pay and services. We have to make that connection, that by fighting for inflation-proof pay rises, cutting the working week without loss of pay, and having affordable, good quality, flexible childcare alongside public services to meet our needs, then only then will we close the pay gap."

Jim McFarlane, NEC member, argued for defence of Unison members in the private sector: "We now have over 200,000 members working in the private sector. The landscape of public service delivery has shifted through successive governments outsourcing everything. We need to send a clear message that we are fighting to bring those services back in-house."

Fighting Reform – Jobs, homes and services, not racist division

"We know the threat Reform poses to our members, our services and union. We've already seen Reform-controlled councils attacking jobs, pursuing cuts in the name of efficiency, undermining equality initiatives and attacking climate measures.

"Working-class communities have lived through years of austerity, falling living standards and underfunded public services. Many people feel abandoned by politicians who promise change but continue policies that working-class people pay the price for.

"That's why simply denouncing Reform will not work, nor will simply telling people to vote for anyone as long as it's not Reform. Many workers who vote for Reform, possibly even some in our own union, are expressing anger at the political establishment.

"We must be seen to be leading the fight against austerity, against cuts and against declining living standards, whoever is implementing these policies. We must be at the forefront of building a workers' party accountable to the working class and which is committed to fighting in the interests of the working-class majority.

"We should demand the rebuilding of all youth services that have been cut. Local councils should set needs budgets that reflect the real needs of their communities and be prepared to fight for the funding from central government needed to deliver them."

AMY SAGE, NEWLY ELECTED TO THE POLICE, PROBATION AND CARCASS SERVICE GROUP EXECUTIVE

"The hostile proposals [on immigration] are not from the Tories, not from Reform UK. They are being implemented by a Labour government... The people targeted by these proposals are Unison members: they are care workers, teaching assistants, refuse workers, cleaners, administrators, social care staff, the very people who keep our local government services running every day.

"Our answer to exploitation and low pay is not deportation, it is trade union organisation. Our answer to division is solidarity. We must stand with migrant workers, but not silently. We must push the TUC to call for a national demo of jobs and homes, not racism."

SAFFY HILL-CHAMBERS, SURREY COUNTY UNISON

Cwm Taf Morgannwg health visitors pass 120 days of action

DAVE REID

SOCIALIST PARTY WALES SECRETARY

Cwm Taf Morgannwg health visitors have gone past the 120th day of strike action in their fight for pay justice. They are striking to force the Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board (CTMUHB) to pay health visitors the rate for the job, and are balloting again to extend their strike. They are just as strong and determined as they were when the strike began on 23 February.

Health visitors play a vital role in supporting the parents of new-born babies and ensuring children have a good start to life.

In a process that began in 2021, health board bosses signed an internal job grading which matched them as Band 7, acknowledging a Masters qualification. But the board has ignored their own job description, costing many of the workers £9,000 a year.

After being stonewalled for five years, the health visitors started strike action.

They lobbied the Senedd (Welsh parliament) on 16 June when the newly installed Plaid Cymru health minister, Mabon ap Iwan, was answering a question about the dispute. He had been vociferous in their support when in opposition before the May Senedd elections, but is tight-lipped now he's a minister, repeating the same mantra as the Labour health minister had done before being voted out.

Plaid and Labour have switched roles but it's the same tune – the health board and the union must sort it out between them. But from day one it has been clear it's the Welsh health minister who must sort this out by instructing the CTMUHB to pay the rate for the job. Instead, Mabon said because Unite is taking strike action it cannot take part in the



SOCIALIST PARTY WALES

Haringey: Greens must not abandon striking teachers

HARINGEY TEACHER

Teachers and support staff in the National Education Union (NEU) at Highgate Wood School have now had eight days of strike action in their fight against a package of austerity cuts that threaten to make 10% of staff redundant, extend teaching hours, and enlarge class sizes. At the root of the dispute is the change to the funding formula, introduced by the Tories and maintained by Labour, that has reduced the funding for students in inner-city schools. As a result, the school is now running at a growing deficit.

After 50 years of Labour control of Haringey, it was hoped that the newly elected Green councillors, who had pledged to defend education and fight cuts, would do something to reverse years of austerity.

Initially, Green councillors visited picket lines and publicly pledged support for the strikes. NEU members discussed with the councillors how they could end the strike by either cancelling the debt or at least accepting a longer plan for repayment that would avoid compulsory redundancies.

However, now the Green cabinet member for Children and Education wrote to the strikers to say that they could not intervene in the dispute.

Repeating almost word-for-word messages from the previous Labour council, they explained that whilst they regretted job losses and the damage done to children's education, they were powerless to intervene, saying that with many other schools in the borough running at a deficit they cannot set a precedent by bailing out Highgate Wood School.

This is not what people in Haringey voted for when they rejected Labour in hope of the Greens' promises of exchange. Now there is anger and a sense of betrayal from the strikers.

This is the first test of the new council and will now doubtless be repeated in many other sectors where Haringey Labour has presided over cuts in public services for years. The school strikers are determined to force the Greens to stick to their promises by intervening to put an immediate end to the redundancy process currently under way, and instead agree a new plan with school management that will preserve jobs and learning conditions.

Working-class communities deserve better: we need councils that are willing to stand up and fight, with budgets based on need not notional 'debt' for supplying key public services. And school staff need national strike action to secure fair funding for education!



PHOTOS: SOUTH WEST SOCIALIST PARTY



Bristol strikes – the music of the future

BRISTOL SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBERS

Workers' growing impatience with real-terms pay cuts and poor terms and conditions were shown in Bristol as three separate strikes took place. Socialist Party members and Bristol Trades Council delegates visited the pickets to offer support and solidarity.

National Education Union (NEU) members were on their second week of action at Learning Partnership West, a privately run school that takes children who've been excluded from mainstream education. Their demands include union recognition, parity of terms and conditions between staff, and opposition to unsafe and unsuitable premises which have no outside green space.

A majority of striking classroom teachers and support staff were on the picket line. Several expressed their frustration that they'd been forced into taking action by an intransigent management. The workers didn't want to impact their pupils, but were clear that winning their demands would be in the interests of staff and students alike.

NEU members were also out at Hanham Woods school, an academy. A dedicated group of workers who, when management didn't implement what was agreed after strikes in September, rebalanced and took to the picket line again.

60 housing workers in Unite, working for Green-LibDem Bristol City Council, also took to the picket lines, striking against a proposed move away from the nationally negotiated 'red book' and onto an inferior set of terms and conditions.

