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WE CAN'T LIVE ON BURNHAM'S CRUMBS

Unions must lead fight for cost-of-living action

Take the wealth out of the bosses' hands

ELEANOR DONNE
ESSEX SOCIALIST PARTY

Labout prime minister Andy Burnham has toured the UK, bringing the people his message of a 'ten-year plan to bring back hope.'

Many working-class people are dreading the upcoming winter months. After a summer in which we boiled due to the capitalist climate

catastrophe, energy prices are going up again by 4% in October. As the weather gets colder, many people will again face the prospect of 'choosing' between heating and eating.

We can't wait ten weeks, never mind ten years!

Over the last few years, the price of basic foods like milk and bread has risen by a third, eggs by a half. Rents have gone up by a staggering 58%, largely driven by private landlords. The Renters Rights Act, in force from 1 May, helps make private tenants more secure in their tenancies. It limits how frequently landlords can raise rents but lets them increase it to the already unaffordable open market rate. We need real rent controls now!

Burnham has announced small cost-of-living measures to 'give people some room to breathe' such as capping single bus fares at £2 a journey, reducing business rates for pubs and scrapping VAT on domestic electricity bills from 1 October – an average reduction of less than one pound a week! Your energy bills will still be higher this time next year.

Meanwhile, the energy companies continue to make obscene profits, polluting water bosses too. Burnham speaks of getting 'more control' over privatised services. What is needed is nationalisation under democratic working-class control.

The bank balances of the super-rich are healthier than ever. But we

are told of the need for 'fiscal responsibility'. Burnham talks of the "biggest redistribution of power this country has seen", but without taking the wealth and power out of the hands of the big capitalist bosses, fiscal responsibility is code for yet more cuts. We need a working-class fightback.

When inflation let rip in 2022, workers took strike action to make sure their wages kept pace with rising costs and resisted a fall in our living standards. The Tory government had to intervene with the Energy Price Guarantee which capped fuel bills, alongside other measures.

Trade union leaders should not give Burnham 'breathing space' but step up and lead, starting by naming

the date for a Saturday demo against austerity, building towards industrial action on public sector pay. They should demand that Labour immediately removes the 50% strike ballot turnout threshold, and fully fund pay rises in the public sector and demand no job losses. Unions should campaign for the TUC policy of at least £15-per-hour minimum wage with no age exemptions to be implemented immediately.

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



Lobby the TUC

1pm Sunday 13 September

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

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

Sheffield NHS cuts NHS workers – get organised to save our services!

As an NHS worker I have seen the impact of austerity on the health system over the years, but now we are at crunch point. An NHS Trust in Sheffield is expected to cut £65 million under the guise of ‘savings’ this year. It is expected that next year will bring additional tens-of-millions in cuts with the addition of whatever is unachieved from this year’s ‘target’.

How are they currently making these cuts? So far, largely in staffing reductions - whether resignations, ‘mutually agreed redundancies’, or the current favourite of not backfilling for staff that leave. Many departments have been on months-long hiring freezes which means that if a colleague leaves they cannot be replaced. As you would expect, the staff are expected to keep treatment levels and targets unaffected. This ultimately results in NHS Professionals (bank) staff being used to fill the holes – more expensive than just having enough staff to begin with.

Additional bureaucracy has been brought in to ‘review’ whether we really need to replace colleagues that leave, and this panel nearly always rejects the first attempt, if not all of them. Another new bureaucratic panel has been brought in to assess if departments are on course for their cuts, and will bring in financial managers to take over the budget if they do not think they are on the right track.

These additional layers of management bureaucracy take supervisors and line managers away from helping with the already short-staffed



We must demand a coordinated fightback against austerity by all unions representing healthcare staff

wards and departments to focus on further paperwork. Funding for ‘un-essential’ training has been pulled. We have been told on numerous occasions by directorate managers and the CEO that we are not striving for excellence, we are striving for ‘good enough’ now. A damning reflection of the fall in standards at the hands of cuts and austerity. These decisions are directly causing the dropping of patient standards all together.

As morale on the ground drops to the lowest I’ve seen it – definitely lower than during the Covid-19 pandemic and previous austerity measures – we need to be clear. NHS workers must unionise and organise to save the NHS.

We must demand a coordinated fightback against austerity by all unions representing healthcare staff, but especially the top five: Royal College of Nursing (RCN), Unison, Unite, British Medical Association (BMA) and GMB, alongside specialised unions such as Royal College of Midwives (RCM) and the Society of Radiographers (SoR). Whichever union is the most applicable, join it, get active, and relentlessly push for coordinated action!

In order to stop the decline impacting patient treatment further, and in order to save the NHS from further privatisation, we must coordinate a fightback across the unions to fight against the government’s austerity. Our working conditions directly impact patient outcomes, and neither can be compromised!

AN NHS WORKER IN YORKSHIRE

Back-to-school costs crisis

BECCA BAYMAN
LIVERPOOL NORTH SOCIALIST PARTY

The back-to-school season comes as a relief for many parents who have had to pay for childcare over summer. New research by children’s charity Coram has found that parents are forced to fork out £191 per child a week for childcare on average during the school holidays. But even when children are back in school, the costs of afterschool childcare are immense. Coram found that parents of primary school children in England will pay 42% more for after-school childcare this year than they did ten years ago, with annual bills now exceeding more than £2,800 a child in some parts of the UK. As childcare costs have risen, wages have failed to keep pace, so families are being squeezed from both sides. For working-class families, there is less and less left over at the end of the month.

But the costs don’t end there. Parents also spend an average of £381 each year on mandatory school uniforms and sports kits. Extracurricular activities are now luxuries for many, typically costing £700 per year. This adds up to £9,100 over a child’s time in school. All children should have

access to these opportunities that will allow them to develop their skills and stay healthy. Instead, parents are forced to absorb the costs schools are unable to subsidise as they are starved of funding.

From September this year, free school meals will be extended to families whose parents are on Universal Credit in England. This is a welcome measure, but it does not go far enough – only the poorest children will receive this. Free school meals should be provided universally and properly funded so schools aren’t forced to absorb any extra costs. In Tower Hamlets, East London, the Aspire-led council has implemented a policy of universal free school meals, forcing London-wide primary free school meals. Councils carrying this out need to combine it with a campaign to demand the necessary funding from central government, so schools themselves are not forced to struggle further. Catering should also be brought back in-house, not outsourced to profit-driven companies where cuts to the quality of food are made to keep costs low. Children deserve secure provision of healthy food, quality education, and safe and secure childcare.



£381
The average spend by parents on mandatory school uniforms and sports kits

Strike ‘e-ballots’ arrive but Tory 50% strike block remains

Socialist Party WHAT WE THINK

Legislation allowing for electronic or ‘hybrid’ balloting for trade union strike votes came into force on 25 August. The Tories’ draconian anti-strike 50% voter turnout threshold, however, remains, despite Labour’s promise to deliver on its ‘make work pay’ policies within 100 days of office - now nearly 700 days overdue.

The threshold will be an unnecessary barrier to the hundreds of thousands of public sector workers in NEU, UCU and PCS, who could ballot for strike action this autumn.

Speculation over the summer - perhaps fanned by a section of the trade union leaders or Andy Burnham’s campaign camp seeking support from union activists - was that the introduction of electronic balloting would coincide with an abolition of the threshold. That was what had been implied by business secretary Jonathan Reynolds, one of those cabinet members to stay in place with the new prime minister.

Excuses
Instead, the e-ballot ‘statutory instrument’ explanatory note points to a clause in the 2025 Employment Rights Act requiring an assessment of the impact of e-ballots on turnouts before the threshold is removed. A nonsensical excuse.

The trade unions should be fighting for the abolition of all the Tory anti-trade union laws, including those outlawing workplace votes of members on the basis of in-person



Sainsbury’s work placement scheme ‘They want young people to work for free’

PENELOPE DAWBER
LANCASHIRE SOCIALIST PARTY

Andy Burnham, after a month and a half of U-turns, has now engaged in another attack on working-class and young people. After he received £164,000 in donations from Lord Sainsbury for his recent campaigns, Burnham announced a scheme with the supermarket giant Sainsbury’s, of which Lord Sainsbury has a 5.5% stake in, to create 10,000 work experience placements.

According to the Independent,

this scheme will “offer younger students a combination of school-based learning and workplace experience while older participants will receive support with CV writing, interview skills, job applications and career planning”. However, despite all the honeyed words, this is nothing but unpaid labour.

The Christmas period is the busiest for supermarkets, forcing them into temporary recruitment drives to keep up with demand. It’s why I got hired at Sainsbury’s, alongside many others. These positions are intended

to be temporary, but many are kept on permanently. Even for those who aren’t however, it is 2-3 months of pay they otherwise would not have. This is now gone.

Instead, this scheme, focused on young ‘NEETs’ – of which there are now nearly one million – will give them the capitalist equivalent of a pat on the back and a gold star. Work experience is unpaid labour to get high school and college students in the door. Of course, this rarely works, as getting a paying job often depends far more on nepotism than

democratic debate and discussion - the most effective means to engage maximum numbers of workers. The new rules actually allow for workplace ballots for industrial action, laughably only with the agreement of the employer and overseen by an ‘independent’ scrutineer!

