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Issue 1375 | 16-22 July 2026 | formerly Militant

Burnham replaces Starmer

WORKING-CLASS FIGHTBACK CAN'T WAIT

TRADE UNIONS MUST LEAD


PAUL MATTSSON

We need change. Everyone under the age of 18 in Britain has only ever known austerity. Most do not have any confidence that they will be better off than their parents.

Over a million people under the age of 24 are unemployed; many more are underemployed, on a zero-hour contract, or otherwise in insecure work.

People of all ages are being squeezed by the relentless rise in the cost of living. Meanwhile bankers have just raked in their biggest bonuses since the 2008 financial crisis - £16.4 billion in the first quarter of this year.

Not only has none of that changed under Labour, it's got worse. That fact, and also embarking on further attacks on the working class such as cutting winter fuel payments and trying to cut disability benefits, is what led to Keir Starmer being booted out.

So, on Monday 20 July, we will have a change of Prime Minister - Andy Burnham. He has already said he won't be changing the self-imposed fiscal rules, which mean real-terms cuts to public services. He won't be changing the plans to spend billions on the military at a time when education, health, social services, and more are suffering. He won't be changing the divisive anti-migrant line taken by Starmer's Home Secretary Shabana Mahmood.

Starmer's demise illustrates the government's weakness, and the weakness of British capitalism. That isn't about to change either.

Instead of joining Labour right wingers by coming behind Burnham to 'give him time', the trade unions should be seizing the time to fight for what's needed.

That is: huge investment in our crumbling public services, a minimum wage of at least £15 an hour with no youth exemptions, building the hundreds of thousands of council houses needed to address the housing crisis, and more.

This is a system in which vast amounts of wealth are hoarded by the capitalist class while the working class is made to suffer. That should not be accepted.

Andy Burnham will have a long queue of big business bosses at his door demanding he makes decisions in their interests. An immediate next step for the trade unions should be to bring hundreds of thousands onto the streets in Westminster this autumn, demanding an end to the austerity status quo.

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the Socialist
formerly Militant

Issue 1375
16-22 July 2026

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

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

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ISSN 1366-9621
Published by Socialist Publications, PO Box 1398, Enfield EN1 9GT
Registered as a newspaper at the Post Office
Printed by Newsquest

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

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

NSSN Action Programme to defend workers from the cost-of-living squeeze



PHOTO: MARY FINCH

The most immediate concern for big sections of the working class is the rising cost of living. The new prime minister, Andy Burnham, will be acutely aware of the challenge of trying not to end up like Starmer and the Tories before him. Both are hated for their role overseeing falling living standards and attacks on the working class.

Burnham will also be acutely aware of the demands from the capitalist class to carry out further austerity. Their chopping list includes pensions and disability benefits. The bosses also insist that it is not possible to afford fully funded public services, that they should be left crumbling.

The National Shop Stewards Network conference, which took place on 27 June, brought together fighting trade union activists to draw up a list of demands to address the cost-of-living squeeze. Activists are taking these demands into their trade union branches and other bodies.

Clear demands from the trade unions, and a strategy to fight for them, is an essential working-class counter-pressure on the new Labour Prime Minister and cabinet - much more than to simply 'give him time' and 'wait and see'.

The NSSN will take these demands to a lobby of the Trades Union Congress in Brighton on 13 September. It will raise the demand for a national union-led demonstration against Labour austerity - a policy agreed at last year's Congress.

Get your trade union body to support the Action Programme And to send delegates to the TUC lobby.

'We're not paying for the bosses' crisis'

- Above-inflation pay rises for workers – automatic rises in pay as inflation increases. 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 and water companies
- Freeze rents and energy and 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 enact 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

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We're not paying for the bosses' crisis

1pm SUNDAY 13th SEPTEMBER
Holiday Inn, 137 King's Rd (seafront), Brighton, BN1 2JF

LOBBY THE TUC

Support the NSSN Action Programme to defend workers from the cost of living squeeze



CLACTON BY-ELECTION SHOWS THE NEED FOR A REAL 'ANTI-ESTABLISHMENT' PARTY

Socialist Party

WHAT WE THINK

Nigel Farage resigned as an MP and triggered a by-election in a desperate bid to detract from his and his party's mounting sleaze scandals. However, his attempts to frame the by-election as Reform versus 'the establishment' have been reduced to farce by the refusal of all of the parties of the capitalist establishment to take part. Instead, as establishment politician Chancellor Rachel Reeves put it, it seems he is going to spend his summer arguing with a bin.

But, for the workers' movement, leaving opposition to Reform to Count Binface is no solution. Nor is the answer to support the parties of the capitalist establishment on the grounds they are trying to undermine Reform. It is the failing British capitalist system, and the political parties that defend it, which have created the space into which Reform is stepping.

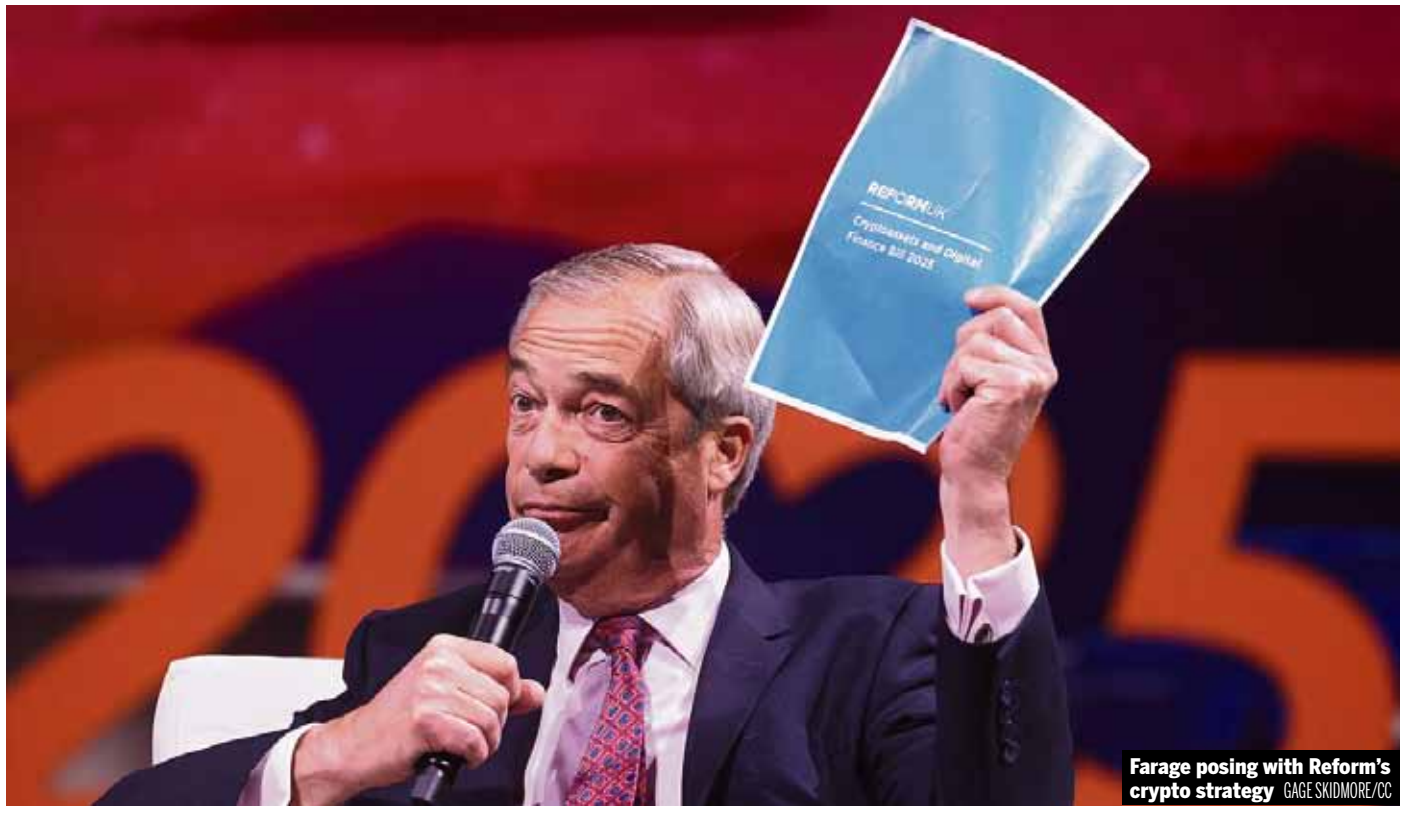
Successive Tory and Labour governments have overseen a relentless squeeze on the living standards of the majority, while the wealth of the richest has consistently increased. According to Oxfam, the richest 56 people in the UK now hold more wealth than 27 million combined. At the same time the Tories and now the Labour government have peddled anti-migrant propaganda to divert attention from the real causes of society's problems.

Nor are any of the establishment parties sleaze free. Remember the expenses scandal in 2009 – in which MPs from every party were embroiled, including the soon-to-be new prime minister Andy Burnham, or the Tories PPE gravy train for their mates during the pandemic, or Peter Mandelson and his association with the paedophile and sex trafficker Epstein. No wonder that some voters, desperate to oppose the parties of the establishment, and seeing them attack Farage, will believe Reform's false claim to be 'anti-establishment'.

Working-class representation

This by-election is another indication of how vital it is for the trade union movement to discuss how the working class develops its own political voice as the only way to cut across Reform and their ilk. Some trade unionists may hope that Andy Burnham will transform the Labour Party from the safe representative of capitalist interests it has been under Starmer into a party of the working class. In reality, however, the fact that Burnham is going to be 'crowned' without a contest, having garnered the support of 80% of the Parliamentary Labour Party, including its most right-wing elements, makes it clear that he, like Starmer, will defend the interests of the elite not the working-class majority. His pledges to stick with Reeves's fiscal rules and rule on the basis of the 2024 Labour manifesto drive that home.

