

BUILD INTERNATIONAL YOUTH WALKOUTS

FIGHT FOR OUR FUTURES NOT THEIR WARS



MARK BEST

SOCIALIST PARTY NATIONAL COMMITTEE

Nearly three years after the start of the Israeli state's genocidal war on Gaza, the satellite images on Google Maps have been updated. They reveal the extent of ongoing devastation and deprivation imposed on Palestinians whose homes are in the strip.

Rows and rows of buildings reduced to dust. Homes, workplaces, places of leisure, completely flattened. In their place, tent cities, now the home of 2.1 million people. Two thirds of the buildings in Gaza have been destroyed.

The images are shocking and emphasise, despite over a year of supposed ceasefire, the ongoing humanitarian crisis, with disease, hunger and dispossession commonplace. And despite the slight changes of emphasis amongst the bosses' politicians, real action to end this situation from governments across Europe isn't there. (see pages 8-9)

The before-and-after photos show destruction on a par with the aftermath of a nuclear blast, created by the bombardment of tens of thousands of missiles. The Israeli state's genocidal slaughter, with capitalist elites internationally complicit, has exposed to millions that this capitalist system is one capable of untold destruction and suffering as a result of their wars of plunder.

Fear of mass working-class opposition and a threat to their rule weighs heavy in the calculations of the capitalist classes in their descent into deeper and broader conflicts and wars.

Their actions have already provoked mass movements. In Britain, huge protests against the war toppled Tory home secretaries, contributed to the end of a Tory government and sowed the seeds for Keir Starmer's resignation.

Now as politicians beat the drums of war, and want us to pay for increased spending on the military with more cuts and hits to our living standards, we should continue that struggle. They are worried about the impact our actions can have – that's what's behind every attempted attack on our democratic rights.

We can take inspiration from the young people fighting back across Europe; from school students in France, housing protesters in Spain, to the school strikers against conscription in Germany (see pages 2-3).

The capitalist system offers a world filled with wars making all of us less safe, and attacks on our living standards to maximise the profits of an uber-wealthy elite.

That's why we're organising for the international youth walkout on 20 November. To fight for our futures, not their wars. The way to provide us all with a world in which we can thrive, instead of struggling to get by, is to take the wealth and power out of the hands of the thieving few, and democratically utilise the world's resources to provide us all with a home, a decent job and end climate chaos.

Join us, fight for socialist change!

SPAIN: EVICTION SPARKS MASS MOVEMENT AND SNAP ELECTION

Spain has been rocked by mass protests. Now, under pressure, trade union leaders are preparing to name the date for a 24-hour general strike. Unable to pass housing reforms though parliament as concessions to the mass movement, the prime minister has been forced to call an early general election. The body of caretaker lawmakers that serves until the election on 29 November is set to pass the reforms. **Paul Kershaw**, Chair of Unite Housing Workers' branch and Socialist Party member, reports. First published in full online at socialistworld.net, 3 October



PHOTO: BARCEX/CC

The brutal eviction of the 87-year old disabled woman, María del Carmen Abascal, known as 'Maricarmen', who had been living in her Madrid flat for 71 years, sparked fury across Spain. She was carried out of her home on a stretcher by riot police after her housing block had been tear gassed.

The state machine violently backed Urbagestion, the investment fund that increased her rent by over 400%. On Maricarmen's limited pension, this was simply not affordable. But the huge popular response has shocked the politicians and capitalists who have retreated as the mass movement spreads.

There had been repeated attempts to proceed with eviction which were thwarted by the housing movement. After legal battles, the Supreme Court ruled in March to end her lease because in their view, she was not sufficiently disabled to require support.

On Wednesday 23 September the eviction was carried out. Over 500 supportive neighbours organised by the tenants' union

camped out to peacefully stop police entering the building. The police arrived at 6am with 15 vans, a helicopter and dozens of police to violently disperse the crowd.

Maricarmen was carried out and taken to hospital. Images of the eviction sparked outrage and there were protests in cities nationwide. Up to 300,000 people marched through Madrid on Saturday 26 September and there are protest encampments in Madrid's Puerta del Sol square, and similar movements in other cities. In some ways, these encampments echo the 15-M movement, the huge wave of anti-austerity protests and public square occupations in 2011 following the impact of the global financial crisis of 2008.

The huge response has terrified the ruling class and won significant but limited reforms. Urbagestion, the landlord, now says Maricarmen can move back under her old rent.

The mass movement forced promises of reforms from the 'progressive' PSOE government that it failed to deliver during more than eight years in government. They include protections against eviction until 2030, curbs on investment funds buying residential property until 2028, automatic lease extensions until 2028, more strict control of short-term rentals and support for first-time buyers.

But they don't go as far as the 'Maricarmen decree' drawn up by the Madrid Tenants' Union, which calls for a ban on 'Vulture funds' – speculative investment funds – buying housing, a law against evicting vulnerable individuals without offering alternative housing, a further curb on price rises, a freeze on rents and automatic renewal of leases. Tenants' union representatives have demanded its full implementation

and discussions in the encampments have moved on to more fundamental change. There are calls to expropriate the vulture funds and Sumar, the smaller party in the governing coalition, has called for Maricarmen's building to be expropriated.

Housing commodity

In capitalist economies housing is a commodity, tradable for profit. In the wake of the global financial crisis, government policies around the world gave this an added twist. The banks were rescued and quantitative easing drove rising house prices by transforming the housing market into a primary outlet for what has been called a 'global wall of money' seeking safe investment. Liberalised financial systems facilitated vast amounts of capital moving around the world in search of profit, and house prices were increasingly decoupled from wages and workers' ability to pay.

In the absence of mass workers' parties, the neoliberal policies driving this process were not seriously opposed by any mass party. Financialisation has gone through various phases since then, but the essential features of high housing costs, badly managed rental property and insecurity persist. Taking over empty homes and expropriating the corporate landlords – with compensation on the basis of proven need – along with nationalisation of the banks are essential measures for a sustainable plan for genuinely affordable and secure housing.

Trade union members have been active in the movement and unions, including the largest ones (CCOO and UGT), have given official backing. They said they were holding off calling a general strike awaiting the result of voting on the housing

reforms in congress. But the unions should be pressing to go beyond the temporary measures from the government rather than waiting on a parliamentary vote.

Attempts to put through emergency housing reforms collapsed after Congress rejected both government decrees. The government needed support from Catalan populist Junts to pass the measures, but the party withdrew its backing at the last moment. Opposition parties PP and Vox also voted against both texts, leaving the minority coalition without a path to approval.

The defeat dealt a significant blow to Pedro Sánchez's government, intensifying calls from the opposition for early elections. Meanwhile, protests continue across Spain, with housing groups organising demonstrations in dozens of cities and demanding stronger protections

against speculative investment and rising rents.

Linking the enormous potential power of organised workers to the protesters in Puerta del Sol and other squares would lead to an unstoppable movement. It will be crucial to hammer out a programme for real change through democratic debate.

Across Europe, struggles are developing against the capitalist housing crisis. Struggles such as these, and the debates around strategy and programme they produce, have the potential to lead to new mass parties worthy of the working class.

In Spain, one tenants' union statement this week states that a "historic window of opportunity has opened to reverse decades of the commodification of housing. That is why we need to step up the pressure." Another states: "This is just getting started."

Build international youth strike 20 November



'Fight for our futures, not their wars', a Europe-wide day of youth walkouts is taking place on 20 November. With 20+ other youth organisations from across the continent, Socialist Students is taking part. The strikes are being organised by two youth organisations taking part in the mass movement in Spain, as well as two student organisations in France. The German school strike organisation which led tens of thousands walking out in September have now also announced 20 November as another strike day.

FRANCE ERUPTS INTO YOUTH REVOLT AND STRIKES



PHOTO: CHALLENGE/CC

GAUCHE RÉVOLUTIONNAIRE, CWI FRANCE

The school students' mobilisation, which began more than 15 days ago, reached a new stage after the public sector strike on 29 September – 338 high schools were blockaded. More than 1,000 were affected by mobilisations on 1 October.

Thousands of young people have taken to the streets to reject the deterioration of their study conditions and their sacrificed future.

For years, school students have endured the shortage of teachers, overcrowded classes, absurd timetables, and the endless days that keep piling up. In many schools, buildings are dilapidated, toilets are insufficient, water leaks are multiplying, and heating or ventilation conditions are unfit for study.

When the time comes to think about the future after high school, it is either the search for jobs, hardship or unemployment. For those considering continuing their studies, Parcoursup (higher education application system) turns access to education into an obstacle course through fierce selection.

Faced with the anger being expressed, President Macron barely even pretends to hear the demands, and prime minister Lecornu proposes nothing. The government is even planning further cuts to teaching and staff posts.

At the same time, the repression is very violent, especially in working-class neighbourhoods and workers' towns. Students' blockades have been violently dispersed, police forces have been deployed outside schools from the outset, and school students have been attacked. So far,

170 school students have been injured. One young person lost an eye in Tours, shot by a rubber bullet. Another in St-Ouen, aged 14, had his jaw completely shattered. In Lens, a 15-year-old school student had his left hand torn off. 5,000 people have been taken into police custody since the start of the movement.

