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the Socialist

Issue 1376

23-29 July 2026

formerly **Militant**

NEW PRIME MINISTER



BUT WE CAN'T WAIT!

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

ANDY BURNHAM CROWNED PRIME MINISTER

Trade union fight against austerity and cost-of-living squeeze can't wait

Socialist Party

WHAT WE THINK

Andy Burnham is now Britain's seventh prime minister in a decade. That is as many prime ministers as there were in the preceding 40 years. Such is the level of political crisis facing Britain's capitalist ruling class.

Keir Starmer's tenure of just over two years is, in recent history, about par for the course. On what basis will Andy Burnham possibly be able to significantly outlast him?

On taking office in 2024, Starmer was lauded as having won a landslide, as a result of the Tories' collapse. In reality, he was elected with the lowest share of the vote of any leader of a majority government in a century. And despite his boasts to have transformed the Labour Party after its time with Jeremy Corbyn as leader, his Labour Party received fewer votes than Corbyn's in both the 2017 and 2019 general elections.

Burnham, however, has been coronated by Labour MPs. His victory in the Makerfield by-election - although he polled fewer votes than Labour did in the seat in 2017 under Corbyn - is being grasped at as 'proof' that he has the ability to see off the threat of Nigel Farage's right-populist Reform UK and win a second term for Labour.

On the other hand, in the days before he entered number 10, Reform won the Norfolk Police and Crime Commissioner by-election, a position won by Labour in 2024. Labour's vote collapsed from 52,455 in 2024, to 14,192. Votes for the Conservatives, Greens and Lib Dems also collapsed. Reform, who didn't stand in 2024, received 32,647 votes (26.7%).

A 'Burnham bounce' was not evidenced in East Anglia. Despite his first speech as Labour leader saying that this 'king of the north' would serve the North, East, South and West.

That doesn't mean, of course, that there won't be some who hope that at least things can't get worse. And Burnham has plans for a policy blitz over the summer, a bid to boost his popularity with announcements on council house building and 'greater public control' of water and electricity. His first speech as prime minister promised to end street homelessness, and he says he wants to give "breathing space" to households in the cost-of-living crisis. The VAT cut on energy bills announced will save the typical household about £45 a year - one gasp for air.



Andy Burnham steps foot in Number 10 following his coronation PHOTO: UK PRIME MINISTER/CC

No one struggling to keep their head above water would turn that down. But it is nowhere near enough to stop the struggling.

The problem for Burnham will be what he has to do to pay for any further measures, having reasserted his intention to stick to Rachel Reeves's fiscal rules.

And while for now he may be praised by fellow Labour MPs from all corners for his 'vision' and 'vibes', he won't be able to avoid all of the contentious issues for long. Rumours over whether or not he would change Labour's position and allow for more drilling for North Sea oil filled in the days before his entering number 10. Deputy Labour leader and Burnham ally Lucy Powell had to go on Sunday morning TV to make the point that, for now, the difference between Burnham and Starmer governments on the issue would be essentially the 'vibes'. Nevertheless, talk of the issue threatened to open up an old wound.

"Factionalism has bedevilled us. Today we moved beyond it", Burnham has said. But tomorrow it will be back, because 'factionalism' is in fact the result of deep divisions over the way out for British capitalism and the huge pressures Labour MPs

will come under on the issues of disability cuts, SEND provision, public service funding, future relations with the EU, and more.

Not a cabinet of 'left wingers'

To win the Makerfield by-election, Burnham had to present himself as an alternative to Starmer. And gone are many of the Starmer loyalists from cabinet. But this is not a cabinet of 'left wingers'. Shabana Mahmood stays as Home Secretary, likely to continue her project of mirroring Reform and making life more difficult for those seeking asylum in Britain.

John Healey, who weeks ago resigned as defence minister, has been appointed chancellor. He will be tasked with diffusing the fiscal bomb left by Starmer, of a £10 billion funding hole in the Defence Investment Plan. Healey, who resigned because he deemed insufficient Starmer's plan to cut other departments to increase military spending, is clearly going to demand more pain for public services to pay for weapons.

Pat McFadden will stay in post in the Department for Work and Pensions to continue his project, started under Starmer, to pursue attacks on disability benefits.

“““

The need for industrial action in the public sector, to fight for decent pay, for full funding and against job cuts, has not gone away

Burnham's appointed economic advisors include Andy "knife must fall on public spending" Haldane, a former Bank of England chief economist, and Jim "we've got to get rid of the triple lock" O'Neill, a former treasury minister under George Osborne.

Those figures are undoubtedly there to give reassurance to capitalist investors that the Labour government will continue to serve in the bosses' interests. Burnham himself has said this is Labour's "last chance". From the capitalist bosses' point of view, they hope that Burnham will once more be able to use the Labour Party's heritage as a party created by the working class and once seen as 'their' party, to be able to keep at bay expressions of organised working class anger while continuing to oversee falling living standards and austerity.

Burnham's rhetoric about 40 years of decline is in reality harking back to an era which no longer exists, in which Labour was seen by big sections of the working class as being its own. Since, the party has been transformed into an out-and-out capitalist party.

With Corbyn as Labour leader, retransformation was posed by the potential for the mass influx of workers and young people into the party - enthused by Corbyn's anti-austerity programme - which could have been the force with which to carry out a fundamental change. That is not threatened with Burnham as leader. Which is one reason why the capitalist class more readily accepts Burnham as prime minister.

Breathing space?

Burnham may aspire to give "breathing space" to the working class facing rising prices. But will the capitalist bosses give him breathing space in order to perform in this "last chance" - leeway given on spending or borrowing to allow for measures to take the edge of the cost of living? Such is the precarious situation of British capitalism, that is not entirely in the gift of the British capitalists. Outgoing chancellor Rachel Reeves says that she has left Burnham the gift of having restored economic stability and credibility. But it remains that Britain's government borrowing costs are at historic highs and growth is stagnant. The world economic situation is equally if not more volatile as when Reeves took office and Britain is just as vulnerable.

Notwithstanding the tight fiscal constraints facing any capitalist British government, exactly how much can be 'afforded' is determined by the relationship of class forces. Unfortunately, without exception, none of the leaders of the Labour affiliated trade unions - or others - have used the Labour leadership process to apply their pressure. Unite, for example, could have used its executive immediately preceding the opening of nominations to put forward a set of demands that it expected any candidate to fight for in order to win its backing. That is the approach Socialist Party members on the Unite executive argued for. In the end, the union's executive voted to endorse Burnham, despite no commitments from him.

Unite's Sharon Graham, who the Socialist Party is backing in the upcoming general secretary election,



PHOTO: UK PRIME MINISTER/CC

has been among the most critical of Starmer's Labour government, including backing strike action against Labour authorities - for example in the Birmingham bin strike. There must be no retreat from this stance under Burnham.

The need for industrial action in the public sector, to fight for decent pay, for full funding and against job cuts, has not gone away - despite the fact that many union leaders would like to use the new Labour leader to buy some peace.

They won't necessarily get their way though. "There will soon be a new prime minister and, very likely, new ministers in education and the treasury. While we do not yet know whether this will lead to any meaningful change in spending priorities, it does create an opportunity to influence those debates." That was the argument put by NEU general secretary Daniel Kabede to the union's executive, in arguing for steps back from balloting teaching staff over the issues of pay and funding. Since, however, those steps back have been decisively rejected, executive members coming under pressure from members - who voted overwhelmingly in a snap poll to continue towards a ballot - and with Socialist Party members on that body articulating members' determination to fight (see page 7).

Trade union pressure

Pressure must be kept up on the leaderships of all the trade unions, making the case that the biggest 'opportunity to influence debates' is to organise and build towards action, demanding what is needed.

Meanwhile, the biggest assistance that the capitalist establishment is giving Andy Burnham currently is its assault on Reform UK and its key figures over their financial dealings.

That, and the farce that is the Clacton by-election, can temporarily hamper the prospects of Farage or Reform. But if a Burnham prime ministership continues to govern in the interests of the bosses and carries out attacks on living standards and public services which that entails, it will in fact strengthen the forces of right populism for the future. Unless of course the leaders of the authoritative mass organisations of the working class - the trade unions - drastically change course from support for a Labour government carrying out austerity, and instead fight independently for working-class interests.

A starting point would be to make good on the 2025 TUC policy to organise a demonstration against any

further austerity. It could bring together school staff fighting for full funding, civil servants battling to stop job cuts, local authority workers continuing to face the austerity onslaught, disabled people preparing to struggle against new attacks on benefits, and other working-class and young people facing an ongoing cost-of-living squeeze.

An autumn demonstration of that character would ramp up the working-class pressure on the Burnham government as it prepares for its first 'fiscal event' towards the end of this year. That will be a demand raised by the NSSN at its lobby of the Trades Union Congress on 13 September, which Socialist Party members are helping to build towards.

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Socialist Students at Young Greens Convention ADAM POWELL-DAVIES

Appeal to the Young Greens: Join the campaign to build 20 November international youth walkouts

ADAM POWELL-DAVIES
SOCIALIST STUDENTS NATIONAL CHAIR

Ahead of the Young Greens Convention which took place on the 18-19 July, Socialist Students sent the following letter to the outgoing Young Greens co-chairs and Executive Committee, inviting the Young Greens to join the campaign for a day of international youth walkouts and mobilisations on Friday 20 November under the slogan, 'Fight for our futures, not their wars!'