“

The trade unions should be fighting for the abolition of all the Tory anti-trade union laws

Tellingly, when the statutory instrument went through the House of Lords, Tory ‘Lord Sharpe of Epsom’ moved a motion in opposition, raising concerns that it “risks making industrial action easier”. He was reassured enough by the response of the government that this would not be the case that he withdrew his opposition!

Missed opportunity
While parliament was nodding through the new rules, Andy Burnham was preparing to challenge for Labour leader and prime minister. Unfortunately, none of the leaders of the Labour-affiliated unions took the opportunity to put any conditions for their endorsement of Burnham – for example to demand his immediate repealing of the 50% threshold. An act that would be well within the gift of the new prime minister immediately, if willing.

A group of trade union leaders - including from NEU, PCS, Aslef, UCU, BFAWU, POA and NASUWT - wrote to Burnham the day after he took office saying: “We believe that there is a pressing need for this failure to be

addressed as a matter of priority and would welcome the opportunity to discuss this with you further at the earliest opportunity.” Unfortunately, on its own, that simply won’t cut it.

TUC demo
NASUWT also has a motion to the TUC in September calling for it to “campaign for the immediate removal of the 50 per cent ballot threshold”. It is clear that achieving that, however, will require action from the trade unions. The motion to the TUC which does outline the kind of action needed to apply significant pressure on Burnham is from PCS calling for “a national Saturday demonstration this autumn for investment in public services, against austerity and for pro-worker policies”, linking this to “a united campaign on pay, and, if needed, to plan for coordinated industrial action.” The demand for an immediate repeal of the 50% threshold should be added to the demands of an autumn demo.

The leaders of all the trade unions and TUC delegates should feel the pressure from members to back the PCS motion, and the TUC leaders to act on it. As part of building that pressure, the National Shop Stewards Network is organising a lobby of the TUC in Brighton on 13 September.

The anti-strike threshold’s usefulness as a tool to prevent workers’ action is undoubtedly why it remains. However, as the strike wave showed, they are not an absolute block on national trade union action.

The struggle for their abolition is inextricably linked to the struggle for the trade union movement to take a lead, mobilising a fight to defend working-class living standards - industrially and politically.

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Lobby the TUC
1pm Sunday 13 September
Holiday Inn, 137 King’s Rd (seafront), Brighton, BN1 2JF

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Hackney Green Council: Don't fall for the establishment's lies, set a no-cuts budget!

OSCAR PARRY
HACKNEY SOCIALIST PARTY

Zoe Garbett, newly elected Green mayor of Hackney, has given an interview to the Hackney Citizen 100 days after taking office. The Greens swept into power promising to “start the fightback” against Labour austerity.

Zoe says: “I knew the extent of the financial challenge faced by the council. But being up close to facing our financial gap of £53 million over the next three years... is a huge challenge.” But she is wrong when she refers to “the cuts that will have to be made this year.”

Many will have voted Green in Hackney with enthusiasm about the prospect of an anti-austerity fightback. But if the Green council accepts the establishment lie that there is no money, it will simply end up delivering Tory and Labour austerity in a different colour.

What is the alternative?

A socialist council, representing workers and youth, could take a different course: building council homes and creating jobs, reopening youth clubs and hiring workers, while launching a mass campaign to win back funding from central government and the super-rich.

Hackney's budget should start from what Hackney needs, not what Westminster says is affordable. The council could involve trade unions, community groups and residents in deciding what services the borough needs.

Implying that the Green council is considering making cuts, Zoe tells the interviewer: “We are committed to setting a balanced budget.” The council should follow the policies of the biggest council trade unions by setting a balanced, no-cuts budget. It has over £300 million in reserves and borrowing powers, that should be used in the short-term while building a mass campaign to demand more money.

Councils are responsible for spending of over £100 billion a year, collectively that means enormous potential power. It is therefore positive that Hackney Council is hosting a national anti-austerity summit on 9 September, bringing together councillors, trade unions and campaigners to debate how to fight austerity.

In the 1980s, Liverpool council set a no-cuts needs budget, building a mass movement in support. It built 4,000 council houses, leisure centres, parks and schools, and created 2,000 jobs - winning the equivalent of £200 million today from Thatcher. Socialist Party members will be arguing that councils should ‘take the Liverpool road’ at the anti-austerity summit.

Eye on the Greens

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

● editors@socialistparty.org.uk

Burnham homelessness plan falls short

Reverse austerity, take over empty properties, build council homes

HAMZA KHAN
WEST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

The government has announced an additional £102 million in funding for its plan to ensure that every rough sleeper in England is offered a bed by Christmas. Prime minister Andy Burnham pledged to “end rough sleeping” in his first announcement as new prime minister. But while emergency accommodation is urgently needed, the focus on beds alone ignores the deeper crisis created by decades of neglect, privatisation, and the erosion of essential support services.

Rough sleeping is not simply the result of a lack of beds. It is the outcome of successive governments failing to provide adequate mental health services, addiction support, social services, domestic violence refuges, and community outreach programmes. Austerity intensified these failures, slashing budgets and

dismantling what little safety nets had been established. Thousands of people sleeping rough today have complex needs that cannot be solved just by placing them in temporary accommodation and hoping for the best.

End austerity

Without restoring funding and expanding these crucial services, the government's plan risks becoming another short-term fix that leaves the root causes untouched - as happened following a similar programme during the Covid-19 pandemic. Burnham's plan seems like it's less about supporting homeless people and more about ensuring the public doesn't have to see them, an ‘out of sight, out of mind’ approach that mistakes visibility for the problem itself.

The pledge to deliver only 1,000 permanent homes over three years is nowhere near enough. Britain faces a severe shortage of council housing

after decades of sell-offs and under-investment. Meanwhile, more than 250,000 homes sit empty across the country, many of which are held as speculative assets by landlords and developers. It is indefensible that people have to sleep on the streets while an entire Manchester worth of homes remain unused. Councils should take long-term empty homes into public ownership, renovate them, and expand genuinely affordable and high-quality council housing.

Ending rough sleeping requires more than emergency beds. It demands reversing decades of housing policy failure, rebuilding public services, and breaking the grip of private landlords and developers over the housing system. It requires rent controls, eviction protections, and a mass programme of council house construction. Housing must be treated as a basic human right, not a commodity.



JOHN SEB/CC

Threatened with eviction at the sharp end of housing insecurity

SARA SAMUELS
NOTTINGHAM SOCIALIST PARTY

Recently I was in the unfortunate position of facing eviction. My landlord hadn't been doing what they were supposed to and therefore was having their property repossessed.

I received a notification to ‘the occupier’ of this and started a process in which I believed I was being responsible and acting early enough to prevent my and my children's homelessness.

I looked online and found the correct form to submit to the court. I compiled a document folder of evidence to prove my legal occupation of the property, created a rent statement, wrote a witness statement and printed off utility bills. This, if successful, would give me an additional two months to find somewhere else to live.

Fortunately, I have the means to create and print documents, access to technology and the skills to use it, many don't.

Unfortunately, what I wasn't able to do was to get through to different advice and support services when I tried to call them. A combination of a demanding full-time job and limited opening hours added to the barriers.

I spoke to my employer, and they allowed me to have some time during work hours to present my documents down at the courthouse. Another thing many would not benefit from.

When I arrived, after waiting for a longer time than expected and being searched, I walked to the ‘help desk’ and was met with a locked door with a sign saying ‘appointment only’. Nothing online had told me! I called the telephone number and asked for an appointment or to be able to submit the documents. I was told I would have to submit them all online.

I left feeling despondent and frustrated. I felt played with by the system.

I submitted all of the documents online and received a reply within 24 hours. However, the reply said that they couldn't submit the request to the judge as I wasn't a ‘named party’. Should I wish to become a named party, I needed to make that application separately and then resubmit my application.

If I'm honest, I cried. What does being a named party mean? Does it make me liable for any legalities? How was I going to find time to do that and work and parent and live? And swallow the anxiety that was now becoming part of everyday life?

I tried to get through to the support services printed on the back of the notice - I didn't get through.

I contacted the court: ‘We can't tell you anything.’

I contacted my landlord, who promised me the eviction was cancelled.

All I could do was wait, with this horrible heavy lump in my stomach that the court-appointed bailiffs may still turn up, that my landlord wasn't being honest, or that the system would just not work.

Stuck with my landlord, stuck with the legal system, stuck with overburdened, underfunded support and advice services, and stuck in a housing crisis created by a system that does not serve the very people that keep it functioning with our labour.

I sat on eviction day by the window waiting for the bailiffs, they didn't come. The eviction was cancelled and my family aren't homeless.

I consider us lucky. Hundreds of others aren't. During 2024-25, over 1,300 homeless children and around 640-700 families were stuck in temporary accommodation across Nottingham. Why? High rents that exceed the local housing allowance and a mass shortage of social housing.

We need an alternative!

BURNHAM'S HOUSE BUILDING PLEDGE COLLAPSES

PAUL KERSHAW
ENFIELD AND LEA VALLEY SOCIALIST PARTY

Andy Burnham called for the government house building programme to go 100% to council housing when campaigning during the Makerfield byelection in June. By August, the now prime minister announced that just 60% would be for social rent, and most of the social-rent housing will not be council homes. The Independent estimates that just 4% will be council housing.