The government is now seeking to prevent young people from gathering by closing schools in a kind of 'lockout'.

Youth defiance

All this reveals the government's fear of seeing the mobilisation spread and connect with workers' anger. This strategy is already failing, because all the teaching staff unions have been calling for mobilisations alongside students since 2 October.

Young people understand more and more clearly that the deterioration of the education system is not simply a 'management error'. It is the result of a policy that prefers to finance the capitalists rather than meet the needs of the population.

The movement of 1 October showed the anger, rage and determination that have developed among young people. A revolt is developing.

The aggressiveness of the police is frightening but no longer stops the mobilisations. A small section of young people confront the police, sometimes in a logic of revenge against the government and the violence they suffer in working-class neighbourhoods. And there are small organised fringe groups seeking to smash things up. Infiltrated police officers who provoke and smash things are also regularly identified.

The chaos is Macron and the

capitalists who feed it every day through their policies, and who want it. Damage to school buildings, fires and attacks on education staff are not a sign of radicalism. What is truly radical is being thousands-strong in demonstrations putting forward demands, building a mass struggle of young people for their futures.

Accusations of manipulation against La France Insoumise have the same objective: to divide young people and workers. But it is not working! Activists from La France Insoumise and from other left-wing organisations are present alongside school students to support the mass struggle, not to control it... which is impossible anyway.

Our side is taking shape again against Macron, the far-right National Rally, and all the capitalist parties: it is that of young people and workers uniting in a massive and determined struggle.

To win, it is necessary to discuss, decide together and give the struggle a clear direction. School students must be able to meet in general assemblies, draw up their demands and regularly elect representatives in each school. Coordination between mobilised high schools would make it possible not to remain isolated, to share experiences and to prepare common actions, locally and then nationally.

It is to prevent students organising that the government is closing the majority of secondary school premises on the eve of the 6 October strike. The workers' movement has a duty to support those who are fighting. We must reopen the secondary school buildings and ensure these are spaces where pupils can come together and decide for themselves what their

demands are and how they wish to organise themselves.

Since Friday 2 October, education, health and other sector unions have begun calling strikes and organising solidarity, aware of the essential role that organised workers can play. Unions in education, health and social care, railway workers and others will stand alongside young people on Tuesday 6 October. In workplaces, assemblies must be called to discuss the situation and decide on concrete actions.

6 October must not be a simple day of demonstrations, but the beginning of a lasting struggle. The public-sector strike on 29 September showed that potential exists. It is now necessary to prepare a massive strike, public and private, which could take the form of a three-day consecutive strike in all sectors.

Such a struggle against Macron will strengthen all workers against the capitalists and their system. The activists of Gauche Révolutionnaire are fighting for this in their workplaces or places of study, and in their trade unions. We are fighting for a society free from exploitation, poverty and the destruction of the environment: a socialist society managed democratically and collectively by the workers themselves.



'Selective sorting is not for students' PHOTO: GR

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'Fight, don't stay at home!' PHOTO: BARCEX/CC

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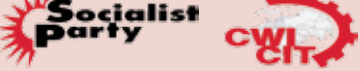
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"The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it."
Karl Marx

Labour prepares attacks on young people's benefits... and the Tories one-up them



Jobcentre Plus PHOTO: SLEEPYTIMECAT/CC

THOMAS BUTLER
LIVERPOOL SOCIALIST PARTY

While Andy Burnham decreed that Britain had taken a wrong turn under Thatcherism during his speech at Labour conference, secretary of state for work and pensions Pat McFadden declared a "moral crusade" on the 'need' to cut unemployment and disability benefits for young people.

Benefit cuts are posed across the board. The health element of Universal Credit is being considered for removal and Personal Independence Payments are being 'overhauled' - code for cuts. Reading this, it might sound like Keir Starmer had never left office! The Starmer government had been forced to U-turn on multiple attempts to slash benefits, such as the vicious proposed £5 billion cuts to disability benefits and maintaining the cruel two-child benefit cap.

It is clear ministers are hoping to lay the ground for more benefit cuts. For all they say they are boosting support to help young people find work, they are still making young people's lives worse through no fault of their own when the jobs aren't there. The bills and rent still need paying! Young people deserve support to live comfortably and not worry about going without as they search for work.

The Conservatives have been singing from the same hymn sheet - but louder. Kemi Badenoch has promised to cut Universal Credit for those who have not paid enough national insurance after a small period, to restrict how claimants spend their money to allow only the bare basics,

and to totally block young people from claiming any Universal Credit up to the age of 25. It would instead be replaced with a 'get to work' scheme which would see financial support cut if young people 'failed' to get a job. Badenoch says she'll stop young people going straight from education to claiming benefits. Thousands of young people today experience applying for hundreds of jobs and never hearing back from any one of them - it begs the question of where the fundamental issue lies: the jobseekers or the so-called super-rich 'job creators'. The Tories remain a party representing big businesses' naked interests - attacking our living standards to protect the profits of a few.

It comes as no surprise that, despite all the talk about hope and change, Labour continues an offensive on welfare. Pat McFadden was responsible for the cutting of over 2,000 Cabinet Office jobs a year ago and supported the 2016 leadership coup attempt to oust Jeremy Corbyn, leader at the time. He sits alongside the likes of fellow pro-capitalist politicians like Wes Streeting, John Healey, Shabana Mahmood and the rest in Burnham's government. Young working-class people don't need more of the same pro-big business politicians that served under Starmer's failed government, we need a mass political voice that stands up for working-class interests first and foremost. An alternative to the Labour Party: a mass workers' party with a genuine socialist programme which fights for the resources we need to thrive, not cuts at the behest of the bosses.

Capitalism is burning.

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We need real jobs

Fight for our future not their wars

ADAM GILLMAN
SOCIALIST STUDENTS

In the run-up to the Labour conference, defence minister Wes Streeting announced the promise of 40,000 'defence apprenticeships'. To combat the "moral emergency" of youth unemployment, Streeting wants to justify increased spending on military equipment and low-paid, exploitative apprenticeships.

Apprenticeships can be a good thing, a way for young people to get experience, training and a decent job. But it's not benefiting young people to push them into the defence industry to be paid the outrageously low apprentice wages.

If this government truly cared about giving young people a future, then it would have a mass programme of council house building

that could create thousands of jobs. Or use money to create decent jobs dealing with our crumbling infrastructure, the climate catastrophe or our understaffed health service. They would also scrap the exploitative minimum wage youth rates, which they stood to abolish in their manifesto.

It's clear this government doesn't care about our future and we need to fight back. This is why Socialist Students, alongside 25 other youth organisations including ones involved in the mass protests in France and Spain (see page 2 and 3), is campaigning for the international youth strike on 20 November. We will "fight for our future, not their wars!" We demand an end to the increased militarisation and instead, decent jobs with decent pay with the resources taken from the super-rich.



Join international youth walkout 20 November

Join the 20 November walkout visit socialiststudents.org.uk or scan the QR code

socialist students



UNIONS MUST FIGHT BURNHAM'S PENSION PINCHING ATTACK



PHOTO: PAUL MATTESON

Socialist Party WHAT WE THINK

Andy Burnham, in his Labour conference speech, sought to feed hopes among some that his government will be different. However, big-business bosses watching will have been quite satisfied. Particularly pleasing for them, his announcement to unlock the triple lock on the state pension - pinching an estimated £50 billion out of pensioners' pockets by 2050.

The Financial Times is one of the main mouthpieces of British capitalism. It has argued for the scrapping of the triple lock for years on behalf of the big business bosses as one of the ways they seek to maximise profit and minimise the share of wealth going to the working class. Its editorial approved: "Burnham's pledge to remove the generous 'triple lock' on state pensions in the next parliament is promising", and its appetite grew with the eating.

The FT editorial continued: "What is needed above all is a credible plan to contain spending in the near term", saying "direct reductions in welfare spending are needed too", and specifically mentioning Personal Independence Payments (PIP) - another threat to disabled people's benefits. Recognising that announcing cuts would arouse the kind of opposition that brought down their last representative, Keir Starmer, they advise: "Significant savings may be unrealistic in this Budget. But Healey can at



Burnham does not intend to encroach on the care home business model dominated by private firms, where low wages and high charges to individuals and councils see profit margins of up to 18%!

least spell out how welfare costs will be contained and signal a tougher spending review, slated for next year."

The pensions triple lock has not ended pensioner poverty but it has reduced it. The state pension had dropped to about 16% of mean earnings by 2010 but raising it annually by the highest of inflation, earnings growth, or 2.5% means it is about 26% now. Burnham has announced that the link with earnings growth will be changed.

The FT and co argue that the triple lock is too "generous" and rising too fast - in relation to stagnating wages - and so needs to be cut loose from annual earnings growth and linked to a more general average. But despite propaganda, those claiming the state pension today are not in clover. A full new state pension is worth just £12,548 this year, the lowest in the G7. Instead of young workers and pensioners being pitted against each other, we need mass workers' struggle to fight for wage rises and restoration and pensions that allow dignity in retirement.

Last November, a response from the DWP to a freedom of information request by consultancy LCP showed that 11.7 million future pensioners - almost one in three of today's workers - would receive a pension income below the minimum retirement living standard if the state pension were linked to inflation.