Socialist Students also produced the letter as a leaflet, which our members took along to the Young Greens Convention as a way of opening up discussion

with Young Greens members about the 20 November campaign. Socialist Students members in the Green Party attended the convention and also helped to raise the international youth walkouts inside the conference.

Unfortunately, members of the outgoing Young Greens Executive asked venue security to move us on shortly after we set up our stall. But we were still able to have discussions with a big portion of attendees from the public pavement outside the venue, where we met overwhelming enthusiasm for the idea of the international youth walkouts. Socialist Students plans to re-circulate our letter to the newly elected Young Greens co-chairs and Executive Committee.

anti-war youth organisations in Britain to join the campaign.

As the largest youth section of any political party in Britain, with over 50,000 members across England and Wales, we hope that Young Greens will throw its significant potential weight behind the international youth strike. We know that many young people have either joined or are looking towards the Green Party as a means of transforming society – for a future free of war, climate breakdown and constant insecurity. But we think that what is also needed is bold, socialist action to get all those young people organised in the fight for that alternative.

Seize moment and take lead

We therefore appeal to the Young Greens to seize this moment and take a lead in building for the 20 November international youth strike. Coinciding with the final scheduled date of this year's COP Conference in Turkey – where the world's elites will yet again get together for a talking shop on climate change – 20 November is a major opportunity to raise the level of organisation and confidence of young people to fight for our futures in this new world era of capitalist conflict and instability. It would also be a chance to ensure that the Green Party in England and Wales is

committed to mobilising against war – and not, for instance, going down the road of the German Greens, who unfortunately instead helped to push through massive increases in military spending as part of a federal coalition government there.

We are hoping that your Convention, taking place in London this weekend, could discuss the possibility of Young Greens committing to build the international youth strike on November 20. And if Young Greens were to commit to the international youth walkouts, Socialist Students would welcome further discussion on how our organisations could best coordinate at a local level – e.g. hosting joint open meetings between Socialist Students societies and Young Greens groups on how best to build the walkouts and 'fight for our futures, not their wars' etc.

We look forward to your reply

Eye on the Greens

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

• editors@socialistparty.org.uk

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

SOCIALIST STUDENTS LETTER TO YOUNG GREENS

We are writing to invite Young Greens to help build for an international day of youth walkouts against war and militarisation on Friday 20 November under the slogan, 'Fight for our futures, not their wars!'

The call for a 20 November international youth strike under this slogan was issued by a Europe-wide assembly of anti-war youth and student organisations held in Cologne, Germany, last month. The international youth strike so far has support from more than twenty youth and student organisations across a dozen countries in Europe, from youth sections of left-wing political parties to national student unions and independent socialist youth organisations.

Socialist Students members attended the Cologne assembly as representatives from Britain. At the meeting of our national steering committee last week, we agreed to build for the biggest possible day of youth walkouts on 20 November, including by appealing to other

Fight for real jobs and decent pay Youth walkout 20 November

MILA HUGHES
WEST MIDLANDS SOCIALIST PARTY YOUTH
ORGANISER

Young people can't afford to wait around to see whether a new face in Downing Street changes anything. We have a new Labour prime minister, Andy Burnham, but we still have low pay, insecure work, and an increasing youth unemployment crisis. And his appointment of John Healey as his Chancellor, who resigned from Starmer's government because cuts weren't swift enough to pay for more war, sends a message about Burnham's intentions.

Our future

We are told to accept a future of zero-hour contracts, short-term employment and dwindling pay. A 'job' that offers no guaranteed hours, security or way to comfortably think about their future is not a real job.

Employers have pushed to replace stability with precarious work so they can rake in megabucks in profits, paid for with our worsening pay and conditions. Real jobs mean permanent contracts, guaranteed hours, and decent conditions.

That's why we've been out campaigning to raise the minimum wage to at least £15 an hour, as a start, with no age exemptions. On campaign stalls, we regularly hear that bills,

food, fuel and the rest are all going up but wages seem to stay the same.

The demand for £15 an hour is not impossible; it's the bare minimum needed to live in this cost-of-living crisis and it's already the demand raised by trade unions. Paying young workers less for the same work is not a 'starter wage', it's exploitation, and it exists only because bosses think young workers are less likely to fight back.

We are building a movement of young workers and students prepared to take action for real jobs and decent pay, standing together with workers already fighting the same battle in their workplaces

Get organised

Socialist Students will be helping young people to get organised to walk out of their classes and lectures on 20 November to "fight for our future, not their wars!" We call on all young people to join us. To fight further cuts and declining services, an unemployment and NEET crisis, and against ramping up bosses' war and division. Join us to fight back for a better society – a socialist society in which the working class democratically makes the decisions, so society can provide a decent job, a good standard of living for all, not just look after the super-rich.



Young Coventry Socialist Party members campaigning NICK HART

Stop Britain burning!

Rebuild fire services and fight the climate crisis with socialist change

ADAM HARMSWORTH
COVENTRY SOCIALIST PARTY

We have all felt the severe reality of climate change over the past couple of months. Multiple record-breaking heatwaves have hit, causing over 1,000 deaths in England and Wales and putting yet more pressure on an underfunded NHS.

The heatwave has caused the 'longest dry spell in three decades', causing or helping to fuel a wave of fires across the country.

The number and size of the fires has put a strain on the fire service, but so has the heat itself. Firefighters have to limit their own time in work during the heat, meaning yet more staff are required to tackle the increase in fires.

This should not be a problem for the world's fifth largest economy, but throughout 16 years of austerity fire services in Britain have been slashed over and over. The Fire Brigades Union (FBU) says the number of firefighters across the UK is down from 59,349 in 2010 to 47,443 as of last year – a 20% cut.

Rebuilding a functional fire service is an important part of preparing for the impacts of climate change

– known as 'climate resilience' – in Britain. New prime minister Andy Burnham, as of yet, has made no pledges to support the fire service, but reversing the cuts is an emergency. This June, five fire stations in Kent were on the chopping block thanks to Keir Starmer and then-chancellor Rachel Reeves keeping up Tory austerity. Protests and the FBU threatening industrial action postponed the cuts for now, but Burnham has pledged to stick to Reeves's same fiscal policies.

Austerity danger

Cuts to public services that are vital for climate resilience are a growing threat to the safety, livelihoods, and lives of many in Britain. It will be essential for the trade unions and working-class communities to fight any cuts or closures, and to fight for the resources we need to protect against climate change.

For example, to restore at least the 12,000 firefighter jobs lost since 2010, and the millions cut from flood defences when the weather swings the other way. We demand that the new Burnham government reverses the years of austerity that has made us less safe while those at the top have enriched themselves.

If councillors of any party want to stand on the side of the people they claim to represent, they should fight the government for the resources they need.

Socialist change

The fight for these defences against the impacts of climate change is as important as dealing with climate change itself. It is still possible to halt climate change and prevent our heatwaves, wildfires, floods and other crises from worsening. But capitalist politicians will not stop climate change while they are wedded to a system based on short-term profits and international competition – the decades of inaction are evidence enough of that.

A socialist system, run in the interests of the vast majority of the world, can prevent further climate change and protect communities from the damage already done. We could democratically plan production, after taking the resources and wealth of society into public ownership, with workers deciding what to produce and how. That way we could transition away from polluting production to protect the environment and improve the lives, safety and health of us all.



Firefighters on Britain's hottest day PETER TRIMMING/CC



Scunthorpe steelworks cooling tower GARETH JAMES/CC

British Steel nationalised after years of floundering, problem solved?

THOMAS BUTLER
LIVERPOOL NORTH SOCIALIST PARTY

British Steel, owner of Scunthorpe steelworks, which employs thousands of workers, has been nationalised. This is not the start of a post-war style sweep of nationalisations! After seven years of staggering along and the government mucking about, it has been forced to fully nationalise the company, taking it out of private hands.

Keir Starmer was keen to pat himself on the back for stepping in to secure British production of steel and the thousands of jobs British Steel provides. However both Conservative and Labour governments have bent over backwards to try to keep British Steel in private hands.

When in 2019 British Steel was put into compulsory liquidation, the then-Tory government bounced British Steel into another set of private hands – the Jingye group. Since then, the government has pumped in hundreds of millions over years to keep the steelworks functioning and making money for the Jingye group. Nationalisation was only considered when Jingye prepared to close down the blast furnaces, making them

uneconomic to start up again, resulting in thousands of job losses and the end of steelmaking in Britain (after the closure of the steelworks in Port Talbot a year before).

Bosses' nationalisation

For the bosses and their politicians, nationalisations are not taken lightly. And when they do they are desperate to hand it back to a private company to run for a profit again. And that means making it attractive, with more investment poured in and could mean attempts to hit workers' pay and conditions.

Putting an 'HM government' sticker onto British Steel will not guarantee genuine change for British Steel workers. We need not just nationalisation but nationalisation under democratic workers' control and management – put the people who know how best to run it in charge. Otherwise you will still have the highly paid bosses,

the lack of financial transparency and crucially a lack of workers' democracy, with managers and bean counters making the decisions – not the workers themselves.