The Social Housing Action Campaign (SHAC) and other housing campaigners hit back at Burnham for betraying his own promises. Suzanne Muna of SHAC said: “Burnham's backtrack proves that government is still too heavily influenced by those whose financial interests lie in maintaining things as they are despite the harm this does to people and communities.”

Similarly, Burnham argued for rent caps before becoming Prime Minister but by July Angela Rayner was ruling out rent caps as newly appointed Secretary of State for Housing.

Burnham promised to deliver “the most significant change moment in our politics for 40 years”. He said he felt “uncomfortable” that some politicians backed certain causes but then got into government and “didn't do anything”. This talk was intended to raise hopes and some workers will think: ‘That sounds refreshing, let's give him a chance.’

Some union leaders also encourage that view. Dave Ward of the CWU, for example, warned in a post on X that if Labour doesn't embrace real change that “shifts the balance of forces in favour of ordinary people, it will hand Farage the keys to No 10.” It is right to link Labour's pro-big business policies to the rise of the right, but Dave goes on to say, “We trust Andy Burnham to be that force for change, and will be firm in helping him deliver that agenda.” With his many dropped pledges over the summer, it is already clear that there is no basis to trust Burnham to make such a fundamental change.

There is no sign of Burnham changing the plans for housing that Labour prepared under Keir Stamer

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with financial corporations for profit-based development. While that approach remains workers will be disappointed.

Labour housing policy

Before Labour was elected, its housing and infrastructure policy was developed in close consultation with big business. The asset management industry criteria for entering ‘public-private’ housing schemes is £1 public money for £3 of private capital. They are attracted by the prospect of effectively risk-free investment and the fact that they end up owning an asset.

The recent announcement of £10 billion investment follows this approach. Much of the funding goes to ‘not for profit’ housing associations, but they will draw in private money seeking a profit. Many of the entities in the sector are anti-union employers that behave much like big business. The largest employer in the sector, Sanctuary Housing, resists the call of its workers for Unite recognition, for example. Sanctuary will get £350 million as a result of this announcement. But other ‘partners’ are straight ‘for profit’ outfits. Vistry Homes, the building company, gets £350 million and Sage Homes, a ‘for profit’ housing association backed by private equity firms Blackstone and Regis, will also get £350 million.

Housing crisis reality

The plight of people living in unhealthy housing is increasingly hitting the headlines and unaffordability is an acute issue for workers struggling with the cost-of-living crisis. Low-paid workers in London are forced to spend 57% of their income on housing and young workers aged 25 to 29 struggle to spend a massive 77% of their income.

Not only has the Burnham government rejected calls for rent control in the private sector but it has committed to above-inflation social rent increases for the next decade. Housing associations have lobbied for this on the basis that it is essential to make rented housing a more attractive investment to meet the government's housing targets through private investment. In the end, this means social tenants paying more to boost the profits of corporations.

Social rents, such as council rents, remain relatively affordable. But even these rents are becoming too high for many. Research by the charity Crisis showed that many housing associations do tenant affordability checks on potential tenants that lead to people being denied social homes because they are deemed to be financial risks. So even people who get to the end of the waiting list are refused a home. Increasing rents for a decade can only make this worse.

If leaders of workers' organisations



ACABASH/CC

go along with Labour's big-business agenda in housing they will be complicit in increasing the danger of Farage getting the keys to Number 10. The TUC congress in September has the opportunity to map out a pro-worker approach. And this raises the question of political representation; the movement needs to take steps to build a party that speaks for workers.

Unite's housing resolution at the TUC calls for mass council house building, rent control and opposes plans to increase social rents. That is the basis for unions to capture the imagination of workers by showing that there is a way out of housing misery.

SHAC, and other housing activists, will be at the conference calling for a union-based tenant and resident union to support the fightback. Trades councils and unions have met with tenant activists in local areas to discuss ideas for a tenants' union.

● **Paul is chair of Unite housing workers branch**

SHAC meeting at the TUC

- **Tuesday 15 September**
- **12:45-2pm**
- **TUC Conference Centre, Brighton**

The Socialist Party fights for:

● **A mass programme of good-quality, environmentally friendly council house building**

● **Cut rents. Rent controls to democratically set fair rents and enforce safety standards. Councils start now with an immediate freeze on council rents and using conditions on compulsory landlord registrations**

● **Fund our services. Councils should reject the cuts, build the infrastructure we need and send the bill to Burnham's government. A mass, working-class campaign can win the resources to improve our lives. Restore and extend the mental health, housing and other services destroyed by austerity**

● **Take the wealth off the super-rich! Nationalise the construction companies, alongside big businesses and the banks so we can use the resources of society to provide for need, not greed!**



Protest against cuts to Hackney's children's centres in 2022 by the then Labour council LONDON SP

PCS NEC agrees to a national ballot to protect jobs, improve pay, and end the pensions debacle

An emergency National Executive Committee (NEC) meeting of the Public and Commercial Services Union (PCS), which organises workers in the civil service and on government contracts, took place on 19 August. The NEC instructed the general secretary to get on with building a national campaign and national ballot for action - a campaign agreed three months previously but still not implemented.

We carry here an edited version of an article by the PCS Broad Left Network.

The PCS conference in May voted for a serious campaign capable of winning on jobs, pay, pensions and the huge number of other issues facing PCS members day-in, day-out. That campaign needs to be built by the NEC, if there is no satisfactory movement from the employer in meeting our demands.

There has been no movement. A new prime minister has not meant a new direction. The 3.5% pay remit, potentially condemning our lowest-paid grades to the minimum wage forever, goes nowhere near meeting our claim for 10%. Jobs are at risk, with members taking matters into their own hands in disputes across the union, striking to protect jobs and conditions. Thousands of pensions are still not being paid, condemning many to severe hardship, while the [Labour government] Cabinet Office refuses to bring this service back in-house. In fact, the private profiteer, Capita, has been awarded more work!

Andy Burnham has created lots of 'soundbites' but little else. If we are to make progress, it is vital that we build a campaign across PCS. The left majority of the NEC remains determined to build this campaign.

But the saga to do so has been going on since 29 May. This was when the first meeting of the new NEC took place, with the specific intention of moving quickly to put the plans in place to launch a campaign, as agreed only the week before at our conference.

Unfortunately, at this stage, equally clear has been the determination of the PCS general secretary Fran Heathcote and her 'Democracy Alliance/Left Unity' allies to frustrate and block any national campaign.

This determination was on show immediately after the close of conference, when the general secretary published her article lauding the 3.5% civil service pay remit as "above inflation". Setting aside that the general secretary was using the government's CPI measure of inflation not the RPI measure used by trade



PCS members in Ofgem on strike in August HUGO PIERRE

unions, this publication bypassed the NEC in a way that up until now has been exceedingly rare. It is now common.

Nothing was published telling members that the priority of PCS is to build a campaign to win on the issues that matter to them most - jobs, pay, pensions and conditions.

On 11 June, there was the general secretary's infamous walkout of the NEC. At the NEC on 15-16 July, further recommendations were agreed to put the necessary steps in place to build the campaign. But the delaying tactics continued, with information not forthcoming and still no sign of any publicity to the activist layer or members.

Get on with it!

At the emergency NEC on 19 August, the NEC instructed the general secretary to get on with it.

A motion put by Broad Left Network (BLN) member Fiona Brittle laid out some clear and high-profile methods of raising the visibility of the campaign, and some urgent communications for members and activists, including on the crucial question of finance and paying for the cost of a serious campaign of industrial action.

This motion passed, despite Democracy Alliance/Left Unity members voting against it. Crucially, it also instructed the general secretary to prepare for a statutory ballot to be launched on 30 September, with the final decision to be made at the NEC meeting on 8-9 September.

It is clear that the NEC minority and the general secretary are hoping that because some areas, including the DWP [the biggest group of PCS members], have not started delegating pay talks they will be excluded from any national response. Likewise for those areas in a multi-year deal.

This is a nonsense, not least because the campaign includes jobs, pensions and conditions. But also

because we already know that the pay remit of 3.5% will not remove thousands from the horror of low pay. A ballot during pay talks, agitated by reports from the frontline of negotiations, would easily achieve membership buy-in.

When the September 2022 pay and jobs ballot was launched, the mandate was designed to last through to Spring 2023 so as to overlap the period when the government would make decisions about the pay remit. At that time, multiple groups had not concluded delegated pay talks, but went for it anyway.

That is exactly the current situation.

BLN members are absolutely committed to the launch of a campaign, to the faithful discharge of conference policy, and to pushing against what is an unstable government predisposed to do us no favours unless it really has to.

The general secretary should respect conference policy and work tirelessly to implement it and stop blocking progress. We hope that all reps will campaign vigorously to build support and win the vote. To not do so will give strength to the employer.

PCS has a history of being a fighting, democratic union, whose proud traditions defended pensions, established and defended the civil service compensation scheme, and which can now play a crucial role in fighting the cost-of-living crisis. Let's re-win those traditions and build the campaign to win. If you agree, we urge you to join the Broad Left Network.