> The richest 56 people in the UK now hold more wealth than 27 million combined



Farage posing with Reform's crypto strategy GAGE SKIDMORE/CC

On that basis, Burnham will not make any fundamental improvements in workers' lives and therefore the electoral 'Burnham bounce' will be short-lived. One opinion poll, conducted in late June, found that around a third of those who voted Labour in 2024 were more likely to consider voting Labour again with Burnham as leader. However, over half – 54% – said they would know in six months if Burnham was doing a good job, and only 19% were willing to give him longer than that. Having already experienced two years of New Labour government, it is no surprise that this is far less credit than was extended to Starmer. In July 2024, 62% of people told the same pollsters that it would take a year or two before they could judge if Starmer was doing a good job.

Organise a conference

The discussion on working-class political representation is therefore more urgent than ever. It would be a mistake to 'wait and see' what Burnham does, allowing Reform to pose as the main opponents of a Labour government that continues with austerity. That is why the Socialist Party is calling for an urgent cross-trade union conference to debate working-class political representation.

Under the previous New Labour government, the late general secretary of the Rail Maritime and Transport Workers' Union, Bob Crow, called such conferences. Nigel Farage has cynically lied through his teeth that he was friends with Bob Crow. In fact, it was the need to cut across the divisive and racist policies of the right which led Bob Crow to help found the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition, alongside the Socialist Party and others, as a step towards a workers' party. A class fighter like Bob Crow, or any one of the workers on strike in Britain today, standing as a trade-union backed candidate in Clacton could transform the situation.

Working-class alternative

The Socialist Party, previously the Militant, has a proud record of public representatives of the kind that are desperately needed today: MPs that stood up to the establishment in deeds rather than empty phrases. Terry Fields, MP for Liverpool Broadgreen from 1983-1992, was sent to prison while he was an MP. His 'crime' was not corruption or sleaze, however, but taking part in a mass campaign of civil disobedience against the iniquitous poll tax, along with 18 million other non-payers. That campaign was central to the resignation of hated Tory prime minister Maggie Thatcher, whom – unsurprisingly – ex-stockbroker Farage "admires". Terry Fields, along with Pat Wall and Dave Nellist, who were also Militant-supporting MPs, all only took a workers' wage, donating the rest of their parliamentary salaries to the workers' movement.

A working-class fighter of that type standing in this by-election could really begin to puncture Reform's 'anti-establishment' bubble. A candidate that stood on a socialist programme, including trade union-backed policies like nationalisation of the privatised utilities – which is supported by a majority of Reform voters – a £15-an-hour minimum wage, and mass council house building, would engender enormous enthusiasm.

> It would be a mistake to 'wait and see' what Burnham does, allowing Reform to pose as the main opponents of a Labour government

Without that, this by-election may end up being a farce, but it is also a call to action by the workers' movement to ensure that Reform and their ilk face real 'anti-establishment' working-class opposition in the future.

Come and discuss
Come to a Socialist Party meeting near you

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If you would like to participate:

- **socialistparty.org.uk/events**
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Labour cuts university teaching grants, we need funding not fees

RYAN LEONARD
HILLINGDON SOCIALIST PARTY

For the second academic year in a row, the government is poised to cut £100 million of university funding from high-cost and priority subjects, including nursing.

The Department for Education (DfE) has announced that the strategic priorities grant will be cut to £1.25 billion (£1.45 billion in 2024-25), in a move that pushes the burden of funding higher education even more firmly onto individual students through their fees and a lifetime of debt.

The Russell Group, 24 prestigious research universities, have responded by calling into question how this latest cut will impact the government's stated aim of growth. They amplify the role universities can play in "delivering much needed economic growth, innovation and jobs."

The £336 million in capital funding promised by DfE shows a fundamental misunderstanding of higher education. Universities aren't renovated buildings, they are made up by the people working, teaching and studying there. New buildings and equipment won't bring back redundant staff or convince working-class students to get a degree.

Like required reading, few students ever read the contract they sign with student finance, but a recent NUS survey suggests that a third of students now believe getting a degree is not worth the time and money.

These students have recognised that, after the impact of funding cuts and increased debts, their degrees have simultaneously risen in cost and fallen in value over successive years.

Many universities are now faced with a choice: how will they make up the shortfall? A favoured target to cut is student services and welfare programmes, seen as non-academic non-essential services. At my university, Brunel, in 2022 an engineering student Jos Winfield took his own life, resulting from poor mental health brought on by the pressures of university life. His father is adamant the university should have done more. The budget for student welfare has decreased markedly since that time.

One thing is clear, as the funding model for higher education places more strain on students mentally and financially, many more students will be placed into an even more vulnerable and precarious position.

We say:

- We need free education, with full funding not more fees! Scrap student debt and provide maintenance grants we can live on
- No course closures and job cuts. Take the wealth off the super-rich to provide decent education for all, with university staff paid what they deserve

Join the student fightback
JOIN socialist students
socialiststudents.org.uk/join


MARK RAMSAY/CC

Heatwave needs a fighting working-class response

JAMES IVENS
SOCIALIST PARTY NATIONAL COMMITTEE

Action cannot be avoided. Firefighters are working overtime against wildfires throughout Britain and Europe. There were 10,000 'excess' deaths across the continent from June's heat dome alone. Dangerous temperatures are part of our new normal under profit-driven climate crisis.

New Green MP Hannah Spencer has introduced a bill on working temperatures. This is overdue. Bakers' union BFAWU, among others, has called for legal maximums for years. It also comes days before parliament breaks up for summer – but workers can't wait.

Almost half of construction workers now report they've suffered heat illnesses. Exhaustion will also increase potentially lethal accidents in manual workplaces, on 35°C hospital wards, in 40°C bus and train drivers' cabins – to name just a few. In fact, heat is now a health and quality-of-life problem everywhere.

But just days before England's 1am kick-off against Mexico, the Labour government passed emergency legislation so pubs could open till 5am. If they can change rules that fast for FIFA, why can't they for our safety?

Workers' action

Workers had to take matters into their own hands in June, as reported in the Socialist's previous issue (see 'Workers' action as temperatures soar' on socialistparty.org.uk). Groups collectively sent in safety letters under Section 44 of the Employment Rights Act 1996, or even threatened wildcat action – forcing managements to accept their demands.

Union leaderships should use these examples to give members confidence in acting collectively, backed by a clear statement that their union will back them up. But workers need more than localised, emergency responses.

Drivers for Arriva's north London franchise are now balloting for official strikes over deficient air conditioning on buses. The case for coordination with other garages and areas is obvious: to encourage and plan joint struggle. Linking other issues such as pay, fatigue and contract disparity would reinforce all fights. So would working towards a similar approach for other industries, and within and between other unions.

Workers' control

This kind of collective discussion would be equally crucial for fleshing out all the new conditions needed in different workplaces. For now, it seems Spencer's bill will propose only that an 'independent' body 'recommend' maximum working temperatures.

Independent of bosses' objections – or workers' needs? Britain's main bosses' federation, the CBI, has opposed any maximum temperatures. They disguise this as a "common-sense approach" because some workplaces, bakeries for example, are hotter than others.

Most European countries don't yet have maximum temperature laws, but Spain does – with different levels for manual and sedentary work. To workers, common sense is work-specific temperatures; cooling systems; flexible or reduced hours and work intensity without loss of pay.

As for employers, some will be prepared to invest in changes, but only to keep the profit wheels turning. This month, Eurostar upgraded its £1.7 billion order for new Channel Tunnel trains, specifying operating capability up to 55°C!

So the money's there – not least in record profits for the polluting energy companies and casino-capitalist stock markets. But beyond ensuring work can go on, it's 'common sense' for bosses not to add a penny more to their 'costs.'

That means a fight. Our side would be much further forward if organised workers had a collective voice not just in the workplace but also in politics. Andy Burnham cleared his path to Number 10 by saying workers deserve better – the unions should insist he make good on that. But why did it take an opposition MP to get heat on the agenda?

Workers' politics

Unions should therefore also approach Hannah Spencer herself, alongside other MPs who show willing. Are they prepared to act as a conduit for the collective, democratic demands of trade unionists, and be accountable to us?

Above all, a cross-union conference on working-class political representation is needed. A mass party for the whole working class would begin shifting the whole political balance. It would also make the wider heat threats more answerable.

Britain's crop and livestock production has been hit. Neglected road, rail and tech infrastructure literally melts in modern heatwaves. 96% of homes don't have air conditioning – and the £45-a-week energy cost prices most of us out, never mind that Britain's grid doesn't have the power capacity.

We need mass building and upgrading of council homes to be energy and temperature efficient. Investment in modern infrastructure through fully staffed and funded, publicly owned services. An urgent transition to safe, clean, nationalised, affordable energy with no loss of jobs.

Adapting to a changing climate, alongside preventing its further acceleration, means big investment – and international collaboration. The capitalists have shown they won't set aside profit or competition to serve either. The hot planet fightback needs socialist policies to take their recklessly abused wealth and power into collective, democratic ownership and planning.

440
excess deaths a day in the UK during June's heatwave

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

Timms Review prepares attacks on disabled people

BEN GOLIGHTLY
DISABLED PEOPLE AGAINST CUTS CYMRU AND SWANSEA SOCIALIST PARTY

The interim report into the PIP (Personal Independence Payment) disability benefit is a milestone offensive in the UK Government's ongoing siege of disabled people.

The report itself is shallow and actually says very little about what disabled people think. There's very little breakdown of people's experiences by disability, gender, location, etc. But for the government this wasn't the point of the review. Far deeper emphasis is put on the costs.

The headline finding, that PIP – although a vital benefit – is administered badly, is stating the bleeding obvious. Disabled people have said so since its inception. The Timms Review's only purpose is to weaponise our suffering to justify cuts. Ministers have wasted no time doing exactly that.

Despite promises of 'co-production' with disabled people, genuine engagement has been actively opposed by the government at every turn. The Timms Review is clothed in a paper-thin mockery of the language of disability activism, but none of the methods. It is the 'nice, caring' face of the government's assault. As an undemocratic, top-down review that continues a penny-pinching race to the bottom, it is incapable of bringing about a better system.