Jingye has already put the pressure on that they deserve compensation. This after running down the company for years while the shareholders get rich! Compensation should only be provided on the basis of proven need – no more to the fat cats.

A genuine socialist plan of production can meet the needs of workers and our communities by ending the looming threats of closures and getting rid of the profit-driven race to the bottom. Taking the big businesses that dominate the economy into public hands would mean we could plan production to provide what we need, to invest in industry and our communities, and provide a decent standard of living for us all, not maximise the profits of a few.

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One of the first demands that will be put by workers to Andy Burnham is public sector pay. Several public sector unions, under the pressure of members, are preparing for potential action in the coming months over pay, linked to the crisis in funding of public services across the board. The Socialist has reported previously that, despite the efforts of the leadership to hold back, the Further Education Committee of the UCU (University and College Union) has agreed to go ahead with an autumn ballot (See 'Socialists safeguard UCU members' call to fight in Further Education' at socialistparty.org.uk). Here we report on the battles and plans in Unison, the PCS and National Education Union.

Vote 'yes' for strike action over local government pay

Fight for an end to funding cuts

DAVID ELLIS
BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL UNISON BRANCH,
PERSONAL CAPACITY

In what can only be described as an insult, local government workers have once again been offered the crumbs off the table from the Local Government Association employers, in the form of a 3.3% pay offer. Due to Trump and Netanyahu's war in the Middle East, this pay offer will be lucky to keep wages in line with inflation.

It also does nothing to repair the decades of real-terms pay cuts. On average, council and school workers have lost 26% of our pay in real terms since 2010. Low pay undermines staff retention, recruitment, and morale.

Unison demands an increase of at least £3,000 or 10%, whichever is the greater, and a minimum pay rate of £15 an hour. We also demand a two-hour reduction in the working week and an increase of one day's annual leave. The Socialist Party says this must be with no loss of pay.

Despite Starmer's promise to repeal the law, trade unions are still required to achieve a 50% turnout for strike ballots. One of the many demands our union must place on Andy Burnham straight away!

Unison has chosen to ballot a select number of target employers that had a higher turnout in previous ballots. The votes for each employer will

then be counted separately. However, fighting to close the gap on two decades of real-terms pay cuts will require a national fight, and the full might of the public sector unions.

All public sector unions should work together to coordinate national action. The ballot threshold can be beaten by directing support to reps in all areas that need the back-up, and most importantly, a strong national lead to give confidence to members. Holding a national ballot would also mean that branches that have had lower turnouts previously can be brought into the struggle.

Over 15 years of austerity has devastated local services. Over a million local government jobs have gone. Now local government reorganisation is being used to centralise services, merge councils and drive through 'efficiency savings' - meaning more job losses, and attacks on terms and conditions. Reorganisation without funding is simply austerity by another name.

The Socialist Party has consistently campaigned for councils to set no-cuts budgets, and invest in services. That's another challenge to Burnham. I'm in Birmingham, scene of the historic bin strike and hundreds of millions of pounds of cuts across the board. We demand Burnham immediately kicks out the unelected commissioners and pays the bin workers what they deserve.

'They owe us - big time'

We do not come to work for a pat on the head or empty words of thanks. We didn't create the cuts to public services. We didn't decide to ignore workplaces sweltering in the heat. We didn't cause chronic understaffing, impossible workloads, or the stress that drives workers to their GP with burnout and poor mental health.

The government and employers owe us - big time. They owe us decent pay, safe staffing levels, and respect for the work we do every day. And they won't hand it over out of kindness. They only act when workers stand together and demand it. A strong 'yes' vote tells employers that we reject poverty pay and we defend public services - and that we're ready to fight for every penny we've earned.

BALAKA FELL-HOLDEN, UNISON LOCAL
GOVERNMENT SERVICE GROUP EXECUTIVE,
PERSONAL CAPACITY

- **Unison is balloting around 200,000 members from 9 July - 6 August**
- **Unite is also balloting local government members in targeted authorities from 16 July - 17 August**



Unison members at East End Housing on strike in Tower Hamlets, see page 10 HUGO PIERRE

The fight is on - PCS NEC votes for a cost-of-living campaign

Fighting job cuts at the Foreign Office

PCS members at the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) took a day of a strike action on Thursday 16 July and will take three and half more days before the end of the month, plus action short of a strike. The action is due to a long-running dispute over job cuts - originally the FCDO wanted to cut up to 25% of UK-based staff but the employer says job cut numbers may now be less than that. If this is the case, it's due to union pressure to take measures to avoid compulsory

redundancies. PCS fears that vital expertise and experience will be lost with such a heavy job cut; this is particularly the case when it comes to staff dealing with aid and overseas development work. Vital projects in conflict and crisis areas of the world could be hit hard.

PCS is fighting for a no compulsory redundancy agreement and for an end to the job cuts. Support the action, come to the picket line and make a donation to the strike fund!

PCS MEMBERS



ROB WILLIAMS

REECE LAWTON
PCS NEC MEMBER, PERSONAL CAPACITY

As previously reported in the Socialist, the impasse at the top of the PCS civil service union was broken on 7 July when the National Executive Committee (NEC) left majority voted under protest to accept the undemocratic standing orders (meeting rules) insisted on by the general secretary Fran Heathcote. Up till that point, she had shut down the NEC and the National Disputes Committee.

Now we can get on with the business of fighting and winning for members. Thankfully, this means that, among others, the strike at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office was finally given the go-ahead, and on 15 July a mass picket was joined by NEC members.

An NEC meeting was called on 15-16 July to discuss, among other things, the union's response to the Labour government's inadequate 3.5% civil service pay remit, and the refusal of the Cabinet Office to reopen talks.

The NEC majority is clear that in order to achieve the demands agreed at conference in May, we need to mount a major industrial campaign against the employer.

The initial position of the general secretary was that we should accept the pay remit, with all of the strings attached (which include keeping the lowest paid at minimum wage levels), and rush into delegated

pay talks in each separate employer area.

U-turn

But in a remarkable U-turn, the general secretary's office wrote to the NEC majority's senior officers in order to align the general secretary's proposals with those of the NEC majority. This is due to the pressure of the members, articulated by the NEC majority.

The NEC majority motion, submitted by deputy president Dave Semple, contained only one key difference to the general secretary's paper - that the proposed reduction of contractual hours should not be welcomed as it would leave future Admin Assistant grades (AAs) £3,300 worse off a year. We say that reduction of hours should not involve loss of pay - for existing or future staff - who are likely to include in-sourced workers. Our starting point is to defend everyone, rather than the complete levelling down of our pay, terms and conditions.

The general secretary's paper and the NEC majority motion were passed unanimously. So the stage is set for a major cost-of-living campaign. Pay claims will be submitted in all groups and bargaining units on the basis of the national pay claim for 10% and an £18 per hour minimum, with measures to ensure that the AA grades do not remain permanently on the national minimum wage, and other related demands.

These demands represent a single

programme around which the union can unite members across departments and bargaining units. Instead of fragmented struggles, members in every workplace can fight in a shared national campaign.

The general secretary has agreed, at last, to take the first steps towards popularising our demands, with bulletins, website articles and social media communications. Material is to be cleared by the National Disputes Committee. An NEC statement should also be issued to the membership without delay.

Further measures include a speakers' briefing for workplace meetings; a letter to the PCS Parliamentary Group requesting support; the preparation of parliamentary questions; and an examination of whether a parliamentary petition capable of securing a debate can be successfully launched. We are also seeking a meeting with Andy Burnham and his team to advance the union's case, with the outcome to be reported back to the NEC.

These decisions mark an important advance, after months in which the national campaign has been blocked. But it would be a serious mistake to confuse an agreement to do something with it being done. These steps must be taken, and used to organise meetings, recruit new activists, and prepare members for the struggles that lie ahead. The campaign will only be won if PCS members recognise it as their own campaign and have confidence in the leadership to fight and win.

We call on all reps who want to build a fighting, democratic union with a socialist programme that could win for members to join the PCS Broad Left Network, and unite to build a massive cost-of-living campaign.

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Defending trans+ members through collective action

The NEC also agreed a significant motion setting out PCS's response to attacks on the rights of trans+ members. It commits the union to urgently bring together the National Disputes Committee, PCS Proud and PCS Legal to develop legal advice for reps, explore the potential of a judicial review of the government guidance, support members facing discrimination, and to restore the PCS Trans Awareness course under the direction of PCS Proud.

Rights are defended not only in the courts but in every workplace. The motion commits PCS to making clear to negotiators that, in the overwhelming majority of workplaces, the government guidance cannot be implemented as proposed. It instructs the National Disputes Committee to produce urgent bargaining guidance for branches and groups to resist exclusionary changes and to defend any members affected.

This overturns the previous approach of the national leadership and ensures that PCS union fights for all its members - women, LGBTQ+ members, Black and Asian, disabled, old and young.

We see it differently. Burnham has been quite clear that he intends to stick to the fiscal rules, so unless we form a big union fightback, why would there be new money? He will be under enormous pressure - he

NEU exec overturns general secretary and plans fight on pay and funding

SHEILA CAFFEY
NEU NATIONAL EXECUTIVE MEMBER, PERSONAL
CAPACITY

The National Education Union (NEU) ran indicative ballots for school teacher and support staff members earlier this year, which saw over 200,000 education workers engage with voting to take action over pay, funding, workload and redundancies.