Government guidance anticipates a 'saving' of up to £50 billion by 2050. The current spending on pensions is £154 billion so this attack equates to a large proportion being cut, hitting the poorest pensioners hard. More future pensioners will be poor then, given that many more will not be homeowners or have good

private pensions thanks to '40 years of neoliberalism'.

The FT's campaign under the five prime ministers since 2017 has been unsuccessful so far. All the governments before who sought to roll back on the triple lock have found opposition to any changes to be widespread and across the generations. A recent Times YouGov poll went as high as 93% of pension-age people defending it.

National Care Service

Why then has YouGov now found support for Burnham's plan by 48% to 28%? In his speech he said that the money taken from pensions could be used to fund a National Care Service - in the next parliament which in today's volatile world is not a concrete commitment. He even spoke of it being "Free at the point of use and no care charges paid out of your basic state pension. Care that is about people not profit."

The Bagehot column in the Economist, while impatient for more spending cuts, did put it correctly: "Greater scepticism is in order". It writes: "This is a golden age for the faux heretics...So with Mr Burnham. The big ideas that propel him are wearily familiar, shared among most of the six prime ministers who have governed Britain in the past decade. Policies recur word for word." Governments attempting to carry out the demands of the capitalist class get replaced when mass opposition makes them unviable. The demands of the capitalist class for less public spending are again attempted and come a cropper. And so on.

The idea of a National Care Service was also raised by Tory PMs Theresa May and Boris Johnson seeking

support for their unpopular governments. They also had no plans to fund it other than taking money off the working class. Like them, Burnham does not intend to encroach on the care home business model dominated by private firms, where low wages and high charges to individuals and councils see profit margins of up to 18%! The plans are limited to personal care, food and accommodation will still have to be paid for.

Jeremy Corbyn's manifestos in 2017 and 2019 pledged a National Care Service, committing to "Introduce free personal care for over 65s and fill existing projected funding gap", which was costed at £10.8 billion. Corbyn's 2017 manifesto proposed nationalisation of the utilities and Labour's vote increased by 3.53 million - 9.6% - the biggest increase between elections by any party in both the absolute number of votes won and the percentage share of the vote since the 1945 general election.

Nationalisation

The Socialist would expand on his formula with the call for the nationalisation of the top 150 corporations and banks that dominate the economy under democratic working-class control and management. This would start to put the levers of the economy into the hands of the working class, which could start to plan how it is run, including investing in care, nationalising the care 'industry', and providing all generations with the means to live a decent life.

Unite the Union leader Sharon Graham has said: "Instead of going to try and pick the pocket of pensioners, we need to move over to the other side of the equation and think about things like wealth taxes way before we try to stop something like the triple lock." Unite could lead a movement to fight for this to be realised.

Keir Starmer's Labour government was unable to carry through its attacks on pensioners in the form of the winter fuel payment cut, because of the working-class pressure brought to bear on MPs. The unions must take the initiative to mobilise that pressure now.

If Unite demanded that the 83 Labour MPs it has sponsored (to the tune of millions of pounds) move to block the attack on the triple lock in parliament - including by raising a private member's bill - and coordinated with other trade unions for a mass Saturday demo, it could cost the government its majority and defeat the measure, which is expected to be voted on in this parliament.

Despite his so-called 'landslide' election win, Starmer lasted just two years as prime minister because he governed in the interests of the capitalist class - with the attacks on the working class and pensioners that entail.

Bond market pressure will not ease on Burnham, and demands from the capitalists for spending cuts deemed necessary to protect their profits will grow. The content of Burnham's speech was another confirmation that he intends to do their bidding. The pressing question for our movement is how can the working class build opposition most effectively - including by mass youth strikes on 20 November, strengthening our unions, and building our own party with a socialist programme for ending the grip of the capitalists.



Man City scandal: The dirty, profit-driven side of the beautiful game

DEAN YOUNG
SOCIALIST PARTY NORTH WEST ORGANISER

After over three years of investigations into the financial dealings of Manchester City Football Club, a verdict has been given. The independent commission, created to carry out the investigation, concluded it is guilty of 114 out of 115 charges over things ranging from lying about sponsorship money, non-cooperation with footballing authorities and breaking spending rules by an estimate of roughly £900 million. Man City has begun an appeals process.

Man City, historically the smaller club in Manchester, was, due to 'financial doping', able to dominate the largest sport in the world, in the biggest league in the world.

It's not just that fans of rival football clubs feel bitter that their teams were cheated by City's rule breaking. It's what this represents. City were bought by the Abu Dhabi group, royalty from the UAE, in 2008. This was done on the basis of their desire to 'sportswash' their reputation.

Andy Burnham, as Manchester mayor, worked with Man City and its owners' sportswashing. This has resulted in the prime minister making excuses for them, saying: "Well, I would be really concerned to lose them. They've been such a huge partner in the building of modern Manchester." He then had to scramble to backpedal. Burnham is a football fan but his comments are completely out of touch with most others.

Because the Abu Dhabi group sit on vast riches, being part of the UAE ruling elite, they had unlimited resources available. Restrictions were

put in place to stop this and they have been found guilty of circumventing these rules over a period of nine years.

Man City employs many people, who will worry what this means for their futures? Similarly, many people will have lost livelihoods because the financial doping meant City relegated their clubs which, such is capitalism, sacked staff to reduce costs.

The football industry

This is not a problem of just Man City; football is run as a capitalist industry that seeks to make profit. The Man City owners have just been caught being far too vulgar cutting corners compared to the more traditional billionaire capitalists running say Manchester United, Liverpool or Arsenal.

Former pro Roy Keane said on a well-known podcast: "If a business was doing this they'd be accused of cooking the books and face prison time." I was amused. That would be a logical conclusion. Not so in this capitalist system rigged for the super-rich!

The debate has largely centred on the punishment of Man City. Should their titles be stripped from 2009 onwards? Should they face relegation? Should they get a transfer ban? Should every team get to nick one of their players as compensation? (I put first dibs on Haaland for Liverpool.)

It is almost certain footballing punishments will be correctly given. These punishments will unfairly affect working-class fans of Man City who had no role in the corruption of their club's owners. However the club, and its fans, existed before these owners. They will do long after too.

The solution on how to avoid future scandals on this scale is a complete overhaul in how football is run. Germany has a 50+1 rule for club ownership, meaning supporters own a majority stake in each club historically. That would be a good start, but ultimately clubs should be owned and run by and for the working-class communities they represent.

Clubs should open up their financial books for inspection by club staff and their unions, and supporters' clubs, and ultimately to the working class as a whole. Then we can inspect to see if it just City up to no good.

Ultimately, football must no longer be treated as an industry for profit. Football exists as the world's favourite leisure activity. Without the working-class people who play it from childhood and watch it, ultimately it is nothing.

For the greed to be flushed out of football we need democratic control and management of all clubs, and the wider sport, and a socialist planned economy run in the interests of people not profit.

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'Ghost patients' make real NHS funding disappear

DAVID
BIRMINGHAM SOCIALIST PARTY

Since October last year, NHS England has removed nearly half a million people from GPs' registered patient lists. These 'ghost patients' have been removed because they are thought to have died, moved away, or otherwise no longer use the practice. Naturally, this type of data cleaning is important for providing accurate funding and planning services.

However, most General Practice core funding is based on the size of their patient list, with GPs paid an average of around £180 per patient; the patients deleted so far represent around £90 million in annual funding at stake. Yet, NHS England plans to identify many more such 'ghost patients'. Additionally, GPs in the most deprived areas have seen a disproportionately large reduction in their patient numbers. Once again, it's the poor who are being hit the hardest!

Doctors have also expressed concern at the "aggressive" pace of these reductions. Not only does it make it nearly impossible for GPs to manage their finances, but many patients have been removed in error. Almost 70% of practices reported documented evidence of patients being incorrectly removed. This can create barriers to treatment, particularly for the most vulnerable in society,

including patients losing access to their repeat prescriptions. The doctors' union, the BMA, said the process was "seriously flawed" and has called on NHS England to pause the exercise.

These stealth cuts come at a time when the NHS is already stretched to breaking point. The demand for healthcare is constantly increasing. However, between 2015 and 2024, the number of GP practices in England fell by 17%, with the number of full-time equivalent GPs falling by 7%. What's more, the increasing levels of privatisation of healthcare services mean that more public money ends up in the pockets of shareholders instead of funding the healthcare our country so desperately needs.

The trade union movement, in particular the health unions, must actively fight back against all cuts to the NHS. All NHS privatisation must be reversed, and other vital areas of healthcare, including GPs, dentistry, and social care, should be brought under democratic workers' control, and all services completely free at the point of use. The resources to do this are there, but locked up in the hands of big business. We need to nationalise the big pharmaceutical companies, the medical suppliers and the outsourcers. Only then can we finally build a healthcare system that is well funded, efficient, and fit for purpose.



Burnham and social care: big business to be left untouched

Fight for nationalisation

DAVE GORTON
CHESTERFIELD SOCIALIST PARTY

Trade union leaders fell over each other to congratulate Andy Burnham on his Labour Party Conference speech. Unison's Andrea Egan welcomed the legal repeal of the public ownership ban on water and called for full renationalisation of water, but didn't call for the same about social care. Others were even more embarrassing in their unjustified praise.