Out of its other, nastier, face is the government's blatant abuse of statistics to make the supposed economic case for cuts. This, too, is only a justification, and not the true purpose of the cuts: PIP is barely 1% of the budget, and its benefits are never accounted for; welfare spending as a proportion of GDP is flat; disability spending as a proportion of total government expenditure has actually been falling for years. The increase in PIP spending relative to other welfare benefits is not a mystery, nor inevitable.

The government's own evidence base explains that fully one third of the pre-pandemic increase is down to "structural and demographic changes". For example, an ever-increasing retirement age means that what counts as the 'working age' population is growing, is older, and is more disabled.

The rest of the increase, the evidence base itself directly suggests, is due to worsening health and NHS waiting lists, post-Covid labour market disruption, and above all the cost-of-living crisis giving people who were always entitled to the benefit no choice but to brave the system and apply.

Preparing the attacks

There is absolutely no evidence to support the government's case, under the flawed biopsychosocial model, that people are incentivised to be disabled by money and sympathy. Truth is the first casualty in war.

Caught in the middle of these two angles of attack, in a pincer movement, are disabled people.

The purpose of a system is what it does. The purpose of the UK welfare system reform is not to support disabled people, or to save the taxpayer money. It's to punish and demonise disabled people to distract from the failings of British capitalism, which has been in crisis for a generation. The bosses and their politicians are trying to use divide and rule to make it easier to make cuts to other areas and distract from the real cause of falling living standards – the super-rich and their failing system.


Stephen Timms HOUSE OF COMMONS / JESSICA TAYLOR/CC



Protests outside Parliament during the attempts to cut PIP in 2025 ISAI MARIJERLA

Unfortunately for the government, disabled people have also shown that we can seriously kick back. If it was not for the bloody nose we gave the government last year, the PIP cuts would already be in effect today.

Workers' movement

The TUC (Trades Union Congress) General Council has taken the mistaken and shameful decision to refuse to implement TUC 2025 motions 38 and 39. Those motions, passed unanimously by delegates, clearly committed the trade union movement to coordinated, sustained, and specific action in defence of disabled people and young people, and link that to fighting austerity attacks on all working-class people.

This is an emergency issue for the entire trade union movement, its 1.4 million disabled members, and our communities. Motions calling on the TUC to recommit to action have since been passed in the CWU and other unions. The National Shop Stewards Network lobby of the TUC in September will be an important additional point of pressure, for the TUC to enact passed policy and organise a weekend demonstration against austerity and attacks on workers' rights.

If the TUC leaders continue to put Labour Party loyalty ahead of members and ahead of disabled people, then the TUC will lose authority.

If so, it will be down to a 'coalition of the willing' - those unions prepared to take a stand. We want the largest possible fightback, but we can't wait forever.

We are fighting back

Fighting disabled people's organisations have not been fooled by Timms's tokenism. Disabled People Against Cuts Cymru (DPAC Cymru) has pioneered the demand for a genuine and independent disability review, democratically led by disabled people and our organisations, including our trade unions, and inviting the views of carers and all workers involved in providing the services that we rely on. A review based on the socialist principle: from each according to their ability, to each according to their need.

We have patiently won extremely wide support for that demand in Wales and intend to make it a reality, demanding MPs refuse on principle to vote with the government as it proceeds.

MPs that vote for disability cuts must become pariahs. Our trade unions should stand candidates against them.

The Timms Review concludes in the Autumn, and the entire workers' movement must urgently prepare. We have every confidence of winning because defeat is unthinkable.

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PCS executive gets back to business despite general secretary obstruction

SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBERS IN PCS

The National Executive Committee (NEC) of the PCS civil service union met on 7 July to ensure that the National Disputes Committee (NDC) could deal with urgent business.

This has broken the deadlock at the top of the union since the general secretary, Fran Heathcote, walked out of the NEC meeting on 11 June, cutting off the Zoom to prevent the NEC taking key decisions. She then shut down all the national democratic bodies of PCS, including the NEC and NDC.

Against objections from the elected senior lay officers of PCS – including president Bev Laidlaw, deputy president Dave Semple, and vice presidents Rachel Heemskerk and Hector Wesley – the general secretary instructed the union's full-time officers not to permit the NDC to clear any business, meaning decisions on strikes and on support for victimised reps were delayed.

To enable the NEC and NDC to function, the NEC majority agreed to adopt the standing orders (rules for debate), the dispute around which had been used by Heathcote as her reason to shut everything down.



On 7 July, PCS organised a lobby of parliament over the civil service pensions crisis. In December, private company Capita took over the pension scheme, on a seven-year contract worth £239 million. The company has left thousands in limbo, missing payments, receiving nothing at all, facing hardship, and some postponing retirement. This scandal is a direct result of privatisation. The Socialist Party says the unions should demand the work is immediately taken into the civil service, with all those affected given hardship payments and compensation. See 'Civil service pensions crisis a result of privatisation and neglect' at socialistparty.org.uk ROB WILLIAMS

NEC majority prioritises members' interests

Dave Semple, deputy president, on behalf of the NEC majority, made the following statement to make it clear that we prioritise members' interests, and particularly those members fighting for their jobs - like those in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Sodexo in Belfast, who have now been given authority to take strike action:

"The elected NEC majority is enabling the adoption of these standing orders, under protest, in order to progress business and protect members' interests, not because we agree with the content. We wish to have this reproduced in the record of this meeting."

Heathcote has also abused her powers by publishing two one-sided videos on the union's website and by sending out a biased all-members' email. This material put employers across the country on notice about what was going on and will have damaged the credibility of the union as we try to prepare for a major national campaign on the cost of living, jobs, office closures and much else.

NEC majority members - including Socialist Party members and supporters of the Broad Left Network (BLN), alongside others who want a more fighting, democratic union - convened a well-attended 'Coalition for Change' meeting for PCS members on 18 June, to ensure that reps and members were kept informed of events. A leaflet was produced by the NEC majority to take out to members.

Since then, a wide swathe of members and reps have been writing to the general secretary, copying in the president and deputy president, to demand that she gets round the table with the leaders of the NEC. Further pressure has been mounting on the general secretary due to strike submissions, delayed on her orders.

It was made clear by Heathcote that unless we adopt the previous standing orders, the NEC would not re-open and the NDC would not meet.

Why was there a dispute about the standing orders?

Heathcote wanted the previous standing orders to stay in place. She and former president Martin Cavanagh had often hidden behind them to rule out any proposals from NEC members that disagreed with Heathcote's recommendations. Routinely they were used to delay and block a national campaign on pay, jobs, cuts etc.

But the new left majority on the NEC includes a new president, who issued a ruling that the NEC could agree new standing orders by majority vote. Heathcote's allies challenged the chair's ruling and lost – and it was at this point that Heathcote walked out and shut down the NEC.

Heathcote's position has been that lay reps in PCS don't run the union. A small example of this was when the president, deputy president and two vice presidents proposed text for a briefing for the union's negotiators, Heathcote simply refused to publish it, arguing that lay reps writing briefings was a breach of her contract!

In reality, she is using any tool she can to block those who have been elected on the basis of wanting a national fightback. It is the fightback she is blocking.

The NEC majority unanimously agreed that, while Heathcote's obstruction is undemocratic, we cannot allow a continued stalemate that halts industrial action and prevents us doing what members voted for: building towards a national fightback on pay, jobs, office closures and more.

NHS call centre pay win: 'Believe nothing, question everything, don't give up!'

CHRISTINE ELLIOTT
UNISON STEWARD

I work in an NHS Trust call centre, receiving and triaging calls to a number of community services, including district nursing, therapies, palliative care, urgent community response, hospital at home, and other services.

Following a service redesign in June 2022, which significantly added to our duties, we submitted a request for a review of our job description, with the full support of our general manager. We were of the opinion that we had been working at a higher band that that at which we were being paid (Band 2) for some considerable time. This was our opportunity to rectify the wrong.

Our team were united in the belief that we deserved fair pay for a fair day's work, and with union membership at close to 86%, what did we have to lose? Nothing ventured, nothing gained.

What followed was a four-year battle against senior management, the human resources department and, incredulously, staff-side representatives.

Seven months after submission of our original request for re-evaluation, we were finally told that senior management had not progressed our request, deeming unilaterally that we were not worthy of a band uplift. This was not their decision to take - as they would find out.

We immediately submitted a grievance, which was upheld and a job evaluation panel was finally convened. We were notified of the outcome of that panel just days before Christmas 2023. It was not the news we were hoping for. There was to be no change to our salary banding.

We challenged the outcome. Eventually a further independent panel assessment of our job description took place with an outcome of a Band 3. The Trust, however, overruled the decision, claiming the job profile we had been matched against was incorrect.

Once again, we protested this outcome, taking our case nationally to the NHS Staff Council Job Evaluation Group, which recommended that a second independent panel took place.

Finally, in March this year, we received the news we had been waiting for: the second independent panel had awarded us a Band 3. Only last week, we concluded negotiations for back pay from the date of our original job evaluation submission, just short of four years from the beginning of our journey.

Lessons learned: management, HR and sometimes even staff-side are not your friends. Believe nothing, question everything. Be patient. Don't give up!



Pay banding has been the cause of several strikes in the NHS - here in Leeds YORKSHIRE SOCIALIST PARTY

School teacher pay and funding

NEU members: Vote yes for strike action!

SHEILA CAFFREY, LOUISE CUFFARO AND DAN WARRINGTON
NEU NATIONAL EXECUTIVE MEMBERS, PERSONAL CAPACITY

The Labour government has been forced to make a concession on teacher pay. It has accepted the School Teachers Pay Review Body (STRB) recommendation and is awarding a 6.5% pay increase over two years for teachers in England – 3.5% for 2026-27, and 3% for the following year. The original proposal was for it to be over three years.

It is a concession made by a government in crisis, under pressure from the threat of national strike action by the National Education Union (NEU). The union is due to start a national ballot on 3 October.

But this isn't the time to take our foot off the pedal. The announcement doesn't meet the demands made by NEU members in the indicative ballot in April.

The pay award is not fully funded – there is a shortfall of £461 million. It will therefore mean more redundancies of school staff to pay for it. The NEU says that schools will have to "find £460 million from budgets already at breaking point. This is the equivalent of 8,300 school staff: 3,900 teachers and 4,400 support staff."