● For the full article, and to join the BLN, go to bln.org.uk

● The BLN is a network of left activists in the PCS, in which Socialist Party members participate. The BLN is part of a 'coalition for change' alongside other activists in the union, which currently holds a majority of seats on the PCS NEC

Why I will be at the lobby of the TUC - Unison policy backs the PCS motion's call for a national trade union-led demo

PAUL COUCHMAN
UNISON SOUTH EAST REGIONAL DELEGATE TO TUC CONGRESS (IN A PERSONAL CAPACITY)

This will be my third year as a delegate to the Congress from Unison. Last year I was very pleased to see the motion calling for a national demo against Labour austerity passed overwhelmingly, only to be disappointed when the TUC General Council didn't call one.

My Unison branch discussed this and decided to submit an

amendment to a motion at our National Delegate Conference in June, which was carried and is now Unison policy: "Step up the campaign against austerity and for Jobs, Homes and Services not Racism, including calling upon the TUC General Council to organise the mass demonstration against Labour austerity agreed at last year's TUC Congress".

This is fully in line with the motion to this year's TUC Congress from PCS: "Congress agrees to urgently call a national Saturday demonstration this autumn for investment in public services, against austerity and for pro-worker policies."

A number of our activists will be travelling to Brighton to attend the lobby called by the National Shop Stewards Network and to make sure the Unison delegation fully supports the PCS motion in line with our conference policy.

We also need to ensure that, if passed, the TUC leaders are not allowed to ignore the call and press them through all our unions into naming the date for a mass demonstration against Labour austerity.



nationalshopstewardsnetwork

1pm SUNDAY 13th SEPTEMBER

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

LOBBY THE TUC to support the PCS motion for a national demo and coordinated action



SCAN HERE TO REGISTER:
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School support staff: We need unity and we need action

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

Hundreds of National Education Union (NEU) members, both support staff and teachers, including 40% of the National Executive, have signed a statement calling for maximum unity between unions that organise support staff.

In advance of a special Executive meeting on 8 September to decide whether or not to go ahead with a ballot of support staff, the hundreds of signatories include 22 members of the Executive.

The statement was published over the summer by executive members of three unions with support staff members: Unison, Unite and the NEU.

As we face both a cost-of-living crisis and a funding crisis in public services including schools, this summer Unison and Unite balloted local government workers, including school support staff, over pay. Unfortunately, despite an overwhelming vote for action, the ballots did not meet the 50% turnout threshold required by Tory anti-union legislation, disgracefully kept in place by a Labour government under Keir Starmer and now Andy Burnham.



Support staff in different unions fighting together in Tower Hamlets in 2025 HUGO PIERRE

Workers action against hot London buses - United action can win

After two days of strike action at eight bus garages, bus drivers and their union Unite forced management at Arriva London North to the table. The first offer was rejected by drivers on a vote, and strikes continued in the last week of August.

The Socialist Party's leaflet says: "Sharon Graham, the newly re-elected general secretary of Unite, is backing the strike. This is great - and one concrete way she could help the strikes is by helping them spread across the city. The best way to get a resolution to the issue of overheated cabs is by all-London action. Sharon

Graham should organise a combine of Unite bus reps from all the different garages to discuss how we can make sure every garage is part of the action."

The Socialist Party leaflet demanded that London buses are taken back into public ownership, and put forward what councils that say they are anti-austerity - such as the newly-elected Green councils in east London - should do to put the pressure on Sadiq Khan to throw out the private bus operators.

● See socialistparty.org.uk for the full leaflet. As we go to press, further strike days are planned.



Stamford Hill HACKNEY SOCIALIST PARTY

A constant stream of drivers were reporting to the picket line in the heat of the afternoon sun at **Stamford Hill** in Hackney.

One picket described how occasionally they have to drive a bus that belches out large quantities of noxious gas that not only invades the cab, but can envelope the whole bus. As if on cue, clouds of acrid smoke emanated from a garage smoke stack, that polluted the whole of the street for 20 yards in each direction, including part of the school opposite.

The pickets also said they felt sorry for the public who are forced to endure the sweltering hot temperatures of nothing more than a greenhouse on wheels. Although this strike is primarily about hot cabs, in the winter months the opposite problem occurs, of drivers losing the feeling in their legs due to no heating.

The strike seemed very solid at Stamford Hill, and they want cast-iron guarantees on fully functioning air-conditioning that cannot be reneged on.

BRIAN DEBUS

A majority of drivers at **Barking** had voted to accept the offer, including several on the picket line. The pickets were clear that a union's strength comes from unity, so as a majority across the Arriva garages had voted to keep fighting, that is

The NEU plans to ballot both teachers and support staff in October. As the local government unions are accepting the employers' pay offer for support staff, the NEU's campaign will now be over teacher pay. But crucially for support staff, it will also be over funding - to cover any pay rise in order to stave off further redundancies, and to start to redress the massive funding gap inflicted on schools since 2011.

But at a time when we need maximum unity to defeat pay cuts and redundancies, the Trades Union Congress (TUC) has threatened sanctions against the NEU, following complaints from other support staff unions. The complaints are due to the agreements originally signed up to by the NEU when it was first formed, in which it agreed not to recruit support staff.

However, since then, thousands of support staff have joined the NEU because they saw it as a fighting union, over Covid and then in the 2023 strikes. The NEU now has around 70,000 support staff members, making it the second biggest support staff union after Unison, and those members expect their union to fight for them. There are also around 300,000 support staff in no union at all. With a new school support staff-specific negotiating body being proposed by

the government (the SSSNB), Socialist Party members argue that it is best for all unions that organise support staff to be recognised by that body and work together.

Talks are currently taking place between the unions. We hope for a collaborative outcome that enables all the unions to fight together locally and nationally.

But even if that outcome is not achieved at this stage, Socialist Party members on the NEU Executive will be arguing at the 8 September meeting that the plan to ballot all members, including support staff, goes ahead. It is essential that unions stand up to low pay and the funding crisis and pile the pressure on Andy Burnham's government.

We also argue that, if that decision means more sanctions are threatened by the TUC against the NEU, the NEU should reach out to all the other unions, not only in education, to appeal for a collaborative way forward. There should be no sanctions against a union which, under pressure from its members, is leading a fight-back against low pay and austerity.

Add your name to the statement:



Barking EAST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

what they'd do. A couple of them had been in two minds, but once they saw the picket line they knew they couldn't cross it and joined it instead.

Alongside the issues in this strike, one driver explained how a fight was also needed on pay. "My wages have gone up from £10.40 to £18 over 20 years. In real terms that is a pay cut. With three kids I can't afford to live on this".

HANNAH SELL

A just-qualified new driver joined the union and the strike, there and then on the picket line at **Southbury** in Enfield. At this garage, most drivers had voted to accept the offer, though they didn't trust management. Still, the workers wanted to stand with their colleagues.

IAN PATTISON

At **Palmer's Green** in Enfield, I asked drivers what they thought the cost of installing air-conditioning in the

cabs would be. I learned that we are not dealing with a small local bus company without recourse to significant funds. One striker told me that when he visits other countries in Europe, he sees Arriva buses.

According to the Arriva LinkedIn page: "Arriva is the leading passenger transport operator in Europe, employing around 36,200 people and delivering 1.5 billion passenger journeys each year, with businesses across 11 European countries."

Arriva was bought by I Squared Capital for 1.6 billion euros in October 2023 - a company registered in the Cayman Islands. Open the books - show the workers where the money is!

SARAH SACHS ELDRIDGE

One rep said: "If it's to monitor drivers and keep on at us, they sort out the technology straight away. But if it's to make our working conditions better, we have to wait forever."

FRANK MERRITT

“We are capitalist, not socialist. We believe in a growing, fair, and competitive economy that rewards hard work, innovation, entrepreneurship, and ownership’ - *Promise to America pledge, drafted by Democratic Congressmen Suozzi (New York) and Gray (California), June 2026.*

This pledge, signed by Democratic House members, is an indicator of the consternation from corporate Democrats at the recent surge of populist ‘progressives’ and the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA).

The idea of ‘socialism’ is on the rise, reflecting the crisis and turmoil in US capitalist society. 53% of Gen Z hold a positive view of socialism. 38% even view the idea of communism favourably in the US. What a shift from the decades of ‘red scares’ during the Cold War, experienced by their parents and grandparents!

In referencing DSA’s surge, the Financial Times comments: “With apologies to Marx’s The Communist Manifesto, a spectre is haunting America - the spectre of socialism. Its platform - affordable housing, universal healthcare, free college for all and higher taxes on billionaires”.

But the situation is more perilous than these capitalist commentators evaluate. The farsighted elements of the US ruling class who inhabit the Democratic Party elite perhaps are beginning to sense it. Elements of the platform on which most DSA candidates stand is theoretically possible in a capitalist system, and were even partially achieved in reforms granted to a mobilised working class in many parts of the world during the post-World War Two economic upswing.

Today, even the prospect of mild social democratic reforms collides with 21st Century oligarchic US capitalism, where the combined wealth of the top few richest Americans exceeds the bottom 50% of the US population.

The surge of the DSA - currently around 120,000 members - and the other early stirrings of a rediscovery of the socialist tradition in the US are dramatic, but will be dwarfed.