One rep explained how winning the union's claim would benefit all the workers there but especially those on the lowest pay, and that solidarity from across the workforce is their strongest weapon. A practical example of that was shown when strikers managed to convince workers from the Bristol Waste Company not to cross their picket line.

More strikes may be the music of the future as workers continue to suffer a cost-of-living crisis. The National Shop Stewards Network conference, bringing together rank-and-file activists from several unions, will be an important part of preparing the movement for the struggles of the future and there was a lot of interest in attending from across the Bristol strikes.

social partnership process to standardise the application of the pay bands in the Welsh health boards.

But the reason Unite is in dispute is because CTMUHB refused to respect the job evaluation process in the first place, or engage in any way with the union or its workers. As Unite pointed out at the TUC Cymru conference, social partnership does not work for the Cwm Taf health visitors.

This highlights the warnings about social partnership that Socialist Party members have long made – that it enmeshes workers in a procedure that always works to the advantage of the employer. Unions are involved in meaningless consultations when it suits the employer, but the employer can just walk away when it suits them.

● Lead reps Kerry Parry and Jo Penny will be addressing the National Shop Stewards Network Conference.

Leeds NHS theatre assistants strike

ALI MANSFIELD

"They're playing games with us", was how one worker put it on the picket line in a renewed round of strike action in Leeds Hospital Trust.

Theatre assistants, who perform specialised clinical work in operating theatres, have been in dispute over pay banding. They have been kept on Band 2 pay despite the specialist nature of their work, and despite the same work being paid at Band 3 in other trusts.

The management had met with Unison to agree rebanding – only to later claim they had used the wrong paperwork, adding delays and putting the agreement into question. If this was an attempt to disorientate or demoralise the strikers, the turnout and mood on the picket line showed this would not work.

Throughout the strike, the trust has offered Band 6 staff to cover work usually done by the theatre assistants at enhanced rates of overtime pay, though an appeal by the theatre assistants seems to have had some effect on these shifts not being picked up.

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Socialist Party members campaign for fighting, democratic trade unions, wherever possible working alongside others, to campaign for the industrial and political strategies workers need



nationalshop stewardsnetwork 20 years

IAN DALTON

SOCIALIST PARTY NATIONAL COMMITTEE

The National Shop Stewards Network (NSSN) was founded in 2006. Within two years, a world economic crisis had erupted. With it, a determination from the capitalist bosses to make the working class pay.

The 2010 general election brought about a Tory-Liberal Democrat coalition government. The election campaign had featured a bidding war by the main parties as to who would cut public services the most. This followed initial austerity measures which had already taken place under Gordon Brown, such as scrapping the 10% tax rate for low earners.

With no party winning a majority, the Liberal Democrats became junior partners to the Tories. In 2009, the now, new Prime Minister, David Cameron had declared “the age of austerity”, and the government committed to £110 billion in public sector cuts and tax rises.

In response, anti-cuts alliances, many based on trades councils, were established and held public meetings and protests, including on the date of the Budget on 22 June 2010, where the details of the distribution of the cuts were to be announced. These included 800,000 job losses, 158 court closures, pay freezes, cuts to housing benefit and VAT increasing to 20%.

The agenda of the NSSN's fourth annual conference just days later was dominated by this issue. A statement, proposed by then NSSN Secretary Linda Taaffe, called for “...the maximum unity of the trade union movement in defence of the public sector and the welfare state, and support the call by the PCS union and others for the Trades Union Congress (TUC) to name the day for a national demonstration, preferably before the TUC conference in September 2010.”

The TUC leadership was far from taking such action, instead they actually invited Cameron to speak to Congress! The statement resolved: “If a demo is not called, the NSSN will call a lobby of the TUC in Manchester, urging the TUC to call a united national demonstration with a view to further organising a one-day public sector strike, as the beginning of a serious fightback against these vicious cuts.”

700 turned out in Manchester, with the late RMT General Secretary Bob Crow amongst the speakers. The TUC's official composite came down for a national demonstration against cuts, without specifying a date, as well as support for co-ordinated industrial action between affiliates.

The PCS union, in which Socialist Party members played a leading role, had argued in its resolution for a definite demo date of 23 October. The TUC instead called for regional rallies on

23 October, marches were organised from below - with the NSSN playing an important role in the South West and elsewhere. In London the NSSN coordinated with FBU, PCS, RMT and NUT to organise a 4,000-strong march to an indoor rally.

In the Comprehensive Spending Review on 20 October, the government announced it was abolishing the Education Maintenance Allowance in England, which provides a means-tested weekly payment of between £10-30 for college students.

The review of Lord Browne, former boss of BP, into higher education, commissioned by the previous Labour government, also reported in the autumn, its main recommendation being to lift the cap on university tuition fees.

The National Union of Students (NUS) called a national demonstration against the proposals for 10 November 2010. This became the largest-ever student demonstration in the UK. 50,000 demonstrated in the capital, where, without a rally to end the demonstrations, students protested outside and stormed Millbank, the Tory Party HQ.

On the demonstrations, Socialist Students distributed tens of thousands of flyers calling for a national student walkout, on a date to be determined. The NSSN called for trade unionists to join a walkout, which eventually took place on 24 November, with demonstrations of several thousands in major cities.

As well as further national demonstrations, dozens of buildings on university campuses were occupied by students.

Missed opportunities

Belatedly, the TUC held a joint demonstration with NUS in Manchester in January 2011. This was infamous for the then NUS President being chased off the demo by students angry at the failures of NUS. Despite education workers marching with students, and striking electricians joining the 9 November unofficial national demo, much of the leadership of the trade unions missed the opportunity to link up the workers' movement to this mass struggle of young people.

It was against this backdrop of missed opportunities for coordinated struggle that a special conference of the NSSN was called. A dispute amongst the leadership of the NSSN had broken out, with some, including the Socialist Workers Party, wanting to subordinate the NSSN's campaigning activity against the cuts to pre-existing campaigns which did not demand councils refuse to implement cuts.

Campaigns such as the Coalition of Resistance and Right to Work, gave uncritical platforms to councillors, particularly from Labour, who said

they were against cuts in principle, but still planned to vote for them in the council chamber.

The Coalition of Resistance had recently held a conference which featured limited participation from the conference floor, and all 22 proposed amendments to the conference declaration were remitted for further discussion.