But Unite's general secretary, Sharon Graham said before Burnham's speech: "Going to a group of people who are getting around £12,500 a year in order to pay for it [social care], to take away their security, is wrong – I think it's morally wrong."

Yet, Burnham made it plainly clear that while ordinary working-class people will be asked to pay, not a single penny will be taken from those who've robbed social care for decades – big-business private profiteers and billionaires.

But the figures speak for themselves:

- More than 400,000 people are currently waiting for a care assessment, review or direct payment. 250,000 older people have died since 2014-15 waiting for care that never arrived in time
- Councils in England were already £715 million over budget last year

(on adult care alone). They are spending more than 80% of their core funding on adult and children's social care

- Private equity firms own or partly own 11 of England's 20 largest fostering and children's home providers. The four largest independent fostering agencies have paid out or reserved at least £205 million in interest to shareholders and investors since 2020
- Local authorities in England have spent £250 million on more than 1,800 unlawful placements of children in unregistered homes over the past two years. A recent prosecution saw one set of owners fined £92,400, with surcharges of £2,960 and costs of £17,250. In this single case, the directors who were acting illegally collected more than £1.7 million from local authorities

• Social care private provision stands at 83% while the public sector is responsible for just 4%. Public money has simply been handed over to private equity-funded big business. Unless this is stopped and reversed, no social care plan will survive. Extra money put into it will still be siphoned off into the pockets of private profiteers

The starting point for any reform of social care has to be the nationalisation of the resources with no compensation given to those who've plundered the system for decades. Nothing else will suffice.

Christmas comes early for housebuilders' profits

We need council houses and rent controls

KATIE TULLOCH
SWANSEA AND WEST WALES SOCIALIST PARTY

Andy Burnham has announced the 'Your First Home' scheme, with the stated aim of reducing the difficulty of stepping onto the property ladder for first-time buyers. Under the scheme, first-time buyers of a new-build home, with a minimum deposit of 2.5%, can receive a 20% equity loan with an initial interest-free period. But will it solve the problems that the thousands of people whose sub-par housing situation comes with rent that eats up a larger and larger amount of our pay every month?

Upon closer inspection, 'Your First Home' appears to be largely a remodelling of then-Tory chancellor George Osborne's 2013 'Help to Buy' scheme, only with a lower minimum deposit and a fresh three-word designation.

In 2019 the National Audit Office found that Osborne's scheme had failed to boost social mobility as nearly two-thirds of people

who used the scheme could have bought a home without it and that: "the Help to Buy scheme led to an increase in prices in areas that were already relatively expensive, meaning properties in those areas remained too expensive for many." The scheme did, however, have a positive impact on the financial performance of developers who saw an increase in revenues, profit before tax and profit margins.

Builders' bonanza

This may be why RBC Capital Markets analyst Anthony Codling declared in response to Burnham's announcement that "Christmas has come early for the UK housebuilders". Construction companies' share prices jumped accordingly after the announcement, anticipating future profits. While the government has said developers will be expected to make a contribution to the scheme, this cost will likely be passed on to homebuyers. The price of an average home may be pushed even

higher than the current rate of at least seven times the median full-time annual salary.

Rather than reversing decades of underinvestment and under-construction of council housing, Burnham is recycling the policies of previous pro-capitalist governments which have driven the current housing crisis by subsidising inflated property prices for the benefit of greedy developers.

If Burnham was really committed to increased housing affordability and radical change, as he claims, the government must commit to the mass building of genuinely affordable, high-quality council housing. It is imperative that safe and secure homes be treated as a fundamental right, not an opportunity to pad the already inflated pockets of developers. Construction companies should be taken into democratic public ownership to address shortages in supply and drive prices down by flooding the market with high-quality council housing.



Energy bills set to hike – nationalise!

70% of people in Britain support energy nationalisation. 82% support public ownership of water. Despite Burnham's talk of "ending 40 years of neoliberalism", he hasn't put nationalisation onto the agenda.

He did use his speech to Labour conference to announce Great British Grid – which is actually just a part of the already announced 'Great British Energy' scheme.

"Great British Grid will complement, rather than replace, the existing institutions responsible for Britain's energy system and the role of existing network operators remains unchanged", so says the government website.

So far this year, energy companies have made £6 billion in profit from

their operations in Britain. Oh, and our bills are projected to be hiked by £276 a year. Diesel prices have also reached record highs.

But Burnham is doing nothing to take energy infrastructure out of the profiteering bosses' hands. We need nationalisation. Take over the big energy companies to be put under democratic working-class control and management, with compensation only on the basis of proven need. For a democratic plan of investment to lower our bills while protecting the environment.

WHAT'S
YOUR VIEW?

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JUDY BEISHON

SOCIALIST PARTY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

British foreign secretary Ed Miliband proclaimed “the beginning of a new approach” on Israel-Palestine, in a speech on 8 September. ‘An approach that not only calls out injustice and suffering but acts’. He used terms that went into new territory for the UK government, calling aggression by Israeli settlers in the West Bank “settler terrorism” and “ethnic cleansing”, and officially designating the Israeli occupation as unlawful.

He plans an import ban on goods from settlements and action against “specific companies and individuals who provide services such as construction, infrastructure, financing, or real estate for settlement expansion”.

Before Andy Burnham became Labour leader, the government under Keir Starmer initiated some sanctions. Bending to mass pressure, Starmer authorised sanctions on 33 violent settlers and suspended around 30 licences for UK arms exports to Israel. Burnham’s government is increasing the sanctions but it is particularly the above language that signalled its new approach.

This repositioning is the result of the continuing anger of millions of people, as Miliband acknowledged in his September Labour Party conference speech - mass anger that became a major electoral liability for Labour. Starmer was widely condemned by ordinary people for being far too tolerant of the ultra-right Israeli government’s brutal war on Gaza, which has destroyed most of the Gaza Strip, killing over 75,000 Palestinians, injuring over 170,000 and leaving 1.4 million without adequate shelter.

He undertook only token-level measures against that war and the onslaughts in the West Bank. During the five decades since the West Bank and East Jerusalem were seized by Israel in the 1967 war, Israeli Jewish settlements have increasingly colonised it, but there has been a marked acceleration in the last three years. Following the bloody Hamas-led attack on Israel in October 2023, as well as Israel’s Netanyahu government

relentlessly bombarding Gaza, it gave a green light to ultra-right nationalist settlers to attack Palestinians across the West Bank with the aim of driving them from their properties and land.

There have been more than 1,600 such attacks this year according to a UN agency, the worst rate recorded since it started monitoring them 20 years ago. As summarised by Yuli Novak, director of human rights organisation B’Tselem: “For almost three years, day after day, we had documented homes being burned and demolished, communities being expelled, children being shot and killed, roads being blocked and humiliating assertions of Jewish supremacy by settlers and by the Israeli government alike. Forms of violence once relatively rare in the West Bank, including aerial bombardment, large-scale destruction of residential areas and mass displacement, had become routine” (New York Times 14.9.26).

Netanyahu’s current government has authorised more than 100 new settlements, almost doubling the previous number; and land controlled by settler farms has been allowed to increase more than four-fold. Meanwhile, over 1,100 West Bank Palestinians have been killed and around 40,000 forced from their homes by military onslaughts or settler aggression.

These genocidal events have included what Miliband called “the crossing of a long-standing red line”, the enlargement of the E1 settlement project near Jerusalem with the intention of further dividing and isolating Palestinian areas.

Occupation aims

Israel’s Zionist leaders have moved away from the language of subterfuge to instead starkly express their aims. Bezalel Smotrich, the far-right minister overseeing the settlement project, makes clear that the goal is complete Israeli sovereignty of the West Bank, the removal of the Palestinians and to “bury the idea of a Palestinian state”. Mainstream right-wing



Israeli settlement in the West Bank
PHOTO: RALF ROLETSCHKE/CC



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

Israeli politicians are also pushing that agenda; for ex-

ample defence minister Israel Katz, in Netanyahu’s Likud party, has praised the creation of new outposts by settlers and announced plans for three new military-agricultural outposts in the north of the Gaza Strip.

Faced with mass outrage worldwide at these developments, it has become untenable for capitalist politicians internationally to try to portray the Netanyahu government’s acts as ‘legitimate defence’ following the October 2023 Hamas attack, as many initially contended. Even Trump’s US administration, by far the largest provider of arms and political support for the Israeli regime, is having to take into account a historic change domestically in attitudes towards Israel, with a Pew survey in July reporting 62% of Americans having an unfavourable opinion of the Israeli government, up from 43% in 2022. Trump therefore felt compelled to say last year that he wouldn’t ‘allow’ Israel to annex the West Bank, and in June he expressed annoyance at Netanyahu’s pace of aggression when he erupted at him: “Everybody hates you now... Everybody hates Israel”.

Trump’s rhetoric is also due to pressure from Arab regimes in the Middle East that want him to hold Netanyahu back. But despite this, and despite a large number of Democrats and some Republicans in the US Congress reflecting the increased support for the Palestinians in the US, for the time

being the fundamental support of US imperialism for the State of Israel remains very much intact. Last month, a delivery of 40,000 one-ton bombs and 20,000 Penetrator warheads was promised to add to the previous billions of dollars of US-produced arms supplies.