This is the opposite of dealing with the funding crisis, which members want action on – it will make it worse. And this is when we know the crisis in the Middle East is ongoing and energy bills are rising, which will make school budgets even tighter.

The award does nothing to tackle excessive workload, one of the key issues that NEU members want to fight over. The only concession on this is to stop a planned attack on working hours which would have made the situation even worse.

Keep the pressure on

Andy Burnham is about to become Labour Prime Minister. But we already know he has said he will stick to Rachel Reeves's fiscal rules, and he is backed by all the pro-austerity Blairite and Starmerite Labour MPs.

We cannot afford to 'give him time'. The best way to 'influence' Burnham is to keep the pressure on. The NEU's own figures show that since the strike wave in 2023, teachers have won twice what both Tory and Labour ministers originally proposed. The markets and big business are piling pressure on – we must do as well!

In the indicative ballot, 90.5% of teachers were willing to take action on a 48% turnout – 150,000 teachers. That's a really solid basis for a ballot for action in the autumn, especially if a strong lead is given. A bold lead by the NEU can also encourage other education unions to take action.

The NEU Executive met on 9 July and agreed to run an online 'snap poll' of NEU members from 11-18 July. They are being asked if they accept the offer, or are prepared to take action for more pay, and/or for full funding for the pay award.

Reps and activists must use this short window to campaign vigorously for a strong yes vote for action.

Why a snap poll?

We and other Exec members argued against holding this poll, as members have already voted in one consultation and made their views known extremely clearly. The strike ballot isn't planned until October – there's plenty of time for proper discussion and preparation by members, especially once they see what the funding gap in schools under Andy Burnham is really like.

We argued for the union leadership to recommend action, and for a question that would make it clear this is about fighting on funding, redundancies and workload, not just pay – in line with the questions members were asked back in April.



One of 16 schools on strike in Enfield ENFIELD AND LEA VALLEY SOCIALIST PARTY

16 Enfield schools on strike!

15 schools fight over sickness policy

National Education Union (NEU) members in 15 schools across Enfield, north London, took part in a day of coordinated strike action over a punitive new sickness policy. The policy was first imposed by the Labour council but has been continued by the new minority Tory administration.

Reps and members at Carterhatch Junior School were enthused that, since the last day of action in April, several academy schools have reverted to the old policy. They took this as a sign that the action is having an effect, and are hopeful that more school managers will back down, which will put more pressure on the council to back down too. The lead rep at Carterhatch Juniors expressed pride that, as a result of the strike action, new members have joined the union, including two support staff frustrated that Unison had not balloted.

Picketers at Capel Manor stressed the ongoing funding crisis in schools that will be exacerbated by the partially unfunded pay rise recently announced, and expressed determination to fight for the full funding needed.

BEA GARDNER

And one against academisation

Staff at St Ignatius College – a Catholic school in Enfield – took six days of strike action over two weeks. The NEU opposes the school becoming an academy and part of a chain. The workers know that academisation is a threat to union-won agreements on terms and conditions. Office staff face job cuts if academisation goes through. And it will mean higher pay for senior leadership.

Whether or not the NEU succeeds in stopping academisation, staff are determined to defend their terms and conditions, including a guarantee of no redundancies for the next two years at least. 30 striking workers were on the picket line.

The strikers had a message for parents: "In the short term, there will be some disruption – and we are truly sorry. But in the long run, we are fighting for a better school for your child."

IAN PATTISON

UCU in further education – get ready to ballot in the autumn

DUNCAN MOORE AND MARCO TESEI
UCU NEC MEMBERS, PERSONAL CAPACITY

Many University and College Union (UCU) members will welcome the announcement of £485 million additional funding over two years for further education (FE) colleges in England, to 'help match pay rises for schoolteachers'. But it is not enough.

This concession by a weak government has come about because of the campaigning of our members in FE and the escalation of UCU's campaign for better pay, funding and national agreements on pay and workload. Our strategy of building for aggregated strike action this year, which Socialist Party members in UCU have been leading the call for, has already won us important concessions.

But there is no guarantee that this money will fund all FE staff getting the 10% increase that UCU demands, which would start to bridge the gap between FE and schoolteacher pay, as individual college bosses will make those decisions. And it is unconsolidated – a one-off payment not a permanent pay rise.

And it will definitely not be enough to even begin to restore the devastation of years of cuts.

To make sure this money goes where it's needed (our members' bank accounts), to win the funding needed to end the crisis in FE, and to win the national pay bargaining our members demand, we need to keep on the pressure.

The UCU has emailed members to confirm that the plans for an autumn aggregated strike ballot are going ahead. All branches - get ballot-ready for October!

Tower Hamlets school fights compulsory redundancies

NEU members at St Paul's Way Trust School in Tower Hamlets started six days of strike action on 29 June against compulsory redundancies, and are continuing in July.

The school's Trust claims to have a financial deficit, requiring cutbacks. However, the school is over-subscribed and has a waiting list of students wanting to join. Management has shown union reps the hole in the budget but refuses to show how it developed over previous years.

NEU members showed up in big numbers against the redundancies, with over 90 on the picket line outside the school.

The staffing restructure takes an axe to the Pastoral Support Team. The total number of posts has been reduced, but where existing posts are retained, a large number of them are being downgraded, in some cases by as much as 50%. The school has also significantly increased teaching hours and cut planning time to the statutory minimum of 10%.

The new proposals show no place for the wellbeing of children. The ballot result, with a 70% turnout and 98% in favour of action, shows the level of support for those members facing compulsory redundancy.

Some Unison members in the school refused to cross the picket line. Sadly, the lengthy ballot timetable, which the local branch heavily criticised, meant that Unison members would not be able to take action until two days before the end of term. This lack of urgency meant unfortunately they did not meet the Tory ballot turnout thresholds that Labour has kept in place.

HUGO PIERRE, TOWER HAMLETS SOCIALIST PARTY

● **Read more: 'St Paul's Way Trust school strike against redundancies' at socialistparty.org.uk**

Re-elect Sharon Graham as Unite General Secretary

Fight to maintain and extend her fighting manifesto

KEVIN PARSLOW
UNITE LE1228 BRANCH SECRETARY, PERSONAL CAPACITY

Ballot papers for the general secretary election in Unite the Union were posted to members on 14 July. The ballot ends at 12 noon on 11 August, with the result to be declared shortly after.

There are only two candidates: the incumbent, Sharon Graham, and the challenger, Simon Dubbins, Unite's international director. Sharon received 695 branch nominations; Dubbins got 342. This contrasts with the last election in 2021 when, in a four-candidate nomination period, Sharon won 349 and Steve Turner, predecessor to Dubbins as the candidate of the union's United Left group, garnered 525.

It may seem that that there is a clear advantage for Sharon, particularly after supporters of her fighting industrial programme won an overwhelming majority on the union's Executive Council, in the elections to that body in April.

Yet there is no room for complacency. Sharon won last time in a three-horse race, short of an absolute majority. So it is crucial that the campaign continues its momentum to ensure a victory.

Socialist Party members in Unite support Sharon's re-election because a victory for Dubbins and the United Left would take the union backwards both industrially and politically. A win for Dubbins would be a boost for the right wing in the trade union movement and the bosses.

In the five years since Sharon became general secretary, Unite has been involved in over 1,800 disputes, involving 280,000 members and winning over £700 million in extra pay. The standout dispute has been the Brimingham bin workers, now on strike for 18 months, against a cutting Labour council.

The consequences of this dispute were played out at last year's Unite policy conference when an emergency motion, initiated by Socialist Party and fellow Unite Broad Left delegates, was overwhelmingly endorsed, apart from by a handful of United Left supporters. It supported the binworkers and agreed to review the union's affiliation to Labour, and suspend from Unite membership Angela Rayner, then-deputy leader of the Labour Party. Labour was punished at the polls in May in Birmingham and across the UK.

The question of changing the political direction of the union has been posed.

Since then, the EC has endorsed a consultative ballot of members on Labour Party affiliation, which raises the possibility of a formal change at the next Rules Conference, to take place no later than next summer, although we argue this should be brought forward as a priority given the absence of effective trade union political representation currently. Socialist Party members argue that Unite must take the lead in the formation of a new workers' party.

Dubbins, supported by the now misnamed United Left, would undoubtedly orientate Unite back towards Labour. Little to no criticism is made of the party in his campaign literature. If elected, he and his supporters would try to obstruct industrial action to appease the Labour government. This at a time when Unite is balloting some of its members in local government on this year's pay offer, for example. And having just broken free of three years of deadlock in the Executive Council, a Dubbins victory would be another unwelcome obstacle in the transformation of Unite.



Sharon Graham with Birmingham bin workers on strike PHOTO: SOCIALIST PARTY

Reflecting unjustified illusions, like many unions, Unite has nominated Andy Burnham for Labour leader, albeit critically and not without opposition on the Executive Council, including from Socialist Party members, even though his nomination was a shoe-in without Unite's assistance.

But Unite will need to oppose Burnham's policies if he continues in fundamentally the same direction as Keir Starmer, and instead set out demands on him. Unite members will remember that during the 2021 General Secretary election, Sharon Graham and the organising department she led were criticised by the United Left candidate Steve Turner for conducting a leverage campaign on Burnham as the Greater Manchester Mayor to intervene into the Go North West bus strike.

Any honeymoon period for Burnham may not last long industrially, with other unions set for ballots later in the year, opening up the debate within Unite on its relationship with Labour.

Socialist Party and other CWI members are not uncritical supporters of Sharon. We fight for Unite to take up a socialist programme to defend the jobs, pay and conditions of its members in industries maintained by capitalism's greed for profit: armaments, carbon and nuclear energy and others, while retraining them in socially useful production. This is the best way of protecting their jobs, while at the same time opposing war, climate change and environmental pollution.

Nevertheless, we will be campaigning hard to get Sharon Graham re-elected, as workers need fighting unions to represent their interests. The Socialist Party has produced material to give out to Unite members, which can be ordered from our office, and will be leafleting workplaces to ensure a big majority for a fighting union.