Contrast this with the scrupulously fair debate held at the special NSSN conference on 22 January 2011, where both points of view on the steering committee were given equal time to introduce their argument and equal allocations of speakers in the debate, with conference co-chaired by one representative from either side. The conference voted overwhelmingly, by 305 votes to 89, for the NSSN to establish its own anti-cuts committee on the basis of opposition to all cuts. This body went to work straight away and called a demonstration in February to march on the Labour Local Government Leaders conference in London.

NSSN anti-cuts stance vindicated

The stance taken by the NSSN was soon vindicated when councils began setting their first budgets under the coalition government, as Labour councillors failed to put up any resistance to the cuts.

Instead of a national resistance, trade unionists were forced to fight borough by borough and service by service. The fight on this issue, drawing on the lessons of the Liverpool City Council in the 1980s, led to rebel councillors emerging in a number of towns and cities taking a stand to defend services.

But the legacy of this austerity remains today in the decimation of council services and council workforces shrunk by thousands.

When the TUC belatedly organised its demonstration for 26 March 2011, it received a tremendous response. Approximately 750,000 attended, one of the largest trade union-organised demonstrations in Britain.

A poll commissioned by the TUC showed 52% of the population supported the aims of the demo with only 31% opposed. Taxi drivers reportedly gave protesters free or discounted rides. Such was its size, the Unison contingent alone took an hour to pass by and the Usdaw contingent further back didn't even get to the end.

But the question on people's lips was: What next?

TUC leader Brendan Barber declared trade unions would not allow public services to be destroyed, but put forward no concrete steps of how that could be achieved. Unison's Dave Prentis just called for local demonstrations. It fell to Unite General



Social media ban – readers' opinion

● Algorithms maximised for profit

HANNAH PONTING
LIVERPOOL STUDENT

The recent proposal by Keir Starmer, before he resigned as prime minister, to ban social media for under-16s has created a polarising debate.

For some, social media plays a positive role, a hub for both entertainment and education, helping to develop connections and friendships with people from across the world – an escape from difficult circumstances at home or school.

However, social media can be damaging, spending hours 'doomscrolling', addicted, or affected by harmful online content and cyberbullying.

Why do so many young people spend so much time online?

Under capitalism, social media is run for profit. User engagement and attention are products to be sold.

Algorithms are optimised to maximise profit. That means it is inevitable that it is designed to be addictive.

Social media plays a massive role in young people's social lives and in youth culture. Removing it without offering them anything else to do, will leave them bored and looking for alternatives. Many will look for ways to bypass these laws or move towards less regulated platforms, which are even more likely to become a hotbed for harmful content.

Others will have nowhere to go. This is part of a broader phenomenon – many young people feel increasingly isolated and pessimistic about their futures.

Without access to decent local libraries, many students rely on video lessons on YouTube to revise for exams. Without youth clubs to go to and the high cost of travel, many young people don't have any option but to connect with friends online, instead of in-person. Without fully funded local gyms, parks, sports teams, and other recreational activities, many people look towards online communities to develop their hobbies.

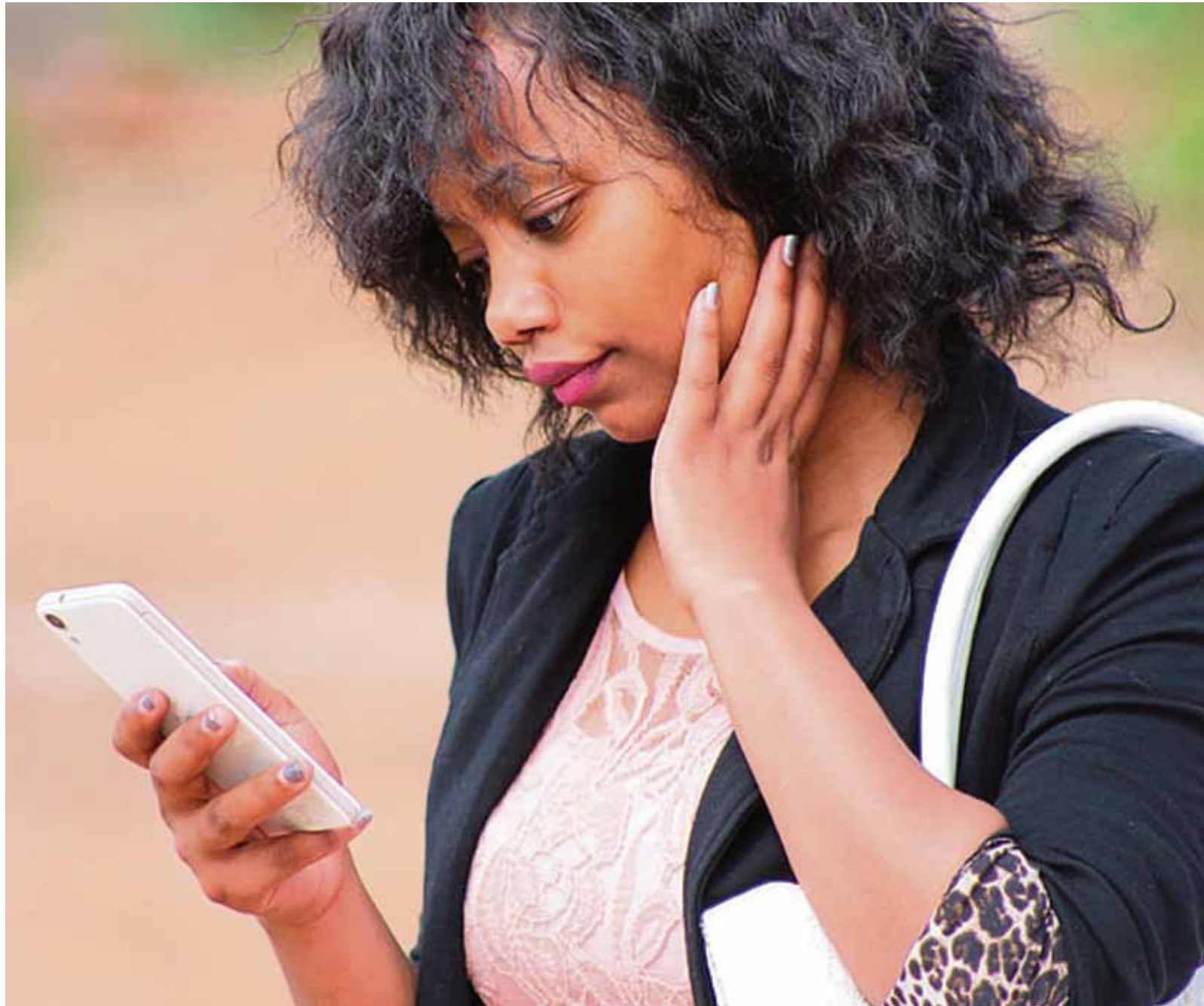
It's an increasingly bleak future for youth in Britain. Almost one million young people 'not in education, employment or training' (NEET). Many send off hundreds of job applications, receiving nothing, or only AI responses.