The lack of confidence of many on the National Executive to move to action (many using the Tory anti-trade union laws, still on the books two years into a Labour government, to justify their fears) meant that they agreed to push any formal ballot six months later to October.

The threat of action pushed the government to alter their offer from being over three years to over two years, with 3.5% for teachers this year and 3% next year - but not fully funded. For many on the exec, this was seen as an opportunity to pull back on action.

On 9 July, the exec discussed a paper from general secretary Daniel Kebede in which he used the ascendancy of Andy Burnham to argue for a 'snap poll' at the end of the summer term to judge whether or not teachers would accept the pay deal, and whether they'd be willing to ballot for sufficient funding to ensure the pay deal this year was fully funded.

Socialist Party members were part of a small handful of exec members who opposed a snap poll, as members' views were already clear. We could see that many supporters of it were wanting to cancel any action. We reminded the exec that workload was also a key part of the original ballot.

A week later, with the results of the snap poll in, as well as feedback from members in the areas and in union forums, there was a shift. Many members had been vocal that it was 'ridiculous' to run a snap poll at the end of the academic year, especially when the demands for an inflation-busting pay deal with funding to prevent redundancies and improve workload hadn't been met.

Daniel Kebede put forward a paper ignoring the 75% of snap poll respondents who said they would fight on pay, and suggested that with Burnham coming in, this would be a good time just to firm up the 1% of the pay deal that was unfunded, and fight for a small extra pot of funding. (Last year, when Socialist Party members on the exec argued to fight on funding as well as pay, we were told that the union 'could not' fight on funding!)

We see it differently. Burnham has been quite clear that he intends to stick to the fiscal rules, so unless we form a big union fightback, why would there be new money? He will be under enormous pressure - he

has been making these points, as a large



Now is not the time to take our foot off the pedal



MARTIN POWELL-DAVIES

won't want a fight with hundreds of thousands of education workers on picket lines, and so this is the time to increase that pressure, not take our foot off the pedal.

The pay award sits just over current inflation. It doesn't take into account the energy price cap being lifted or escalations in Iran, both of which will hit members' and schools' pockets heavily in the autumn.

It doesn't take into account the almost 17% needed to bring pay back in line after 15 years of almost annual real-terms pay cuts.

It doesn't take into account the redundancies happening up and down the country as schools cannot balance budgets, leading to vital support for children and young people being cut.

And it doesn't take into account the spiralling workloads that are making workers vote with their feet and leave education more than any other issue.

It was clear that members had been making these points, as a large

majority of the exec shifted position - not just to holding a ballot on the original terms, but to actually push it much further!

To firm up wording on funding, so it doesn't just cover a pay deal, but enough to be able to prevent redundancies; to put in appropriate measures to cut workload and provide a decent education for pupils. And on pay, not just a deal that sits over inflation, but to fight for pay restoration, inspired by the resident doctors in the BMA.

This shows that when many of the exec members feel the pressure from the broader membership, they can be galvanised into action. It shows the importance of building from below, but it cannot be left there. We do need a leadership that is willing to fight!

We are determined to keep the pressure on the NEU top officers to show the leadership and confidence needed to lead this ballot to win for all education workers and for the whole of education.

INTERVIEW: FIGHTING FOR TRANS RIGHTS IN 2026

London Trans Pride takes place on 25 July 2026. In recent years its numbers have swelled to the tens and hundreds of thousands. We spoke to Socialist Party LGBTQ+ group organiser **Michael Johnson** about fighting for trans rights in 2026.

Can you explain briefly the court rulings and government advice that have been made in relation to trans rights?

The biggest thing to tackle here is the Supreme Court ruling last year, which ruled that, within the Equality Act, 'sex' refers only to biological sex (in principle, sex recorded on a person's birth certificate). This ruling specifically came about in relation to gender ratios on public bodies and whether trans women in particular counted towards women for this purpose. The ruling, however, has much further reaching impact.

As a consequence of the Supreme Court judgement, the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) has produced its second draft guidance for services, public functions and associations on the Equality Act. Establishment politicians have praised the guidance for bringing 'clarity'. In reality, it brings very little.

On access to things like toilets, the guidance raised these should be single sex. It acknowledges that it is not proportionate to check or monitor this, but that services might need to if there are complaints. Another example, trans people should use the facilities matching their sex recorded at birth but can be stopped from using these if it causes offense or upset to others. It also says trans people shouldn't be left without facilities – as to do so would also be discrimination under the Equality Act. Anyone who has actually had to use public facilities might question how achievable some of these single-sex spaces are; the beds crisis in the NHS for example: do corridors count as single sex?

There has also been the Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 updated draft guidance for schools. This replicates the EHRC guidance on access to single-sex spaces for children and young people who are transitioning, alongside other guidance around supporting transition. It says education settings should take a "strong stand against bullying" and should "be conscious of the rights of pupils and staff", in respect of using the child or young person's desired name and pronouns. The previous draft, produced under the Tories, never saw the light of day in the face of opposition from some teaching unions.

Lastly, after around a decade of prevarication by both Tory and now Labour governments, a conversion therapy ban has been put forward. This includes significant caveats

allowing a questioning approach to a person's gender identity. But it shows there is pressure coming from all sides on an unpopular government which lacks mass support.

How could the court rulings and government advice affect trans people's rights?

Trans people are already being affected daily by the impact of the Supreme Court judgement, and EHRC guidance, even before it is fully in force.

During debates in Parliament on the guidance, MPs shared stories from constituents, including from one person facing anxieties about being able to access a toilet without issue, who ended up wetting themselves in public. Indeed, we've heard reports of trans people avoiding leaving home to avoid needing to access toilets while out, or even not seeking medical treatment due to worries about what ward they will end up on.

The guidance makes suggestions towards things like single occupancy toilets and rooms on wards. But, to return to the experience of anyone who has used public toilets or been in hospital recently, this suggestion is almost utopian without a massive programme of public service investment and works to meet the needs of all! Fighting for the rights and services trans people need is part and parcel of the struggle of building a working class campaign for the public services we all need.

There have been similar reactions to the education guidance. Some have likened it to a new Section 28 - the hated Thatcher law banning the 'promotion' of homosexuality in schools, which led to years of teachers worrying if, in challenging homophobic bullying, they would risk running foul of the law. Teachers and staff fear similar issues with this, teachers needing to decide "Is this bullying or someone expressing a belief that I can't interfere with?"

Ultimately, while the Labour government tries to position itself as "the most LGBTQ-friendly government in history", for most working trans people in particular, but also the wider LGBTQ+ community, things are getting harder.



Struggle can defeat divide-and-rule tactics and attacks

Why are the government and the courts making rulings on trans rights now?

Before answering more concretely about the government and really 'why now?' I do just want to emphasise that, despite what the courts may want to argue, they are not a neutral force. In fact, they serve the capitalist bosses. Just look at the make up of the Supreme Court judges - dominated by Oxbridge graduates (unlikely to ever share a ward with anyone!).

And part of the reason things are getting harder for the LGBTQ+ community, and the whole working class, is for the same reason as the government and courts are making these rulings. It comes down to the economic crisis that Britain is facing, and has been facing for closing in on two decades, and the wider crisis of the capitalist system.

It wasn't too long ago that Tory prime minister David Cameron was accepting Gay Ally awards and Theresa May was hosting garden parties celebrating the Stonewall riots, announcing an LGBT action plan. Due to the struggles fought by the LGBTQ+ community, massive gains have been made to our rights and with movements of the working class have come big shifts in social attitudes. For a whole period, governments and corporations were forced to present themselves as 'allies' (being as loose as possible with that term) and would avoid being seen to outwardly attack LGBTQ+ rights while, of course, carrying on with exploitation, cuts and privatisation, as part of the general assault on the working class, including LGBTQ+ workers and young people.

As the economic crisis has deepened we've seen the growing crisis for Britain's capitalist class (exemplified by the speed we run through prime ministers). As we've just seen with Keir Starmer, the establishment parties have no solution for this crisis other than to make workers pay.

Public services have been eroded by austerity alongside attacks on pay, conditions and living standards. We've seen in the strike waves and fantastic struggles of the working class, refusing to accept attacks on our living standards. In response, we've seen the return of divide-and-rule tactics from the bosses to try to weaken mass struggles.

This has unfortunately meant that trans people, alongside migrants and others, have faced attempts to scapegoat them by a capitalist elite seeking to maintain its increasingly unpopular rule.



PHOTO: EIRA HADFIELD-JONES/CC



PHOTO: BEN COLUCCITY



How can we stop the issue of trans rights being used in a divisive way by the capitalist bosses, politicians and right-wing media?

This is a really important question. Polling, like the British Social Attitudes survey, has found that views on trans people have worsened, driven by the divide-and-rule rhetoric. But this isn't irreversible. We should remember, at the end of the 1980s, at the height of the AIDS crisis and the Thatcher-led Tory government's attacks on LGBTQ+ people, questioning the "inalienable right to be gay", more than 80% of people felt homosexuality was wrong.

But struggle cut across this. A notable example being the solidarity the LGBTQ+ community showed with striking miners through organisations like Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners (LGSM). This led to the National Union of Mineworkers returning that solidarity, helping to enshrine LGBT rights in the Labour Party constitution and also joining in the struggle against Section 28.