UK sanctions - motives & limits

Burnham and Miliband, on the other hand, as well as pledging to sanction trade with settlements and companies involved in the settlement project, “will now also refuse all licence applications for arms and other exports that materially contribute to the occupation”, in the words of Miliband. This is welcome news for the anti-war movement even though small in effect, as UK imports from the settlements are less than 1% of UK imports from Israel, and Israel receives less than 1% of its arms imports from the UK. However, there is a groundswell of similar planned or already implemented moves from other governments, including France, Canada, Norway, Netherlands, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Poland, Portugal, Sweden, Australia, Ireland, Spain and Belgium, which collectively causes disquiet within Israel’s ruling class.

At the same time, that disquiet is limited, because western governments are not inflicting sanctions on Israeli big business as a whole - just identifiable aspects of the occupation. In reality though, it isn’t possible to separate Israeli capitalism from the occupation and ethnic cleansing. The

Green Party ‘Zionism is racism’ motion

Tens of thousands of people joined the Green Party following the election of eco-populist Zack Polanski. It now surpasses 200,000 members. Many of these joined in the period after the Labour Party under Keir Starmer backed Benjamin Netanyahu to the hilt during the Israeli state’s brutal bombardment of Gaza.

At the Green Party’s conference on 2-4 October members passed a motion entitled ‘Zionism is racism’.

What attitude should socialists take to this issue? Following the spring conference, Socialist Party Executive Committee member Judy Beishon wrote an article exploring the question in Socialism Today magazine. In it she traces the history of Zionism as a right-wing political movement. And looks at what programme is needed today

to end brutal wars and give real self-determination to people across the region.

● Read the article and more at socialismtoday.org



Israeli state is based on the entire Israeli economy and the government of that state is providing the resources and political drive for the settlement expansion and the brutal repression, displacement and confinement of Palestinians.

The Israeli state and military (IDF) have encouraged armed settlers to organise in so-called Regional Defence Units and turn a blind eye to the overwhelming majority of settler attacks on Palestinians. Also, IDF assaults have regularly been inflicted on Palestinians, often in tandem with those of unofficial or official settler mobs.

Despite all this, western sanctions are being carefully limited to measures that can try to head off accusations from below of ‘doing nothing’, while at the same time not breaking with western capitalism’s fundamental support for the State of Israel or damaging trade between western companies and Israel. Miliband stressed continued support for “important and valued trade with green line Israel” - ie, Israel within the 1949 Armistice line that was originally drawn on a map in green ink.

This means deliberately avoiding more effective sanctions that governments could inflict, as even two Financial Times journalists noted about the UK sanctions when they wrote: “The most powerful such tool would be sanctions targeting banks and insurers that do business with settlements”. They went on to quote the words of an Israeli economic planner, who said that such action “would

be a bigger issue... You have a credit system in which large British banks could be members of a consortium financing projects... London is one of the top three financial centres in the world. So this could carry serious results” (FT 21.9.26).

However, Miliband stressed that he opposes BDS (boycott, divestment, and sanctions) against Israel, with one of his two justifications being that blame should be placed on Israel’s government rather than its people. Referring to ‘people’ without distinguishing between the classes in society is a way of Miliband defending Israeli capitalism. He overcame his qualms about sanctions impacting ‘people’ when in the past he praised the anti-apartheid movement in Britain regarding South Africa, and by today supporting sanctions on the Russian state.

His other reason for opposing BDS is “precisely because we support the two-state solution, including security and prosperity for Israel”. To accentuate this smokescreen he said: “Securing the two-state solution in its fullest form is the North Star of this government’s policy, and indeed of successive British governments over decades.” Yet it has become clear over those decades that not just the present Israeli government but its predecessors - and Israel’s ruling class above them - won’t contemplate the existence of a genuine Palestinian state. So as the Socialist Party has consistently explained, any solution, including a two-state solution, can only



Foreign secretary Ed Miliband and other European capitalist governments have imposed sanctions
PHOTO: FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH & DEVELOPMENT OFFICE/CC

be achieved on the basis of socialist movements developing in Israel-Palestine, led by working-class people, that can reach the point of challenging and removing capitalism.

Limited sanctions - forced on capitalist governments internationally by mass opinion and the anti-war movements - can help highlight the Palestinians’ plight and exert low-grade pressure on the Netanyahu government. But those governments can never be trusted to do what is needed to achieve Palestinian liberation. Although they want to see greater stability in the Middle East, it is completely against their interests to raise revolutionary aspirations in the Arab masses and the Israeli working class, which a serious strategy aimed at Palestinian liberation would entail.

Workers’ sanctions

The only sanctions that can be trusted by workers and socialists are those taken by independent workers’ organisations. Workers everywhere, including in the Middle East, share the same fundamental interests against capitalist exploitation, so can act in each other’s interests and against those of the capitalists of all countries. Regarding Israel, workers internationally can make it clear that their sanctions are aimed against the occupation and Israeli capitalists rather than against ordinary Israelis, helping to expose the class divide in Israel and encourage as many Israeli Jewish workers as possible to move in an anti-war and anti-capitalist direction.

Workers’ sanctions can also act most effectively against the Israeli war machine, as organised workers are potentially the most powerful force in society. Italian workers set an example when they took general strike action in 2025 against the Gaza genocide. Regarding the Ukraine war, in 2022 workers at Ellesmere Port in north west England refused to unload a ship carrying Russian oil and they pointed out that bosses were circumventing sanctions. On 30 October 2026, dockworkers in six countries, covering 40 ports, intend to take action aimed at blocking military equipment being transported to Israel. These types of protest action by organised workers can be precursors to more widespread and prolonged actions, which will be on the cards as workers’ movements come to gain in strength and confidence in all respects.

Such workers’ solidarity actions internationally are invaluable, while at the same time recognising that it is workers in Israel-Palestine who face the direct task of removing Israeli capitalism and also capitalist relations in Palestinian society.

The Palestinians have repeatedly shown their willingness to struggle, with a prime example being the first intifada in 1987-93, a mass uprising against the occupation. The 1993 Oslo Accords gave rise to the Fatah-led Palestinian Authority, a body that has echoed Israeli repression and held back workers’ struggle. Hamas, based on right-wing political Islam, has also suppressed workers’ struggle and presents no way forward for Palestinian liberation. Today, Palestinians across the West Bank are taking their own grassroots initiatives to organise defence of their towns and villages, which can help lay the basis for democratically run committees of workers and the poor to develop and link together.

Israel election looms

Currently, only a small minority of Israeli Jews are actively aiding Palestinian defence, but Israel is far from being a static society that will be devoid of class-based upheavals. Israeli academic Dan Ben-David, writing in the Economist, aptly commented: “Israel is a story of profound changes on massive scales at extraordinary speeds” (12.9.26).

A general election takes place on 27 October, with the Netanyahu government’s record in the spotlight. Recent additions to the debates taking place include government fury against the new film ‘Naza’, which contains IDF personnel exposing the extent of the deliberate killing of civilians in Gaza; and the attempted crashing of a Flydubai plane carrying around 170 Israelis.

There are many cracks at the top of society over how to manage the occupation, with a range of senior establishment figures speaking out against the worst of the settler terrorism, fearing it will provoke a major Palestinian uprising, seeing it as an undesirable challenge to the authority of the IDF, and viewing it as counterproductive to Israeli capitalist interests internationally and domestically. These include former Israeli Attorney General Michael Ben Yair, former prime minister Ehud Olmert, and a number of former IDF chiefs. But none of them, along with the pro-capitalist opposition political parties, have any solution to the national conflict. If those parties form the next government, management of the occupation would probably change in some ways but the oppression will continue.

Domestic reasons for those leaders to denounce settler violence include the fact that while a majority of Israeli Jews support repression of the Palestinians, not yet convinced of an alternative, most don’t support the untrammelled terror being inflicted by ultra-right settlers. While their government pursues de facto West Bank annexation, it isn’t a goal for most of the population and, contrary to international perception, a research body reported that more Israelis are leaving the settlements than moving to them (see: ‘How do we stop the settler attacks in the West Bank?’ at socialist-struggle.org).

Inequality is massive and rising in Israel. The above mentioned Economist article noted: “In 2024, 20% of Israel’s workforce paid 93% of the country’s income tax, up from 83% in 2000, while half the workforce was too poor to reach the income-tax threshold”. The interests of the ruling class are diametrically opposed to those of the working class and middle class, a dichotomy that will see more and more into mass consciousness as further events unfold.

The building of mass workers’ organisations that can pose a socialist solution is as vital in the Middle East, as everywhere on the planet. In Israel-Palestine such organisations will be able to put forward a real alternative to oppression and insecurity, opening the way towards a socialist Palestinian state, alongside a socialist Israel in which the capitalist Zionist state apparatus will have been replaced by democratic workers’ ownership and control of the economy and essential resources. This will be in the context of socialist transformation across the entire region, ending war, poverty and deprivation for all.

Unite victory at Legal 500

NICK AUVACHE
UNITE ORGANISER, HOUSING WORKERS BRANCH

After two and half weeks of striking and picketing their Fleet Street offices, digital and tech workers at Legal 500 have won a stunning victory. The Unite members' central demand for a flat pay increase of £2,000 for each worker has been met in full.