The development of a socialist consciousness and mass combative organisations of the working class would be capable of sweeping away capitalism and building a socialist society that would put the working class in power, replacing the oligarchs and their puppets.

Visceral anger

The visceral anger bubbling in US society at the cost-of-living crisis, which will only be partially reflected in the November midterms, is forcing all sides of the two-party system to react to defend against dangers to the system.

This is why Trump moved to ban large institutional investors from buying single-family homes, and talks of state intervention into AI companies, and why vice president JD Vance, despite being part of a vicious anti-union administration, claims on the Joe Rogan podcast he’s pro-labour.

Beginning in Zohran Mamdani’s New York City, a chain of DSA members won Democratic primaries, including in Denver, this summer.

Union organiser Angie Nixon in Florida is the first DSA member to win a statewide primary. Her shock result was based on raising \$975,000 compared to her opponent’s \$16.3 million.

Trump and the Republicans are also recruiting officers for DSA and socialist ideas. Trump said recently that “the Democratic Party is now full of communists” who “want to take their ruinous and deadly ideology of misery and squalor to every state in America.”

The genocide in Gaza is a major polarising issue across primaries, the shift in societal view of the Israeli state is resulting in the defeat of many candidates backed by the Zionist lobby.

The possibility of DSA member and member of the House of Representatives Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (AOC) running in the Democrat primaries for the 2028 presidential election is gaining traction. She has polled ahead of corporate Democrats Gavin Newsom and Kamala Harris in prediction markets.

Whatever the outcome of the midterms, the Democratic Party leadership will further move to take on any threat to its pro-capitalist agenda, which will include mobilising against AOC and any left populist candidate in the presidential primaries, as they did in the previous Bernie Sanders campaigns in 2016 and 2020.

Currently Sanders and AOC are mobilising large “fight oligarchy” rallies across the country, raising massively popular policies like Medicare for all. They are a major reference point for workers and youth.

As previously with Sanders, socialists will have to seriously engage with the likely momentum of an AOC primary campaign and the electric interest it will generate around left ideas. AOC, reflecting the polarised situation in US society, which is even deeper than when Sanders ran, can engage in combative rhetoric against Trump, the oligarchy and capitalist crisis.



The idea of ‘socialism’ is on the rise reflecting the crisis and turmoil in US capitalist society. 53% of Gen Z hold a positive view of socialism. 38% even view the idea of communism favourably in the US. What a shift from the decades of ‘red scares’ during the Cold War, experienced by their parents and grandparents!

Engagement will have to be combined with skilfully warning her record shows she is likely to end up like Sanders in endorsing the candidate and agenda of the corporate Democrats, even if the primaries go to the wire.

It was the Sanders campaign, calling for a “political revolution against the billionaire class” in 2016, and AOC’s 2018 primary victory, that lifted DSA into tens of thousands of members in its initial surge. DSA gained national prominence as ‘the squad’ were elected to the House of Representatives containing its supporters.

GAINS FOR THE LEFT IN US PRIMARIES

The rise of the DSA and the tasks facing socialists in the US

PHOTOS: PUBLIC DOMAIN, ZHAODIX/CC, GAGE SKIMORE/CC, ISG



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However, neither Sanders, AOC or Mamdani show any signs of drawing the conclusions that a struggle, mobilising their base and the wider working class, is needed against the corporate Democrat leadership. They have a record of trying to build ‘unity’ with it, to the fatal detriment of movements of workers and youth.

Sanders, who could have defeated Trump, demobilised his mass base repeatedly, endorsing Clinton, Biden and then Harris for the presidency. AOC and the squad’s actions have demoralised activists including in DSA, whose membership fell heavily under Biden, when she supported funding for Israel’s Iron Dome and the shutting down of a national railroad strike.

The graveyard

The Democratic Party has been rightly called the ‘graveyard of social movements’ by generations of activists. AOC’s record so far shows that she is susceptible to the pressure of ‘co-optation’ by the capitalist corporate machine.

As has even been seen with activists with a more fighting record than hers, including Sanders who was originally seen as an independent, in the labour and civil rights movements.

There is a current debate in DSA about whether AOC should be supported.



Socialists must patiently and firmly explain that while every reform must be fought for, today’s US capitalism and its oligarchic ruling class will not tolerate such ‘democratic socialist’ measures

Sanders, AOC and Mamdani are not prepared to use their authority to break from the Democratic Party machine and launch an independent party capable of attracting the attention of workers and youth, with the potential to become a mass vehicle for the discussion of socialist ideas.

A discussion should take place urgently among labour activists, socialists and campaigners with mass assemblies locally and nationally about the need for a union activist running a presidential campaign on a fighting programme, independently of the two corporate parties.

There are advocates for breaking with the Democrats now and promoting the idea of a new workers’ party. The Rhode Island chapter of DSA has taken the political decision to break from supporting Democrat candidates and caucuses publicly and in its bylaws.

They are running an “independent Socialist candidate”, Brittany Kubicek, for the General Assembly (Rhode Island’s state legislature) in November on a socialist programme and calling for a workers’ party.

This development, although it will encounter political opposition, can

encourage other chapters and sections of DSA to move in the same direction. Kubicek is endorsed by the Independent Socialist Group, the CWI’s co-thinkers in the US.

Eugene Debs, the socialist activist and militant trade unionist who ran for president five times between 1900 and 1920, has been referenced by Sanders and Mamdani and others on the left.

But what needs to be rediscovered by the new generation is that Debs, as well as playing a leading role in many strikes and going to prison for opposition to war, stood independently of the two capitalist parties.

Standing on a fighting programme as the Socialist Party candidate in the 1912 presidential election, he won close to a million votes. The Socialist Party, in that period, had deeper roots in the working class than the DSA has today.

The labour unions, and their social weight and resources, can have a critical role to play in the formation of a mass workers’ party.

They should run their own candidates and throw their weight behind pro-working class independents who are standing up to the two-party system while ending funding for Democrats and Republicans. Candidates from a workers’ party should refuse corporate donations and, if elected, accept only the average wage of the working people they represent.

Socialism

The ideological opening presented by this rise of ‘democratic socialism’ must be seized by those who are committed to a revolutionary socialist programme. Every opportunity to explain what socialism is to those who are excited by it, must be taken.

Socialists must patiently and firmly explain that while every reform must be fought for, today’s US capitalism and its oligarchic ruling class will not tolerate such ‘democratic socialist’ measures.

The only way to guarantee an end to the capitalist cost of living, corporate healthcare, environmental destruction nightmare is for the working class to take into public ownership the biggest corporations, banks, tech, healthcare and energy industries and run and plan the economy democratically for the needs of the majority.

A fundamental socialist transformation of society means a higher level of production and technology, even than exists currently in the US today, and the working class planning the economy internationally.



Help us fund workers and youth fighting back

CLEO SHARP
BRIGHTON SOCIALIST PARTY

One pressing issue for young people in Brighton is the cost of living. Rent is through the roof, totally unaffordable.

According to LiveWhere, the average monthly rent for a four-bedroom student house is £2,514. If you want bills included in student halls, it could easily cost you up to £250 a week.

Ahead of term, we have been preparing material on how to organise tenant unions, to give us a fighting chance against unfair landlords.

For campaigns like this, however, we need money to print leaflets and to pay for meeting rooms, which is why our fighting fund is so important. We also sell our weekly Socialist newspaper, which you are reading now.

All this campaigning and fundraising helps us create Socialist Party placards for events such as the National Shop Stewards Network

(NSSN) lobby of the Trades Union Congress (TUC) on Sunday 13 September in Brighton. This is another topic we have been campaigning on.

The people we have connected with are eager to engage in activism which makes a material difference. Sometimes it only takes one enthusiastic person to share it with their friends, and it can quickly spread.

Our demand for a £15-an-hour minimum wage has also caught people's attention. Sometimes people tell us that this demand seems utopian, which is why it's so important for us to be able to point to the NSSN lobby – a real material demonstration, fighting for this cause, a real physical way to make a difference.

● Read about coming to the NSSN lobby on page 6 or scan the QR code



Donate to fund fight to save our NHS

ADAM HARMSWORTH
COVENTRY SOCIALIST PARTY

Coventry Socialist Party is campaigning to end parking charges at our hospital. Through a rotten 40-year PFI deal, a private company makes millions of pounds in profit out of patients, visitors, and even staff.

Over 16,000 people have signed our petition. Equally important are the donations we receive from those who sign.

We can easily raise over £50 on one of our campaign stalls. Our campaign is so familiar, many residents who visit Coventry city centre sometimes stop by just to donate.

Even people who tell us they disagree with our wider socialist politics will donate and support the campaign, to which we can explain – there's a reason it's only the

socialists, not Reform, not Labour, who will actually put in the effort to oppose these charges.

We're not just fighting to end parking charges and a terrible PFI contract at one hospital, but end all privatisation in the NHS, and win a socialist society that will put people before profit. No other party is fighting for a fairer society like we are, and

every penny collected on our stalls goes towards that.