The trade unions can, and do, play the same role today. When conferences of trade unionists discuss trans issues, they consistently vote to support campaigns and demands, sometimes in opposition to those union leaderships who do not recognise the need to campaign to unite workers as widely as possible around a programme to meet all our needs. Socialist Party members have played an important role in supporting these discussions but also putting forward the need for them to go beyond the union conferences into our communities and into action.

I do also want to address attempts to portray trans people as the main threat to women, something that has been a feature of some of the politics of divide and rule.

Much has been made in the right-wing press of things like the threat to women from trans women using refuges. And this can gain an echo as services like women's refuges have faced years of attacks on funding. A Women's Aid 2026 report records that even with capacity increases, around 65% of referrals to refuges are rejected primarily due to lack of space.

This isn't because of trans people, it's the result of the austerity politics and policies of governments and local councils. Pitting trans people and other women against each other is only in the interests of those people actually making the attacks. Campaigns for services like refuges and campaigns for accessible services for the trans community to be safe, well-staffed and resourced are, at the heart

of it, the same campaigns. And we will be stronger if we fight together.

Scandalously, those trying to whip up anti-trans hate to distract from their own failure to solve our problems, make an appeal to a fear of male violence. What makes this possible is women's experience of living in a capitalist society where male violence against women remains deeply ingrained, notwithstanding legal improvements in recent decades. The Metropolitan Police have been found to be institutionally misogynistic; women's medical symptoms consistently get dismissed and experiences of pain become normalised; internationally, profits of the billionaires, estimated at \$18.3 trillion, are prioritised over women's safety, health, and lives. Fighting trans hate means fighting for an end to all gender oppression.

What can be done to take the fight for trans rights and against all oppression forward?

Firstly, I think it is important to say that, despite the attacks and pressures, it's not all doom and gloom. The current situation isn't just being passively accepted. Where there have been snap protests called against the EHRC guidance, hundreds have turned out. And those numbers aren't just from the trans community. Events like Trans Pride in London have swelled to 100,000 in 2025, and those numbers include people looking to fight politically.

I've mentioned community campaigns and workers' action. The struggles of other oppressed people under attack are erupting too. There is huge potential for struggle, linking these causes, and real potential for solidarity and the bringing together of these struggles into mass campaigns. The context of the original Stonewall uprising was mass movements against oppression across the world.

Socialist Party members in the trade unions are fighting for the unions to take a lead. That means providing support, training, resources, and guidance for organisers and negotiators and

lay reps on how to defend trans+ members' rights of access to workplace facilities; protect trans+ members from discrimination and harassment; challenge transphobic and homophobic behaviour; and increase awareness on trans+ issues in the workplace and wider society, as part of a campaign to unite workers against all the attacks from the capitalist class.

We also demand the trade unions discuss and take steps towards the formation of an independent, workers' party, based on the workers' movement. That could pull together the struggles in the workplaces and the social movements for women's rights, LGBTQ+ rights, against racism, and environmental destruction etc, and put forward a socialist programme.

Such a struggle also needs to go beyond stopping closures and attacks, but to also fight for what we need. This will need communities to come together, to discuss and debate, and decide a course of action.

I do want to end with that - pointing out that a big message to take from the Supreme Court judgement is that even when we win, under capitalism wracked with crises, those things can be taken away when the next crisis rolls along. So I think any campaign, yes needs to fight for services, rights, legal reforms; but also needs to be clear-eyed that if we truly want to take the struggle against all oppression forward that means fighting for a break from the brutal capitalist system and the socialist transformation of society.



Southampton setback in the struggle against austerity

Below is a statement from the Socialist Party in Southampton about the mistaken decision of one of its former election candidates to stand for the Greens in the next election. Nadia Ditta stood twice for Southampton council as a member of the Socialist Party, under the banner of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition, but has now decided to switch to the Greens. Particularly since Zack Polanski became their leader, tens of thousands have joined the Greens looking for an alternative to austerity and war, often young people making their first steps into the struggle for a new society. Regrettably this is not comparable to Nadia's decision to, at this stage, step back from a clear socialist stand against austerity and war.

Labour was severely punished in the May elections for continuing the Tories' austerity agenda. Nationally, as voters looked for ways to protest, right-wing populist Reform's racist agenda won seats and the Greens made gains because they had the national profile of being an anti-austerity party to the left of Labour. But it was not predetermined that the Greens were the only high-profile national party seen as anti-austerity in May. Last summer, the potential was shown for a new party when 800,000 signed up to support Jeremy Corbyn and Zarah Sultana's declaration to launch one. Unfortunately, due to the mistaken approach of the leadership, that potential was not met on this occasion. So, while there were around 750 left independent and socialist candidates in May's elections, 101 of whom were elected, they did not have the national profile of the Greens.

More than 280 of the socialists and trade unionists who stood did so under the common electoral banner of 'Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition' (TUSC). In Southampton, they included Nadia Ditta, in Bevois ward, who stood for the Socialist Party as part of TUSC. She gained 739 votes, 23.8%, for a clear fighting programme including opposition to all cuts to council jobs and services. She played a central role in fighting to successfully save and win the refurbishment of the local Venny playpark, along with her record as a campaigner against racism and war, not least against the onslaught on Gaza.

Nadia should have won in Bevois this year. A majority voted for anti-cuts candidates, with the Green surge netting 690 votes. The Green candidate expressed her support for Nadia and, had the Greens stood down as we called for, Nadia would now be on the council. There is huge disappointment that Labour came through the middle in Bevois from Nadia, her supporters and members of the Socialist Party locally who have campaigned consistently in the area for years and over the past three years with Nadia.

Mistakenly, instead of stepping up pressure on the Greens not to stand against her next year, Nadia has now taken the decision to join the Green Party. In discussion with her we have urged her to reconsider. The Greens have gained votes as an anti-austerity, anti-war party, but, up until now, where they have been tested in power they have never delivered.



PHOTO: SOUTHAMPTON SP

In England and Wales they haven't had power in national government, but in many other countries they have joined capitalist coalition governments and loyally acted in the interests of the millionaires rather than defending the working-class majority. In Belgium, for example, the trade unions have been taking general strike action against government attacks on pensions and other austerity measures, and the deputy prime minister responsible for the attacks is a Green. In Germany, the Greens were part of a coalition government from 2021 until 2025, which was responsible for 30% of the weapons imported to Israel during that time, used in the slaughter of the Palestinians.

In England, the Greens may not be in power nationally but they have 1,500 councillors, who could be a powerful weapon in the struggle against austerity. Yet, instead, the Greens' record on this locally and nationally has been to vote for cuts rather than mobilise communities and the trade unions to demand the restoration of funding from this weak Labour government.

Locally, the Green councillors have rejected the argument of trade unionists in the Southampton trades council that the Greens should back Unite, Unison and GMB council trade union policy to set legal, balanced no-cuts budgets using reserves and borrowing powers. If the Greens took that approach, wouldn't that win mass support and put huge pressure on Burnham to make concessions? The way forward in Southampton, and every local council, requires a consistent campaign to oppose cuts in deeds not just words.

This strategy has a record in Southampton. It was argued by expelled Southampton Labour anti-cuts councillors Keith Morrell and Don Thomas in 2013 who proposed a Southampton People's Budget to the

full council, meeting the required conditions of the financial officer. They subsequently went on to be re-elected as clearly identified anti-cuts and socialist councillors in their Cox-ford ward.

Nadia has stated she remains committed to voting against all cuts to local jobs and services. But we have warned that her stand will be compromised by fellow Southampton Green group councillors voting for further cuts budgets, increased council tax, and rents that Bevois residents struggle to pay. As, indeed, have individual Labour councillors sometimes not been able to bring themselves to vote for their party's austerity policies.

The question is now posed: what will others in the Green Party, Bevois and across Southampton say as new budgets are prepared for the autumn?

The Socialist Party remains committed to our anti-cuts stand and calls on Nadia and others to back a Southampton Peoples' Budget to restore jobs, services and build council housing using council reserves and borrowing powers, as part of a mass campaign to demand the restoration of government funding cut since 2010.

Labour were punished in this May's elections for being a government that defends the capitalist system, and implementing austerity as a result. Inevitably, some are hoping that a Burnham government will be different, but he has made clear that, in essence, he will continue with the same approach as Starmer. The need for the working class to build its own genuinely anti-austerity political party, with a socialist programme, is therefore more pressing than ever. This is not the time to turn away from it in the mistaken hope of finding an easier shortcut.

SOUTHAMPTON SOCIALIST PARTY



PHOTO: LONDON GMB

Enfield hospital workers strike against bullying privatisers

IAN PATTISON
ENFIELD AND LEA VALLEY SOCIALIST PARTY

Privatised NHS staff, working for ISS, are taking six days of strike action over two weeks.

The workers are striking over serious allegations – accusing managers of bullying, including racism, failing to properly pay bank holiday overtime, unmanageable workload, while grievances take months to be resolved. At Chase Farm Hospital in Enfield, north London, 40 people were on the picket line – caterers, cleaners, security, etc – organised in GMB union.

Management want a 'flexible' workforce, where workers do multiple jobs in the hospital. One moment you could be cleaning who knows what, the next moment you're working in the kitchen. Patients and other staff will be worried to hear that.