Why I'm campaigning for Sharon Graham

"Sharon Graham has developed a comprehensive plan to refocus Unite on industrial militancy, supporting reps to do their jobs winning pay rises and improved terms and conditions for their members, and it's working. She hasn't been afraid to take on Labour councils, like Birmingham. Her manifesto contains plans to overhaul union structures to make sure they reflect the reality of working practices and increase member control. The alternative to Sharon Graham as general secretary would be a step backward."
SUZANNE MUNA, EC MEMBER FOR SOUTH WEST


Suzanne Muna

"Sharon Graham has given full support for the development of combines, which in some industries have been transformative. The finance combine is developing and the combine for hospitality, where I work, has meant hospitality members from across the UK who feel isolated have now met dozens of times and spearheaded campaigns and strikes in the industry. Equality sectors are gaining momentum too under Sharon's leadership, with the development of the anti-discrimination unit and the determination to take on discrimination cases, as well as the union's commitment to stand by its LGBT+ members who are facing an increasing hostile media and political environment."
JOHN WILLIAMS, EC MEMBER LGBT+ SEAT


John Williams

"For health workers like Bart's Unite members, and who have been involved in successful strike action campaigns including against privatisation and for in-house return to direct NHS employment, it is very important to continue to have a General Secretary who will instinctively put the resources of the union at their disposal when they need them at the point of moving into struggle.

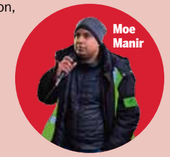
"The re-election of Sharon Graham, with a proven fighting record, will put health workers in a much better position in these times. Unite can play an indispensable role in initiating the broadest coalition of unions in a determined industrial and political struggle against austerity. This can be given great impetus in the anticipated decision to free up of our political funds, ending Unite's Labour affiliation at the union's rules conference next year. If Sharon loses this election, that will be much harder."
LEN HOCKEY, EC MEMBER FOR LONDON AND EASTERN


Len Hockey

"My branch nominated Sharon Graham because under her leadership, Unite is more militant and a better organised union. Members have won significant concessions because they are supported to take on the bosses and win. The result is workplace branches are more engaged with the union, with more shop stewards and delegates elected to committees. This is making Unite a more democratic, lay-led union."
DAVE WALSH, CHAIR OF MERSEYSIDE CIVIL ENGINEERING BRANCH, UNITE CONVENOR LIVERPOOL CITY COUNCIL


Dave Walsh

"I support Sharon Graham because she has put Unite back where it belongs - in the workplace. She has strengthened support for reps, including legal backing when they are victimised, backed industrial action that delivers real gains, and focused the union on defending jobs, pay, conditions and workplace organisation."
MOE MANIR, LONDON BUS DRIVER


Moe Manir

Ballot papers for the general secretary election in Unite the Union were posted to members on 14 July. The ballot ends at 12 noon on 11 August

Unite Executive's nomination for Labour leader


PHOTO: PAUL MATTSSON

JOHN WILLIAMS
EC MEMBER

A special Unite Executive Council took place on 9 July, to decide whether we would nominate Andy Burnham for Labour leader. Of course, this was a formality, as he had already got the 81 Labour MPs needed to nominate him as well as other unions. Even by the time of the Unite Executive, it was clear that Burnham would not be opposed and would be crowned as Labour leader and prime minister.

It was very clear that Burnham was looking to be seen as a friend of the trade union movement and wanted the backing of Unite in particular - with a general secretary who has clearly moved the union to a more strike-ready, militant union.

General secretary Sharon Graham said that Burnham had been 'listening' to the concerns of the working class, especially as he's been outside of the Westminster bubble for a long time, and she claimed that he backs radical policies like a wealth tax. Though on the energy companies, he's talked about vague 'public control' and has deliberately not used the term nationalisation.

Socialist Party members on the Executive made it very clear of our opposition to nominating Burnham. He has shown himself to be a political chameleon - being in the cabinets of Blair, Brown as well as Corbyn - no one is sure what his manifesto will be. An idea partly accepted by Sharon, when she said that she certainly wouldn't look to nominate 'the Andy Burnham of old.'

Several delegates spoke about his history - as did I. He voted for the Iraq war, against investigations into the Iraq war, voted to introduce and increase tuition fees, voted to bring PFI into the NHS, and allowed the hated Tory welfare bill to pass. I made the point that I believe people can change - but what is he doing now?

He publicly says he supports the Labour government's fiscal rules and their anti-immigration policies. His chief-of-staff is the ex-chair of Labour Friends of Israel, who's made awful comments about people on benefits. And it looks like he's U-turned on his previous support for trans rights. As the LGBT+ member on the Unite Executive I couldn't in good conscience vote to nominate him.

However, the overwhelming feeling of the Executive (even by those who criticised him) was to give him a chance, on the claim that he was Labour's last-chance saloon. But this was a mistake.

With the nominating period opening at 6pm on the day that the Executive met, Unite could have opened up a debate within the union about which of the 100-plus sponsored Labour MPs would have best represented Unite members and policies - for example those who were suspended by Starmer for opposing his austerity programme. This would have been real leverage to act on Burnham, rather than to nominate him without any agreement by him to implement Unite's policies.

We also reminded the Executive of what we saw when Corbyn was Labour leader: just having an individual in the top position wasn't enough when the Blairite party machine had such a tight control that they could undermine them. However, Burnham is the candidate of this machine and seems to want to accommodate rather than deal with this.

The argument was made that this was a conditional nomination, and that if he went back on his word to transform the economy to one that benefits workers, then support would be pulled. It seemed to be the case of voting for him first and then finding out what he intends to do, which is surely the wrong way round!

With Andy Burnham's coronation round the corner, there will be hungry working-class people and trade unionists desperate for him to deliver. Socialist Party members on the Unite Executive will fight to make sure that Burnham won't get away with pulling the wool over our movement's eyes, and continue the fight for political representation of the working class with trade unions at its heart and on a socialist programme.

Leeds socialists demand free public transport

GEORGE PHILLIPS
LEEDS AND WEST YORKSHIRE SOCIALIST PARTY



IAIN DALTON

Socialist Party members have launched a campaign calling for free bus travel for all in West Yorkshire, starting immediately with under-25s. Route cuts should be reversed, services expanded, and SEND (special educational needs and disability) transport fully funded.

The entire bus network should be brought into public ownership, under the democratic control of workers and service users. We have run campaign stalls, taking our petition across Leeds, targeting popular student and residential areas, and sixth-form colleges. And online too.

West Yorkshire Labour mayor Tracy Brabin had previously stood and won election as an MP when Jeremy Corbyn was Labour leader. Then, Corbyn pledged free bus travel for under-25s. So why can't this be implemented now she's mayor?

We built for a public meeting, inviting supporters of our campaign and users of the network to speak on the issues they face. The campaign didn't stop after our meeting.

We took part in a protest outside Tracy Brabin's offices, organised by Better Buses West Yorkshire. They staged a 'People's Question Time' to highlight that there is no public consultation on changes to our bus network.

Speeches took place, and this allowed Socialist Party members to raise our demands for genuine public ownership. We also raised campaigning with bus drivers in Unite the Union. Franchising leaves their terms and conditions in the hands of private companies.

Brabin did come out to briefly address the crowd, and agreed to a public mayoral 'question time' at an unspecified date. Our campaign activity will continue throughout the summer. And, in September, we'll have the opportunity to raise it with the next cohort of students at freshers' week.

- **socialiststudents.org.uk**

Leeds trans rights protest for national day of action

Socialist Party members participated in a Leeds demonstration, called in opposition to the Supreme Court decision, which is being used to restrict the rights of trans people.

50 people turned out, part of a national day of action. The Leeds organisers said it was only planned two days in advanced, which shows that people feel strongly.

I wanted to speak at the protest to talk about this issue and wider issues trans people face, such as access to healthcare and higher risk of poverty caused by discrimination. But I was told the speakers list was booked up.

So, instead, we had good conversations with protesters, who were positive about our leaflets. The Socialist Party is proud to stand on protests like this, and we will continue to promote what we say at future demonstrations and at Pride.

TOM GIBSON
LEEDS AND WEST YORKSHIRE SOCIALIST PARTY



Coventry campaigns for a £15-an-hour minimum wage – no youth exemptions

ADAM TYAS
COVENTRY SOCIALIST PARTY

Socialist Party members strengthened our regular Saturday campaign stalls, held every weekend in the city centre, this time campaigning at the local Godiva festival.

In one part of the city centre, our 'scrap hospital car parking charges' campaign continued, now with more than 16,000 signatures, demanding an end to the rip-off at Walsgrave Hospital. Anger continues to grow over profiteering private contracts that burden our NHS. More people recognise the need to fight back.

Meanwhile, near the bus station and festival, Socialist Party members campaigned for a universal £15-an-hour minimum wage. This issue affects huge numbers of young people and workers, as we face ever-rising cost of living, alongside years of wage stagnation. While the Labour Party changes leaders, working-class people continue to pay the price for austerity and capitalist crisis.

We had a particularly strong response from young workers and students. Many highlighted the injustice of being paid less simply because they are under 21, despite doing the same work as older colleagues.

Young people are demanding a better future. And Socialist Party members are campaigning alongside them to help build that fight.

We argue that the trade unions must lead a serious, militant fightback, ending their funding and support for the Labour Party, which has repeatedly refused to stand on the side of workers. For example, dropping its promise to scrap lower youth rates for the minimum wage. Instead, the unions should take steps towards building a new mass political voice that fights for workers' interests, and for a socialist alternative to capitalism.



DARA FITZGERALD

HAMZA KHAN
WEST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

The second in the recent wave of protests in solidarity with Pakistan-occupied Kashmir took place in London. Thousands of people from all across Britain gathered in Parliament Square on 5 July for a demonstration, ending with a march to the Pakistan High Commission.

The protest emerged in response to escalations in violence by the Pakistani state against the Kashmiri people. This followed protests organised by the Joint Awami Action Committee (JAAC) in Kashmir.

