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the Socialist

Issue 1382

17-23 September 2026

formerly **Militant**

FIGHT FOR OUR FUTURES

JOIN THE INTERNATIONAL YOUTH STRIKE ON 20 NOVEMBER

SOCIALIST STUDENTS

The world is in crisis: wars, climate catastrophe, youth unemployment and the rising cost of living. Meanwhile, the big-business billionaires only get richer.

Millions of young people despair at the prospect of our futures being torn up and thrown away, while the powerful elites compete for evermore power and profits.

But we won't accept that. That's why we will be joining the international youth walkouts on 20 November, together with over 20 other youth organisations across Europe.

We are fighting for our futures. Billionaire-funded politicians like Nigel Farage want to divide workers and young people – encouraging us to point fingers at each other rather than the big-business capitalists whose interests this rotten system serves.

Instead, young people across Europe will be taking united action together. Socialist Students will be building for the biggest possible walkouts and raising the need to take the wealth and power out of the hands of the capitalist bosses – so it can be put to use to meet the needs of all.

Students get organised and fight back - on housing, unemployment, education cuts



What you can do - see pages 2-5

Fight for socialist change



Building for coordinated public sector strike action and a national trade union demo



Reports from the NSSN lobby of the TUC and from the unions preparing national ballots, pages 6-9



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The Socialist is written, read, sold and bought by ordinary workers, trade unionists, young people and Socialist Party members. We want you to write for the Socialist.

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



Graduate unemployment crisis

We need real jobs, with pay we can actually live on

KATE BLANCHARD
WEST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

Graduate vacancies have dropped by nearly half in the past year – falling to only 8,383 listed in July – a survey by jobs website Adzuna has shown. With 500,000 undergraduate students progressing from UK universities every year, this has made already competitive vacancies impossible to achieve for most new graduates.

The youth unemployment rate has risen to 16.2% as of June. The Labour government has declared it a crisis of ‘NEETS’ – under 25s not in employment, education, or training.

The new Andy Burnham Labour government is proposing things like training schemes, employment

advice, and temporary unpaid job placements to tackle this ‘crisis’. (See ‘Sainsbury’s work placement scheme: ‘They want young people to work for free’ www.socialistparty.org.uk). Yet, this ignores the actual drivers of increasing unemployment.

Ever-larger profit

It’s not lack of ‘employment advice’ that’s making vacancies disappear, but that big business has been allowed to continuously cut costs in the name of driving ever-larger profits. They keep wages low, replace workers with climate-destroying AI, and extract more labour out of fewer workers.

Even more vacancies disappear as big companies are not willing to

invest in training. When the ultra-wealthy want more profit, they inevitably try to squeeze it from the working class.

Labour’s proposed strategy shows that it isn’t willing or able to tackle this. It will do little to help graduates into meaningful, long-term employment that pays an actual living wage.

The Socialist Party proposes sharing out the work – fewer hours, for better pay, creating more meaningful jobs overall. Allowing workers to enjoy a better work-life balance.

To achieve that we fight for a socialist society that puts the working classes in control of deciding what is needed for the benefit of society, and not for the pockets of the ultra-wealthy.

Cambridge college students support fight for jobs and future

PHILIP HODGSON
SOCIAL ACTION SOCIETY, HILLS ROAD COLLEGE

The newly formed Social Action Society at Hills Road College in Cambridge, with the help of Socialist Students, held a campaign stall to build awareness for the 20 November youth strikes, and to circulate flyers on topics such as youth unemployment. Our group has affiliated to Socialist Students.

The response was positive, with students from Hills Road and neighbouring colleges expressing interest in collective action. People were keen to hear about the international strike, and what it has to do with them as UK college students.

The issue of youth unemployment particularly resonated with people. Increasingly, sixth-form students are in need of jobs to cope with upcoming university tuition fees and student housing. This was reflected in people’s choice of leaflets.

This stall, along with one inside the college premises, has meant our student society has quadrupled in membership. Young people are interested in learning about broader plans to protest our current system, and also uniting with likeminded individuals to enact change.

As a society with socialist ties and a unanimous anti-war stance, we hope to keep up momentum for these goals throughout the academic year. We look forward to hearing about other societies across the country doing the same.

Salford uni – money for education not war

Socialist Students kicked off freshers with a series of campaign stalls and events across the Salford campus. We met students and staff with diverse views – anarchists, communists, Labour and Reform supporters.

But almost everybody agreed that things are not working for working-class people, and that trade unions are essential to the fightback.

People agreed with ‘Funding, Not

Fees’. The government is boosting military budgets. Meanwhile, uni face course cuts and closures.

Students thought that having multiple military stalls over the week was wrong. And that working-class people shouldn’t be forced to risk their lives in wars that serve the interests of the capitalist class.

21 people came to our first Socialist Students meeting centred around

how we can fight the rise of the far right. But it developed into a much wider conversation on how working-class people are too often pushed into the military.

We are the first political society at Salford in 25 years. There is a huge appetite for political discussion and debate.

Five people attending our meeting were studying military

apprenticeship courses. One said: “Why can’t we have discussions like this in the army?”

There’s a desire to fight back against the far right and super-rich, for nationalising energy and water under democratic workers’ control, and the socialist transformation of society.

FIN COZENS-STOTT
SALFORD SOCIALIST STUDENTS

Students: get organised and fight back!

What you can do

1 Build for the N20 international youth walkout!

On 20 November 2026, Socialist Students will be joining over 20 other youth organisations across Europe, walking out of classes to say: ‘Fight for our futures, not their wars!’
Can you collect names of fellow students who can build for the biggest possible walkout where you are?



2 Build Socialist Students at your campus, college or school

Socialist Students is a democratic nationwide socialist organisation which has groups active in over 50 schools, colleges and universities. In September 2025 it organised youth walkouts against the state visit of Donald Trump. Groups discuss socialist ideas, and put them into practice, fighting for decent services, against oppression and for socialist change.
Sign up to help build a group where you are



3 Buy your Socialistism 2026 ticket

On 14-15 November, days ahead of the N20 international youth walkout, over 1,000 socialist activists will come together in London for a weekend of discussion and electric Saturday night rally.

What role for direct action in the struggle for socialism? Are the Greens the type of party we need to transform the world? Does AI mean the end of the working class? They are some of the 30 discussion workshops taking place.
Freshers and school students tickets from £5



4 Read the Socialist newspaper

The mainstream media: social media platforms, TV channels, newspapers, and so on, all have something in common – they are owned and controlled by the billionaire capitalist class. They tell one side of the story.
The Socialist newspaper tells the other. We are a voice for young people and workers fighting for socialist change.
Read, write, sell and subscribe!

Like what you’ve read?
SUBSCRIBE TO THE SOCIALIST
socialistparty.org.uk/subscribe



5 Join the Socialist Party

To fundamentally change the world and bring about socialist change, wealth and power needs to be taken out of the hands of the super-rich capitalist bosses and put into the hands of the working-class masses. To achieve that, a party is vital.

The Socialist Party takes part in the struggles of young people, students and workers – at every stage putting forward what is necessary to win, linking that to the need for revolutionary change.

If you want to change the world, discuss with us about what it means to be a member.

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



End student housing hell - Fight for rent controls!

ROBBIE DAVIDSON
MANCHESTER SOCIALIST PARTY

This September, almost 300,000 18-year-olds will enter the student housing market. Most of them will be making the first steps, praying a degree can secure them a stable job, into a spiral of debt which will follow them through decades of their working lives.

£50,000 debt

Putting themselves on average £50,000 in the red, students will hope against hope that they can cover their expenses whilst succeeding in full-time higher education. As young people suffer, Paragon Bank found that 91% of uni landlords reported positive returns - the highest of any sector. This has come by bumping rents up by 60% over the last decade, whilst cutting costs and leaving young people in cramped, mouldy houses.

It is clear that Burnham’s crumbs won’t offer any way out for young people under the thumb of the cost-of-living crisis. Socialist Party members will be taking part in Socialist Students activity at freshers fairs around the country, making the case that we need a party which will.

On 20 November we are planning to stamp our mark on our futures, fighting for affordable, safe housing and decent jobs - not more money for their wars. Fight for our futures!

and housing hell at university. We are fighting alongside community activists and trade unionists for rent controls to cap rents and enforce decent standards, for a mass council house building programme, for living student grants not loans, and for fully funded, free education for all.

Rent strikes

At the beginning of the 2020s, a national wave of rent strikes erupted - and things have only got worse since. New struggles will come as the crisis of the profit-based capitalist system progresses.

On 20 November we are planning to stamp our mark on our futures, fighting for affordable, safe housing and decent jobs - not more money for their wars. Fight for our futures!

Bristol youth looking for an alternative

CLINT HATCHER
BRISTOL NORTH SOCIALIST PARTY

Our first campaign stall of this educational year was packed with students wanting to find out more on how they can organise in the college, and build towards the 20 November student walkouts. We’re hoping an informal meeting will take place after our next stall, with students wanting to find out more about setting up a Socialist Students society in their college.

The crisis of capitalism is apparent now more than ever for young people. The Socialist Party can point to these issues, and put forward a programme to fight against rampant militarism and austerity.

As we enter the new educational year, all kinds of students are desperately seeking an alternative to the broken system they will inherit.





Brighton college students want to fight back

CALLUM JOYCE
BRIGHTON SOCIALIST PARTY

We visited Brighton Met College to build support for the international youth walkouts on 20 November. One student remembered us from last year, when we were campaigning at the same college for walkouts against the state visit of US president Donald Trump to the UK.

We leafleted students during their lunch break. We had good discussions – they wanted to talk about the education funding crisis, what we thought about the Green Party, and the government's plans to increase military spending.

We are revisiting the college every week. We arm students, who are

looking to fight back, with a campaign and a strategy that they can use to do so.

We will invite university students that we meet at the freshers' fairs to come join us campaigning at the college. For a lot of students, this is their first time discussing the idea of political activity. We hope it will be the basis for building a fighting student organisation here, and at other schools and colleges around Brighton.