Legal 500, a global legal directory, has grown significantly over the last few years, bringing in more than £40 million over that period. Workers simply wanted a fair share.

Management had previously sacked two workers who had started to organise. Workers were undeterred. Unite continued to recruit and then members voted for strike action when management initially rejected their pay claim.

Despite the fact that it was clearly affordable, the employer told Unite that it is not in line with their 'pay principles' to raise pay when business is going well! Unite members took a different view.

The workers rejected a 3.4% pay offer and a revised £1,200 uplift. Daily pickets were lively and well attended, which boosted morale.

In addition, Unite organised a protest outside the Bar Awards ceremony hosted by the company - exposing their meanness took the shine off this glossy event.

The sacrifice and determination of the workers, together with support from the wider movement, forced the bosses to return the table with their tails between their legs and submit to the union's demands.

Many of these workers are young and for the vast majority it was the first time they had been on strike. Their experience endorsed the idea that militant trade unionism plus solidarity brings results!



AMNON COHEN

Forest School: 'We want what you took away'

The week-long strike of caterers and cleaners at Forest School, Waltham Forest, London, ended on 2 October with one of the parents joining the picket line. Strikers were told that parents and students have started

a petition in their support. And the school student council voted to support the strikers! Unite rep Luisa said: "It is brilliant to know that they appreciate our job in the school and how important we are."

School management proposes a 13.5% pay cut, reducing staff from 52-week pay to 44 weeks for catering staff and 45 weeks for cleaners. According to the Charity Commission, the Head gets £300,000. The company that employs them,

Compass, has a recorded profit of \$1.8 billion.

The workers went from just one Unite member when this started, to a fantastic, confident picket line. More workers came out during the week to join the strike. Luisa says: "The school needs to stop thinking about their pockets and start thinking about the kids, the parents, and the employees."

● **An interview with Luisa can be read at socialistparty.org.uk**



ISAI MARJERLA

Berks hospital porters defending overtime pay

SARA GILLMAN

On 29 and 30 September, I went along to support around 30 hospital porters on a picket line at Royal Berkshire Hospital Trust, members of GMB.

The porters are on strike to protect their overtime pay - work which they have to do just to get a minimal wage and afford the bills. The overtime rate has now been reduced by approximately £7 an hour. They have tried to negotiate with the trust but have been ignored.

There are also many health and safety issues, with the porter role being constantly extended - lifting very heavy oxygen tanks on their own, for instance.

There is a determined mood to fight and stay firm from all at the picket line. The workers are also very pleased with all the support they have so far received from other unions and workers in the hospital, who have stood in solidarity with their porter colleagues, refusing to cover their work.

70 porters are also new union members, after an influx of workers joining during this dispute. Branch and regional organisers confirmed that if no acceptable agreement is found they will continue to ballot for more strike action, or work to rule.



SARA GILLMAN

UCU higher education special conference - We need national action in universities!

TILDE RESARE
UCU MEMBER, UNIVERSITY OF SHEFFIELD

The University and College Union (UCU) represents academics and support staff at higher education (HE) and further education (FE) institutions. It numbers over 120,000 workers.

The Socialist's report from 2026 UCU Congress states: "24 universities are now at risk of insolvency: an unprecedented situation and a direct consequence of the failed marketised fees model in higher education. Labour's only response has been to increase fees."

The current funding model of HE is a product of the 'neoliberalism' Andy Burnham claimed he wants to reverse in his new role as Prime Minister. However, so far it looks like he has more loyalty to the 'bond markets' than to the working class, as currently no steps are being taken to meaningfully increase spending in education.

Following a motion being passed in 23 UCU branches calling for it, a special HE sector conference (SHESC) has been called for 14 October, with the stated purpose of debating launching a dispute with the Secretary of State of Education.

Push the leadership

It has been necessary to campaign for this SHESC because at UCU's HE conference in May, members voted overwhelmingly for national action against job cuts, in the face of huge efforts from the leadership to prevent this. This is a clear display of will from the workers to stand up for the sector.

Members again showed their willingness to fight in the consultative pay ballot in the summer. Of those who voted, 69% rejected the 2% pay offer and 60% were willing to participate in industrial action. The UCU Higher Education Committee (HEC) is meeting to determine the next steps. They should agree to ballot for pay and funding.

But the HEC, the body in charge of implementing the policy the members have decided on, has so far refused to call national action. "Following legal advice" the dispute over the funding model has been stalled.

This follows a similar motion passed in 2025, which the UCU leadership has failed to act on.

HEC has instead endorsed a three-year strategy as a solution (the 'Education. It's ours' campaign), delaying any national industrial action.

This stalling is an overreach of the powers by the unelected UCU officials, who are backed by the elected leadership group around the general secretary, Jo Grady. It is important to note that the legal advice cited does not state that launching such a dispute would be impossible.

The main problem is supposedly that a dispute over the current broken HE funding model in general would be deemed 'political' rather than 'industrial' and therefore not legal under current legislation. This argument sidesteps the issue that the current funding model poses an existential threat to the whole HE sector - if pay, jobs, terms and conditions are to be maintained and improved, it requires more funding. Members have been and continue to be engaged in huge battles at many universities across the country - my own included. But the funding crisis cannot be resolved by individual universities alone.

If workers across the HE sector were led by the UCU to take decisive strike action this would be an undeniable show of force. There is wide support for this across the sector. The tango at the HEC is filibustering against the will of the workers. However, due to the actions of the UCU leadership, there is very limited trust in the current leadership of UCU.

This is the background against which the SHESC has been called. HE members should go into this Zoom conference taking confidence from the battle in FE, where there are also relentless efforts by the officials and Grady-supporters to prevent, delay and whittle down national action. But due to the daily battle of Socialist Party members and other lefts on the FEC, applying the pressure of the members, in FE there is due to be a national ballot this autumn.

A strike across the board would make both fights much stronger!

● **To vote for national action, vote FOR Motions 1 and 3, and AGAINST Motion 2**



PAUL MATTSSON

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

Probation union Napo sets date for strike ballot Vote 'yes' to fight for decent pay and workloads



PAUL MATTSSON

ADAM HARMSWORTH
NAPO NATIONAL VICE-CHAIR, PERSONAL CAPACITY

From 19 October until noon on 13 November, probation service workers in Napo will be balloted for industrial action over both pay and workloads.

The recent chaos around the early release of thousands of prisoners has put the spotlight on problems in probation that have existed for years. Probation workers are already severely overworked, and many were dreading the immense extra work they would be forced to shoulder with the early release.

Pay has fallen in real terms over many years, leaving some staff working two jobs even while being overworked. To add to the insultingly low pay, a year ago probation bosses didn't even bother to make a pay offer for an entire year!

On top of that, there is a horrendous culture of bullying and discrimination in the prison service (HMPPS).

Napo members in probation have had enough of being overworked and underpaid.

In June, Napo's National Executive Committee (NEC) passed a motion of no confidence in HMPPS, demanding "immediate and substantive change".

When neither HMPPS nor the government reacted, 90.76% of members voted for industrial action in an online indicative ballot. From there, the NEC unanimously voted to continue the campaign, including a formal ballot for industrial action.

Napo has 6,000 members. It has had two online all-member meetings since announcing the formal ballot, with 490 members attending the first and 300 at the second.

Everything indicates this is a union whose members are prepared to fight back, to improve pay and

workloads, and to effectively rescue probation from a crisis of years of underfunding.

Napo members in probation should vote 'yes' to strike, and make clear this union will not back down until funding is restored to probation and the culture of overworking is torn down.

Pressure on Burnham

If the Labour government were truly on our side, it would have begun restoring pay to the public sector and investing in public services like probation. But there is no word of this from new prime minister Andy Burnham. Instead, at the time of writing, even the threat of strike action hasn't budged the government to intervene to ensure any decent offer on pay and workloads could be put to the union.

At last year's annual general meeting (AGM), 37% of attendees voted for a motion for Napo to begin discussions with sister unions on building a new political voice for the working class. Since then, Keir Starmer was booted out, massively unpopular due to his continuation of Tory austerity.

While no similar motion has been taken to this year's AGM, many members will feel let down by a Burnham government promising to be different, but in practice acting just the same.

Napo AGM

All Napo members are encouraged to attend the AGM at Newcastle's Civic Hall from 15 to 17 October, and join the discussion on how we can build the industrial and political fightback together to win a probation service that works for its staff, service users, and the community.

That must include Napo pressing the TUC to call the national demo against Labour austerity agreed at TUC Congress in September.

PCS national strike ballot dates set Now we organise to win



HUGO PIERRE

PCS BROAD LEFT NETWORK

PCS will be balloting from 20 October to 1 December for national industrial action.

The ballot for action is in support of the union's demands on pay, jobs and conditions - demands which cannot be met by the 3.5% government-imposed pay remit - only 2% of which is funded.

If we want more money we will have to fight for it.

The task now is to turn the decision into the biggest possible organising campaign across PCS and deliver the turnout and 'Yes' vote we need to take effective national action.

PCS demands a 10% pay rise, an £18-an-hour minimum civil service wage and appropriate London weighting. Low pay and the erosion of differentials continue to plague the civil service, with increases in the legal minimum wage repeatedly catching up with the lowest civil service grades. The government's 3.5% civil service pay remit does not meet those demands.