With prices going up without wages keeping up, many face a reality in which they have no hope of owning a house, car, or even having a stable job.

The Labour Party boasts that this ban will 'give kids their childhood back'. But without funding to back this up, these are empty words.

Youth clubs, mental health services, parks, public transport, libraries, and safe, free areas for young people to congregate are vital. Underinvestment in young people's future is a recipe for disaster.

The responsibility for managing the effects of social media is being



unfairly placed onto the people who use it, particularly young people, rather than the big businesses which control these algorithms.

Instead, these platforms should be run as socially useful tools, with the genuine needs of those who use them as a focus, rather than being run as businesses looking to maximise profit. That requires nationalisation.

They should also not be viewed as easy substitutes for properly funded local services, including youth services, but instead be part of a coordinated socialist model of society, where human need is treated as the foremost priority, not a secondary thought after profit.

● Who's in control?

EMILY LYNDON
YOUTH WORKER

Keir Starmer told us that under-16s will be banned from social media in order to keep them safe. Yet, the age of criminal responsibility is 10 years old. Which is it?

Can children be criminally responsible in the eyes of the law, and simultaneously be too vulnerable to use Snapchat or Instagram? This is just another example of the utter hypocrisy that permeated his time as Labour leader.

The responsibility falls on the individual, rather than a genuine programme to improve the quality of life for ordinary people.

Parents, guardians, and educators lack access to training and support when it comes to online safety – crucial to keeping young people safe online.

What is there for young people to do? Over 1,000 youth centres have closed since 2010. Young people have limited access to safe spaces.

Under-16s will absolutely continue to use social media. But now there will be stigma and even less support when things go wrong.

The decision is a lazy effort to pass policy, seemingly doing something, while washing their hands of all responsibility to make the internet safer.

No one is denying the harm that

can come as a result of unregulated social media.

Social media can act as a lifeline for young people, fostering community. It is also a way for young people to engage in politics, with large numbers of young people aligning with left-wing ideas. A ban could stifle political development.

Rather than bans and restrictions, we need the billionaires who push the algorithms to be held accountable. Social media could be regulated by communities. Yet, here we are, acknowledging the harm, and holding no one responsible to account.

While capitalism exists, social media is always going to be a dangerous place. Online trends, pressure, and exploitation go unchecked, because of the profit motive that drives it.

Now with more access than ever, we should be mounting pressure on the tech billionaires. Online spaces should be safe for all users, especially children.

This could be achieved with genuine workers' control, community moderators, and restrictions on algorithms and the use of AI.

● Read more – 'For democratic control of social media – nationalise!' at socialistparty.org.uk

WHAT'S YOUR VIEW?



● editors@socialistparty.org.uk
or, if you're not online, write to the Socialist Inbox, PO Box 1398, Enfield EN1 9GT

Left-wing economists ponder how to solve wealth inequality



Wealth disparity in Mumbai PHOTO: SURAJNAGRE/CC

DEAN YOUNG
SOCIALIST PARTY NORTH WEST ORGANISER

Left-wing economist and writer Thomas Piketty, alongside other economists, have in recent weeks produced a 'Global Justice Report' which aims to outline a plan to tackle wealth inequality. Piketty, in an article in the Guardian 4 June, sets out the four key aims of the report: "Redistribution at the world scale; a deep reform of the international financial and economic order; a radical transformation of energy systems; and substantial shifts in consumption patterns."

With the increase of poverty and climate catastrophe at one end of society, and the increase in wealth of a tiny few at the other, people across the world will be interested in plans to reduce inequality and prevent environmental destruction.

But how do the authors of this report envisage such a transformation of society? They view the need to shift away from 'overconsumption' and towards an economy run on the basis of 'sufficiency' (in other words based on the needs of humanity). A fair goal, but the question ultimately is how to achieve this. Piketty and co believe we can move to a needs-based society with the following programme:

- Forming new international institutions within the confines of the capitalist system to supersede old ones such as the UN, IMF etc.
- The key new institution being a 'Global Justice Fund' (GJF) that spends 10% of global GDP each year from 2026-2060 on investment, compared to the 0.4% average today
- To fund this they propose a 20% global wealth tax, a 90% global marginal income tax on the top 1% of earners, and the GJF holding, via a sovereign wealth fund, 10% of all stocks internationally

With such a plan, the report suggests that by 2100 the average GDP per capita would equalise internationally at around €5,000 a month. The average working week would fall from 40 hours to roughly 19 hours. The gender pay gap would be eradicated. Climate catastrophe averted, the bottom 50% of earners would increase their share of global wealth from 2% today to 30%, with the billionaire class's share of the wealth down from 6% to 0.05%. The report lists a lot more than this, but these are some standouts.

This report is a well thought-out, well-researched and evidence-based approach on how to begin to tackle the scourge of wealth inequality. It shows that in reality we aren't doomed to climate chaos, or endless poverty and worsening living standards if the resources of society were put to use.



Piketty and co fail to ask or answer a fundamental point – why would international capitalism agree to such plans?

But society as it is organised now is based on competing capitalist nation states, which seek to act in the interests of their capitalist classes to maximise their profits. Piketty and co fail to ask or answer a fundamental point – why would international capitalism agree to such plans? Especially while governments are stopping international development funds, such as widespread cuts to USAID and UK foreign aid spending. Why would finance capital, such as the banks and

hedge funds, allow the setting up of a sovereign wealth fund which owns 10% of all global shares? Why would the billionaire class allow a significant wealth tax and a 90% marginal tax rate? They would only concede this massive transfer of wealth away from their clutches if the alternative was something even worse for them.

Piketty, in his Guardian article, heralds the average 1:5 or 1:10 wealth disparity that existed at the height of Nordic and Western nations after the Second World War until the 1970s – the era of capitalist boom. But the post-war boom, and the unprecedented levels of investment in the economies of these nations (such as the nationalisation of roughly 20-25% of the British economy) was not done due to the kindness in the capitalists' hearts. It was done to head off the radicalisation within the ranks of the working class after WWII. At that time, there existed an alternative way of organising society in the Stalinist states. While the lack of democracy and brutal repression proved to be their ends in the following decades, the nationalisation of the key parts of the economy and the planning of production were a danger to the bosses as workers saw there was an alternative. The capitalist class temporarily made sacrifices by allowing the creation of the welfare state, nationalisation of significant sections of the economy and very high taxes on the wealthy so they could preserve their system and one day take back these concessions. They have done this over the last 50 years via the methods of neoliberalism and privatisation.