When I lived in east London, it was a different hospital, different private company, different union – Unite. But the issues with privatisation were the same.

After years of private vultures, in 2022-23 those east London Barts NHS workers did something that should inspire the GMB members in Enfield. Their private employers were kicked out, and they won being directly employed by the NHS.

Labour MP Feryal Clark, and Ergin Erbil, who was kicked out as council leader when Labour lost in May, both spoke on the picket line. The Socialist Party and local trade union council spoke too.

Keir Starmer's Labour government promised "the biggest 'insourcing' in a generation". If so, why are these still-privatised workers forced to strike?

Enfield Council could use its powers to hold a local referendum on NHS services to oppose privatisation. The Greens now hold the balance of power between Tory and Labour on Enfield Council. What are they doing to back the strike?

Some strikers hoped that Andy Burnham would be an improvement on Keir Starmer. But they're not waiting around.

Housing Association staff strike in Tower Hamlets to protect their pensions

A STRIKER SPOKE TO HUGO PIERRE

Unison members at East End Homes, a housing association employing around 120 staff with a stock of 3,900 homes, have been on strike since 1 July in protest against a consultation by the executive team on closing their current final salary pension scheme, transferring staff to an inferior scheme.

Concessions have been won through strike action, including the offer of a transition payment and increases in the employer contributions to the new pension for a limited period. However, the majority of affected Unison members have voted to reject these and to continue with further industrial action.

East End Homes have now confirmed they will consider beginning consultation on firing and rehiring staff who refuse to sign new contracts. This is in advance of new legislation coming into force in January 2027 that will make this practice illegal unless a business is facing severe financial difficulties.

Zoe Woodward, one of the Unison reps, said: "We intend to continue industrial action until our members achieve the withdrawal of this proposal or proper concessions for the loss of their pension."

TUC LGBT+ conference in 'fightback mood'

SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBERS DELEGATED TO CONFERENCE FROM THEIR UNIONS

This year's TUC (Trade Union Congress) LGBT+ conference took place at a "defining moment", as TUC president and Prison Officers Association general secretary Steve Gillan put it.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) draft Code of Practice on the Equality Act, which had been laid before parliament a month earlier in light of the 'For Women Scotland v Scottish Ministers' 2025 Supreme Court ruling, represents a further attack on trans+ rights. But the fightback mood at this conference was more evident than in previous years.

Steve made the point that the far right and their poisonous ideas are getting a hearing across the UK and must be fought. He argued it's partly 'messaging' that's caused Labour's collapse in the polls, and praised the Labour government's 'transformative' agenda, citing the watered-down Employment Rights Act.

But then, acknowledging the reality of Starmer's record, he called for a change of approach under Andy Burnham, who he said will hopefully go further. But what means do the trade unions have to determine Labour policy under Burnham? No more than under Starmer. So the trade unions fighting back, and a party that opposes austerity and



PHOTO: PAUL MATTHEWSON

the division that undermines our strength, are needed.

The panel discussion on the future of solidarity and trans rights was an opportunity to push the TUC leadership to take a lead on fighting the far right and their ideas. PCS National Executive Committee delegate and Socialist Party Scotland member Fiona Brittle reminded conference of the TUC's agreed approach to campaign for 'Jobs and homes not racism', in order to unite the working class and fight against

all oppression springing from austerity and exploitation.

PCS delegate and Socialist Party member Eilonwy Awen spoke on 'Tackling hate, promoting allyship and solidarity - Unions Against LGBT+ Hate'. She explained how we need to fight for control of funding and rights to be in the hands of the majority, the working class, not a small minority of rich people who want to divide us. She's right, and we need a new mass workers' party that opposes austerity and division.

The discussion on the draft EHRC guidance included two emergency motions, calling on the TUC to oppose the guidance and for reform of the EHRC. Eilonwy spoke again, saying that unjust rules like this guidance shouldn't determine or undermine the democratic decisions and rules of trade unions. Otherwise, where would we be? Trade unions fought Rishi Sunak's Minimum Service Act, and defeated that attempt to ban strikes. And we're going to fight this. She reported that many PCS members who work for the EHRC and the civil service don't agree with how trans people are being treated, nor with the guidance.

There are signs in and beyond the conference that a serious fightback is wanted. When the Reform-led Durham council pulled out of the local Pride, the local community and trade unionists mobilised and made it bigger and brighter than ever. We need to build on this, with trade unions taking the lead on fighting attacks on LGBTQ+ rights as part of the struggle to fight austerity and all the attacks on the working class.

The TUC general secretary remarked that in the past year there has been the biggest increase in trade union membership since records began. Areas with Reform councils unions report big growth in membership too. Let's put this to use, uniting and fighting the bosses' attacks, and for all workers.

'Optimistic' Unite young workers conference

JOHN WILLIAMS
YOUNG UNITE MEMBER, AND EXECUTIVE COUNCIL MEMBER LGBT SEAT, PERSONAL CAPACITY

This year's Unite Young Workers conference kicked off with a description of a cost-of-living crisis not going away, climate change warming the planet to unbearable temperatures, and atrocities taking place in wars around the world, including in Palestine.

The chair of Unite the Union, Andy Green, argued that a union rooted in the workplace has enabled Unite to strengthen, which will help the developing young members' section. This includes fighting the employer, whoever that is - regardless of the rosette they wear. He said this is important if the ground is to be less fertile for the far right.

It was reported that Unite has 5,900 new young members, the fastest growing section in Unite. In the past four years, young membership has increased by 17% - particularly important given that it is estimated that 50% of reps are due to retire in the next ten years.

The point was made that because of our age, we can be more exploited. The situation facing



PHOTO: LIVERPOOL SOCIALIST PARTY

young people was laid bare: high rents, student debt and difficulties getting onto the housing ladder. We discussed the need to fight for jobs as part of a green transition. So what's required is a collective fightback and for young workers to get organised and take responsibility. We're not just the future - we are the here and now! Young members mustn't wait for someone else to be a leader.

Labour's future

The future of the Labour government was also discussed. It hasn't acted in the interests of the working class, including young people. This has led to the collapse of the mainstream parties. Conference speakers said that Andy Burnham will only 'get one shot at getting it right'.

Socialist Party members argue that - especially given the support for Burnham of all the right-wing MPs - we need a trade union conference on political representation for the working class. We are campaigning for a special rules conference as soon as possible for Unite to debate its relationship with Labour.

Motions included action against sexual harassment. Others highlighted job insecurity, including unpaid internships, unpredictable hours,

zero-hour contracts, 12-hour shifts, no breaks, and low pay due to age. The trade unions must lead a fight for the Labour government to improve young workers' rights.

An emergency motion on the draft Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) code of practice was also passed, calling for 100% solidarity with trans people, for reform of the EHRC, and to defend trans members.

The conference had a very optimistic tone. But one thing is for sure, we can only rely on our collective strength in fighting for what we need.

● **Unite's general secretary election, which runs till 11 August, is vital for the direction the union takes. For why Unite members should vote to re-elect Sharon Graham and campaign to maintain and extend her manifesto, see 'Re-elect Sharon Graham as Unite general secretary' at socialistparty.org.uk**

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Protesters want Pride to be political

● Nuneaton organisers welcome socialists

CHRIS GAMBLE
NUNEATON SOCIALIST PARTY

We ran two campaign stalls. One in the town centre, focused on our local campaign opposing hospital parking charges. And one outside the gates of Pride.

Both stalls did exceptionally well, raising over £140 between them, including 25 people who bought the Socialist paper – more than our typical campaign stalls.

Even better was the reception that we received from organisers and the public. We were welcomed by the organisers warmly, and shown a great spot right in front of Pride for our stall.

We had fantastic discussions with them about funding our NHS, and the impact that has on gender-affirming care.

With the EHRC's guidance being used to attack trans rights, the

politics of Pride is more important than ever. A stance we shared with most that stopped to talk with us.

We met ten people interested in the Socialist Party, and we look forward to seeing some of the them at our meetings in the weeks to come. It was the best day of campaigning in Nuneaton since I joined the Socialist Party a couple of years ago.

● 75,000 march in Leeds

MICHAEL JOHNSON
SOCIALIST PARTY LGBTQ+ GROUP ORGANISER AND
LEEDS SOCIALIST PARTY

75,000 joined the march. While the main event restricts itself to a carnival environment for its corporate sponsors, many attendees wanted to discuss politics.

Attendees spoke to us about the homophobia and transphobia they, or family and friends, face and the need for proper campaigns to not only challenge incidents when they occur, but also the causes of division.

The Socialist Party encountered

strong support for our free public transport campaign. People told us, coupled with transport that they get a say in, this would help keep people safe.

People we spoke to were clear that the fight for LGBTQ+ rights can't just be once a year, but needs to go into our communities and workplaces to fight for jobs, pay, housing, and everything we need.

● Bristol – jobs and homes

LIZZIE AUDREY
BRISTOL SOCIALIST PARTY

Thousands marched. The Socialist Party handed out leaflets for our public meeting two days later. We marched alongside the National Education Union (NEU).

At our meeting, we discussed issues, such as housing and employment, which affect LGBTQ+ people disproportionately. A key point of discussion was corporate presence at Pride events, and the fragility of their conditional support.

funding, replaced with new 'Individual Health Plans (IHPs), which lack any legal protection or the funding to go with it. This is a cut to education provision and the needs of our children.