As an immediate next step, we are organising a student protest on 25 September in solidarity with German school students, who are walking out against militarisation on that day – a launchpad for the Europe-wide action on 20 November.

Birmingham City Uni – angry about lack of jobs and education cuts

NICK HART
BIRMINGHAM SOCIALIST PARTY

On the first day of welcome week, Birmingham City University Socialist Students got an excellent response. Both students and the public were angry at the lack of job opportunities for graduates, and universities prioritising the bottom line over quality of teaching.

One student walking past, stopped, took a leaflet, removed his earbuds, and told us he was just that minute listening to an audiobook of 'What Is To Be Done' by leader of the Russian Revolution Lenin.

Leicester socialist youth meeting Fight for our future, not their wars

ALANAH CAREY-PEACHER
LEICESTER SOCIALIST PARTY

We hosted a public meeting on the struggles youth face today, and what the world that we are inheriting could look like.

We have known the climate crisis to be imminent for decades, yet the capitalist class and their politicians in charge have sat on their hands, and continued to let greed override need.

Now we see consistently worse weather, especially in the most poverty-stricken places on the planet. The extreme heat in the UK this summer is set to become the 'new norm'.

One individual at the meeting stated that it feels like 'what is the use in trying, when the places we all know and love could become unlivable in our lifetimes'. The bare necessities and amenities – which we all require to live a fulfilled life – are becoming harder to obtain.

There is a youth unemployment crisis. We are expected to have far more experience for a job than is possible!

We've paid through our teeth for our education. Yet it appears to count towards very little, despite costing us and our families a lot of debt.

Many young people have little choice but to opt for precarious job opportunities, such as zero-hour

BILLY JONES
GLOUCESTERSHIRE SOCIALIST PARTY

Administrative staff, such as those working in IT and student services, are being put between a rock and a hard place. Either quit your job in the middle of this dire economy, or be the one to stay on, and see your workload increase to unmanageable proportions.

The Times has revealed that universities spent £400 million on redundancy payouts in the last 12 months – a 60% increase from the previous year. 'Rising financial pressures' have led to many courses being shut down completely, in particular humanities subjects.

But where does the blame for this lie? The Times puts it on 'stagnating domestic tuition fees'. But tuition fees are rising. They were £9,000 in 2016, and will be over £10,000 next year.

University was once free. So where is the money that students pay in fees really going?

You would think it would be used to pay for better courses, better accommodation, and better access to

support from key staff. Clearly the opposite is true.

When education is run like a business, the only people who benefit are the rich. Education should only have one goal – education, not making profits. For example, instead of focusing of education, the University of Birmingham talks about "long-term strategic ambitions".

It's time students and staff joined together to fight back. On 20 November, student and youth organisations across Europe – including Socialist Students – are coming together for a day of joint strikes and mobilisation, under the slogan: 'Fight for our futures, not their wars'.

The University and College Union (UCU) is also balloting its members in further education for strike action to demand a pay rise this autumn, alongside other workers (see pages 6-9). Workers in Unison union at Gloucestershire uni took strike action at the end of the last academic term over low pay, long hours, and lack of holidays.

It is only through this kind of coordinated fightback that students will be able to get the top-quality education that they deserve.

cuts benefits and threatens to take them away. It's worsened by dodgy, invasive 'review processes' that claim we're 'fit'.

The cherry on top – increasing war and military spending – an immense toll on the working class. Increasing militarisation across Europe has sparked students to walk out on 20 November.

We're demanding our governments fund education and our futures, instead of funding destruction. It's more important than ever for the working class and young people to stand up.



Fight for free education for all Scrap the failed loan system



DANIEL BASSEY
YORK SOCIALIST STUDENTS

In college, I was told that you could afford to go to university, no matter your personal background. And that loan repayment was merely an extra 'tax', that would be offset by the higher-paying job opportunities that a degree could offer.

I wasn't told that in 2023, the loan repayment threshold had lowered from £29,000 to £25,000. Meaning that the annual amount repaid jumped from roughly £50 to £453, on an average graduate salary.

Recent headlines around loans being 'missold' point at the crushing reality of fees and debt faced by ambitious young students, with no other choice but to bite the bullet.

The system hasn't always worked this way. In 1977, student fees were funded entirely by government, with a modest maintenance grant too!

This funding system was threatened under Margaret Thatcher's Tory government. But due to the backlash from students, nothing changed until 1998.

Then, Tony Blair's Labour

government introduced an upfront fee of £1,000 a year. Labour tripled tuition fees in the 2000s.

And the Tory-Lib Dem coalition tripled fees again in 2012. Annual tuition fees are set to rise to over £10,000 next year.

While some have the ability to pay, the reality for many students is that tuition fees are unaffordable. A typical working-class student has parents unable to provide maintenance support. With most loan money going on rent, we're forced to pick up a part-time job alongside full-time university, affecting our studies.

Graduates are rarely able to pay off the £50,000 in debt. Instead, many pay until it is written off after 40 years!

The loan system is a failed, predatory, capitalist solution to the higher education funding crisis. Further increases to student fees are completely unaffordable, and do nothing to address uni budget deficits.

Courses are being cut, staff laid off, and our universities continue to tumble down international rankings. Socialist Students calls to end the market-based fee model, and for a free, fully funded higher education system.

Southampton college students struggling to cope

NICK CHAFFEY
SOUTHAMPTON SOCIALIST PARTY

While discussing with groups of students and staff at Southampton City College about the problems they face not in education, planning for a future came up – securing jobs, coping with the dangers of city life, and rising knife crime.

Staff explained how keen students are, signing up for apprenticeships, but finding it difficult to get an employer to take them on. Why doesn't the council step in and offer training in construction, so we have a 'direct works' team to refurbish the 600 empty council homes that could dent the waiting list?

Southampton Labour council closed all its youth centres in 2012. The Socialist Party fought those cuts,

and we warned the council the impact it would have.

Young people should have access to safe activity and support. With a guaranteed job, training, or place in education, young people would have a genuine future.

Most weeks over the summer we've held a city centre campaign stall in the afternoon, before our Socialist Party branch meets. We chat with young people who gather there after school and college finishes.

This week was better than ever. Young people from two other colleges, and one of the local unis, signed up for the 20 November walkout.

All had different reasons. Young people are angry.

We spoke to two young women who had grown up in care, recognising that their families could have

stayed together if they had been given support at the time, when life was falling apart. Two young school students wanted to know how they could organise the walkout.

We explained how students had responded over climate change, with the huge school strikes. The key is get organised, and hold regular meetings.

Begin a discussion on the issues facing young people, and how the walkout can attract greater numbers, pressuring councils and governments into making concessions to the needs of young people.

Already, some who have signed up want to come to our meetings and hear more. Events are pushing young people to conclude they need to get active and fight for their future.

Greenwich students back working-class unity against racism and far right

SOFIA PANDOLFI
SOUTH LONDON SOCIALIST STUDENTS ORGANISER

Socialist Students campaigned outside the welcome fair at the University of Greenwich Avery Hill campus, discussing with students the need to build a political voice on campus, and be part of the international youth strike on 20 November to fight for our future. 20 students signed up to know more about and join Socialist Students.

A few students who took leaflets said they did not consider

themselves 'political.' Despite claiming not to know about politics, they did understand from their experiences of worrying over getting a job, the extremely high cost of living, the travel expense of commuting to university, and the debt they'll graduate with – the crises that young people face today.

We explained why the education and unemployment crisis we're experiencing is a product of a system that prioritises profit, and invests in war over our future. Joining Socialist Students means fighting against cuts

to our education and public services, funding our needs rather than increasing university tuition fees, and for a socialist transformation of society that can offer students and young people better opportunities and a real future.

Students expressed anger towards the far right, and worry over the threat of Reform. They were interested in the need to build unity amongst young and working-class people to fight back against the division and racism fuelled by the far right.



BUILDING FOR COORDINATED PUBLIC SECTOR STRIKE ACTION AND A NATIONAL TRADE UNION DEMO

This winter, over half a million public sector workers could be taking national strike action against Andy Burnham's Labour government. The 2026 Congress of the TUC (Trade Union Congress) met at the start of an autumn in which there will be national ballots for action in three unions: the civil service union PCS, teachers in the National Education Union (NEU), and further education lecturers in the University and College Union (UCU).

The following pages report on the debates and decisions taken in the last

week by the leaderships of those unions, and on the lobby at the start of TUC organised by the National Shop Stewards Network (NSSN) on 13 September.

The NSSN in particular was lobbying in support of the PCS motion 34, to "urgently call a national Saturday demonstration this autumn for investment in public services, against austerity and for pro-worker policies" and urging "all public sector unions to join a united campaign on pay, and, if needed, to plan for coordinated industrial action".

NSSN rally and lobby

The room was overflowing for the "best fringe meeting of the TUC" – as NSSN secretary **Katrine Williams**, National Executive Committee (NEC) member of the PCS, described the NSSN rally and lobby.

Birmingham bin workers, teachers and support staff, PCS members, Barts Health Trust workers, SPS Technology strikers, local government and transport workers and many others crowded in – delegates to the Congress and other workers and young people who had travelled to Brighton to hear the speakers and to put forward their own demands.

Don't just 'wait' - put pressure on Burnham

NSSN chair **Rob Williams** said: "It is 50 years since the long hot summer of 1976, when the then Labour government moved to a programme of austerity, that led directly to a whole period of workers' action against cuts and pay restraint, including the 'Winter of Discontent'.

"The lesson of the demise of Starmer – thrown out by the anger and frustration of working-class people, like the other five prime ministers we have had in the last decade – is that if you represent the interests of big business and the capitalist establishment, despite how much people hope against hope, yours will be a government of crisis."

He argued that while it is "totally understandable" that workers are desperate for change, "the biggest mistake that the TUC can make is wishful thinking." Burnham's first Budget is on 28 October. "It's essential that the union movement doesn't just 'wait for Burnham' but sets out a real

emergency programme to counter the wish-list of big business."