JAAC's demands include opposition to the reservation of 12 seats in the Azad Kashmir legislative assembly for refugees who fled Kashmir decades ago and do not live in Kashmir. JAAC argues that the reservation of these seats undermines the agency of the Kashmiri people in their own government.

But the JAAC has been declared a proscribed group under anti-terror legislation by the Pakistan-backed Azad Jammu and Kashmir government. The Pakistani government met these protests with deadly force, mass arrests, and internet and mobile data blackouts – all in the name of 'maintaining law and order'.

At least 20 people have died, and many more injured. This has all resulted in outrage in Kashmir and the diaspora.

The London protest was full of impassioned members of the Kashmiri diaspora, chanting for azadi (freedom) and inqilab (revolution). Several Socialist Party members from across London attended, showing solidarity with the struggle for self-determination for the Kashmiri people.

Our socialist message resonated with many who attended, understandably angry at the Pakistani state oppression of Kashmir.

We call for an end to the violence against the Kashmiri people, the release of the imprisoned JAAC activists, an end to the cost-of-living crisis, for the economy to be brought under the democratic control of the Kashmiri workers, and for Kashmir to have self-determination.

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Zack Polanski's local government speech: an alternative to austerity?

BERKAY KARTAV
SOCIALIST PARTY NATIONAL COMMITTEE

Zack Polanski's speech at the Local Government Association (LGA) was an opportunity for the Green Party leader to lay out a clear plan and strategy for how Green councillors can confront the Labour government, fight austerity and end the housing crisis, issues which have motivated the tens of thousands of people to join the Greens after his leadership election.

He correctly mentioned how after a decade and a half of austerity, council budgets are squeezed. "Combined with the enormous financial demands of social care and SEND provision", many councils are in financial crisis.

Many people who have had enough of the lack of affordable homes, disrepair, high service charges and the never-ending nightmare of trying to find a secure affordable home, would welcome Polanski's remarks on housing. He said houses will need to be built to meet needs and that we need homes people can actually afford to live in, rather than luxury developments.

He said that a Green government will end rip-off rents, launch a new generation of council house building and give councils stronger powers over long-term empty homes.

Green councils

These are all policies that Green councils can implement now!

Polanski unfortunately did not use his speech to explain how the 21 Green-led councils and over 1,300 Green councillors can take action today to deliver on their election manifestos and build local and national campaigns to win the money and resources local communities need: to deliver on pay, jobs, housing and services.



Green Party leader Zack Polanski BRISTOL GREEN PARTY/CC

Keir Starmer's Labour was smashed at the last local elections. Many people voted for the Greens hoping that they would be different. The Greens now have the opportunity to work with local communities, trade unions and youth organisations to draw up 'people's budgets' that meet the needs of local workers, residents and young people – and begin preparations for a coordinated fightback to win the funding local councils need.

Unfortunately, this has not been the approach of Green councils so far. Polanski mentioned the record of Green-run Bristol council in his speech, but he did not mention that it has made £51 million cuts last year, while adding more money to reserves.

On the question of housing, Green councils can immediately freeze rents for council tenants, introduce a compulsory register for all private landlords and make rent controls a requirement of registration. They can implement a mass programme of council house building and take over empty homes to house people on council house waiting lists and more.

Green-controlled councils in London, and Aspire-led Tower Hamlets, are taking legal action against Sadiq Khan over his attempt to cut London's affordable housing quota from 35% to 20%.

Good. But it would be far more effective if these councils in London could join up in the first instance to take joint action against monster private housing developments and show in practice how councils can fight for working-class people and build the pressure on Khan and this Labour government to deliver rent controls and council homes – by doing it themselves!

Greens can also take up Labour's new leader Andy Burnham on his pledge to build council homes – he has given councils the green light to build now and send the bill to Westminster.

At the LGA, Polanski claimed that councillors are limited by the resources and power that councils have. He said to them: "Your hands tied again by national legislation".

We would disagree. When the Tories were in power, many Labour councils and councillors simply blamed Westminster austerity, and did not use their powers to win the resources taken from them by the then Tory government.

If Polanski sends the same message to Green councillors, who got elected with a promise of 'doing politics differently' – to repeat this failed strategy – then they will suffer the same fate, as have other European Green parties who carried out brutal cuts and faced collapse in support.

Any council or even groups of councillors willing to fight cuts by using all the tools available to councils, including using reserves and borrowing powers to build a mass working-class campaign and send the bill to Westminster, would potentially harness an enormous amount of support from trade unions, community groups and radicalised young people.

The Liverpool road

This is what Liverpool's socialist council – led by Militant, the predecessor to the Socialist Party – did in the 1980s and won £60 million of extra funding from Margeret Thatcher's government, building thousands of council homes in the space of a few years alone.

We need socialist councillors who are prepared to stand up for their communities to build council homes, create jobs and fund our services - not more excuses about why we have to wait.

Polanski should publicly commit that the Green Party leadership will be fully behind any Green council, or groups of councillors who do take that fighting stance.

The Green victories in the last local elections are a sign of how popular anti-austerity ideas are. But to end austerity and the housing crisis, working-class people need a voice of our own, a party based on trade unions, where our class can have a say and have control over the actions of elected representatives. That is the kind of party the Socialist Party is fighting for, join us in that fight.

Eye on the Greens

What's your experience of Green councillors, or young Green campaigners on campus?

- **editors@socialistparty.org.uk**

South London tenants demand council action to fight eviction



Southwark Council is led by a coalition of Greens and Lib Dems, with a Green leader STEPHEN CRAVEN/CC

SOCIAL HOUSING ACTION CAMPAIGN (SHAC)

Tenants on the St James Estate in Southwark, south London, are fighting mass evictions and unaffordable rent rises after corporate landlord BMR Group Ltd began trying to force residents from their homes. Campaigners understand that BMR Group plans to convert the estate into unlicensed houses in multiple occupation (HMO), increasing rental income for the landlord.

In November 2025, Folio London, the private rental sector arm of Notting Hill Genesis housing association, sold the estate to BMR Group Ltd.

More than 100 families now face losing their homes. Fifty households have already been issued with 'Section 21' eviction notices, while others have been hit with rent rises of between £250 and £900 a month.

In May 2026, tenants came together to form an official Tenants and Residents Association (TRA) to help each other stay in their homes and resist mistreatment by their landlord.

Abigail Bunyan, a tenant from the estate who is facing eviction, said:

"These houses are not an investment, they are homes that people have raised kids in, raised grandkids in, and the people of this community being treated like this is beyond detestable."

Urgent demands on the council

Under the Housing and Planning Act 2016 and the Renters' Rights Act 2025, campaigners say the council has a statutory duty to enforce housing standards. They are calling on the council to:

- Use its investigatory powers urgently and fully: launch an immediate investigation into BMR's actions on the estate
- Reject HMO licence applications: refuse all applications from BMR to convert homes into HMOs
- Seek a banning order: prevent BMR from renting out residential accommodation or playing any role in the property sector
- Update the national rogue landlord database: ensure BMR is added to the National Database of Rogue Landlords and Property Agents
- Blacklist BMR from public partnerships: exclude the company from all current and future council procurement and partnership frameworks
- Provide free legal advice: support tenants facing eviction, rent hikes, and landlord pressure

More fundamentally, campaigners say the council must support the TRA's demand for the St James Estate to be taken out of the private rental market and brought under public ownership.

Durham Miners' Gala

Pro-Burnham union leaders don't match workers' mood



Socialist Party at Durham Miners' Gala ELAINE BRUNSKILL

MOLLIE NIXON
CARLISLE SOCIALIST PARTY

The annual Durham Miners' Gala, one of the world's greatest celebrations of working-class heritage and industrial fightback, took place on 11 July. Socialist Party members mobilised on the day, to share our petitions, sell the Socialist paper and Socialist Party books, and most importantly to meet and converse with fellow workers.

The general secretary of public sector union Unison, Angela Egan, used her speech to denounce politicians "spending money on weapons and foreign wars, rather than investing in our people".

Starmer

Her comment was directed at Keir Starmer. But new Labour prime minister Andy Burnham has already announced that he would increase military spending at the expense of welfare. Unison continues to give Labour £3 million a year.

Socialist Students spent the day gathering pledges from young people to take part in a Europe-wide anti-war youth strike on 20 November. We attracted lots of interest with disillusioned young people based on our slogan: 'Fight for our futures, not their wars'.

There was a distinct focus on solidarity. The Durham Miners' Association made sure the local LGBTQ+ Pride could take place this year, after funding was cut by the Reform council.

The right-wing media attacked the presence of a Palestine solidarity bloc at the 'Big Meeting', saying it goes against 'trade union values'. But the trade union movement supports international solidarity.

If any of the gala attendees was against 'trade union values', it was Labour politician Angela Rayner. Her Unite the Union membership was suspended last year for her backing of Birmingham Labour council's strikebreaking.

Labour

Labour's ongoing attacks on the working class has prompted many workers to question their union's relationship to the Labour Party. The Labour government is attacking us with the same brutality as the Tories.

If the unions had an actual influence on Labour, general secretary of retail union Usdaw, Joanne Thomas, would not have mentioned in her speech that already union demands are not being fulfilled by the government, despite their manifesto commitment.

Usdaw continues to give Labour £1.9 million a year. Joanne Thomas lamented Reform winning councils around Durham. But Labour continuing austerity opens a vacuum that right populists like Reform are attempting to fill.

Labour MP Andy McDonald called Burnham a "chance for a total reset". But understanding the motto of this year's gala – "The past we inherit, the future we build" – means not settling for Blairites in new clothes.

The pro-Burnham speeches didn't match the mood of attendees. Very few thought that Labour under Burnham would change course away from austerity.

New party

Lots signed the petition calling for trades unions to launch a new party of the working class. 237 people bought a copy of the Socialist.

We gave out leaflets with the National Shop Stewards Network (NSSN) new 'action programme', advertising the NSSN lobby of the Trades Union Congress (TUC) in Brighton in September. We also handed out Socialism 2026 leaflets, advertising sessions which will discuss the next steps for trade unionism in a new era of capitalist crisis.