Parents already face persistent objection of Wokingham Council to provide the EHCPs needed, spending over £250,000 on challenging parent demands in tribunals. Essentially paying to argue with parents, instead of using that money to fund needs-based education.

These attacks stem from Tory and Labour government cuts to local council funding. We call on councillors to link up with parents, education staff, and their trade unions to fight for the restoration of government

funding, so we can ensure the needs of all are met. Don't pass on cuts to our children.

Wokingham Council has over £90 million of our money in reserves. These emergency funds should be used alongside the councils borrowing powers to ensure SEND (special education needs and disability) provision is protected and improved, while building a campaign with other local authorities to demand government funding to meet the needs of all.

This is an emergency, and should be treated as such.

● Join the protest – Thursday 30 July, 6.30pm, Civic Offices, Shute End, Wokingham RG40 1BN

Tolpuddle Martyrs festival – chance to get our ideas out to workers' movement

CLINTON HATCHER
BRISTOL NORTH SOCIALIST PARTY

Tolpuddle Martyrs festival is a week-end of celebration, culminating in a parade through the village. Every year, we in the Socialist Party try and make sure we get our ideas out – a new mass workers' party, opposing austerity, and socialism.

We reached hundreds of people with our programme. We sold 113 copies of the Socialist – more than last year, despite the festival being smaller. We met several people interested in joining the Socialist Party.

A gulf between some trade union leaders and their members was

evident. The top table speeches backing Andy Burnham weren't reflected in the hundreds of conversations we had with ordinary trade unionists.

We found some hope that Burnham would signal a slight improvement, but very little expectation, let alone enthusiasm. On the march, people joined our chants calling for an end to union funding for Labour and fighting austerity.

It is vital that we get out to our trade union branches and call for a new workers' party. Capitalism has a stacked line-up of hands to manage their system in parliament.

Calling them 'safe hands' though would be overselling it. We've had seven prime ministers in ten years!



Plan your socialist summer fundraising now

ISAI MARJERLA
SOCIALIST PARTY TREASURER

Every quarter, the Socialist Party sets itself the target of raising £25,000 to fund our campaign materials and spread socialist ideas as widely as possible. Our branches will be planning their fundraising, like for example Lambeth and Southwark branch organising a south London, socialist walking tour.

The summer quarter is usually quieter, but we have already begun by taking our ideas to the Durham Miners' Gala, Tolpuddle Martyrs festival, and a national Gaza demonstration.

In some areas, our members have also taken part in local Pride events. This is on top of the regular local activities and campaigns that our branches are involved in week in, week out. So far we have raised £3,651 in three weeks.

This quarter will also include a national day of action on the week-end 5-6 September, to kick-start the autumn campaigning period and build support for the international youth walkout on 20 November. Activities will be taking place across the country. If you want to find out more or get involved, contact us now and help us build for it.

Help fund the fightback
DONATE
socialistparty.org.uk/donate



Southampton fight for free bulk waste collection goes on

TIM CUTTER
SOUTHAMPTON SOCIALIST PARTY

On 15 July, Southampton Socialist Party, TUSC and members of the local community lobbied Southampton City Council and made a deputation to the council over the issue of fly-tipping and calling for the restoration of the free bulk collection service.

During the May local elections in Bevois ward we pledged to take our campaign to the chamber, whether we won or lost the election. We stuck to our commitment and took our campaign to the full council meeting.

Socialist Party member Carina and myself made the deputation. We pointed out that many of the candidates had promised to do something about the issue of fly-tipping, yet it wasn't even on the council meeting agenda. It was only being discussed because of our campaign and the lobby.

We pointed out that the cost of restoring free bulk collections is a drop in the ocean compared to the millions of pounds the council has in reserve. With the cost-of-living crisis forcing many families to make impossible choices on where to spend what little

money that they have, charging them a minimum of £23 to have their broken household items collected was an unaffordable option.

Outside the council, Socialist Party member and president of Southampton trades council, Maggie Fricker linked the issue of fly tipping to all the other issues facing our communities and called for the council to set a needs-based, no-cuts people's budget.

There was also a protest in support of LGBTQ+ rights, against a motion to the council from a Reform councillor aimed at preventing the council from flying the rainbow flag. Socialist Party members supported this protest.

As a result of our campaign, the Labour council leader offered to meet with us to discuss the issue of restoring the free bulk collection and dealing with fly-tipping.

Although we welcome this, words are meaningless without action. We showed that we were not going away and the campaign continues as part of a wider campaign for a people's budget and city-wide campaign to fight for the return of millions of pounds stolen from the council over years of austerity.

Under pressure, Newham Council forced to reassess pension investments linked to war

NIALL MULHOLLAND
EAST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

Campaigners in Newham have secured a significant victory in their efforts to ensure council workers' pension funds are not invested in companies linked to war, occupation, or human rights abuses. After sustained pressure, Newham Council has agreed to investigate its pension fund investments and assess

whether they include companies connected to Israel's occupation of Palestine.

On 13 July, councillors unanimously passed a motion calling for an audit of the pension fund and that publicly administered pension funds should not contribute to war, genocide, or military occupation.

The decision followed months of campaigning, including local demonstrations and lobbying of council

School students getting organised

● Hackney linking socialism to everyday

SAAD H
HACKNEY SOCIALIST PARTY

Socialist Students members organised a campaign stall near Stoke Newington School & Sixth Form, speaking to students about the issues affecting them. Large groups of students stopped to ask questions, discuss politics, and find out more.

Conversations focused on lack of job opportunities, pressures in education, and that establishment politicians offer little real change. Students showed an interest in socialist ideas, and how collective organisation can provide a way to challenge inequality and give young people a voice.

We distributed our 'No to Reform – get organised' leaflet. We oppose Reform's division. Working-class people, regardless of background, have common interests that can only be advanced through collective action.

Students were particularly receptive to the call for stronger organisation in schools and colleges, including student unions and campaign groups that can fight for affordable and quality meals, accessible

trips and activities, democratic rights for students, and support for staff striking for better conditions.

● Tower Hamlets – striking workers and youth getting organised

ADAM GILLMAN
SOCIALIST STUDENTS

Staff at St Paul's Way sixth form have been striking against job cuts. National Education Union (NEU) members were enthused by Socialist Students campaigning to organise school and college students, and were supportive of us leafleting the sixth form.

We held a stall outside to build for the east London youth day of action on 26 July and the international youth walkout on 20 November.

Students were receptive on the issue of youth unemployment. One had applied for tons of jobs, with no reply.

We spoke in favour of funding public services to ensure high-quality jobs that have trade union-agreed rates of pay. This chimed with students too.

The issue of war also got students

taking leaflets. We also had a groups of students taking leaflets after seeing our Socialist paper back page: 'Fight for our futures, not their wars – youth walkout on 20 November.'

● Waltham Forest protesting racism, climate change, and war

JAMES IVENS
WALTHAM FOREST SOCIALIST PARTY

There was a good response to our material against Reform and interest in the 20 November international youth walkout at Walthamstow School for Girls. One person, who had taken part in Socialist Students' anti-Trump walkouts, gave their details and is interested in doing more.

A passerby also gave his details after seeing what we were doing. I was using the slogan – "School students are protesting this year against racism, climate change, and war" – and that got a lot of interest.

Schools have now broken up for the summer. So now we're campaigning, meeting youth in shopping areas and parks. Then we'll be back campaigning at schools in September.



Wokingham Lib Dems fight SEND parents, instead of fighting for funding

READING SOCIALIST PARTY

The Lib Dem council in Wokingham claims it is "committed to improving the lives and young people with special educational needs"

The council is going along with Labour government plans to remove the legal rights of children currently enshrined in 'Education, Health and Care Plans' (EHCPs), and the linked

meetings. The previous Labour council refused Freedom of Information requests about pension fund investments.

Following the May local elections, Labour lost its majority and entered a coalition with the Green Party, while the pro-Palestinian Newham Independents became the main opposition. This new balance of power reflected the angry mood among voters over years of local cuts and the

war on Gaza, and increased pressure on the council to act.

During the council debate, Labour councillor John Gray, previously chair of the pensions committee, proposed an amendment, widely regarded as a wrecking attempt, that divestment should occur only if there was no impact on pension returns. The amendment was defeated and the original motion passed. Socialist Party activists argue that the council

should ensure pensioners' interests are protected while ending investment in companies linked to war, genocide, or military occupation.

Socialist campaigners now stress that the real test will be whether the council delivers on its commitments by conducting a thorough audit, divesting from complicit companies, and to refuse to make any of the budget cuts decided by the previous Labour administration.

SPANISH CIVIL WAR 90 YEARS ON

REVISITING HOMAGE TO CATALONIA

JOE WOOLFALL
LIVERPOOL SOUTH SOCIALIST PARTY

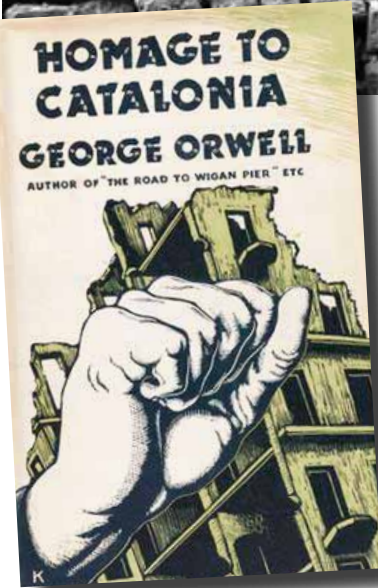
George Orwell is one of the best-known socialist writers, famous particularly for Nineteen Eighty-Four and Animal Farm: critiques of Stalinism, fascism and totalitarianism. The era in which Orwell wrote was different from our own.