As part of this programme, Rob explained, "We've got to keep demanding that Labour delivers on its promise to scrap the Tory undemocratic 50% strike ballot thresholds."

Rob argued for the TUC to support the PCS motion, but with a word of warning: "We successfully lobbied Congress last year to support the motion to call a national demo but shamefully it was never carried out. So we hope that this motion will pass this week, but the NSSN will keep the pressure on for this to be implemented."

PCS

PCS deputy president **Dave Semple**, a Socialist Party member, reminded the rally of the 2011 NSSN lobby of the TUC at the start of the Tory-LibDem austerity programme.

Then, PCS played a leading role in building resistance to those brutal cuts, from the massive 750,000-strong demo in March, to the joint strike by PCS and three education unions in June.

"We said we need mass strikes, we need a coalition of people willing to take action, and in consequence of



ALL PHOTOS BY GREG KITEOS UNLESS STATED OTHERWISE

in backing the action. In Bristol, NEU members are discussing the potential for a Bristol-wide strike of support staff and re-sharing advice on not crossing picket lines.

UCU

David Kaplan, a UCU member and teacher at an adult education college in London, explained that in FE, "each individual college group behaves like a business and negotiates its own pay for its staff. In January this year, there was national action by UCU members, but the action petered out as different colleges settled with their colleges for different pay rises.

This point had been taken up by Rob Williams earlier: "The workers' movement has no common interests with the bosses. They want to make us pay the price at home for capitalist crisis, why should we have any trust in their foreign policy, which will always put the interests of big business first?" But, he argued, "the dismal character of British capitalism in 2026, after 50 years of neo-liberalism, means that you can't tinker around the edges." He argued it needs "fundamental change – in my opinion, socialist change."

NEU Executive member **Sheila Caffrey**, while emphasising the importance of the national ballot of teachers, reported that "Shamefully, there is no ballot of support staff" despite those workers being low paid and at risk of losing their jobs, due to "squabbles" between four unions that organise support staff (see more on page 8).

Surrey NEU member **Lucy Hatch** said that the decision of the NEU executive not to ballot support staff was disappointing but she was proud that Socialist Party members on the exec had fought for it. "Now we must all work together in every union".

Sheila explained how support staff across unions could still be fully involved



Sheila Caffrey

But we need our own political voice

The rally gave a standing ovation to Birmingham binworker and Unite convenor **Matt Reid**, 18 months into all-out strike action against a Labour council, after a £8,000 pay cut. Thanking the NSSN and trade union movement for its backing, Matt detailed the lengths the Labour council had gone to try to break the dispute, including agency workers and court injunctions, to try to enforce fire and rehire on the workforce.

Matt said, "It looks like the Labour government have given councils the mechanism in which to fire and rehire their staff still. He's sort of saying we can't give you more money, but we'll give you the mechanisms to take it from your own staff." Unison member **Mia Hollsing**, speaking at the lobby outside the TUC, demanded that councils – Labour and Green – refuse to make cuts and instead campaign for the funding needed.

Rob Williams argued that it is "essential that the trade union movement takes the lead – both industrially and politically. The likes of crypto-billionaire-backed Reform, Restore and the far-right are looking to fill

the political vacuum left by this New Labour Mark II". In his reply to the debate, he said: "Yes, it is absolutely essential that we mobilise against them" but to confront them, the trade union movement needs "an alternative" – "in my opinion, with a socialist programme, that can appeal broadly to the working class of all backgrounds."

Fire Brigades Union general secretary **Steve Wright** told the rally: "When we said we'd back Andy Burnham, we met with him and told him we need investment in the fire service and public services, and public ownership. We're not willing to give our backing and our money if our members don't feel the benefit".

On the lobby, Unite Executive Council member and Socialist



PHOTO: ISAI MARJERIA

Party member **Len Hockey** reported on the historic decision taken at Unite conference last year to debate the union's relationship with Labour.

The necessity of fighting cuts and privatisation illustrates the need for workers to have their own political party. He said that as a Unite EC member, he will be working to ensure that debate happens, so that trade unionists can discuss how to achieve a political voice.

This followed Dave Semple reporting that the PCS conference had agreed motion A111, meaning that "if there is no end to austerity, the unions must get together and have a conference on the future of political representation. This vacuum cannot be allowed to continue."

On the lobby, Unite Executive Council member and Socialist

Stop Press: PCS motion 34 passed at TUC

Motion 34 from the PCS, to "urgently call a national Saturday demonstration this autumn for investment in public services, against austerity and for pro-worker policies" and urging "all public sector unions to join a united campaign on pay, and, if needed, to plan for coordinated industrial action", has been agreed at TUC.

Paul Nowak, general secretary of the TUC, gave a statement from the General Council supporting the motion, but qualifying this by saying that it is up to individual unions to decide on action and coordination. TUC delegates report that, on the question of the demonstration, Nowak said that the General Council will have to decide on whether that can go ahead.

Given the refusal of the General Council to implement last year's motion to call a demonstration, there is a real concern that they will do the same again. Therefore, as was said at the NSSN rally, the NSSN and the trade unions should keep up the pressure on the TUC for this demonstration to be called.

The NSSN Action Programme includes the demand "that the TUC enact Congress 2025 policy [now 2026 policy too] by calling an Autumn national demo against Labour austerity. If not, for a trade union 'coalition of the willing' to step in to organise such a demonstration."

Trade unions - back the youth walkouts

Liverpool Socialist Students member **Hannah Ponting** called for youth minimum wage rates to be scrapped, along with Burnham's 'apprenticeships' by which "you don't get a job at the end and you don't get paid while you're doing it".

She called for trade union support for the international youth walkouts on 20 November – 'Fight for our futures, not their wars'.

Socialist Students distributed a model motion for trade union bodies – below:

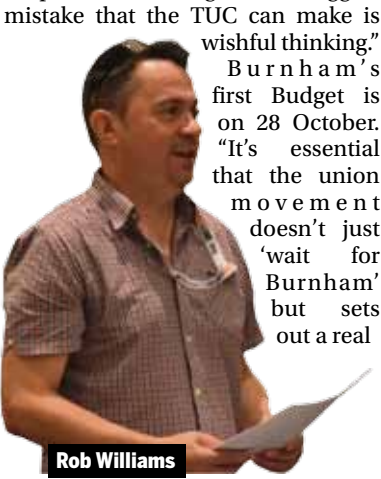
Support the November 20 International Youth Strike: 'Fight for our future, not their wars'

This union branch/trades council notes:

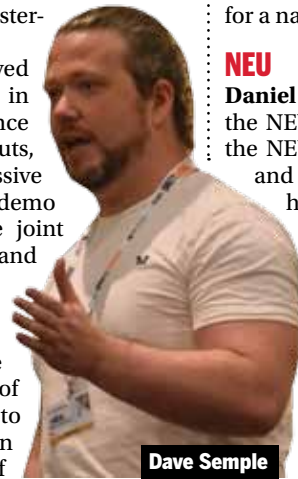
1. The increasing outbreak of war and armed conflict is adding to the instability facing young people and workers globally. The world political establishment, representing the interests of big business and the billionaires, is using the spectre of war in an attempt to justify further attacks on living standards and democratic rights.
2. Tens of thousands of school, college and university students across Europe are expected to take part in an International Youth Strike on Friday 20 November, walking out of class and protesting under the slogan, 'fight for our future, not their wars'.
3. By taking action on November 20, young people will be building on a growing international fightback to war, such as the ongoing 50,000-strong school strikes against conscription in Germany, as well as last year's general strike in Italy in solidarity with the Palestinian people.
4. More than 25 youth and student organisations across 12 European countries have so far pledged to build the International Youth Strike. In Britain and Ireland this includes Socialist Students, Young Greens (England and Wales), and the Stop the War Coalition.

This union branch/trades council resolves:

5. We stand in full solidarity with students walking out and protesting on November 20. We agree to donate £25 to Socialist Students to assist in producing leaflets, posters and other International Youth Strike campaign materials.
6. We agree to invite a representative from Socialist Students to speak about the International Youth Strike campaign at an upcoming meeting of [this union branch/trades council].
7. We also agree to provide a representative from [this union branch/trades council] to speak in solidarity with the International Youth Strike at a local protest on November 20, as well as offering stewarding and organisational support.
8. We oppose any reprisals against students taking action to fight against war and for a decent future, such as detentions, exclusions, or arrests. The rights to strike and protest are fundamental democratic rights for students and workers alike. We call on schools in particular not to take action against students. We pledge to support any student defence campaigns as necessary.
- See socialiststudents.org.uk for details and more info



Rob Williams



Dave Semple



Hannah Ponting

BUILDING FOR COORDINATED PUBLIC SECTOR STRIKE ACTION AND A NATIONAL TRADE UNION DEMO

NEU to ballot teachers for strike action on pay and funding - Socialist Party opposed narrow National Executive decision not to ballot support staff

Build a united fight of all NEU members together to win the funding we need

2027 Executive elections a chance to stand candidates who want a fighting, democratic union

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

On 3 October, the National Education Union (NEU) will open an England-wide ballot of teachers. The National Executive agreed in July that this will be to fight towards teacher pay restoration, following years of real-terms pay cuts, and for enough funding not just to cover the pay rise but to prevent redundancies.

But on 8 September, the Executive very narrowly voted not to ballot support staff over funding.

Support staff in schools are predominantly nonunionised and are at the sharp end of attacks on school funding and increasing redundancies. Over the last few years, the NEU has increased to nearly 70,000 support staff members - the second largest support staff membership out of four unions, including Unison, Unite and the GMB.

When the NEU was first formed in 2017 through the merger of the NUT and ATL, its then-leaders signed an agreement not to recruit support staff. However, since then, thousands have joined the NEU because they saw it as a fighting union, and expect their leaders to fight for them. This has led to complaints from the other unions, which in our view only damages the chance for a real fightback for the workers involved.