The Socialist Party recognises that, for real change, we need an alternative to the pro-austerity Labour Party. We need a new mass workers' party, with a socialist programme.

Obituary – P&O class warrior Sue Haynes

ERIC SEGAL
KENT AND EAST SUSSEX SOCIALIST PARTY

Sue Haynes was an outspoken rank-and-file leader of the bitter 1988 P&O strike, which followed on from the 1984-85 miners' strike. Both strikes opposed the Thatcher Tory government tearing the heart out of working-class communities. Sue was a member of the Militant, forerunner to the Socialist Party.

Sue took the anger of 2,300 Dover P&O workers to the conference of the National Union of Seamen (NUS) in Hull. Sam McCluskey, the right-wing NUS general secretary – and then treasurer of the Labour Party – contemptuously walked out of the conference hall and switched the mike off whilst Sue was calling for the action to be declared a national NUS strike.

During the strike, Sue fought to change the name of the National Union of Seamen to the National Union of Seafarers. Sue was also one of the officers of the Kent Anti-Poll Tax Federation.

She was a class warrior.

Selling the Socialist

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

Croydon cuts worsen knife crime

BEN GOLDSTONE
CROYDON AND SUTTON SOCIALIST PARTY

We met a local parent who was interested in the Socialist Party on our campaign stall. He was drawn in by our youth knife crime poster and petition.

He agreed wholly that austerity and cuts to youth services were a major cause of the problem, saying how much had changed and been stripped back whilst he has lived here.

We also had interest from passers-by in our Socialism 2026 flyer.

Cardiff opposes data centre scrapping 'park and ride'

JOHN WILLIAMS
CARDIFF SOCIALIST PARTY

Big business and Labour-run Cardiff Council are seriously thinking about putting a data centre in Pentwyn, scrapping the east Cardiff 'park and ride'.

We got out campaigning on the issue. The response was amazing.

People immediately started approaching us, angry at what was being proposed. Everyone has heard about it.

Countless people said they use the 'park and ride', including NHS workers. Some people were unsure what to think.

We explained that, in principle, we aren't against data centres if they're needed. But the issue is who makes the decision on where to put them?

At the moment, big business does – while ripping up a vital service in Cardiff. It's not ordinary working-class people who get to decide where it goes. That argument convinced every person who was unsure.

We raised £110, with people donating to support our campaigning, including 24 people buying the Socialist paper. And met two more people interested in the Socialist Party.

Cardiff Socialist Party is very happy to support this campaign. We put forward our demand for a socialist alternative to Labour, so we have parties in power fighting for us, and for nationalisation of the data centre companies, so the working class can decide where they're put and how they're used.

Wakefield Reform cuts school uniform grants

JOHN VASEY
WAKEFIELD SOCIALIST PARTY

We held a campaign stall in the town centre to protest Wakefield's newly elected Reform council withdrawing the grant for school uniforms.

Despite Reform's sweeping victory in May, we enjoyed encouraging support from those who backed our demand to reinstate the grant, keen to express outrage against the attack. A senior citizen related how her generation, in the past, had relied on some of the benefits that had been won by struggle, and how the school uniform grant was a continuation of this.

A party aiming to answer the needs of ordinary working people is not one expounding Reform-type bigotry, targeting gains made by the working class, or scapegoating a particular section of it. A workers' party is one that unites all of our class to get the wealth that has been taken by the exploiters.



Croydon Socialist Party campaigning against cuts to youth services, which is worsening knife crime DEJI OLAYINKA

Turkey denies entry to anti-war activists

At the invitation of the Workers' Party of Turkey (TIP), Sol (CWI in Germany) members **Chiara Stenger** and **Christoph Farwig**, like many other socialists and anti-war activists from around the world, travelled to Turkey on 3 July to participate in an anti-imperialist peace summit. This summit was held in Istanbul as an alternative to the NATO summit taking place in Ankara.

Chiara and Christoph, and others, were prevented from entering the country and were deported to Germany. They victims had their mobile phones confiscated, were taken into police custody at the airport and had to spend the night in a holding cell.

The Turkish state had already reacted to the planned protests surrounding the NATO summit in recent weeks with arrests and repression. These entry denials are consistent with that. While the world's warmongers are welcomed with millions of euros, anti-war activists are not allowed to exercise their democratic rights and are being detained.

We spoke with Chiara and Christoph.



Christoph Farwig (second from right) is greeted by comrades at the airport PHOTOS: SOL



Chiara Stenger arrives back in Berlin

HOW ARE YOU AND WHAT EXACTLY HAPPENED?

Chiara: I'm doing okay, all things considered. When I tried to enter Turkey at Istanbul Airport, I was held up at passport control and then taken by several security officers to different rooms. My identification documents and my cell phone were confiscated. Initially, they talked about 'normal' security measures, but it quickly became clear that they were after the conference. I was asked questions about my stay and my views on capitalism and Trump. Finally, my fingerprints were taken and photos were taken. I was questioned further, and then I was taken to a locked room where a comrade from the Left Youth (Linksjugend ['solid], the youth organisation linked to the Left Party) in Munich was also there. Up until that point, we hadn't received any information about what was going on or what would happen to us, despite repeatedly asking.

Christoph: I had been informed before passport control that other comrades had been detained, so I was prepared. The security forces at the airport expressed that they couldn't understand the action either. I was put in a group cell without a cell phone or ID card, meaning without any way to contact anyone, where I met a comrade from the Left Youth in Munich. I was pressured to sign a document without its contents being explained to me and wasn't given dinner. On Saturday morning at 11am, we were taken to the deportation plane. The flight crew was handed a document stating, among other things, that I was a flight risk and violent. Throughout this whole time, it was incredibly important to know that I wasn't alone and that I had the Sol, the CWI, and the TIP behind me, taking care of things on the outside.

Chiara: We had opportunities to communicate at times, and it was encouraging to know that comrades from Sol, TIP, and the Left Youth were looking after our situation. Many thanks also to the Left Party members of parliament Nicole Gohlke and Cansu Özdemir, who acted immediately and who intend to continue investigating the matter, because there is strong evidence suggesting that German authorities were behind the whole thing.

HOW DO YOU ASSESS THESE REPRESSIONS?

Chiara: It seems that German and Turkish authorities collaborated in this case to prevent our entry. Apparently, their aim was to intimidate us and hinder a successful conference discussing alternatives to war and capitalism. Even without us, the conference will hopefully be a success, as most participants were able to enter without any problems, and I'm glad that the comrades can have these discussions. But it's striking that, apart from one person from Italy and one from Finland, all the German participants were deported.

Christoph: This whole affair shows that militarisation goes hand in hand with curtailments of democratic rights. I left Turkey in a state of intense anger, but also with the determination to put an end to this activity and imperialism.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

Chiara: Sol will draw attention to this case and, together with comrades from TIP and the Left Party, will try to find out what's behind the repression. After all, it was a registered, legal event, and there are absolutely no legal grounds why participation in the conference should be prohibited. I think, rather, that this reflects the German state's new approach of targeting left-wing activists in order to push forward with militarisation and rearmament with as little opposition as possible. It's all the more important, therefore, that we don't let this deter us and that they don't succeed in achieving their goal. Because only through organising and international resistance against war, imperialism, and capitalism can we change these conditions.

CWI Appeal 2026: Help fund the building of a socialist international

ISAI MARIJERLA
SOCIALIST PARTY TREASURER

In 1864, Karl Marx set up the International Workers' Association (IWA) to bring together workers, socialists, activists and organised labour movements across borders. This was what Marxists refer to as the First International.

Marx understood that capitalism is an international system. That is why his famous call "Workers of the world, unite!" remains so powerful today. Workers across the globe have far more in common with each other than with the bosses and the capitalist class which profits from our labour.

The Socialist Party follows in that tradition. Our predecessor, Militant, founded the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI), precisely to help towards building a united international workers' organisation capable of challenging capitalism.

Today, the CWI is 52 years old and has a proud record of Marxist analysis of the current conjuncture of capitalism and the perspective for world socialism. Our confidence in Marxist ideas and the working class, as the force able to get rid of capitalism, has brought serious revolutionaries in different countries towards us, and we are taking steps, some small and some in leaps, forward.

Now more than ever, this task is urgent. Capitalism is destroying our lives, livelihoods and our planet. It is holding back social advancement while protecting profit and the interests of a tiny minority.

The task is clear - we need socialism, and we need it all over the world. This summer, the International Executive Committee (IEC) - the elected leadership of the CWI - will meet in Berlin. The IEC meeting is taking place in an increasingly volatile and polarised period. Delegates from Europe, Africa, Asia, Latin America, the USA and Canada will come together to discuss perspectives, theory and tactics, and coordinate our work.

We are raising funds to help make this meeting possible, including supporting travel costs for those who otherwise may not be able to attend. Please donate today and support the fight to build an international workers' organisation capable of challenging capitalism and fighting for socialism across the world.

- **Donate to the CWI appeal at socialistparty.org.uk/donations/cwi26**



The **Committee for a Workers' International** (CWI) is the international socialist organisation which the Socialist Party is affiliated to. The CWI is organised in many countries. We work to unite the working class and oppressed peoples against capitalism, and to fight for a socialist world.
socialistworld.net

‘Albania is not for sale!’ - the masses rise against luxury Kushner project

The Committee for a Workers’ International (CWI) is the international socialist organisation which the Socialist Party is affiliated to. The CWI is organised in many countries. We work to unite the working class and oppressed peoples against capitalism, and to fight for a socialist world.
socialistworld.net

On 11 July, Tirana in Albania saw the 42nd consecutive night of demonstrations calling for the resignation of the country’s prime minister and protesting against a tourism project linked to the Trump family. The following article by **Mira Glavardanov**, written on 23 June, analyses what is going on.



PHOTO: ALBINFO/CC

The Albanian masses have taken to the streets in daily protests against a four-billion-dollar tourist project on their coastline. It is a mass protest of hundreds of thousands of people, in a small country with a population of two and a half million. They are demanding the abandonment of the project planned for the previously Protected Area of Vjosë-Nartë Delta and Sazan Island. It would have disastrous consequences for the wildlife. They are demanding answers as to how and why the laws changed in 2025 to allow billionaire landgrabs of protected nature reserves, and call for the resignation of the prime minister Edi Rama who is clearly behind these decisions.