● Socialist Party branches are organising a special 'mega stall' day of action on 5 and 6 September

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

AREA	£ RECEIVED	£ TARGET	Q3: JULY-SEPTEMBER 2026	DEADLINE: 30 SEPTEMBER 2026
South West	2,760	2,100		131%
Wales	1,663	2,400		69%
Northern	509	800		64%
East Midlands	1,137	2,050		55%
Yorkshire	1,439	2,650		54%
West Midlands	1,382	2,700		51%
London	2,440	5,000		49%
North West	527	1,200		44%
Southern & SE	1,024	2,400		43%
Eastern	260	1,300		28%
Other	688	2,400		20%
TOTAL	13,828	25,000		55%

Why I joined: to fight racism, we have to fight for socialism

DANIEL WILLIAMS
SHEFFIELD NORTH WEST SOCIALIST PARTY

My first political campaigning was with the Green Party. I was watching video after video of ICE raids and murders happening in the US, and could foresee the same thing happening in the UK, if Reform got into power.

I felt a responsibility to fight back, knowing my mum, girlfriend, and friends would all be harmed if Reform was elected. I was also (and still am) involved in the anti-racist movement, attending Stand Up to Racism counter-protests and the Together March.

I began seeing interviews with Reform voters. I realised that many of them were just angry, having experienced their living conditions decline year after year. Reform's simple "stop the boats" slogan was an effective tool to mobilise them.

So I tried to propose at a Stand Up to Racism meeting that we use similar simple messaging, adopting the "tax the rich" slogan. But, at the meeting, the only people to lend any credence to the idea were two Socialist Party members. They gave me a leaflet, and I contacted them that night.

Through attending meetings, I learned that the Socialist Party shared my feelings, recognising that those on the right were angry about their material conditions declining, and wanted someone to blame.

So, while the Green Party has aided a shift, especially amongst youth, to

the left, analysing history at Socialist Party meetings shows that any partial advance against the ruling class, be it nationalisation or a wealth tax, is just a concession that could be clawed back.

Similarly, single-issue campaigns, like opposing racism, do vital work, and can win important changes. But issues will persist, as long as capitalism remains intact. Fighting for socialism with the Socialist Party is what is required for permanent change.



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

Review: 'The Thin End of the Wedge' by This Life Collective - School students challenge sexism

EESHA
MANCHESTER SOCIALIST STUDENTS

A group of Tyneside schoolgirls have made a video titled, 'The Thin End of the Wedge', outlining the everyday misogyny they experience. They pull no punches.

Comments were of a violently sexual nature, including a 'rape list' a boy had created of girls in his school. These girls are incredibly brave for speaking out.

The girls state: "Men and boys don't start off as rapists, they start as misogynists who aren't challenged." This message is powerful, and I think we can go further.

Today, access to women's bodies has never been so easy. Grok AI can digitally remove the clothes of women and girls. Teen shows like Euphoria take every opportunity to sexualise its female cast.

It is both unfair and dangerous to allow a misogynistic culture to fester. But it can feel like a losing battle. Socialists say we have a capitalist economy dependent on women's subjugation.

Women create the next workforce by giving birth to children. We are unduly expected to keep the household running – cooking, cleaning, and caring for children and elders.

Many do this alongside full-time work. Women's role as wageless, thankless domestic workers is an economic one, as well as a cultural one.

At a recent Manchester Trades Union Council meeting, I saw what



Part of the school students' film THIS LIFE COLLECTIVE

socialist solutions to misogyny can look like. Trade unionists discussed classifying workplace sexual harassment as a health and safety risk, treated with the same seriousness and precision as electrical fires, slips, and falls.

This can be part of taking the burden off women to be solely responsible for painstaking cultural change, uniting all workers in struggle.

The Tyneside girls have brought attention to an important issue. Misogyny left unchecked can grow into something even more sinister.

For feminism to have any teeth in

this hostile modern climate, we must not separate women's cultural and economic subjugation. Help us in the call for a socialist alternative to sexism and violence against women and girls.

And join the international youth strike on the 20 November. Together, we can fight for the future we deserve.

Do you agree?
JOIN THE SOCIALISTS
socialistparty.org.uk/join

Southampton socialists say Pride is political

FRANKIE COULTAS
SOUTHAMPTON SOCIALIST PARTY

The Socialist Party participated in Southampton Pride, taking part in the march, with our placards calling for a new workers' party to fight for the rights of LGBTQ+ people.

We had good conversations with attendees, particularly one young person active in Trans Pride Winchester, which occurred the week before. Unlike Southampton Pride, Trans Pride Winchester had been explicitly political, with speeches from attendees.

This speaks to the particularly precarious position trans people are in right now. We can't afford not to engage with the political arguments used to victimise us. They are being

brought down on us every day, most recently following the EHRC guidance for service providers.

Aside from the Socialist Party, the only other political presence at Southampton Pride was the National Education Union (NEU) community stage. Southampton Pride banned political parties from the main area for the second year running, in line with UK Pride.

However, the 'headline partners' of Southampton Pride were P&O Cruises and Cunard. Both companies have a history of exploitative working practices.

As a socialist, I found this very difficult to parse. In contrast, the chants from the march included 'Pride is a protest.'



Socialist Party members and other trade unionists at Manchester Pride

Manchester – workers before corporations

ROBBIE DAVIDSON
MANCHESTER SOCIALIST PARTY

Young Socialist Party members attended a massive Manchester Pride march. While water companies, supermarkets, and landlord conglomerates paraded floats through the city declaring big business's belief in a vague idea of equality, working-class young people were looking for more radical answers.

Last year's anti-trans Supreme Court ruling had bred a palpable fear on the ground that none of the gains made for LGBTQ+ people are safe under this rotten, profit-driven

system. The empty promises from new Labour prime minister Andy Burnham resonated with very few.

Our demand that Manchester Pride should be led by trade unions, youth activists, and community campaigners was popular. One young person said she was "disgusted" that corporations were front and centre, whilst the banners of the workers' movement had been crammed in at the back.

We're discussing and meeting with people who signed up at Pride to hear more about the Socialist Party, and the need for a new party of the working class and all groups on the sharp end of oppression.



Bradford solidarity with Kashmir movement

IAIN DALTON
YORKSHIRE SOCIALIST PARTY SECRETARY

Protesters assembled outside the Pakistani consulate in Bradford on 26 August. Organised by the Friends of Joint Awami Action Committee Bradford, it was in response to a call for further protests by JAAC in Kashmir. JAAC continue to hold a mass sit-in in Rawalakot, the third largest city in Pakistan-controlled Azad Kashmir.

The Pakistan state has attempted to press ahead with elections, which include the reserved seats for people from Indian-controlled Kashmir living in Pakistan. JAAC wants these reserved seats abolished, as part of its demands on the cost of living and democratic rights.

Voter turnout is down from over 60% in 2021 to below 50% today.

Voting has been postponed entirely in some areas.

JAAC has called for a boycott of these elections. It would say that these ballot boxes would have been stuffed to get even this result.

Shutdowns of markets and transport have been lifted in some other cities in Kashmir. But food and medicine supplies are still being blocked from reaching Rawalakot, and the internet remains blocked across Azad Kashmir.

Additional Pakistani army units were being deployed to Kashmir with clashes on 25 August, leading to another protester being killed, adding to the official tally of 80. This horrific number could be much larger given that protesters have set up their own clinics after protesters had been abducted from hospitals earlier in the protests.

In Bradford, placards depicted some of those killed by the armed forces.

The main message from protesters here demanded an end to repression against peaceful protesters and release of those arrested. This was reflected in chants of 'Killer forces, out, out' and 'Stop killing in Kashmir'.

I spoke on behalf of the Socialist Party at the protest, extending our solidarity, and pointing to the need to link up with workers across the subcontinent, who have been involved in their own protests against the cost of living.

Only by the working masses taking control of the resources of the region, under democratic workers' control, can the needs of ordinary people be met, and their right to self-determination guaranteed.



Bradford IAIN DALTON



DAVID THOMAS

The producers of the C4 ‘documentary’, ‘The Great ADHD myth?’ may be satisfied that courting controversy has helped boost their TV ratings. However, it has left the community of people - young and old - struggling through life with the mentally exhausting effects associated with ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder), anxious and angry that such a shoddy piece of journalism was broadcast, supposedly in the interests of ‘stimulating public debate.’

Denying the reality of ADHD

The programme centres on the struggles of a stereotypically hyperactive schoolboy, Mason. However, ADHD presents itself in many different ways. Symptoms include an inability to focus on and prioritise tasks, impulsive behaviour and severe disorganisation. Of course, these are all behaviours that many people can exhibit to some degree, as the show went to great lengths to stress. But that’s true of the symptoms of many complex health conditions. However, in denying the reality of ADHD, the show belittles its sufferers and fails to explain how the severity of their symptoms can massively impair their lives. This is particularly true for women, who more often mask their symptoms, and can be linked to severe emotional distress and self-harm. The programme’s presenter, Max Pemberton, tried to present himself as just a psychiatrist in search of the truth. In fact, he is a regular

contributor to the Daily Mail who also took part in the media onslaught on Jason Arday. He sets out to prove that ADHD symptoms don’t arise from a genuine neurodevelopmental disorder but are just an invented ‘social construct’. However, no specialist in the field is given an opportunity to explain why the overwhelmingly accepted medical consensus opposes his false claims.