The last 50 years show that, while the super-rich bosses maintain their position holding the levers of economic and political power, any concessions won are only temporary. Gross inequality across the world, climate chaos, and attacks on our living

**80-85%
Just 150
corporations
control 80-
85% of the
economy**

standards are baked into the capitalist system itself. We must do away with such a system, it cannot be reformed to serve the interests of the working class. In Britain, just 150 corporations control 80-85% of the economy. As a first step to building a society that provides what humanity needs, we should nationalise these 150 companies under democratic workers' control and management. This would provide a real basis in Britain to plan our economy for human need, not profit. We must also spread such an approach internationally, not leaving ourselves isolated nor leave the working classes in other nations hamstrung by capitalist exploitation. It is for this reason that the Socialist Party is a member of the Committee for a Workers' International, with sister organisations on every continent.

We need an international socialist solution to crisis-ridden international capitalism, with its waste and inefficiency, which creates trillionaires like Elon Musk while hundreds of thousands across the world starve and the climate gets ever hotter. The Global Justice Report stimulates a debate on how to fix society, but if we leave the wealth and power in the hands of an unaccountable capitalist clique we will continue in a doom loop of exploitation.

If you want to join us in the fight for a socialist world, get in touch today.

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SOCIALISTS**

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Newcastle Greens discuss council budgets – but will they lead a fight against austerity?

SAM MORDEN
TYNE AND WEAR SOCIALIST PARTY

Greens Organise (GO), a left grouping within the Green Party, organised a meeting in Newcastle on the 20th June around involving communities in council budget spending; roughly 30 people attended, with a mix of ages. I and another Socialist Party member went along. There was a presentation led by a council officer from Islington Council, a GO member.

Promises

The discussion centred mainly around the methodology of getting local communities involved in decision making on how to spend set, limited pots of money. Emphasis was put on “not promising more than we can deliver”, with a paternalistic tone when talking about involvement of local communities, rather than approaching them as equals and involving them fully in all levels of decision making. There was no mention of workers (let alone council workers), the working class, or trade unions.

The four Green councillors in Newcastle before this May’s elections voted with Labour to pass the council’s most recent budget, which included

£37 million of cuts, 75 job losses and a 4.99% council tax increase. Now, with Labour’s vote collapsing and the Greens seen as a credible left-wing opposition, the Greens hold 24 seats. Lib Dems lead the council with a ‘confidence and supply’ agreement from the Greens.

Questions

The meeting included space for questions and, following that, break-out groups which later fed back to the rest of the meeting. When we were able to contribute, we raised the need for no-cuts, needs-based budgets, where what is needed is discussed first, in complete lockstep with local communities and local workers and unions, with council workers central to this process. We gave more information of how this could be done, by using reserves and borrowing powers to pass balanced no-cuts budgets, while building a mass campaign in order to win money from government, using the past example of the Militant-led Liverpool council in the 1980s. We asked the speaker and the room whether this is an approach they support.

Though there was support for the idea, many in the room, including the speaker, dismissed it as “too difficult”, saying that “things are harder

now since the 1980s”. Others disapproved of using their influence on the council to campaign for this approach rather than focusing on politically convenient ‘little wins’ within individual wards for local and national grant funds. One person raised that they only had one third of the council, so could do nothing like what we were suggesting.

Are we using our power?

In my response, I brought attention to the excellent documents on the TUSC website (tusc.org.uk) which laid out how such needs-based no-cuts budgets could be organised and carried in the current period; and challenged the ‘settling’ within the limits they had set themselves. What, I asked, were they using that one-third of the council for? Were they setting alternative no-cuts budgets? Were they working with council workers and their unions to oppose austerity and job cuts? Were they raising campaigns with local communities to protect and restore services? Were they spreading the news of these actions with the people they represent?

One Green activist claimed that they were doing all of those things. We haven’t seen any evidence to support this claim yet.



Protesting cuts when Labour ran Enfield Council SARAH SACHS-ELDRIDGE

Enfield Greens’ abstention lets Tories take council leadership

PAUL KERSHAW
ENFIELD AND LEA VALLEY SOCIALIST PARTY

Labour lost control of Enfield council in the May local elections. Years of disappointment and cuts meant support collapsed, as in so many councils. Added factors have been plans to enclose some public land to be taken over as a training facility by Tottenham Hotspur FC and for more green land to be built on to create a new town, with no convincing assurances about affordability. Local Tory canvassers called for a Tory vote to save public land from privatisation! Such was the scale of Labour’s collapse, the Tories gained six seats, despite themselves suffering a reduction of the vote share, and finished one seat short of an overall majority. Five Greens were elected.

People’s Budget

In the run-up to the elections, a ‘Peoples Budget’ meeting drew trade unionists from the trades council and other campaigners together to set out priorities in Enfield. After the election result, a public letter was sent to the Greens pointing out those key priorities and arguing that the peoples budget demands “should form part of a policy platform to be put forward by you as the basis for any negotiations with Labour,” and to “make opposition to all cuts your starting point for any negotiations about forming a new administration or for how you work with other parties in the council.”

At the first meeting of the new council, the Greens abstained on the leadership vote which enabled the Tories to take control. They say they will vote on a case-by-case basis.

The Greens have opposed the new town development so have common ground with the new administration on the decision to oppose the new town, which will bring the council into conflict with the government and Labour Mayor of London.

Homes we need

Experts have identified enough ‘brownfield’ sites in Enfield where much needed new council homes could be built without the need to build on the Green Belt at all. Stopping a bad development is not enough, Enfield needs decent affordable homes. The Labour council had been criticised for forcing homeless people out of the borough – sometimes by hundreds of miles. Enfield Council ended its legal homelessness duties to 115 families in a single year because they refused housing offers located outside the borough. This was the highest figure of any local authority in England. Any anti-austerity councillor should demand an end to this scandal.

The Greens won their seats because many saw them as an anti-austerity alternative and local campaigners are holding them to account. If the Greens stand up for local communities, campaigners will be shoulder to shoulder with them. If they retreat, the fight will not stop.