Socialist Party consistent position

Socialist Party members have, over several years, argued that the NEU should fight seriously for its support staff members, calling for maximum unity between the unions rather than complaints and sanctions. We've argued that disagreements between the unions should be resolved through democratic discussion between the elected lay leaderships of the unions. Over the summer, we launched a statement for maximum unity from national executive members in the NEU, Unison and Unite; hundreds of NEU members and 22 NEU exec members signed it. We wrote to the NEU general secretary Daniel Kebede to urgently request he initiated discussions with other union leaderships to back this call.

Over the summer, Unison and Unite balloted local government workers, including support staff, but while members overwhelmingly voted for action, the turnout did not reach the Tory 50% threshold, disgracefully kept



NEU strike of teachers and support staff in Tower Hamlets, East London, this year HUGO PIERRE

in place by the Labour government under Starmer and now Burnham.

A special meeting of the NEU Executive was held on Tuesday 8 September on Zoom. The Executive was to make a decision on whether to continue with ballots of both support staff and teachers. The general secretary reported on threats that voting to ballot support staff would result in sanctions from the TUC General Council and risked talks with the other unions breaking down.

The first amendment heard by the Executive attempted to ditch all national ballots and instead focus on lobbying government for increased funding - it was voted down by a clear margin. This was from a group that has consistently spoken against national action, and we, with others, strongly opposed this amendment.

The second amendment, which we also spoke and voted against, called for the cancelling of balloting and recruitment of support staff, and instead to just proceed with a ballot for teachers.

Tight vote

The crucial vote was not conducted in the professional manner one might expect. Instead, Zoom votes were counted three times, going from 26 for and 28 against, to 30 for and 27 against. This included exec members who weren't present joining the meeting for the later votes.

This shows how unwilling a section of the NEU leadership is to lead a fightback against Burnham's Labour, leaving members at the mercy of funding cuts, redundancies and school closures. But the vote was extremely close, showing the pressure from the membership.

A successful national ballot of teachers, coinciding with a ballot in the PCS union and UCU, could lead to an important renewal of public sector industrial struggle. But wouldn't this be stronger with the whole of the school workforce coming out in opposition to cuts and instead fighting for what schools, our communities and education workers need?

Involving support staff

We mustn't accept this as the end. We will build the ballot of teachers to be as successful as possible. But including support staff is still essential.

Could local ballots of support staff for action on issues affecting members locally run alongside the national teacher ballot, ensuring as great a unity as possible? We encourage all areas to host meetings of support staff to look at how action across unions can be built. We will circulate legal advice, such as has previously been produced by Bristol NEU, on the right for any worker to refuse to cross a picket line, and look at how this can be organised in local districts, including ensuring hardship funds are available. We call on the national union to do the same.

This split in the leadership and the majority grouping, the NEU Left, which includes members of the SWP (Socialist Workers Party), is significant. Socialist Party members already work with a larger group on the Executive, but hope this can be taken further. Those who are willing to build a fighting union are the people we want to work with. With the Executive elections next Spring, we put a call out to all those who are willing to strive to build a fighting union to work with us.

PCS national ballot dates set: Campaign for a big 'yes' vote!

REECE LAWTON

PCS NEC MEMBER, PERSONAL CAPACITY

PCS members are heading towards a national industrial action ballot as civil servants face renewed attacks on pay, jobs and conditions.

The PCS National Executive Committee (NEC) has agreed a ballot from 20 October to 1 December, opening the possibility of national industrial action before Christmas.

The ballot covers the union's national campaign over pay, jobs, pensions, hybrid working and terms and conditions. The immediate task is clear: organise throughout every workplace to smash through the anti-union 50% turnout threshold and deliver a decisive 'yes' vote!

Socialist Party and PCS Broad Left Network (BLN) members on the NEC argued that PCS should have launched the ballot by 30 September, in line with the decision of the union's annual conference. However, the NEC was informed, after questioning the general secretary on the delay, that the union's balloting provider could not begin it before 20 October. This situation should never have arisen - both conference and subsequent NEC meetings had instructed the union to prepare for a September ballot.

More importantly, the NEC left majority rejected proposals from the general secretary to hold a consultative ballot first, which would have meant further delays. Instead, we argued for what is needed now - an industrial action mandate capable of putting pressure on the government.

Pay and jobs

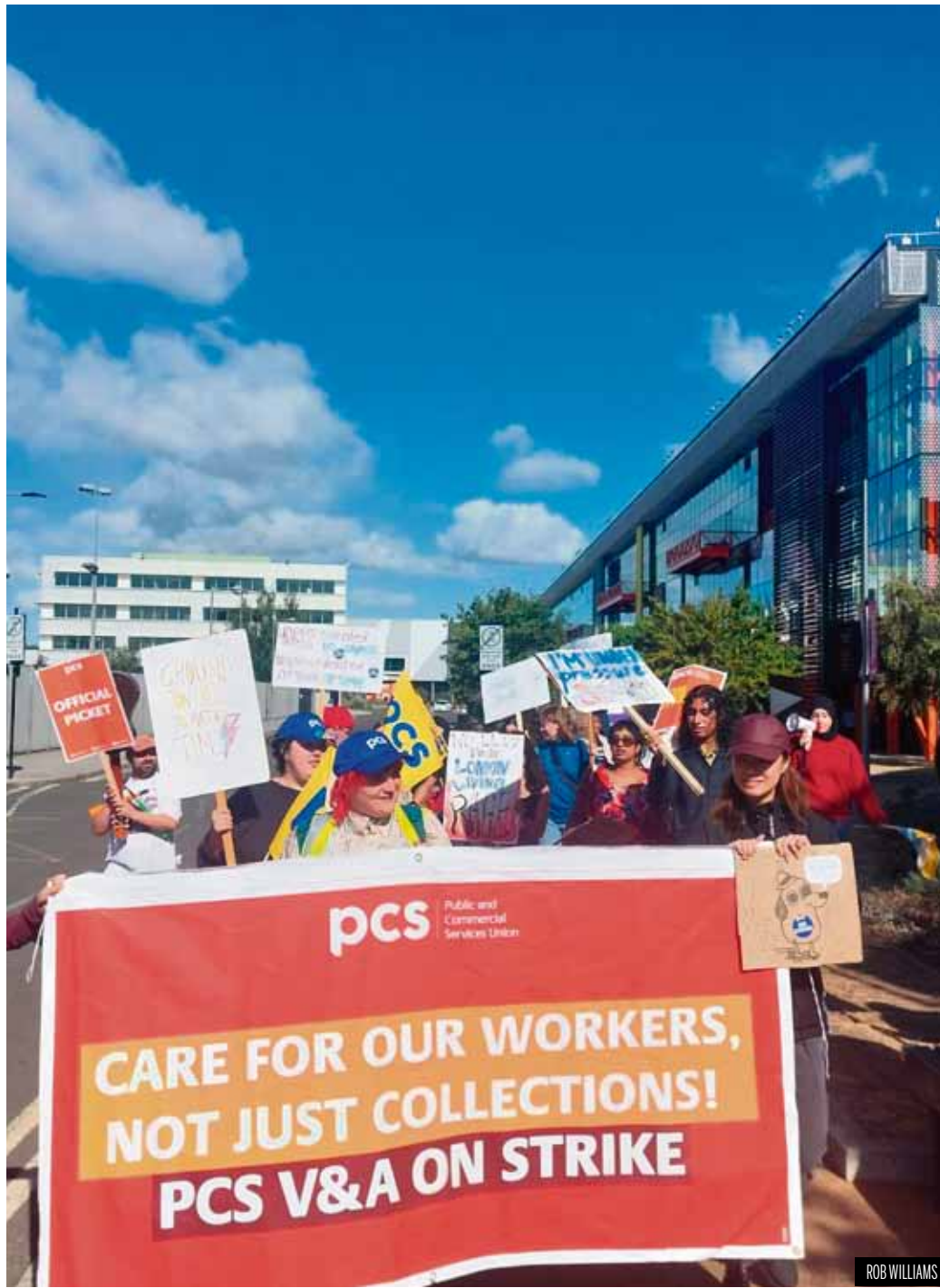
PCS conference policy calls for a 10% pay rise, an £18-an-hour minimum wage and appropriate London weighting. The government's 3.5% civil service pay remit falls far short.

Years of inflation have eaten into civil service pay. The fact that inflation fell from its previous peaks does not reverse the enormous increases already imposed. Energy, transport, water and council tax costs have risen, while international instability and conflict threaten further increases in energy and other prices.

Jobs are also under threat. Tens of thousands of civil service posts are threatened by government departmental spending cuts. PCS is demanding a job security agreement and protection against compulsory redundancies.

Job cuts also mean greater workloads for those who remain and deteriorating services for the public. Meanwhile, arbitrary office attendance requirements leave workers paying more each month simply to travel to workplaces where they may spend the day on online meetings.

The national ballot will not take place in a vacuum. PCS members are already showing what organised workers can achieve.



ROB WILLIAMS

At the V&A museum, PCS members returned a huge mandate for action, with more than 95% voting to strike, and have taken strike action alongside action short of strikes. At Ofgem, industrial action helped secure around 1,000 jobs within the civil service and bring another 200 posts in-house.

These disputes show why the national campaign matters. Instead of isolated groups of workers being forced to fight job cuts, low pay and attacks on conditions one by one, a successful ballot can bring the collective strength of the union into the struggle, coordinating with existing disputes where possible.

Coordinate with other unions

PCS members are not alone. The same question confronts workers throughout the public sector: who pays for the crisis? The millions of workers

who run government departments, schools, colleges, hospitals, councils and other services have enormous potential collective power. Trade unions facing the same government and the same attacks should coordinate their campaigns and, wherever possible, their industrial action in order to force the government to the table.

Between now and 20 October, PCS must organise in every workplace: checking membership details, recruiting members and reps, holding workplace meetings and systematically speaking to members about the campaign.

Once voting begins, every level of the union must be focused on beating the 50% turnout threshold and delivering the biggest possible 'yes' vote. Socialist Party and BLN members will be campaigning hard and keeping the pressure on.