We are also demanding a job security agreement, including protection against compulsory redundancies. Tens of thousands of jobs are potentially at stake. The Institute for Government estimates that around 40,000 civil service jobs could disappear by 2029, and other significant budget cuts across departments could lead to 72,000 job losses by the end of the decade.

We are fighting for our pensions, against attacks on terms and conditions, and against arbitrary office attendance requirements, which can cost members hundreds of pounds a month simply to travel to work.

Coordinate with others

The millions of workers who run government departments, schools, colleges, hospitals, councils and other public services possess enormous

collective power. Where different groups of workers are fighting over the same fundamental issues, the trade union movement should seek the maximum possible coordination of campaigns and industrial action.

A strong 'Yes' vote in PCS, alongside successful ballots elsewhere in the public sector, would strengthen every worker fighting against falling living standards. We will be discussing coordinated action capable of forcing the government to move.

The NEC also agreed that members will be consulted on the question of a levy to fund targeted strike action and for longer-term requirements. The National Disputes Committee will set the dates for membership consultation. The Broad Left Network (BLN) firmly believes that members should have their say on the future of the levy and how we properly resource industrial action.

Between now and 20 October, PCS needs to build organising campaigns in every branch: cleaning membership data, recruiting new members and reps, holding workplace meetings and systematically speaking to members about why they need to vote 'Yes'.

Once ballot papers land, every part of the union must be focused on beating the legal 50% turnout threshold and delivering the strongest possible 'Yes' vote. BLN members on the NEC will continue to push for reps to have the resources of the national union thrown behind them.

● Ballot papers will be sent electronically, unless members are in Northern Ireland or do not have a valid email address

● **Socialist Party members play a key role in the PCS Broad Left Network which, in a coalition alongside others, forms a left majority on the PCS NEC. BLN supporters have fought hard for this ballot to take place**

TUC must enact PCS's TUC motion for a national Saturday demonstration

Burnham's speech at Labour Party conference has revealed the reality behind his so-called 'new direction'. His announcement of the scrapping of the pension triple lock has shown that under him, yet again working-class people will be expected to pay the price for capitalist crisis.

A whole number of trade union leaders have rushed in to cover up for Burnham. But it is vital that the unions build pressure on this new Labour government.

A major step must be for unions to vote at the Trades Union Congress (TUC) General Council on 21 October to enact the PCS TUC Congress motion to call a national Saturday demonstration against austerity.

It is vital that union reps, members and activists call on their respective unions to vote for the motion to be enacted. A model motion from the National Shop Stewards Network 'For the TUC General Council to enact Motion 34 to call a national Saturday demonstration' can be found at shopstewards.net



CHERYL WITTES

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Cable Street anniversary protest

What can unions do next to oppose racism and far right?

PIPPA EVANS
TOWER HAMLETS RESIDENT AND PCS UNION NEC
(PERSONAL CAPACITY)

It's the 90th anniversary of the Battle of Cable Street. Then, hundreds of thousands of workers and young people mobilised across the East End of London to stop Oswald Mosley and the British Union of Fascists (BUF).

Mosley deliberately chose the area to march through to target predominantly working-class Jewish and immigrant communities, and provoke division. Instead, he faced a mass mobilisation of local workers, Jewish workers and residents, Irish dockers, trade unionists, socialists, and young people.

1936

Thousands of police couldn't clear a route for the fascist march, and they were forced to retreat.

Thousands joined a demonstration on the 90th anniversary. There was a strong trade union presence, with workers travelling from across the country.

Unite the Union played a key role in organising and stewarding the event. There were lots of union banners, including Unite health workers from the local hospital and Tower Hamlets Unison.

The banner at the front of the march read: "No to: Antisemitism, Islamophobia, all racism. 1936 they did not pass. 2026 they will not pass." Other banners linked the demonstration to wider struggles today. There were also chants against other forms of division and oppression, including the genocide on Gaza and anti-trans rhetoric.

How can we oppose racism and oppression today? Unite's role helping organise the demonstration gives a glimpse of what the trade union movement can do, mobilising workers against the far right and racist division.

The far right is gaining support and confidence by exploiting growing anger, as working-class people see their lives getting worse. But trade unions bring millions of workers together, and have the collective strength to fight for improvements in our lives.

What we fight for today

The solution to a housing shortage is genuinely affordable council homes. The answer to low pay and insecurity is decent jobs and wages.

Ending sky-rocketing energy and water bills means democratic public ownership to replace vulture profit-seeking private companies. Trade unions need to take up these fights.

This was an important lesson from the Battle of Cable Street in 1936. Back then, rank-and-file Communist Party activists built support in the East End by organising around issues such as housing.

In the 1930s, the Stepney Tenants' Defence League campaigned against high rents, poor conditions, and evictions. Fighting the far right was connected to the wider struggles facing working-class people.

In the Public and Commercial Services (PCS) union, the left coalition has a majority on the newly elected National Executive Committee. We're pushing to implement the fighting programme agreed by members at this year's union conference.

We've fought for a fighting national



campaign over pay, jobs, pensions, and conditions. We are balloting for strike action from 20 October (see page 11).

By taking up issues that directly affect workers' lives, and organising around them, unions can cut across far-right attempts to exploit anger and division, pointing to what can actually improve working-class people's lives.

The trade union movement already has a mandate to take this forward in a coordinated way. The Trades Union Congress (TUC) has policy going

back to 2018 calling for action against the far right, and a campaign for jobs, homes, and services, not racism.

National demo

This year's TUC Congress again passed a motion calling for a national Saturday demonstration against austerity. We can't allow the TUC leadership to again ignore the motion. The TUC should set a date and mobilise.

A demonstration like this could bring together the struggles workers are already facing – housing, low pay, insecure work, cuts to public

services. And provide a clear alternative to the far right's attempt to blame migrants and other working-class communities.

A political vacuum exists. The Labour Party has abandoned the working class and is implementing austerity.

Many feel there is no alternative. The unions should take the lead in building a new mass workers' party.

- Read more about Cable Street and opposing racism and the far right at socialistparty.org.uk

Socialism 2026

finance appeal

Fund the fightback

AREA	£ RECEIVED	£ TARGET	Q3: JULY-SEPTEMBER 2026										FINAL CHART	
South West	3,161	2,100												151%
North West	1,523	1,200												127%
Southern & SE	2,758	2,400												115%
Wales	2,712	2,400												113%
London	5,515	5,000												110%
East Midlands	2,230	2,050												109%
Northern	870	800												109%
Yorkshire	2,312	2,650												87%
West Midlands	2,303	2,700												85%
Eastern	719	1,300												55%
Other	1,424	2,400												59%
TOTAL	25,527	25,000												102%

ISAI MARJERLA
SOCIALIST PARTY TREASURER

The Socialist Party fights boldly for socialism – a democratic society run in the interests of the many, not for the profits of a wealthy few. We reject the myth that there is not enough wealth to meet everyone's needs, forcing ordinary people to compete against each other for scarce resources. There is no need to rob Peter to pay Paul.

The wealth exists. In June this year, capitalism produced its first trillionaire. Yet that wealth remains concentrated in the hands of big business and the super-rich.

The poorest 50% of the UK population own less than 5% of the country's wealth. We say: take the wealth off the super-rich to fund the needs of the majority.

Across communities, workplaces, schools, colleges, and universities, we campaign alongside other working-class and young people against the attacks of this rotten system. The real power in society lies with those who create the wealth – the working class. We are the majority, and we

can get rid of this capitalist system of war, oppression, and exploitation.

Capitalism offers no decent future for the vast majority. Living standards are under attack, public services are crumbling, and millions face insecurity.

We fight for every gain that can be won for our class today. But we also fight for more.

Socialist ideas can change the world. But to do that we need to get the ideas out far and wide. And that requires funding.

Socialism 2026, hosted by the Socialist Party, is the largest gathering of socialists, trade unionists, campaigners, and activists planned this autumn. 14-15 November will be a weekend of discussion and debate on how we can build a socialist alternative to capitalism, and strengthen the working-class struggles taking place today.

As part of the Saturday rally, there will be a financial appeal. This year, we are setting a target to raise £50,000. Every contribution will help strengthen the fight for a socialist future. Every penny donated to us will be used to win a new world.

You can make a pledge now by emailing finance@socialistparty.org.uk, to be redeemed by 11 December.

- Donate today: socialistparty.org.uk/donations/socialism-2026

● Fighting fund target reached: £25,527 raised

A big thank you all our members and supporters, who raised fighting funds through campaign activity and donations. Our Socialist Party branches have been busy organising stalls, campaigning, and other activity to raise funds to help build socialist ideas.

£11,500 was raised in the last four weeks alone – an amazing show of support for our ideas.

Help fund the fightback

DONATE

socialistparty.org.uk/donate

France, Germany, Spain –

20 November International Youth Strike steps up

4,000 sign up in Britain

ADAM POWELL-DAVIES
SOCIALIST STUDENTS NATIONAL ORGANISER

With six weeks to go, the campaign for the 20 November International Youth Strike has been taken up a notch.