London youth day of action



Peckham, south London ANDY BEADLE

ROB ELLIS
CAMDEN AND HARINGEY SOCIALIST PARTY

Life for young people has only become more expensive over 16 years of austerity, as an increasing cost of living has coincided with the trebling of tuition fees. Maintenance grants have been replaced by loans, shifting even greater financial burden onto students.

This hardship continues once we are out of education. Degrees don’t lead to employment as easily as we were led to believe. Over one million people between the ages of 16 to 24 are not in employment, education, or training.

Under this backdrop, young Socialist Party members felt it necessary to hold a day of action in London – four groups across the city. Starting with a campaign stall, and

ending with discussions in parks. This spread awareness of the Socialist Party to young people, and built solidarity amongst us by sharing our similar struggles.

North London

We discussed with young people the pressure felt by cuts to local secondary school funding, leading to strikes in the area, such as Highgate Wood. Many echoed our concerns of rising tuition fees and an increasingly harsh job market.

● East London – what change do we need?

ANDY
WALTHAM FOREST SOCIALIST PARTY

We addressed the issues plaguing

young people, like ourselves, on our campaign stall in Bethnal Green in Tower Hamlets. Unemployment, unaffordable cost of living, underfunding of councils and vital education services from schools to universities, racism and the rise of far-right movements, and a lack of third places – or anywhere to socialise and relax outside of home.

I spoke with a man who lived in the area. He strongly resonated with “putting more money into councils and public services”.

One of us spoke to a RMT transport union member. He was also mostly in agreement, but did have concerns with immigration.

Reform and people on the far right blame growing inequality and worsening living conditions on immigrants. They’re egged on by the capitalist class, their parties, and the media. They don’t want us to focus

on the actual issue – mass hoarding of wealth and resources by the extremely wealthy.

After, we went to Bethnal Green Gardens to speak to each other about our pressing issues and struggles as young people today.

Unemployment, and the government’s inability to secure jobs for youth who need them, is terrible. Capitalism justifies keeping some people unemployed to put pressure on workers, knowing that they could be replaced. It is inhumane and unnecessary.

Local councils don’t have enough funding. They need more money to keep pillars of our communities up and running. And Labour councils have made things worse by passing on 16 years of cuts.

Some schools like Lammas in Leyton are at threat of closing down, because of lack of funding, disrupting children’s education during their key development years, putting underpaid teachers and other staff out of work.

Many universities are falling apart, with departments that have worn down and outdated facilities and equipment, and a lack of professors and lecturers. All this while students are expected to pay back massive loans, up to six digits.

Young people lack anywhere to socialise regularly. If it’s too expensive, or inaccessible because of travel to find somewhere to casually talk with friends or meet people, this pushes many to staying inside, spending more time online.

The Labour government has shown no intention of building more youth centres or social hubs, but the exact opposite. Austerity has closed youth centres, removed skate parks, and shut down nightclubs.

Change is needed. Increasing funding to public services would help a lot. We need more to improve our schools, giving staff the wage they need, and children the education they need.

Make transport affordable by nationalising London transport companies and others. So everyone can

afford to travel to where they need, and still have money left over.

Nationalising major industries would ensure that there’s enough funding and resources for us to have jobs, an affordable cost of living, councils that can support the needs of their communities, and university that is free.

This would also mean taking back control of the mainstream media that is currently controlled by billionaires, trying to divide us by pushing racist and anti-immigrant narratives. Instead, we can push real concerns, focusing public attention on the actual problems.

There is an alternative to this soul-crushing system, and it’s socialism. Giving workers and the public the democratic control of our resources and services, so that we set the standards for our living.

● South London – fighting youth unemployment, demanding decent jobs

ADAM GILLMAN
SOUTH EAST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

In Peckham, we campaigned against youth unemployment. We linked this issue to the need for high-quality, well-paid jobs and apprenticeships. And a £15-an-hour minimum wage, as a step towards a real living wage, with no age exemptions. We pointed to the need for socialism to make any gains permanent.

One person was angry at the state of the country, and “doesn’t trust Burnham one bit”. He agreed we need a trade union-based, mass workers’ party. They bought our Socialist paper for solidarity price. A 12-year-old school student took a leaflet, and was interested in socialist ideas.

Starmer still PM when South West socialists discussed chaos Britain

ALEX SAMPSON
PLYMOUTH SOCIALIST PARTY

The main discussion at our South West conference, led by Socialist Party general secretary Hannah Sell, looked at the changing and chaotic nature of British politics. Keir Starmer was still prime minister when we held this discussion.

Over 40 attended, with more joining on Zoom. Labour’s failures and the lack of a working-class alternative is leaving a gap that the right-populist Reform are exploiting. This is exacerbated by a weak or non-existent challenge from the left, thanks to the collapse of Your Party and the inconsistent nature of Green Party policies.

The key to fighting back is for trade unions to lead action, and work together to build a genuine party of the working class. One that will fight for jobs and services for all, rather than pandering to billionaires. This

AREA	\$ RECEIVED	\$ TARGET	Q2: APRIL-JUNE 2026										DEADLINE: 30 JUNE 2026
South West	2,615	2,100											125%
Wales	2,329	2,400											97%
East Midlands	1,949	2,050											95%
London	4,705	5,000											94%
Eastern	1,105	1,300											85%
North West	997	1,200											83%
Yorkshire	2,132	2,650											80%
Southern & SE	1,886	2,400											79%
Northern	474	800											59%
West Midlands	1,172	2,700											43%
Other	7,971	2,400											332%
TOTAL	27,335	25,000											109%

is the only route away from the anti-migrant, blame-based politics of the right.

We can build the Socialist Party, and get our ideas and programme out to the widest number of working-class people, who are looking for an alternative.

Everyone in the room was keen to

continue taking the fight into their trade unions, universities, and workplaces. Support for our programme is evident in our impressive fighting fund appeal total, raising £2,620. This will help push the work further, not just in the South West, but nationally. We left buoyed and ready to meet the challenges ahead, with clear

perspectives and ideas about how to fight for a socialist alternative. If you are not currently a member, now is the time to join.