UCU Further Education Committee agrees to ballot for national action

DUNCAN MOORE

UCU NEC MEMBER, FE UK-ELECTED, PERSONAL CAPACITY

The Further Education Committee (FEC) of the University and College Union (UCU) convened for a short, special meeting on 11 September and agreed to proceed with a national ballot of FE members on an aggregated basis for a 10% pay rise, institutional backing for collective pay bargaining, and action on workload. This will be the first aggregate ballot of England FE members in UCU's history.

At the FE conference this May, members voted for the South Devon College motion, moved by myself, for aggregated industrial action. Socialist Party members defended this decision at the last FEC meeting when attempts were made to postpone a ballot indefinitely (See 'Socialists safeguard UCU members' call to fight in further education' at socialistparty.org.uk).

Burnham claims he has put strengthening vocational and technical training at the top of his agenda, saying: 'From today, Britain will value the hard hat every bit as much as the graduation cap'.

However, the FE lecturers who teach these subjects have seen their pay fall by 40% in real terms since 2010. We have no national contracts, allowing colleges to compete in a race to the bottom on pay and conditions.

This year the Association of Colleges (which brings together the employers) is yet to make a pay recommendation, and due to the lack of national bargaining, any recommendation it does make will not be binding on college principals. The pay disparity between FE lecturers and our counterparts in schools now averages £10,000 per year, leading to massive recruitment and retention issues. If they don't value the teachers, how can they value the students?

Socialist Party members in UCU have been at the forefront of pushing for a strategy of an aggregate (all-member) ballot this autumn. UCU members want a national fight.

Due to last year's ballot being disaggregated (ie counted branch by branch), although the national turnout was above the 50% Tory threshold (disgracefully still in place), just 32 of the 70 branches gained a strike mandate. Due to college settlements, in the end just 17 branches came out on strike.

Truly national fightback

Now, with an aggregated ballot, many more UCU branches could come out in a truly national campaign, potentially joining other education workers in the NEU and civil servants in the PCS, putting pressure on Labour to deliver the funding we need.

FEC agreed a five-week ballot to conclude before the end of the Autumn term. Socialist Party FEC members argued, and other lefts agreed, that the committee secretary's proposal for a four-week ballot window was not long enough.

FEC also approved the grounds of the dispute, and Socialist Party members argued for these to be strengthened. Members don't take strike action lightly, and they will be more confident to vote 'yes' if they know that their action has a clear objective that can begin to solve their problems.

This year's pay claim was based on the union's 'New deal for FE' demands: a 10% rise and steps towards pay parity with school teachers within three years; national workload agreements, and binding fully funded national bargaining.

Following the FEC, all of these will be part of the dispute following an amendment to include workload. However, as the dispute, despite the aggregation of voting, is still with individual employers, there was a disagreement on the FEC about how to fight for national objectives.

National demands

Since the pay demands are only achievable with a significant increase in government funding, Socialist Party members argued (alone on the FEC) that a demand for funding from the Labour government should be a core part of the dispute. We have a new prime minister - we should demand he reopens the issue of funding.

This point was opposed strongly by the union officials and by other members of the FEC, including other lefts, due to the legal advice UCU sought out. This asserts that FE staff can only have a dispute with individual employers, who don't control the funding.

Socialist Party member Marco Tesei challenged the legal advice, pointing to the legislation that makes action against the Secretary of State possible.

When it was clear we would not win this at the FEC, I asked the officials to consider how we raise the question of funding in our campaign material, up to and during the ballot. Socialist Party members on the FEC will continue to argue for leveraging all possibilities to ensure successful national action.

In our view, the union could also have gone further on what it is demanding on national pay bargaining, going beyond simply asking employers to make public statements of support.

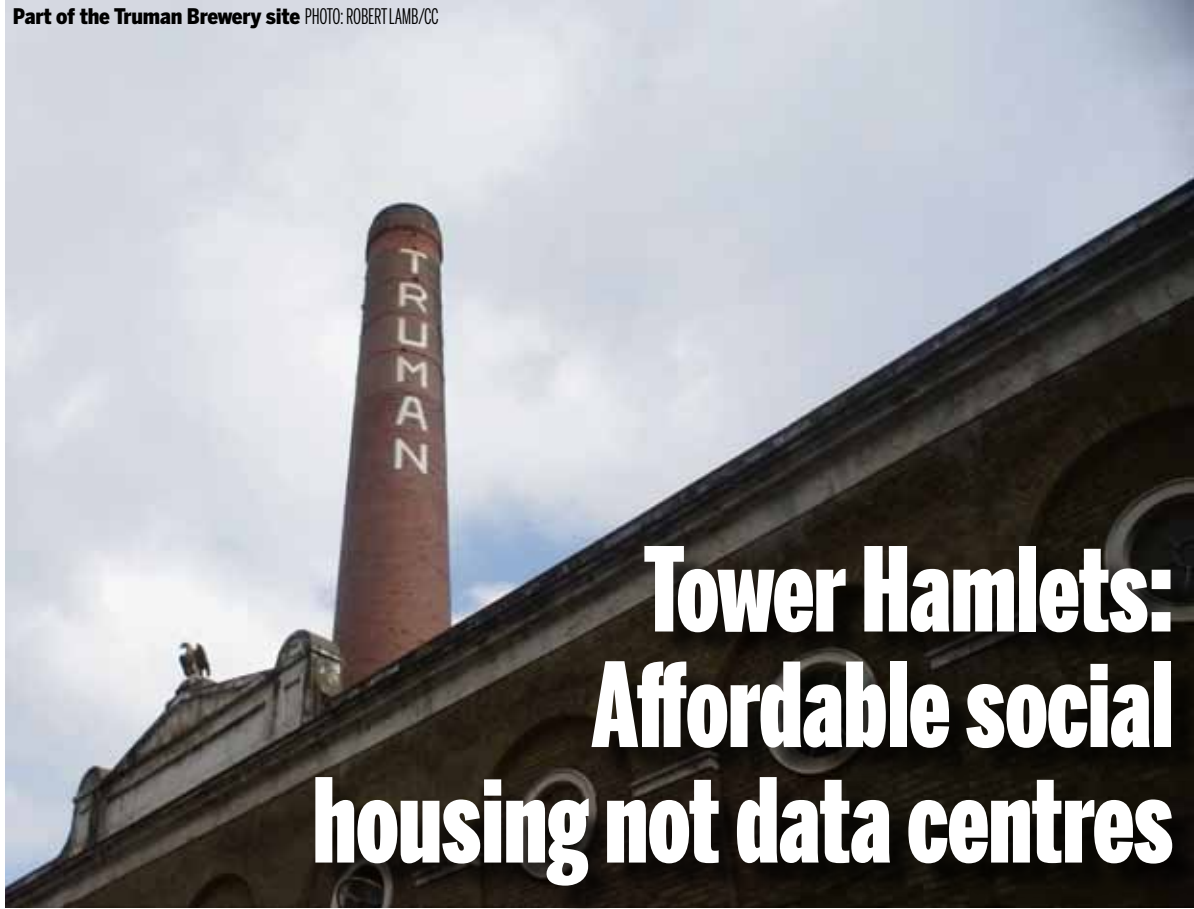
Nevertheless, UCU FE members now have an opportunity to collectively send a powerful message to college bosses and the government by delivering a resounding 'yes' vote.

Clear leadership will be needed to keep branches together, when local employers will be trying to settle local inadequate pay deals. If branches are settling local negotiations, they should add a written caveat stipulating that they will re-open negotiations on pay for 2026-27 once the additional FE funding is confirmed. We should strike together to fight for the government to concede more funding. We cannot let the Labour government off the hook!



Duncan (second left) on the Truro and Penwith picket line in January SOUTHWEST SOCIALIST PARTY

Part of the Truman Brewery site PHOTO: ROBERT LAMB/CC



Tower Hamlets: Affordable social housing not data centres

PETE DICKENSON
TOWER HAMLETS SOCIALIST PARTY

A few days after becoming Housing, Communities and Local Government minister in the Burnham government, Angela Rayner posted on social media that: “For too long communities have seen their high streets declining around them... We’re putting powers into the hands

of communities to crack down on everyday eyesores that blight town centres.”

However, a few days before this she had nodded through, against massive local community opposition, a decision by her predecessor, uber-Blairite Steve Reed, to redevelop part of the former Truman’s brewery site in the heart of the Bangladeshi community in Tower Hamlets, East London. As well as a data centre, the

scheme will include six social housing units, compared to the Tower Hamlets Council proposal of 345 homes. 30,000 families are currently on the council’s social housing waiting list, and blocking the Truman proposal would have been a statement of intent that the government is serious about building council homes. Rayner’s social media post though was just cynically rubbing salt into the local community’s wound.

Yet again, establishment politicians’ actions spoke louder than words.

The controversy over the Truman site has been raging since 2020. The then Labour council, headed by Mayor John Biggs, approved a proposal by Truman Estates, the owners of the site, to build a shopping mall, despite opposition to this headed by the Save Brick Lane campaign. When Biggs was kicked out in 2022, the new mayor, Lutfur Rahman drew up a plan, including 345 social housing homes.

30,000
families are currently
on the council’s social
housing waiting list

Truman Estates objected to the council proposal and it was withdrawn. In August 2024, the owners submitted three new planning applications, now including a data centre, which went to a public inquiry. Halfway though this, the then minister Steve Reed, intervened and ordered that the public inquiry inspector should submit the report directly to him to decide, bypassing normal planning procedures. This dictat not coincidentally, coincided with the decision of the Starmer government to declare data centres ‘critical national infrastructure’. Reed got the sack when Burnham took over, but Angela Rayner nodded his proposal through almost immediately.

There is currently an explosion of data centre construction in London, with 247 built already and 26 more major developments in the pipeline.

The huge power requirements of data centres are now threatening to prevent housing developments. In 2022, a London Assembly report revealed that housebuilding was crowded out due to data centre power demand. In West London, a prime site for data centre construction, the electric grid had reached full capacity by 2022 and housing schemes faced a 15-year delay in getting connected.