Manipulative experiments

Much of the programme is taken up with ‘experiments’ conducted by Pemberton, clearly designed to arrive at the result he’d already decided upon in advance. The first, conducted on the 10-year-old Mason, consisted of stopping his course of ADHD medication. Instead, a range of other strategies were tried, which seemed to improve his symptoms. However, as so many variables were changed at once, a GCSE student could tell you that it would be impossible to draw an accurate conclusion as to cause and effect! They included factors that might have some benefits to young people in general but genuine research has shown has little to no link with ADHD – such as cutting down screen time and eating less processed and sugary food. Pemberton then takes ADHD medication for himself with predictable results. He has already prepared the ground for his theatrics by having an ‘expert’ erroneously comparing it to taking addictive cocaine. But the effect of stimulant drugs on someone with the brain chemistry of someone with ADHD isn’t the same as for the

A socialist solution to improving working-class health would involve a systemic change to working-class lives, and the nature of both work and education

general population. That’s the whole point! Without any alternative points of view being presented, its arguments might seem plausible to some. For example, the Guardian immediately gave the show a positive four-star review. Tellingly, however, they quickly had to add two corrections to their original article, both of which exposed Pemberton’s manipulative misinformation. Firstly, they had to point out that Mason ended up back on medication. Mason’s struggles weren’t as easy to solve as Pemberton was claiming. Worse, it turns out that the words of one of the experts interviewed, Katya Rubia, were, in her words, “cherry-picked... and presented... out of context to make them fit into their narrative.” The drug companies Millions of working-class people suffer, physically and mentally, from the pressures of life under capitalism. Meanwhile the drugs companies and privatised health industry directly profit from the misery inflicted by

their system. It’s understandable, therefore, that there is a suspicion - aired in the programme - that the increase in ADHD diagnosis is simply driven by their search for profits. Of course, there’s always a danger of overdiagnosis in the pursuit of private profit. But the reality for most people is underdiagnosis, thanks to long waiting lists and many Integrated Care Boards refusing to fund assessments. At the same time, ADHD is already one of the conditions with the highest failure rate for PIP assessments.

Serving a pro-cuts agenda

The show also unhelpfully used emotive terms like comparing ADHD medication to a ‘chemical cosh’, as if they were being misused to subdue rather than assist people. Of course, prescribed drugs can never provide more than a partial solution. Official advice correctly states that they should be administered as part of “a comprehensive, holistic shared treatment plan.” After all, ADHD presents differently for different people and may form only one aspect of an individual’s overall health condition. But providing detailed individual diagnosis, therapy and support requires a lot of resources. And resources are precisely what the NHS is being starved of. Some of the issues thrown in by Pemberton as possible causes of ADHD are undoubtedly very real factors undermining people’s health and wellbeing in general. These include parents not having time to spend with their families, the unhealthiness of urban environments, and an underfunded inflexible school system driven by exam targets. A socialist solution to improving working-class health would involve a systemic change to working-class lives, and the nature of both work and

education. It would also include a fully nationalised and democratically run health service, where the profit motive was removed from drug research and diagnosis. It would be funded to fully meet everyone’s needs, not just those who can afford to pay. But even those changes wouldn’t mean that conditions such as ADHD, with genuine neurodevelopmental causes, would simply disappear.

Northern Care Alliance NHS strike continues despite employer intimidation



MANCHESTER SOCIALIST PARTY

Hospital theatre workers at the Northern Care Alliance (NCA), covering four hospitals across Greater Manchester, took three further days of strike action in the last week of August - despite some desperate steps taken by their employer. We heard from Unison reps on the picket line that, following the Trust’s declaration of a ‘critical incident’, members were pulled into offices and told their attendance on shifts the following week was required,

and they should consider their professional registrations! They were issued with a letter stating they had been designated ‘essential workers’. Workers were also instructed that they had to obtain a GP fit note from day one of sickness! Strikers reported they had felt threatened and intimidated, but above all angry. We heard that their union had acted quickly with responses to the employer and detailed advice to members. Despite the intimidation, the strike was strong. They are asking only to

have their national terms and conditions (Agenda for Change) applied regarding pay rates for overtime. NCA theatre staff know that this issue is turning into disputes across the country. There are already strikes taking place in Luton and Bedfordshire Trust, and other branches are organising. They wonder if that is why NCA bosses refer to “external forces” as the reason for withdrawal from local negotiations. Picket conversations included the Channel 4 news article the previous week, about whistleblowing

concerns around patient safety. Strikers told us that they see and escalate issues regularly. Their grievance already includes demands on the employer to ensure safe staffing levels, which in turn would reduce the demand for overtime. They’re not asking for the moon - and taxing the billionaires who fancy a jolly there might provide the funding needed to pay these workers what their terms and conditions already state. ● unisonnca@nca.nhs.uk for solidarity messages

The cost of having kids: Fight for free childcare, decent fully paid parental leave, and socialist change

KATIE SIMPSON
NORTHAMPTON SOCIALIST PARTY

I was 19 years old, it was 2007, when I realised that I wanted to be a parent. Unfortunately, it was the same year that the largest financial crisis hit in my lifetime. Not through any fault of their own, but unemployment and austerity left families struggling. Shows like Benefit Street were commonplace on my TV. I remember seeing the scorn in the papers towards these parents. ‘Lazy, work-shy, skivers’. All of these terms for families just trying to get by. Many already had children before the financial crisis. I remember thinking: “I don’t want to do that. I don’t want to be one of those people.” So myself and many in my generation decided to forgo having children, until much later in life. I had my first child at 34. My second at 38. Almost 20 years after I first determined I wanted children. Caring for the next generation is

still too expensive. Inflation has put food costs through the roof, not to mention school clothes and supplies, basics at home, and the additional rent required for larger properties. On top, childcare costs that are so extortionate that parents can’t afford to return to work. Governments and councils have repeatedly cut and destroyed services, particularly for disabled children, that parents rely on. The phrase “it takes a village” is common, as people recognise that trying to raise children as a couple or a single parent is an enormous struggle, even without the financial pressures that we currently have. A slump in global birth rates has panicked capitalist economists, with some demanding we have larger families. This pressure has fuelled a new misogyny and sexism towards women. What started in 2007 as an attack on women who have children outside of marriage or to multiple fathers, is now an attack on women not having



Butlins security staff: ‘We need to be heard, we need to be loud’

CALLUM JOYCE AND DAVID MAPLES
BRIGHTON SOCIALIST PARTY

The Friday before a bank holiday is not the usual time for a strike and Butlins is not the most expected workplace, but security officers in Bognor Regis were left with no alternative. They do not have a history of union membership, so when they looked to join one, they searched online. Seeing the success of the United Voices of the World (UVW) with security staff in London museums, they approached the UVW. The security officers say chronic understaffing, faulty equipment, unjust wage deductions and poor management are undermining their ability to protect guests and staff. They have been trying to get management to listen to their grievances since May, so now they are taking action. They have 13 strike days organised and plan an indefinite strike from 21 September if necessary. So the sound of carnival came to Bognor, with dancing on the picket line even more entertaining than Butlins’ usual offering. And loud they were. They have been invited to speak at the NSSN lobby of the TUC in Brighton on 13 September.

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SPS Technologies set for all-out strike

Unite members at SPS Technologies in Leicester were, at the time of going to press, preparing to begin indefinite strike action on Friday 4 September in a pay dispute. Unite branch secretary Paul Brown said: “Last week, members rejected an offer from management that was supposedly 4% for this year and 4% for next along with changes to terms and conditions. But they want to delay paying it next year so, in effect, it’s really around 3.6%. It had been recommended by union officials and a narrow majority of stewards. Negotiations have gone on for nine months, people are fed up and want it resolved.” In 2021 the workers won gains from strike action against management attempts at fire-and-rehire tactic that could then have led to some workers losing as much as £3,000 a year.



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 for 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

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

DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS

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

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.



Obituary: Andy Myers (1957-2026)

It is with a heavy heart that we report the death of Andy Myers, an active member of Leeds branch of the Socialist Party until the last year, when health problems and hospital trips prevented Andy from participating.

A retired vicar is perhaps not the typical member of a revolutionary Marxist party. But Andy was steeped in the workers' movement. He had always been a trade unionist, as a member of the faith workers' branch of Unite, and before that in Unison. During the campaign against the bedroom tax, he had allowed the use of his church for a public meeting against the opposition of local Labour councillors who demanded he cancel it.

He contrasted the opulence of the bishops at the top of the church, with the relative pittance those in retirement received. He read widely and would always fiercely defend his viewpoint in meetings if he disagreed with others, whilst always being prepared to learn from others' ideas. His last leadoff at the Leeds branch was on the implications of the development of AI for the workers' movement.

Andy became a Socialist Party member around the time of the 2019 General Election, when Jeremy Corbyn's radical programme had been undermined by the sabotage of the predominantly Blairite MPs, councillors and party machine. Whilst a Labour Party member, he challenged his local Blairite MP Hilary Benn on numerous occasions over their attacks. It was seeing the need

for an organised force to fight back against this that brought Andy into our ranks. He expected to be expelled after openly joining us on campaign stalls and at rallies, but eventually resigned, and was enthusiastic about the launch of Your Party which he joined along with Socialist Party members, ultimately disappointed by the direction it took.