Bristol socialists campaigning

MIKE LUFF
BRISTOL NORTH SOCIALIST PARTY

Campaigning in Bristol, selling the Socialist paper on Friday 19 June, the day after the Makerfield by-election, we met a mixture of workers on their lunchtime break, locals, and tourists. One person was challenging us on a lot of issues, and he was joined by a couple of others. He thought we liked Keir Starmer. I said we do not support the Labour Party, and that we call for a new, mass workers’ party that represents us. I said that the austerity



Protesting cuts when Labour ran Newcastle Council

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WHAT WE STAND FOR

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

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

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

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

WORK, PENSIONS AND BENEFITS

- A trade union struggle for the immediate implementation of the TUC demand of a £15-an-hour minimum wage for all as a step towards a real living wage, without exemptions. For the minimum wage to automatically increase linked to average earnings or inflation, whichever is higher.
- Share out the work. A maximum 32-hour working week with no loss of pay or worsening of conditions. The right to flexible working, under the control of workers not employers. An end to insecure working, for the right to full-time work for all who want it; ban zero-hour contracts.
- All workers to have trade union rates of pay, employment protection, and sickness, parental and holiday rights from day one of employment. End bosses using bogus 'self-employment' as a means to avoid giving workers rights.
- No to austerity through inflation. For all wage rates to be automatically increased at least in line with price rises.
- Open the books of all companies cutting jobs or claiming they can't afford to pay a real living wage. State subsidies, where genuinely needed, for socially-useful small businesses.
- For trade unions independent of the capitalist state, with members having democratic control over their own policies, constitutions and democratic procedures. For all trade union officials to be regularly elected, subject to recall by their members and paid a worker's wage.
- Reduce the state retirement and pension age to 55. For decent living pensions.
- Replace universal credit and the punitive benefit system with living benefits for all who need them.

PUBLIC SERVICES

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

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

ENVIRONMENT

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

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

DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS

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

SOCIALISM AND INTERNATIONALISM

- No to imperialist wars & 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.

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Germany: International solidarity against union busting - CWI member under attack for his defence of workers' rights



JOHANNES BAUER
CWI COLOGNE

Cologne's swimming pool operator, Köln-Bäder GmbH, a subsidiary of Cologne council's municipal services provider, Stadtwerke-Köln GmbH, has filed a motion for the extraordinary termination of employment of works council member, Martin Löber. The reason given for this termination is alleged working-hour fraud. Experts from ver.di (the public sector union) who have reviewed the case have stated that this incident does not even warrant a discussion. Various claims made in the justification for the termination have been proven false, as evidence has already shown. There is a strong suspicion that the grounds for the termination have been fabricated.

For Martin, the termination is yet another attempt by his employer to get rid of him. He has already been suspended twice during previous conflicts. As a member of ver.di, Die Linke, and Sol (Socialist Organisation Solidarity, German section of the Committee for a Workers' International), Martin is a combative employee representative who fights for the interests of the workforce to the very end. Martin is involved not only within his own workplace but also in labour disputes at other companies, actively putting his experience and solidarity to use.

The background to the current dismissal attempt is a deliberate act of malice by the management of Köln-Bäder. The workers' paid breaks are to be eliminated. Paid breaks have been part of the working conditions at Köln-Bäder for a good reason. Given the demands of running the public baths, employees often have no opportunity to take their breaks properly. Martin fought within the works council and among the workforce to organise resistance against this, thereby once again making himself a target of management.

Consequences

For Martin, the termination is a heavy blow. He is highly qualified in his profession as a certified master technician for public swimming facilities and has been employed by Köln-Bäder for more than twenty years. Köln-Bäder effectively holds

a monopoly in this city of over a million people. This will make it nearly impossible for Martin to find a comparable position in his field without having to accept significant commuting times or even a change of residence. In practice, a massive reduction in his income, his pension entitlements, and his quality of life would be virtually unavoidable in the event of termination.

Solidarity

In its press release, his union, ver.di, refers to this as "union-busting". Amid the general cutback frenzy of the neoliberal offensive that is under way in Germany, the public sector is now abandoning the long-standing 'social partnership' between employers and employees. This shows that the 'social partnership' does not defend living standards when the ruling class launches an offensive. Ver.di has acted swiftly and stands in solidarity with Martin. This is not just about Martin alone. The aim here is to make an example of him to set a new tone for the future. At Köln-Bäder, the attempt to get rid of Martin is not the first instance in which unwelcome works council members or union representatives have been forced out of the company. This is certainly known to have happened to at least one union representative and three works council members.

Workers need to mobilise broadly against this attack on one of our own and fully unleash the union's fighting spirit to show the corporation where the line is drawn. Die Linke, the Left Party, has also already begun organising support for Martin. This is very welcome.

This battle must not be reduced to a legal skirmish that could drag on for months and eventually fade into a footnote. Public protests and, if necessary, strikes must be organised against this act of arbitrariness.

A successful defence of Martin would set an example of how to fight back when the ruling class tries to cut living standards to maintain their profits and finance their rearmament drive.

- **The CWI appeals to all members and supporters: Send letters of protest to Köln-Bäder GmbH at info@koelnbaeder.de with copies sent to jobauer@posteo.de**

Argentina: Failure of Milei's populist right government and the lie of his anti-establishment rhetoric

HUGO RODRIGUEZ
SOCIALISMO REVOLUCIONARIO (CWI CHILE)

Javier Milei came to power in December 2023 promising to end the privileges of the 'elite', touting himself as a 'growth specialist with and without money'. He delivered a populist message about ending what he called 'a century of failure'. Yet his government has plunged the working class into a level of poverty and misery unseen in recent decades.

According to Milei, the ruling class would have to pay for the irresponsibility of recent years. This was the central theme of his campaign, and many believed him. Large sectors of the population voted for him because they hoped for 'change', desperate for solutions to the disastrous Peronist government of Alberto Fernández and the traditional right wing led by Mauricio Macri.

The rise in food prices was brutal with the arrival of the 'libertarians' to power, while wages remained below inflation. Then came cuts to health, education, and social assistance. The government eliminated state coverage for medications, subsidies for electricity and gas, and food for community kitchens.

Furthermore, he promoted lower taxes on higher salaries and corporate activity; eliminating, for example, the tax on high-end cars, yachts, etc.

After 30 months in office, economic activity has fallen to alarming levels. Around 25,000 businesses have ceased operations, and so far in 2026, 2,000 businesses have closed each month.

Milei's economic programme is based on a policy of submission to the interests of large economic groups and transnational corporations. Privatisation processes of public companies and the handover of natural resources have been promoted, facilitating speculative business.

The liberalisation of international trade has stimulated the massive importation of products, destroying national industry. As a result, the economy has contracted by 2.7% in the first quarter of 2026, and all economic indicators show a decline compared to 2025.

Neoliberal governments come in with beautiful promises but the economic measures they have introduced have proven to be a failure where they have been implemented. They run headlong into a system in permanent crisis, and then they resort to whatever they can get their hands on to try and sustain a very poor mandate. Lowering public spending and cutting social spending is what these neoliberals resort to.