Pressure to build data centres as close as possible to the centre of London is coming from finance capital. The growth of ‘high frequency trading’ by the speculators means that data transmission speeds are critical, and the closer the data centre is to the trading floor the faster the speeds (high frequency trading is where money is moved around up to a staggering billion times a second to where it gets the highest return). Increasing this speed if only by nano-seconds will reap rich profits, hence the attraction of the Brick Lane data centre, situated only a few hundred metres from London’s financial district. It appears that these increased profits are the ‘benefits to the local community’ claimed in the inspector’s report.

The campaign to stop the Brick Lane development and build social housing instead has mass local support, including from the Socialist Party, and this now needs to be extended. Tower Hamlets Council should contact in particular the Green Party-led boroughs in London, plus any others prepared to fight for council housing, to launch a city-wide campaign to force Andy Burnham to be true to his earlier words and back a mass programme of council home building rather than data centres.

Nationalise the water companies – give us democratic control



PHOTO: TIM SHEERMAN-CHASE/CC

MOLLIE NIXON
CARLISLE SOCIALIST PARTY

Sewage pollution by water companies is now the norm. Every single water body is now contaminated with harmful chemicals, with the most toxic sewage discharge incidents having more than doubled to 48 per day at the start of 2026. Rivers, lakes and beaches are being left too polluted to safely swim in.

As this happens, our water bills are continuously climbing. These companies are being allowed to raise our bills, expecting us to front the cost for decades of underinvestment into inadequate sewage-processing infrastructure. Customers of United Utilities in the North West will see the biggest average increase in our bills – £57 up from last year, and for what?

With 84% of people already taking steps to reduce their water use due to unaffordability, according to the Office for National Statistics (ONS), and newly floated proposals by water companies to charge ‘surge pricing’ during droughts, the pressure is mounting on working people. We are being forced to pay more for a worse service!

Despite the ban introduced by the government in 2025 to stop top polluters from doling out lavish company bonuses, through loopholes the pay of water company chief executives in England and Wales rose by 5% this year. Louise Beardmore, of United Utilities, received a whopping £2.5 million pay packet – up £1.1 million from last year! This is in spite of the Environmental Agency finding pollution from her company to be the single largest contributor to the

84%
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due to the
cost

nutrient burden of lake Windermere – a UNESCO world heritage site.

These companies are able to pollute waterways and skirt government bonus bans because they face no real accountability. The Labour government is adamant on the need for proper regulation and penalisation rather than public ownership. But if that actually worked, we wouldn’t be in this mess. Andy Burnham has talked about wanting stronger accountability: what stronger accountability can there be but from the people who depend on that service? Expressions of anger and chiding remarks in parliament are not enough without real action.

What we need is the nationalisation of water, which the vast majority of Britons (82%) from across supporters of all five main political parties agree with. This would only work, however, if it was run under democratic workers’ control – not by those who protect profit over people and planet. And use the wealth and resources hoarded by the super-rich to do the vital infrastructure works, not from increasing our bills.

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For workers’ democratic control of AI – nationalise!

“We really do earnestly believe AI could kill all humans! I personally think it is greater than 10% within the next decade.” Those are the words of an Anthropic AI researcher responding to one of his colleagues’ public resignation over safety concerns.

Putting aside the likelihood of AI systems developing apocalyptic capabilities, and the fact that super-rich CEOs pile more and more resources into their development to try and end up top of the pile and reap the rewards, meanwhile we don’t have a say in how the technology is developed.

But in the real world, development of this technology is already damaging our health and ability to continue our lives. The massive resources ploughed into building data centres and the power needed to run them all emits more and more tonnes of fossil fuels into the atmosphere. The unfolding



**We can’t leave this
technology, and the decisions
over production, in the hands
of a tiny capitalist elite**

climate catastrophe is already seeing an increase in deadly ‘natural’ disasters – just look at the collapse of the glacier and flash flood in Nepal killing over 1,000 people and leaving in its wake a swath of devastation.

We can’t leave this technology, and the decisions over production that belch out polluting fumes, in the hands of a tiny capitalist elite. We need to take their wealth and power and democratically plan production in a way that benefits us all, and doesn’t harm the environment.

Leeds protests AI data centre plans

ALI MANSFIELD
YORKSHIRE SOCIALIST PARTY

One of the largest protests Leeds has seen in some time was called over proposals for Microsoft to build a cluster of AI data centres in Skelton. Labour mayor for West Yorkshire, Tracy Brabin, has given vocal public support to the plans, pointing towards “our region’s future as an AI powerhouse”.

Protesters raised concerns about the use of AI itself, but also linked to broader issues about the role of tech companies, links with the arms industry and the environmental impact of data centres. Planning documents submitted to Leeds council indicate that the proposed data centres would use 22 million litres of water per year, and energy equivalent to more than half a million homes. There are concerns about the impact on water infrastructure which is already under strain – and who would be forced to bear the impact of shortages or the cost of upgrades.

Socialist Party members raised the nationalisation of tech companies and utilities, so the use of these resources could be democratically planned, and any technologies developed could be used in the interests of ordinary people, not dictated by profit. Our stall was extremely popular, selling dozens of copies of the Socialist.



PHOTO: IAIN DALTON

Reform: Funded by billionaires, serving the capitalist bosses

DARA FITZGERALD
WEST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

Breaking news on Monday. The sky is blue, water wet, and Reform has yet again been caught up in a dodgy donor furore. Following the fallout post the Reform conference after the Channel 4 report, Reform has announced a record £72 million in donation pledges from Chris Harborne and Ben Delo, two men who made a fortune in the cryptocurrency space.

Far from being a party for the working class – as Reform leaders sometimes claim – by dividing the working class and trying to turn sections against each other, Reform acts to serve the billionaires and the capitalist bosses.

For those counting, this is the third donation scandal that Reform has been caught up in in the last couple of months. ‘Posh George’ Cottrell, convicted fraudster and author of the book “How to launder money”, was revealed by the Times to be secretly funding parts of Farage’s operation for years without disclosing such payments. It was also revealed on the eve of the Reform conference, that reporting group Verbatim has spent a year undercover filming major party

figures, such as Farage, Dan Jukes, and James Orr, speaking about paid-for polling that benefited Reform and was printed uncritically in the Times and Telegraph

Scandals in Reform such as these have bolstered the arguments from some quarters, such as MPs in parliament, for more regulation of donations to political parties. The House of Lords is debating a Labour bill to cap donations to parties from expats to £100k in a single calendar year, backdated to March.

While Reform’s recent donations have been particularly bountiful, large individual donations to political parties are nothing new. The Sainsburys alone have a long history of donating to the biggest parties, with John giving more than £11 million to the Tories, and David giving more than £11 million to Labour.

Also, it could be argued that the specificity of Labour’s new retroactive donation law, capping donations from overseas donors, is designed to target Reform’s donor base. Recent analysis by Friends of the Earth showed that if a £100k donation cap was brought in, Reform would be left with just 15% of its donations! Party against the elites indeed!

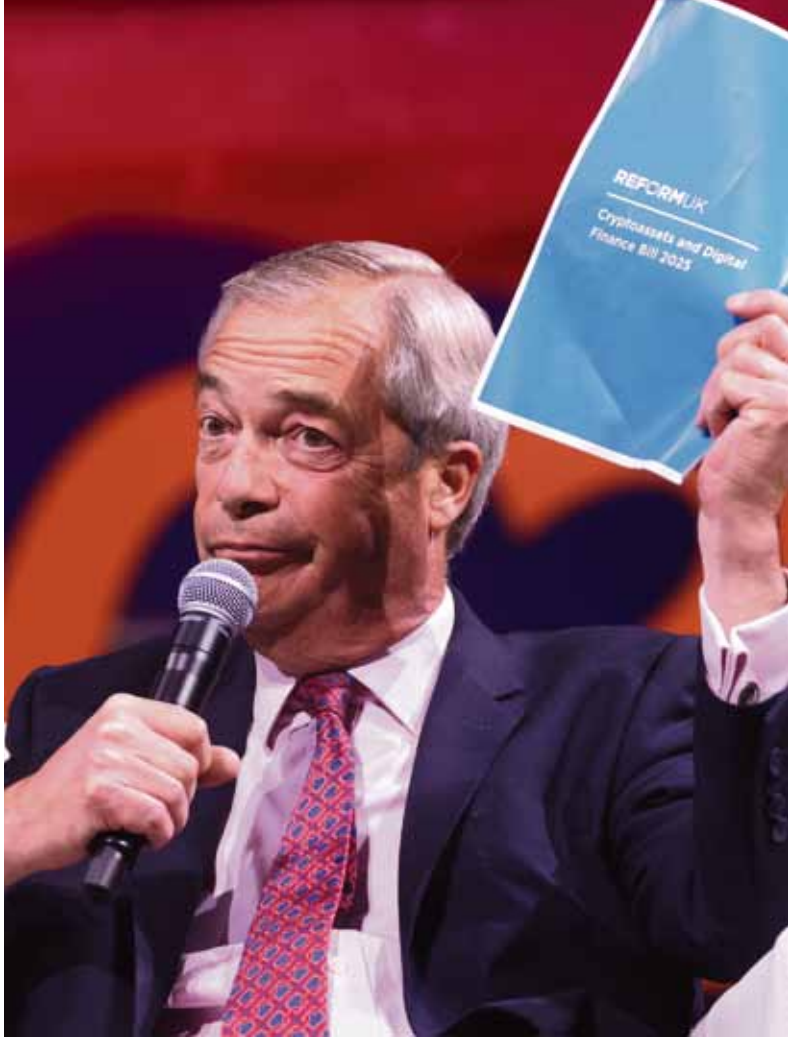
Reform deputy leader Richard Tice has complained of hypocrisy, pointing to trade union donations to the Labour Party. As if donations from democratic organisations of hundreds of thousands of members are equivalent to those from exploitative capitalist bosses!

Actually, the scandal there is that the Labour affiliated unions no longer get any real democratic say in the party’s policies. Labour – created by the working class and trade unions – has been transformed into another vehicle for the capitalist class.