We came into regular contact with Andy when, back in 2016, Labour Party meetings were suspended as a result of the 2016 Labour leadership contest. Andy and other members in South Leeds were incensed about this, so organised a weekly meet-up instead to discuss what was taking place, inviting other local trade unionists and socialist activists they knew. A number of this group, including Andy, regularly bought and then subscribed to the Socialist, and have placed May Day greetings in the Socialist since. Andy recalled to us how, in the 1980s, he assisted in the creation of cassette tape versions of the Militant newspaper for blind or partially sighted people.

Andy's health and difficulties walking meant he couldn't get to all of the meetings and activities he wished to. When he was on stalls, he would bring a fold-up chair and would enjoy discussions he would have with those stopping to sign the petition. He was keen to encourage young people to be politically active, and always gave generous donations to help young comrades attend national and international events.

IAIN DALTON

SOCIALISM TODAY

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Book review: The August Coup



Soldiers and protesters mingle during the coup in Moscow PHOTO: IVAN SIMOCHIN/CC

'FASCINATING DETAILS BUT NO REAL LESSONS' ON TURNING POINT IN STALINISM'S COLLAPSE

CLARE DOYLE

A new book by the capitalist academic Robert Service covers the dramatic events in the Summer of 1991. The 'August Coup' of the title was a total farce but it marked a turning point in the historic break-up of the USSR and the headlong dive into untrammelled capitalism.

Service has been a long-time opponent of the Socialist Party and its forerunner, Militant. When he published a 600-page book on co-leader of the Russian Revolution Leon Trotsky in 2009, Peter Taaffe - Militant's leader and theoretician for many years - memorably wrote: "This book is very thick, but is very thin when it comes to an honest political examination and analysis of the ideas of Leon Trotsky".

Another Trotsky biographer, Alan Todd, reports Service as saying he hoped his 'Trotsky: a biography' would "Finish off Trotsky... A job the ice-axe had failed to do in 1940".

Service's 'The August Coup' comes out a whole 35 years after the

dramatic events in the USSR that presaged the total collapse of Stalinism. He has laboured again, producing just 300 pages of narrative but 57 pages of footnotes, a 22-page index and a 9-page bibliography.

The result? An extraordinarily detailed account of a few days in August 1991 and a gargantuan struggle between the last President of the USSR, Mikhail Gorbachev, and the first president of the Russian Federation, Boris Yeltsin. Before the end of that year - in fact on Christmas Day 1991 - the 'Soviet Union' was dissolved and Gorbachev was leaving the Kremlin. A Confederation of Independent States was already being formed to replace the USSR after a clandestine meeting in Belovezhskaya in early December. Service the historian gives no indication for new generations of readers of how the USSR was founded in 1922 on the initiative of Lenin and Trotsky - a federation of nascent socialist states to replace Czarist Russia's vast 'prison house of nations'.

Much later, in exile in 1936, Trotsky predicted that a crisis in the Soviet Union could lead either to

a political revolution with workers striving to take control of the publicly owned economy or a social counter-revolution and the establishment of capitalism.

Following the collapse of the 1991 coup there was indeed an unfettered rush to 'the market', headed by factory managers and 'Communist' Party 'bosses' alike - the oligarchs of today! This was just the process of social counter-revolution that Leon Trotsky described in his book 'Revolution Betrayed'.

Service - the historian and anti-socialist - conflates the historic Bolshevik revolution of October 1917 with the extremely bloody political counter-revolution that Stalin carried through after Lenin's death (in 1924) and his wholesale slaughter of millions.

Stalinism

Service well knows that Stalin's successors maintained their corrupt and bureaucratic rule long after Khrushchev's 1956 revelations of Stalin's heinous crimes.

President of the USSR in 1991, Gorbachev appears to have been a privileged but earnest communist. He was no doubt affected by developments elsewhere in Eastern Europe and in China - the vast nation he visited in June 1991 at the height of the Tiananmen Square protests.

Service's book is full of fascinating detail but does not draw out any lessons for serious students of today who have no experience of the so-called 'Cold War' between two mutually exclusive class systems.

The author confirms that Gorbachev was earnest if incompetent in pursuing his aim of establishing a 'communist' society through his 'Glasnost' and 'Perestroika'. By contrast, the vodka-swilling Yeltsin is portrayed as totally unpredictable - unhindered, it seems, by any

principles spelled out on the Communist Party card he still carried.

Working at the time for the CWI in Russia's 'Northern Capital', Leningrad, I was able to witness the mood - on the barricades at the City Soviet and at the huge rally called by the City Mayor, Anatoly Sobchak, in Winter Palace Square. In those days we were battling against the stream arguing the case for workers' democracy as the alternative to both Stalinism and capitalism. (One place I did not go near was my flat in Petrogradskaya, staked out by police from the morning of 19 August!)

At 'safe' houses of friends, I watched for news but nothing was being shown except Tchaikovsky's ballet 'Swan Lake' - over and over again! This was a decades-long tradition in times of trouble in the USSR. The press conference eventually shown of the putsch leaders was truly comical. The aged 'Siloviki' group of senior officials, which supposedly controlled the main branches of state power, was led by Yanayev clapping his hands together to stop them from shaking!



Boris Yeltsin announces victory over the coup from the balcony of the White House, Moscow PHOTO: OLEG KLIMOV/LIBERTY/SIPA/CC

It was clear their almost comic attempt would not last long. Within days, one had committed suicide, and others became seriously unwell. After brief periods of imprisonment, the survivors renewed their activity in the Communist Party... presumably to try and make the Soviet Union great again, taking the Chinese road to the market!

It was also clear that the plotters had no idea of how to retain the state-owned planned economy that had been the source of their very considerable privileges - even if they had wanted to.

Those few days marked an historic turning point in the transition to capitalism in the USSR. There would be no going back. Yeltsin was supported by troops outside Moscow's White House and buses had been turned on their sides to block the tanks' route to the Kremlin. There were some lightning strikes in the mining areas for example, but not really mass enthusiasm amongst workers. Service says there were few of them supporting Yeltsin at the White House (less than 6% of the crowd).

The failed coup and the undignified ferrying back from Crimea to Moscow of the plotters and Gorbachev and his family was a turning point. But the collapse of Stalinism and the disintegration of the vast, state-owned economy of the USSR, was already under way. Service's book is loaded with detail of how this process developed - the deadly street battles between gangster would-be capitalists, the factory managers becoming capitalists or oligarchs.

The blow-by-blow accounts of how political opponents dealt with each other are amusing. There are numerous stories that reveal the rottenness of the 'Soviet' state's vast bureaucracy - the heavy-drinking 'People's Ministers', with their lackeys, their expensive policy blunders and endless political manoeuvring.

Service's book begins and ends in Crimea, at the vast holiday villa of Gorbachev. In between is fascinating detail but little explanation of what had gone wrong with the Soviet Union. Read much more on that from the Committee for a Workers' International - socialistworld.net.



- The August Coup: The Destruction of the Soviet Union and the Making of a New Russia 1985-1991 by Robert Service is published by Picador (£30)

£1/£2 solidarity price

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the Socialist

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formerly **Militant**

YOUTH DEMAND A FUTURE

- Youth demand jobs
- £15-an-hour minimum wage for all – end lower youth rates
- Scrap uni fees – for free fully funded education



RHYS CASTLEY
SWANSEA SOCIALIST PARTY

Life for young people has become increasingly difficult. Jobs and apprenticeships are more and more scarce. University leaves us with at least £40,000 debt. For those that can find jobs, the wage fails to meet their basic needs.

2.5 million young people have had to cut back on food to afford essentials in the last three months. Nearly one million young people not in education, employment, or training.

Over the last few months of our Socialist

Party campaigning, we have heard the frustration young people have from trying to live and work in these conditions. We heard of people applying for hundreds of jobs, and not getting so much as a call back.

Students leaving university, and only finding fast-food work - if any at all - having to move back in with family. Even nursing students completely unable to find work, despite the staffing crisis in our NHS.

So, with the support of young workers and students from across Swansea, West Wales, and Neath Port Talbot, we set up in Swansea city centre on 20 August for our latest day of action. The message from young people was clear.

We spoke about an end to youth unemployment and lower youth pay rates, and for a £15-an-hour minimum wage at least for all.

We demanded free fully funded education, proper apprenticeships and training schemes, and highlighted the need for socialism to truly and permanently end these issues.

Once we set up our campaign stall, we had people of all ages, from grandparents fearing for their grandchildren's future, to students fearing for their own, coming up one after the other to express support for our campaign and their frustrations. Some even stopped to join our protest.

Join the international youth walkout on 20 November

With over 1,000 dead and nearly 4,000 missing after deadly floods in Nepal, the reasons are stacking up for young people to protest. Young people are set to walk out and protest across Europe on 20 November, fighting for our future, not their wars and climate catastrophe. Be a part of it and join Socialist Students now!

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WHAT WE STAND FOR: THE SOCIALIST PARTY'S MAIN DEMANDS ►►► see column on p14