This system needs uninterrupted growth, otherwise it begins to die. The entire struggle of right-wing governments revolves around this: growth and 'security'. Unable to meet their targets and to avoid the so-called fiscal deficit, they resort to reducing public spending, which is nothing more than cutting funding for healthcare, pensions, medicine, and education. The economic indicators presented by Javier Milei's administration are disastrous for Argentina.

Investment in public works has fallen by almost 80%. In 2023, it represented 1.6% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP); today it is barely 0.3%. This is of great importance, as public works have a strong impact on the labour market and job creation, stimulating, for example, the construction sector and the entire supply chain of industries that support it.

The president's sister has been implicated in a bribery scheme involving the purchase of medicines at the National Disability Agency, where non-public tenders, pricing, and the collection of illegal kickbacks from laboratories and pharmacies are being investigated. Leaked audio recordings indicate that these illicit fundraising manoeuvres were intended for her.

Fall in consumption and increase in poverty

According to the consulting firm Scentia, sales fell 3.8% year-on-year in April, with the steepest declines in categories such as beverages and impulse items. Supermarkets have reported drops exceeding 7% compared to 2015.

On the other hand, the consulting firm Zuban Córdoba has reported that poverty rose to 29.9% in the last quarter, adding 1.2 million new people to the ranks of the poor in just a few months. The most alarming figure is that among young people aged 15 to 29, poverty now affects 32.6%.

To get a clear idea of the population's suffering, it's worth noting that the monthly minimum living wage is a mere 367,800 pesos (approximately US\$250). This means that a worker earning the minimum wage barely covers 25.6% of what their family needs to avoid poverty.

On the other hand, the promise to 'sweep away the elite' resulted in a series of corruption scandals involving Javier Milei himself, his sister Karina, and other members of his government. The infamous 'Libra' cryptocurrency scam, promoted by Milei on his social media, is still under investigation.

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Chief of staff Manuel Adorni is also the subject of a judicial investigation prompted by complaints about the excessive level of spending on international trips, the high cost of which were paid in cash and do not match his declared income as a public official.

As an example, Adorni's salary as a public official is 7,100,000 Argentine pesos (Approx. US\$5,000 per month). This amounts to approximately 212,000,000 Argentine pesos since he took office, and he has had expenses for travel and property purchases of approximately 1,100,000,000 Argentine pesos, without being able to justify the origin of the money spent.

A government in crisis and the need for a revolutionary alternative

Milei's economic programme has proven to be a complete failure. Were it not for the financial bailouts from the IMF, the World Bank, and the US Treasury, the government would have already fallen. These bailouts were agreed upon in exchange for a programme of plundering natural resources and massive privatisations.

In addition to the economic crisis, rising unemployment and

poverty, the scandalous corruption cases linked to the core of the government are severely impacting support for the government. Polls show a 60% disapproval rating for the government. This has been reflected in the massive social mobilisations of recent weeks against social spending cuts. This situation is provoking a civil war within the government, while the ruling class seeks alternatives to Milei to continue its neoliberal policies in the future.

It is becoming increasingly clear to the population that this government has turned out to be part of the same caste that they supposedly came to eradicate.

A period of enormous upheaval is now beginning, one that could lead to social explosions like the one that occurred in 2001 under the government of Fernando de la Rúa. In this period, five presidents succeeded one another in just a couple of weeks. Hence the urgency of building a genuine revolutionary alternative, responding to the most deeply felt demands of the Argentine people, in order to break with the cycle of permanent crisis and poverty that capitalism represents.

This is clearly reflected in the level of popularity that the deputy of the Socialist Workers' Party (PTS), Myriam Bregman, has reached. In the polls she is now seen as the political leader with the most positive image in the country. The PST is a Trotskyist party, previously known as the Workers' Party for Socialism, which is part of the Workers' Left Front (FIT-U), along with the Workers' Party (PO), the Socialist Left (IS), and the Workers' Socialist Movement (MST).

In this context, enormous possibilities open up for the left within the FIT-U. It will be necessary, then, to learn from this crisis and develop a revolutionary proposal geared towards the masses, who are increasingly disillusioned with the dead end offered by Peronism (read more on Peronism: 'Argentine elections see deepening polarisation' at socialist-party.org.uk). Its support in recent polls has increased to up to 15%. It needs to develop into a party of the working class with a socialist programme for the struggles of the working class and masses, and fight for a government of the workers and the poor going beyond an electoral alliance of different Trotskyist parties.

Only the struggle for a workers' government, which defends socialist policies, will be able to transform this crisis of the regime into a revolutionary solution, favourable to the exploited majorities.



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formerly **Militant**

Fight back against youth unemployment

Fund our future Take the wealth off the super-rich

THOMAS BUTLER
LIVERPOOL NORTH SOCIALIST PARTY

2026 started with high youth unemployment and very little has changed in the first six months. The percentage of young people not in education, training or employment hovers at around 16% – that's nearly one in six 18-24 year olds without a job or on a course!

This does not even begin to tell the full story. 16% doesn't include the thousands of young people in unfair and inadequate working conditions. Zero-hour contract use has been rising with young people, despite Labour being elected promising to abolish them. Many young workers find themselves in such precarious conditions that they are not able to plan their lives securely, unsure how much they will get paid every month, or if they will have a job at all.

To fight the youth unemployment plague, we need a trade union-led fight-back. To fight to share out the work and provide jobs for all. Not just new jobs but also fighting for dignified working conditions. A campaign which demands immediately increasing the minimum wage to £15-an hour for all, as a step towards a real living wage. Young people are saddled with a lower minimum wage, going to as low as £8-an-hour for under-18s. No one should be paid less for the exact same work purely based on their age! Sharing out the work would mean we could have a maximum 35-hour working week with no loss in pay for anyone.

Will an incoming Andy Burnham-led government commit to Labour's pledge to abolish zero-hour contracts? Will it cast away age discrimination in the minimum wage? Ultimately, what measures will it put forward to tackle the ever-pressing issue of youth unemployment? Will it have a plan to create jobs by investing in public services and infrastructure, with a mass council house building programme, fix the crumbling infrastructure and invest in developing science and technology? The wealth is there in society for this, but hoarded in the hands of the super-rich.

We can't have more attacks on young people's rights and benefits, we need real jobs, proper training and free education. If you want to get involved in fighting for a future, join us today.

Do you agree?
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SOCIALISTS
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WHAT WE STAND FOR: THE SOCIALIST PARTY'S MAIN DEMANDS ►►► see column on p14