The capitalist parties – including Labour – are in crisis and incapable of dealing with the many crisis facing the world, such as the rise of the far right, climate catastrophe, genocidal wars and oppression of marginalised groups. The enthusiasm for a new workers’ party was shown in the over 800k people who showed their interest in the initial formation of Your Party.

What we need is a party, rooted in the working class, where representatives take only an average skilled workers’ wage, and whose vision won’t be bound by the accepted limits of the ruling capitalist class.

The Cryptoassets and Digital Finance Bill by Reform UK, among other things, aims to lower taxes on digital currency PHOTO: GAGE SKIDMORE/CC



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Green anti-austerity Hackney summit: WHAT STRATEGY IS NEEDED TO FIGHT THE CUTS?

OSCAR PARRY
HACKNEY SOCIALIST PARTY

Around 200 people attended the national anti-austerity summit hosted by Hackney's new Green council on 9 September. From a show of hands, roughly a third of those gathered were councillors.

A late motion to next month's Green Party conference, backed by Hackney Mayor Zoe Garbett, asks the Green Party nationally to endorse the summit's opposition to austerity. It declares: "Cuts in local government are not inevitable, but a political choice. We have a duty to resist them and to demand an alternative". The Greens are "crucial to any anti-austerity movement", the motion says, and, leading nine councils and part of almost 50 administrations, they could certainly play an important part.

So what strategy is needed to fight the cuts?

Another strongly worded letter?

The summit came out of working-class pressure. In January, trade unionists petitioned Zack Polanski to make every Green candidate pledge to vote against all cuts. Greens Organise, on the party's left, answered with a pledge signed by 950

candidates, promising an emergency summit rather than a vote against cuts. Many signatories were elected, including the mayors of Hackney and Lewisham.

The Greens Organise candidates' briefing for the May elections complained that the challenge to governments on austerity had been "limited to a smattering of strongly worded letters from council leaders". So how is the summit's strategy substantially different?

The summit agreed five 'asks' of Andy Burnham's government, including restored funding and more council homes, all worth fighting for. But Zoe Garbett summed up the approach as "asks to government, not to each other": a cross-party coalition including Labour and Lib Dem councillors, as well as trade unionists.

Burnham and Chancellor John Healey are "in lockstep" on the fiscal rules, with no relief from austerity signalled for the 28 October Budget. Without a commitment on what councils will do when Burnham says no, the 'asks' risk becoming another strongly worded letter.

Socialist Party member Ali Haydor, from Southampton Trades Council, and other trade unionists from the floor, did have an 'ask' of the Green councillors: "Council cuts have been carried out by all parties, including Labour, Lib Dems and Greens. Are you going to pledge to a no-cuts position in the local council budgets next February?"

The 'case' against fighting

Under that pressure, Zoe Garbett addressed the no-cuts question: "The only way a no-cuts budget will work is if there's a critical mass of councils that do it". Otherwise, "we throw our residents and our services to the commissioners" that, she argued, the government would send in. She has told the Hackney Citizen that Hackney faces a £53 million gap over three years, with "cuts that will have to be made" to avoid letting commissioners sell off the borough's land and properties.

In the summit, Greens Organise members argued that commissioners would cut harder, that too few councils would yet take a stand, that it would alienate Labour and Lib Dem 'partners' and let Labour say 'Greens can't organise a council budget', and that local government unions would not back it, having missed the ballot 50% turnout threshold in this year's pay dispute. Nationally, Zack Polanski claimed last October that councils setting no-cuts budgets "effectively down tools, and then the government comes in and do all the cuts anyway".

In place of a fight, different speakers spoke of 'innovative funding methods', community banks, and the claim that council debt "on a computer can be deleted".

What would a real fightback look like?

There are no shortcuts in this fight. Austerity is the deliberate policy of a capitalist class in crisis, determined that working-class people pay while it finds billions for rearmament. Only a mass movement can force the money out of it.

As Hannah Sell has argued in Socialism Today ('How will the Greens develop now?' at socialismtoday.org), the starting point would be a clear commitment by Green-led councils to make no more cuts to services, jobs, pay or conditions, and no council tax rises. Far from 'downing tools', such a stand would have a seismic effect.

Labour has already retreated under pressure on winter fuel payments, and partly on disability cuts. Burnham became prime minister by partially echoing working-class anger at "hollowed-out" councils. Green councils that harnessed that mood could help build a movement able to defeat this weak government.

Hackney council promises residents a "large engagement process" but if that means asking residents which cuts to make, it becomes the same divisive tactic that Labour uses. Instead, a genuine 'People's Budget conference' of local trade union branches, community groups, young people and residents could draw up a programme to meet the needs of all, and mobilise the working class to fight for it.

Reserves and borrowing powers can be used to legally balance a no-cuts budget while a campaign wins the money back, and the sanction of surcharging councillors was abolished in 2000. Commissioners have been sent into councils that spent years cutting, never one that refused to cut, and this weak government would struggle to justify sending them against councils defending services. The compliant road leads to the sell-off anyway: ministers have told the 35 councils on 'exceptional financial support' to use capital receipts wherever possible, selling assets, while the cuts carry on.

Nor would a fighting council stand alone. No-cuts needs budgets are the policy of Unison, Unite and GMB, the main unions for over a million council workers. The Socialist Party fights for the unions to launch a determined struggle against Labour austerity, against the majority of union leaders who want to hold it back, and backs the PCS call at this month's TUC Congress for a national



Main picture: Protesting against children's centre closures in Hackney in 2024. Left: Green Party leader Zack Polanski. Right: Supporting Liverpool's anti-cuts council in the 1980s PHOTOS: CHRIS NEWBY, BRISTOL GREEN PARTY/CC AND DAVE SINCLAIR

demonstration against austerity and for coordinated strike action. With the NEU balloting for national strike action from 3 October, imagine the role one or more councils determined to fight could play in speeding up the struggle to transform the unions into fighting organisations.

It has been done before

Michael Chessum, Lambeth Green cabinet member who moved the Green conference motion, conceded that you must go back to the 1980s to find councils willing to take on central government.

And it was the Militant-led Liverpool council that was to the fore. Only eleven of the 'Liverpool 47' councillors supported Militant, now the Socialist Party. Yet the council refused to pass on Thatcher's cuts, backed by a District Labour Party of over 400 delegates from wards, workplaces and the Labour Party Young Socialists, by demonstrations of up to 50,000, and a city-wide general strike – not against the council but in support of it! It won the equivalent of over £200 million today and built more council homes than every other council put together.

Militant then led the poll tax non-payment campaign, 18-million strong. Thatcher fell, and in 1991 the Tories had to pay councils £4.25 billion in extra grants, about £10 billion today, lifting central government's share of council spending from 48% to 58%.

The ruling class has not forgotten.

Bloomberg already warns that Burnham's commitment to devolution "may be his undoing", recalling Liverpool's "hard-left Marxists". Signatories of the Greens Organise pledge are a majority of Lewisham's Green councillors, and a far bigger share in Hackney and Waltham Forest than Militant was in Liverpool. What is missing is the political will to fight.

What next?

It is unclear whether the summit will meet again, but the Socialist Party will keep arguing for the

Liverpool road, and that the anti-austerity summit reconvenes after the 28 October Budget, with the aim of bringing together representatives of at least ten councils committed to refusing to pass on cuts and to maintaining services, alongside delegates from trade union executives and branches, to plan a coordinated national campaign to win the money back from central government. As Bob Crow, the former RMT general secretary and co-founder of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition, said: "If you fight you won't always win. But if you don't fight you will always lose".

Rent controls and council homes A TUSC briefing on campaigning after the Renters' Rights Act

The Renters' Rights Act 2025 took effect for most purposes on 1 May 2026, bringing in the most significant changes to private renting in England since 1988. The TUSC briefing explains what the Act has changed – in opening up a new terrain for organising tenants – and what it hasn't. But also what councils could do with existing legal powers, including achieving rent restraint in practice, if there were councillors prepared to fight. See tusc.org.uk



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

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

DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS

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

SOCIALISM AND INTERNATIONALISM

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

Do you agree? Join the fightback!

JOIN THE SOCIALISTS

- Visit socialistparty.org.uk/join
- or call **020 8988 8777**
- or text your name and postcode to **07958 032 071** to find out more today!

Help fund the fightback!

DONATE TODAY

socialistparty.org.uk/donate



Zane Gbangbola inquiry announcement a milestone in struggle for truth and justice



Kai Gbandbola PHOTO: GREGG KITEOS

The NSSN lobby of the TUC on 13 September (see page 6-7) heard from Zane Gbandbola's father Kye, who reported that the government will be conducting a public inquiry into the death of seven-year-old Zane in 2014.

More than 119,000 people signed petitions calling for an independent inquiry. Zane died during the flooding in Chertsey, Surrey, on 8 February 2014. Hydrogen cyanide was detected in the Gbangbola home and recorded on three separate sweeps by the HAZMAT Fire and Rescue specialists who attended.

Kye was found in cardiac arrest and subsequently suffered catastrophic injuries, including paraplegia, attributed to hydrogen cyanide poisoning. Zane was taken to hospital but tragically died.

Despite evidence that no carbon monoxide had been detected, the coroner later concluded that, on the balance of probabilities, Zane had died from carbon monoxide poisoning. The Truth About Zane campaign demands that fundamental contradiction is properly examined.

A press release from Surrey Unison, which has campaigned alongside Zane's family and supporters for years, expressed solidarity and explained that "UNISON supports the campaign for Zane's Law – the Clean Land (Human Rights) Bill, which seeks to strengthen protections for people living and working in communities affected by contaminated land and polluted water, within the framework of the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment."