The project became known when a video appeared of Ivanka Trump, daughter of the US president, apparently innocently recounting a story that could have come out of a fairy tale. Together with her husband and friends, on a boating trip in the Adriatic Sea, they happened to take a swim and ‘discovered’ an idyllic lagoon, as you do. An idea was immediately born; this area is too beautiful to leave it to the wild birds and indigenous people, let’s instead develop it as a beautiful tourist resort, in other words, have it for ourselves.

The lagoon is a breeding site for flamingos, sea turtles and other wildlife. Videos that have since flooded the media show thousands of flamingos on pristine sandy beaches that are breathtakingly beautiful. There is nothing new to Albanian people about the area; they have lived in it for centuries and naturally considered it theirs. They are deeply dismayed by Ivanka’s video. Of course, nobody for a moment believes her story.

Ivanka’s husband is Jared Kushner, a development magnate involved in many controversial projects around the world, some bitterly opposed by local people. Not long before this, he was pushing for a development in another Balkan country, the Serbian capital Belgrade. The project to build a Trump hotel complex at the site of the ex-Yugoslav military headquarters met with strong protests and it failed. Kushner’s firm would have been at the heart of Trump’s controversial project of ‘reconstructing’ Gaza, a project so sick that it’s been difficult to lift off the ground even in the rotten capitalist world we live in.

The Albanian ‘flamingo revolution,’ as it’s become known, first erupted on the beaches in Zvërnec village in the Vjosë-Nartë area where local people destroyed fences that had already been raised. Protesters were beaten and dragged away by the heavy-handed police. Almost the next day, big crowds gathered in the capital Tirana and since then the protests have been getting bigger, taking place every single day.

Albania, like many other Balkan countries, is poor and suffers from excessive emigration. During the hardline Stalinist regime of Enver Hoxha, the country was isolated and among the poorest in Eastern Europe. The restoration of capitalism didn’t bring much relief to ordinary people. Corruption and servility to foreign capital is shared by all Balkan governments including the Albanian. On his recent visit to Israel, prime minister Edi Rama praised Israeli prime minister Netanyahu, and admitted that his “knees were shaking in the presence of the great man”. The US is seen as a main ally, not just with the government but also ordinary people. This is not surprising given the role of US imperialism in the Kosovo war in 1999 that led to the majority Albanian population winning independence for Kosovo. Even though many protesters maintain that they are not against Americans but domestic corruption, it is still significant that they have risen against what are essentially US capitalist interests. There are no ‘friends’ when it comes to capitalist plunder.

More so because there are many people who think that even the luxury tourist project is not the whole story. Sazan Island is positioned at the narrowest passage between Albania and Italy, and from the Mediterranean Sea into the Adriatic Sea. Those who control the island potentially control the sea traffic. The importance of that doesn’t need much explanation at the present time given the situation in the Strait of Hormuz. Additionally, it is claimed the island had previously been used by the Stalinist leader Hoxha who, known for his paranoia, built bunkers and other military infrastructure that could be useful. Slogans seen on some placards “No to Epstein Island in Albania!” are not baseless.

Edi Rama has quite absurdly blamed Iran for being behind the protests, “for their own interests while exploiting the concerns people feel about the environment”. In this, he might have copied from the Serbian leader Vucic’s book, who has also claimed that the long-lasting student movement in Serbia is another ‘colour revolution’ orchestrated from the West (absurd given that Vucic is servile to all foreign capital including Western), or that some Balkan neighbouring countries are behind the protests against the proposed Rio Tinto lithium mine, in order to prevent ‘economic development’ of their rival Serbia.

The truth of course is that in both cases ordinary people have organised themselves. The Albanian diaspora has organised protests in many European cities, and are flying back to support protests in the homeland (just like Serbians have done). The outrage against the Kushner project has inspired actions elsewhere in the country against oligarchs and privatisations. Local people have now demolished fences at the Kakomeja beach in southern Albania that was privatised 20 years ago!

In a region that is suffocated by neocolonialism, where corrupt capitalist governments, weak in themselves but backed by imperialist powers whose interests they ultimately serve, working people often find that the land under their feet has been sold off to foreign investors, for dirty mining or luxury resorts. The protest movements that are built have a lot in common; they can, should and do learn from each other. No wonder the slogans used are very similar: “Albania is not for sale” or “We don’t give Jadar away” (Jadar valley in Serbia where the lithium mine was supposed to be).

Common struggle

The interests of all working people are the same; to defend their land, preserve the environment and improve their livelihoods. Albanian protests have met with huge solidarity among ordinary people worldwide, and in the Balkans, including the ‘traditional enemy’ Serbia. Anti-mining protests in Serbia learnt from similar Romanian struggles from a decade previously. Bosnian and Serbian anti-mining activists work very closely together. Anti-corruption protests in Greece and Serbia following train and train station disasters respectively often supported each other. Examples like these of common struggles must be encouraged, in the region where imperialist ‘divide-and-conquer’ tactics have worked so well, for too long. The slogan ‘one struggle’ is sometimes seen in different areas, showing wider internationalism as it often includes the struggle of Palestinians.

Albania is in the accession line to join the EU. The EU is certainly not known for its opposition to the interests of big business. But, presumably given that the project would be hugely profitable to the increasing rival US capitalism, and because questioning the project would give ammunition to put various demands on Edi Rama, the EU has made some noises about the ‘environment,’ albeit contradictory ones.

The EU Commissioner for Enlargement Marta Kos, after asking for ‘assurances’ that the project would be in accordance with EU environmental standards, very quickly happily announced that Edi Rama gave her those assurances (the EU was equally very easily satisfied that the lithium mine in Serbia, which would have directly benefited German auto-industry, was meeting the ‘EU standards’).

The EU parliament, seemingly more democratic and independent, although carrying less power in decision making, has however denounced the project. Edi Rama, for his part, is remaining defiant and says that, despite the protests and no matter what, the project will go ahead.

The Albanian masses can defend their land against big business profits, just like Romanians have stopped the gold mine and Serbians the lithium mine. But the threat never disappears completely, for as long as capitalism exists, neocolonial countries are under relentless attacks from foreign capital looking for resources. If the capital is pushed back from one place it easily moves to another. One struggle is stronger than individual battles. For this reason, the idea of the socialist ‘Balkan Federation’ was popular one hundred years ago but given the more recent history of ethnic wars in the Balkans it was unfortunately pushed back from people’s consciousness. Instead, membership of the EU is today often seen as the way forward for the implementation of the ‘rule of law’ and a remedy for corruption in the Balkan countries (not equally in all countries; in Albania approval of EU membership is the highest at over 90%, in Serbia the lowest, around 30%).

But the EU capitalist club is not a friend of working-class people, not in the core countries, and even less the periphery. EU big capital is equally ruthless as US capital, or any other, and given the chance would behave the same. The EU was very happy to make Serbia its mining colony. Germany is also rich with lithium deposits, which could be extracted much more easily and with less pollution. Yet the priority was put on the project in Serbia that would undoubtedly result in massive pollution. The EU ‘environmental standards,’ whatever they are, don’t equally apply within the EU itself, and certainly don’t apply to EU big business that operates in the neo-colonial world. The same with human rights - the EU does not put forward any serious opposition to Israeli state terror against the Palestinians.

It would be a progressive outcome if the commonality of the battles leads some people to rediscover the idea of the Balkan Federation and moreover a socialist Balkan Federation, on a voluntary and equal basis. We would add that this needs to be linked up today with the idea of a socialist Europe, where the economy and environment are put under the democratic management and control of working people.



Narta Lagoon, Zvërnec PHOTO: PUDELEK/CC

Socialist Party

WHAT WE STAND FOR

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

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

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

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

WORK, PENSIONS AND BENEFITS

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

PUBLIC SERVICES

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

ENVIRONMENT

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

DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS

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

SOCIALISM AND INTERNATIONALISM

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

Do you agree? Join the fightback!

JOIN THE SOCIALISTS

- Visit **socialistparty.org.uk/join**
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to find out more today!



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FIGHT FOR OUR FUTURES NOT THEIR WARS!

YOUTH WALKOUT 20 NOVEMBER

ROBBIE DAVIDSON
MANCHESTER SOCIALIST STUDENTS

In May, an estimated 50,000 students in Germany walked out in huge school strikes against military conscription. This was a marker for the fightback which could be posed across Europe - as young people face a myriad of crises in education, employment and the rising cost of living, while governments pour even more money into arms and militarisation. The German government is ramping up spending on militarisation. In Britain, Keir Starmer has followed suit, announcing a new rollout of austerity cuts to make way for an increase of £25 billion per year on the armed forces in the newly published Defence Investment Plan. And incoming prime minister Andy Burnham has said he will stick to it! They are both in agreement that the NHS, welfare, education and more should be on the chopping block to pay for their wars.

Starmer and Burnham's plan is a single, but very telling, example of the bloodthirsty instability which plagues the global capitalist system. Bosses and politicians around the world are looking to shore up their interests while economies stagnate through direct imperialist interventions and war. Trump, the figurehead of this system, has continued to try papering over the cracks of a declining superpower in the US, by invading Iran, beheading the Venezuelan regime, threatening Greenland and maintaining support for Israeli capitalism's bloody slaughter of the Palestinians. However no attempt to reassert the dominance of US imperialism, nor British military strength, can provide a solution to the turgid living standards.

This is why Socialist Students will be joining the international youth day of action on the 20 November organising walkouts with the slogan 'Fight for our futures, not their wars'. We call on all those in the anti-war movement to join us, as well as the masses of young people feeling the sharp end of the unemployment crisis, the decline of further and higher education, and cuts to schools and colleges - to launch a genuine youth fightback to win the resources for our jobs and education, not wasted on their wars!



Walking out against Trump's visit in 2025 PHOTO: SOCIALIST PARTY

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

9 771366 962103 ISSN 1366-9621