Yet capitalism's global crisis is producing intense instability, polarisation and mass resistance. The rise of the far right today does not mechanically recreate the conditions in which fascism came to power in Italy, Germany and Spain at the time Orwell wrote *Homage to Catalonia*. Fascism arose historically as capitalism's response to a strong, organised and class-conscious workers' movement which threatened to take power, but whose leaders failed to lead it to victory. The rise of Mussolini and Hitler was a direct consequence of the failure of workers' leaders to take power in the revolutionary upheavals following World War One.

In Spain, Franco's dictatorship was the culmination of a similar process. The heroic Spanish workers could have made not one but ten revolutions, as Russian revolutionary Leon Trotsky said, were it not for the treacherous leadership displayed by the various workers' organisations. Today, mass workers' parties do not exist in the same way as they did through much of the twentieth century; most have been hollowed out and transformed into open capitalist parties. But the Spanish Revolution remains full of lessons for today.

It is therefore an excellent time to return to Orwell's *Homage to Catalonia*, around the ninetieth anniversary of the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War. Orwell's book is one of the finest

Barcelona, 19 July 1936. Barricade after the nationalist uprising in Spain PHOTO: PUBLIC DOMAIN



eyewitness accounts of the revolution and counter-revolution which shook Spain from 1931 to 1939. It is also a moving account of how a socialist writer, initially drawn to Spain by a simple hatred of fascism, came face to face with the decisive question of revolutionary leadership.

A biography of Orwell records how, just before Christmas 1936, he stomped into the office of The New English Weekly, a magazine he wrote for, dressed for an expedition and carrying a heavy suitcase. "I'm going to Spain," he declared. "This fascism. Somebody's got to stop it."

Such was the heroic attitude of the roughly 40,000 people from 53 countries who went to Spain to fight Franco and fascism. Orwell travelled via Paris in December 1936 and joined the militia of the POUM (the Workers' Party of Marxist Unification); Orwell did not seek out the POUM for ideological reasons, rather his criticisms of Stalinism in earlier books (such as *Down and Out* in Paris and London) closed the 'International Brigades' for him. Instead, his contacts with the Independent Labour Party (connected with the POUM) facilitated his, joining the POUM's 'Lenin Division'.

Orwell's first experience of Barcelona made a lasting impression on him. "It was the first time that I had ever been in a town where the working class was in the saddle," Orwell wrote. "Practically every building of any size had been seized by the workers and was draped with red flags or with the red and black flag of the Anarchists."

The old servile and ceremonial forms of speech had disappeared. Nobody said "Señor"; everyone said

revolutionary organisations. He wanted to fight fascism in the name of "common decency"; his characteristically aristocratic, plain-English expression of socialist feeling.

But the events of the Spanish Civil War show precisely why leadership matters: what type of leadership is needed, and what occurs when the revolutionary energy of the masses is not developed and consolidated but channelled towards its own defeat.

The Popular Front government, heavily influenced by the Stalinist Communist Party, held back the workers' revolution under the guise of "winning the war first". This was a staged policy: first defeat Franco, then deal with socialism later. In reality, it meant subordinating the working class and its aims to capitalist ministers and private property.

Orwell correctly explained that this flowed from the official policy of the Communist International, which had become subordinated to the diplomatic interests of the Stalinist bureaucracy in the USSR. Stalin sought military alliances with capitalist powers, particularly France, and did not want a victorious socialist revolution in Spain to frighten them off. As Orwell wrote, the Communist Party's line "was undoubtedly influenced by the fact that France... would strongly object to a revolutionary neighbour".

The result was a counter-revolutionary policy. Stalin wrote to Prime Minister Largo Caballero in December 1936, insisting upon the protection of private property. Caballero's successor, Juan Negrín, later publicly declared, "We respect private property." The revolutionary gains which workers had won through struggle were not extended; instead, they were gradually dismantled.

"In order to check every revolutionary tendency and make the war as much like an ordinary war as possible, it became necessary to throw away the strategic opportunities that actually existed," Orwell wrote. He saw this sabotage firsthand. The democratic militias were broken up and placed under the control of the capitalist state. The Popular Army increasingly resembled a traditional capitalist army rather than the egalitarian workers' militias which had formed spontaneously at the start of the civil war.

1937 May Days

The culmination came in the May Days of 1937. When the government moved to seize the anarchist-controlled Telephone Exchange in Barcelona and disarm the workers, barricades appeared across the city. Orwell found himself fighting on the POUM side, defending buildings against forces loyal to the Republican government and the Stalinists. The opportunity existed for the Barcelona workers to take control of the city and revive the revolution. But

the anarchist leadership called for workers to leave the barricades and go back to work, while the POUM vacillated and submitted to the anarchists' lead.

The POUM's explosive growth during the revolution - from around 200 members to 40,000 in the first half of 1936 - showed the sheer hunger for a revolutionary alternative. Yet its leader, Andrés Nin (once Trotsky's secretary), had broken from Trotskyism and drifted into a centrist bloc. That meant criticising Stalinism without offering a clear, independent class programme; a fatal compromise when clarity was needed most.

Lessons

Orwell's writings on Spain are important because they illuminate the lessons for the working class and the revolutionary socialist movement today. Orwell did not draw every conclusion that Trotsky and Trotskyists drew from Spain. He was no Marxist, and his politics remained those of an anti-Stalinist democratic socialist. Yet his book provides powerful evidence for the idea that the power of the working class cannot be defended by subordinating the revolution to capitalist politicians and their state.

A mass revolutionary party, rooted in the working class and armed with a socialist programme, could have patiently explained the faults of all those involved: the obvious Stalinist treachery, the anarchists' hostility to taking state power, and the POUM's tendency to follow the anarchist leadership rather than offer an independent alternative. Spain did not lack workers' organisation. What it lacked was a revolutionary leadership, with a Marxist leadership and programme, capable of drawing the correct lessons and policies, such as developing democratic workers' councils and fighting for the socialist transformation of society. Along with a clear programme to rally the sizeable peasant population around, just like the Bolsheviks in 1917, particularly the necessity for a party to offer land to the peasantry.

Just nineteen years after the Russian Revolution had abolished capitalism and put workers "in the saddle", the essential lessons seemed absent from the heads of Spain's 'communist' and 'socialist' leaders. This was no accident. Stalinism represented a counter-revolutionary political retreat from the internationalist and democratic traditions of October 1917.

Spain also transformed Orwell as both a writer and a socialist. He later said to a friend that "history stopped in 1936", conveying his sense that the defeat in Spain opened the way to a new era of reaction, war and totalitarianism - the world which would later haunt Nineteen Eighty-Four and Animal Farm.

Throughout his life, Orwell was critical of socialists and certain forms of socialism. In *The Road to Wigan Pier*, he famously, and rather unfairly and snobbishly, attacked the "vegetarians, nudists, sandal-wearers, sex-maniacs, Quakers, 'Nature Cure' quacks, pacifists and feminists" whom he believed made socialism unattractive. But Orwell's critique of some types of 'socialists' remains valuable - on Stalinism for example. His experiences in Spain gave him a lifelong hatred of bureaucracy and the falsification of truth. They also strengthened his belief in a socialism which is democratic, not ruled by a privileged elite. Orwell believed that nothing less than socialism could save humanity "from the misery of the present or the nightmare of the future".

That was the lesson of Spain. It remains the lesson today. *Homage to Catalonia* is not simply a brilliant account of one man's experience in a civil war. It is a record of workers beginning to transform society, and of how that possibility was strangled by failed and treacherous leadership. "If there is hope, it lies in the proles," says Winston Smith in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Indeed. But for that hope to become reality, mass parties of the working class, led by Marxists and armed with the lessons of past victories and defeats, must be built internationally.



POUM headquarters Barcelona PHOTO: PUBLIC DOMAIN



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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SOCIALISM TODAY



Monthly magazine of the Socialist Party

July-August issue includes...

- Spain 1936: A crisis of leadership

July marks 90 years since the working class and peasants of Spain rose up against General Franco's fascist forces and capitalist exploitation in general. Adam Powell-Davies draws out the lessons of that heroic struggle for the situation facing Marxists today

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the Socialist

Issue 1376

23-29 July 2026

formerly **Militant**

WE WON'T PAY FOR COST-OF-LIVING CRISIS!

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. 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.

NSSN action programme

- 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

Union branches, union reps and shop stewards committees, trades councils and individual union reps, members and activists can sign up to the NSSN Action Programme by scanning the QR code



shopstewards.net • @NSSN_antcuts • supported by the following national unions



1pm SUNDAY 13th SEPTEMBER

Holiday Inn, 137 King's Rd (seafront), Brighton, BN1 2JF

LOBBY THE TUC



SCAN HERE TO REGISTER:

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WWW.SHOPSTEWARDS.NET

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



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