SpyCops protest against attack on Inquiry

The following are extracts from a letter sent to the Home Office by the SpyCops campaign regarding the current inquiry into undercover policing, including against the Socialist Party and its members. A demonstration is taking place on Friday 18 September at 11am at the Home Office, Marsham Street, London. For more on SpyCops see 'Spycops 'unjustified' – The fight for justice goes on' at socialistparty.org.uk

Dear Home Office,
I am writing in response to your consultation announced on 16 July 2026 about the future of the Undercover Policing Inquiry (UCPI).
The Inquiry has so far only considered one single undercover unit, the 'Special Demonstration Squad' (SDS), which was shut down by 2008. In the course of its investigations the Inquiry has seen and heard evidence of very serious misconduct, even criminality, by police officers. Some of this would never have been uncovered, had the police records not been

shown to the people they were unaccountably spying on.
Some of the most egregious behaviour in undercover policing is yet to be heard by the Inquiry including, but not limited to, long-term, deceitful sexual relationships by undercover officers, miscarriages of justice, undercover police officers acting as Agents Provocateurs, and failures around the policing of racist criminal gangs. If the inquiry is at all curtailed at this point that evidence may never come to light.
It is therefore vital that the SpyCops Inquiry continues as a Statutory Public Inquiry, fully funded to fulfil its legal Terms of Reference, including Tranche 4 (the National Public Order Intelligence Unit), Tranche 5 (other undercover policing operations) and Module 3 (recommendations for the future).
The Home Office must not bow to the obvious vested interests wanting to shut down the SpyCops Inquiry. It is vital that you listen to the demands of the survivors of abuse, misconduct and unlawful deployments of undercover police.



The Dallas midterm convention of the US Republican Party

DAVE MURRAY

An unusual event, the special mid-term convention of the Republican Party took place in Dallas, Texas on 9-10 of September 2026.

The last time a major US party held such a rally was in 1978. This one was intended to rally the right-wing vote behind Republican candidates for the Senate and Congress in elections due to be held on 3 November. On current polling and betting odds, the Republican Party has a greater than 50% chance of losing its narrow majority in both the US Senate and Congress.

It is this majority that has allowed the Trump presidency to dispense with the "checks and balances" within the US constitution which are meant to curb the excesses of the executive branch of their government. It is Congress which is supposed to hold the power to declare war, for instance, something which it hasn't done in the case of the assault on Iran which started back in February and drags on despite multiple declarations of victory. The same goes for the imposition of tariffs, a major feature of Trump policy and of his speech to the convention. Congress has the power to impeach the president (effectively put him on trial before the Senate) by simple majority, the Senate can dismiss the president by 2/3 majority, and both houses have committees and powers of oversight that can snarl up any initiatives taken by a president. A Democratic Party majority in both houses would seriously cramp the style of the big beautiful orange presidency, not least by opening up lines of enquiry into the enormous sums of money that have flowed into the pockets of the presidential family, as well as potentially

publishing evidence of serious violent crimes from the Epstein files.

Donald Trump focused instead on the danger to the USA from "fanatics, lunatics and criminals who want to destroy our country" (ie the Democrats) and the "far-left communists" who want to do the same (also Democrats). This is the appeal to fear. In a rambling ninety-minute speech the Donald also appealed to a higher emotion – loyalty – leading conventioners in an oath of allegiance to "the greatest president in history who loves us so much" - ie himself – while also promising to "cheat like they do". For good measure, he also promised to pay each US citizen the sum of \$5,000 if the Republicans win both houses.

All of this smacks of desperation. It comes alongside attempts to skew voting boundaries in favour of the Republicans, strict ID requirements to exclude poorer voters, attempts to take counting out of the hands of state officials in favour of Trump's federal cronies and the mooted deployment of ICE and the national guard to voting stations – all the while making claims that it's the other guy who is trying to fix the outcome!

Trump is record-levels unpopular for a serving president and has faced the largest-ever single days of protests during his second term.

The fact that the outcome is still uncertain is the real story. Wall Street-friendly Democrats are so despised by the American working class (food prices rose 30% on their watch) that despite a 44% increase in gas prices since February, an unpopular war and the beginnings of a fracture in the MAGA movement, the results of the Midterms are still in balance. The American working class needs a party of its own.

Defend health services in Wales: Unfreeze gender affirming surgeries

The massive strain on health services as privatisation and cuts leave millions struggling to access the care and support they need was a factor in the rejection of the main establishment parties in the May Senedd elections. This is also the context in which the Welsh Gender Service (WGS), the sole gender clinic in Wales, halted referrals for gender surgery on 29 August, pending a review. The Welsh Gender Service provides referrals for adults living in Wales, but all NHS surgeries are carried out in England.

The announcement of the pause and the review follow a call by the Tory health representative in the Senedd, Natasha Asghar. The Tories have a record of attempting to whip up anti-trans hate and not of concern for health services. Under a Tory UK government, spending on non-NHS providers increased 70% in the decade after 2012-13 – from £10.8 billion to £18.3 billion, adjusting for inflation. Almost one in four people in Wales are waiting for NHS treatment.

A protest organised by the Trans

Liberation Coalition in Cardiff on 31 August drew around 300 people. Over 17,000 people have signed a petition calling for the service to be unfrozen. The Senedd Petitions Committee "considers all petitions that get more than 10,000 signatures for a debate". That Senedd is now led by Plaid Cymru, which had a speaker on the demo.

Demand funding and services

Socialist Party Wales calls for the Welsh Government to intervene to instruct the NHS Wales Joint Commissioning Committee to immediately resume referrals for gender affirmation surgery for trans people in Wales. We demand the provision of publicly funded gender identity clinics in every area and an end to austerity and cuts in public services – fully fund the Welsh NHS. We point to the need to build fighting trade unions to defend all jobs and fight discrimination in the workplace and an alternative to capitalist politicians who attempt to divide us, a new mass workers' party

This review isn't due to fully conclude until 2027. But the



PHOTO: JOHN WILLIAMS

consequences for Welsh transgender people were immediate. With no warning, surgical referrals from Wales were unable to be accepted at clinics, impacting over 800 people. People already in the surgery theatre had their surgeries cancelled. Patients affected are left in limbo, unable to proceed with the surgeries they've been approved for after years of waiting!

The report findings should be interrogated in order to provide the best services for Welsh patients. But the reality is that transgender healthcare is anything but quick and easy to access. The average wait for a first appointment with a gender clinic is nine years, with similar wait times for any follow-up appointments. Surgical referrals are made after one to three follow-up appointments. The WGS currently has a nearly 2.5-year wait between appointments, actually among the shortest wait times across the UK! The WGS also sees large numbers of patients, a factor in the numbers of referrals.

Instead of investing into NHS care for everyone, what we see are cuts and privatisation, however they are presented. The real solution to the NHS funding crisis is democratic workers' control of society to meet everyone's needs. By taking the vast wealth held by the uber-wealthy out of their hands, we could use it to provide the services we all need – including a health service fit for purpose.

A TRANS SOCIALIST PARTY WALES MEMBER

Fighting fund target within reach Help us raise funds to build the fightback this autumn!

We are £7,833 away from this quarter's fighting fund target – it's within reach! To give us the best possible chance of achieving it, the deadline has been extended to 4 October. That means an extra weekend of public campaigning where the workers and young people we meet can donate to support our cause.

We raised £2,900 in the last week alone. Now for the final push – three weeks and three weekends left to get us over the line!

Fund the fightback

DONATE TODAY

● Visit socialistparty.org.uk/donate or call **020 8988 8777**

● or make cheques payable to Socialist Party, PO Box 1398, Enfield EN1 9GT



		SOCIALIST PARTY FIGHTING FUND									
		AREA	\$ RECEIVED	\$ TARGET	Q3: JULY-SEPTEMBER 2020					DEADLINE: 4 OCTOBER 2026	
South West	100%	South West	2,963	2,100							101%
		Northern	659	800							82%
East Midlands	100%	East Midlands	1,679	2,050							82%
		Wales	1,945	2,400							81%
North West	100%	North West	912	1,200							76%
		Yorkshire	1,798	2,650							68%
London	100%	London	3,185	5,000							64%
		West Mids	1,524	2,700							56%
Southern & SE	100%	Southern & SE	1,096	2,400							46%
		Eastern	441	1,300							34%
Other	100%	Other	966	2,400							40%
		TOTAL	17,167	25,000							69%

COST OF LIVING FIGHTBACK CAN'T WAIT

- **For fully funded services and a pay rise - back public sector workers voting for strikes**
- **For a union-led weekend demo demanding an end to austerity**

SCOTT JONES

So many of our public services are barely worthy of the name. Many are no longer publicly owned, neither do they fulfil our needs or do the job they are supposed to. And this is not the fault of the underpaid and overworked staff - nurses, teachers, librarians, and so on - who keep them running. It's due to years of privatisation, cuts and little or no pay rises. It needs to end. But of the 'changes' promised by Andy Burnham's government, this isn't among them.

That's not good enough, especially when Burnham's talk of mass council house-building has also been dropped. Rent controls have also been ruled out, as has an increase in the level at which workers have to start paying tax. Even on the pension triple lock, Chancellor John Healey just ducked the question when asked. And what of pay for public service workers? School and college teachers, and civil servants are having to ballot for strike action this Autumn to claw back some of what they haven't received for years. Many others would be up for a fight too, if given a lead by their trade unions.

Things are getting harder across the board. In the NHS, waiting lists in England are getting even higher and in Wales they're so bad that the Welsh government is talking about patients not getting automatic follow-up appointments following operations. The rising cost of renting has accelerated after a three-year slowdown. Prices show no sign of letting up in the supermarket.

We need fundamental and urgent change, funding for our services, pay rises and help with the cost of living. And the money is there. Healey has promised to "control public spending" at the same time as pledging to instead spend billions more on 'defence'. Not to mention the billions avoided in tax every year by the super-rich and big corporations, plus all the money sitting in their bank accounts.

Trade unions need to launch a struggle against austerity and the cost-of-living crisis, demand that the wealth in society is used for the benefit of all. A starting point would be a union-led weekend demo this autumn. It could bring together workers balloting for strikes with those ready to join the fray.

A demo is now the policy of the TUC which represents millions of trade unionists. Now the fight is on to put pressure on the trade union leaders to make it happen!

● See reports pages 6-9

PHOTO: PAUL MATTISSON