In the past week, high school students across France have blockaded schools and rallied against austerity and brutal police repression. In Spain, students and young people have been part of the mass protest movement against evictions and the capitalist 'rentier economy'.

German students, who have walked out in their tens of thousands this year against the threat of conscription and military spending, have now decided to strike again. On 20 November, they will be joining tens of thousands of others across Europe, under the slogan, 'fight for our future, not their wars'.

The message from Socialist Students to young people returning to campus and their classrooms this term has been simple: 'Join the international fightback – walk out on 20 November, and get organised with Socialist Students'.

Socialist Students members have had a phenomenal response. In the past month, over 4,000 students have left their details to find out more about joining the International Youth Strike or to sign up to Socialist Students.

Hundreds have attended our open meetings, to come and hear why we say that 'fighting for our future' means getting organised for a socialist alternative to capitalism.

And we haven't waited around to get students fighting back. On 25 September, we held protest actions all across Britain in solidarity with the German school strikes. We are attending protests in solidarity with French school students.

On 10 October, Socialist Students members from across the country will be forming up at the national Palestine solidarity demonstration in London. We're looking for any students to get involved in the International Youth Strike campaign.

We're determined to make sure that young people in Britain are part of it. Join Socialist Students if you want the international fightback to be socialist.

- Read more about France and Spain on pages 2-3

Liverpool – 600 want to hear about strikes, climate, socialism, and fighting the right

BECCA BAYMAN
LIVERPOOL SOCIALIST STUDENTS

We had multiple Socialist Students campaign stalls on campus every day at the University of Liverpool. We received 600 contact details of students eager to learn more about socialism, a record high for Liverpool uni.

Young people are becoming more aware of the need for an alternative to combat the issues they see in their daily lives. 65 people attended our freshers meeting.

People asked about how to combat climate change, and whether the Green Party is capable of this. We raised the need for nationalisation and workers' control of technology.

Students questioned the logistics of going on strike, and how we protect and support striking workers, and the role of trade unions in this. There was more awareness of the workers' movement than in previous years.

The issue of militarisation came up, in response to our campaigning for the 20 November walkout. We explained why wars occur under capitalism, and why resisting militarisation requires resisting capitalism altogether, and the need for democratic workers' control of the economy.

We were asked about how we should orientate to young people who have been influenced by right populism, and how we can win them over to socialist ideas. We argued for an alternative to the establishment parties to address the problems facing the working class.

We anchored this on the history of Liverpool's Militant (Socialist Party's predecessor) council during the 1980s. The socialist council had overwhelming support from Liverpool's working class, because it created thousands of jobs and built thousands of council homes.

We were asked about the difference between ourselves and other political groups on campus. We're working with other groups, especially across Europe, to build the 20 November youth strike. We explained that the broadness of our organisation allowed for maximum debate and democracy.

We frequently referred to the fight for socialism extending beyond campus. This requires us to sink deep roots into working-class organisations, like trade unions.



Our fight for socialism is based on Marxism, that helps analyse and understand capitalism. The failure of capitalism is inevitable, but socialism is not. So workers and young people must actively fight and organise.

If you agree with these ideas, join Socialist Students on a campus near you.

SOAS – international solidarity

JJ
WALTHAM FOREST SOCIALIST PARTY

As it's an internationally renowned humanitarian education centre, SOAS attracts students to central London from all across the globe. Our commitment to international working-class solidarity resonated.

We referred students to partner organisations of the Socialist Party in the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI) in the US, France, Nigeria, and Germany. We had a long discussion with a student from Singapore about the issues plaguing the working class in her country, and how socialist change is the answer.

We promoted our solidarity rally with German students over their government introducing conscription, scheduled later in the day, and international youth walkouts on 20 November against the rise in militarism. Socialist Students values action as well as discussion.

Students commencing their education journeys have a backdrop of

record youth and graduate unemployment. Tuition fees are scheduled to rise above £10,000 next year.

Students are paying more for less, while navigating a broken rental market and cost-of-living crisis. Our positive reception at SOAS showed the rise in support for socialism, as young people look for an alternative to capitalism.

Manchester – fightback energy

EESHA
MANCHESTER SOCIALIST STUDENTS

Over three days of campaigning, we handed out 3,000 leaflets, and saw 350 students sign up to fight against the militarisation of our education system. The energy for a fightback was palpable.

Students had little faith in new Labour prime minister Andy Burnham. Not only is the cost of education continuing to spiral – tuition fees and accommodation in particular – this money is being shamelessly invested in, for example, the Defence Universities Alliance. Manchester uni is gearing research towards weapons-making, and encouraging students towards careers in the military.

90 students attended our freshers meeting. There were lively political debates about whether there is need for militarism in an increasingly unstable capitalist world, and if the nature of capitalism inevitably leads to war.

Many people also talked about the

logistics of a fightback – spreading information, international solidarity, lessons from student campaigns of the past, and the 20 November walkout.

Manchester students are not just angry. We are ready to take action.

Now we have to keep the momentum going.

Greenwich – what about our future?

JAY COWARD
SOUTH EAST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

Young people want a way to fight for their future, and exercise their concern about where they'll go after graduation. After freshers, we've been back at Greenwich uni every week with a campaign stall, followed an informal café meetup, before our Socialist Party meeting.

The chair of the women's liberation group said that she had to pay to get a shuttle bus to campus, despite being advertised as free. This could be Greenwich Socialist Students' first campaign!

Build the N20 international youth walkout

- bit.ly/4d7GR12

Join Socialist Students

- socialiststudents.org.uk

Come to Socialism 2026

- socialism.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

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

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

DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS

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

SOCIALISM AND INTERNATIONALISM

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

Film review: Bad Apples It's not just one rotten fruit, it's the system!



PHOTO: PULSE FILMS

DAVID KAPLAN

Bad Apples is a brilliant satire on the state of education in the UK.

Maria, played by Saoirse Ronan, is a teacher in a primary school. She has an extremely poorly behaved student, Danny, in her class, whom she is unable to influence.

The characterisations are brilliantly observed. In one scene, the school's Headteacher tells Maria to 'pull herself together' and sort out Danny's behaviour: "You know the school cannot afford support in your class – you have to do it yourself". In another scene, Maria has put a huge amount of thought into a lesson on lyrics and music. It is the first lesson of the day and for some reason, Danny is not in class. Maybe the lesson will go well. Maria has just started the lesson when Danny walks in – he is just late to school. The look of utter disappointment on Maria's face is clear for all to see. Chaos ensues.

Danny's behaviour gets progressively worse and after a series of escalating incidents, Maria abducts him and imprisons him in the basement of her house.

The film highlights the pressures on teachers: to 'perform miracles' with classes that have too many students and without the necessary funding. Individual teachers are encouraged to go 'above and beyond'

the norm and then promoted based on their results, as a whip to other professionals. 'This could be you, if only you work harder.'

The child characters of Danny and his foil, Pauline, are brilliantly played by Eddie Waller and Nia Brown. Both the scriptwriter, Jess O'Kane, and director, Jonatan Etzler, were previously teachers.

On the face of it, Danny is the only 'bad apple' in the film: removing him from the picture is a cure-all for all the problems facing the school. The school gets its 'best ever' SATS results as a consequence. However, leaving the cinema theatre, you realise that it is not Danny who is the bad apple, but the whole system of results-driven, reward-based education.

- **Bad Apples is on general release in cinemas around the UK.**

WHAT'S YOUR VIEW?

- editors@socialistparty.org.uk

or, if you're not online, write to the Socialist Inbox, PO Box 1398, Enfield EN1 9GT

Glasgow City Council: Round one to Unison – now prepare for round two!

PHILIP STOTT
SOCIALIST PARTY SCOTLAND

Glasgow City Council (GCC) have agreed to remove the threat to fire and rehire 23,000 of its own workers. The action follows the refusal by the Unison trade union to bow to the terror tactics of the employer. On Thursday 25 September, GCC announced it was going to press the nuclear button of fire and rehire. While it was forced to retreat within 24 hours, it refused to take the option off the table. That has now been achieved to allow for a ballot of the workforce on the new pay and grading proposals.

In addition, Unison has secured increased pay protection for those facing pay cuts under the council's new pay scheme. The original plan was to offer only six months of protection. GCC has now agreed to three years' pay protection for the around 2,000 workers so far who face pay detriment.

Unfortunately, the leaders of the GMB and Unite unions accepted the council's proposals at an early stage, while Unison continued to fight. Unison's position has been vindicated by these latest concessions.

As it stands, the council has also been forced to increase payments for arrears for those who have suffered unequal pay by £110 million. This takes the total package for compensation to over £800 million since 2018.

But Glasgow City Unison have also made it clear that they are opposed to all pay cuts. As they explained in their statement: "The council has

agreed not to issue fire-and-rehire notices in 2026 while we fight for improvements and ballot our members. Again, it's the strength of our union which has forced this concession."

Unison go on: "However, the fight isn't over, and there are still significant issues that Unison wants resolved. We will continue pressing for additional investment, particularly for lower-paid workers facing losses, alongside further improvements on allowances and detriment.

"We also need clear protection for workers whose jobs have still not been evaluated. Those workers need to know when their evaluations will happen, what their outcome is and how pay protection will apply to them."

This brutal anti-union council even demanded that Unison accepts the employer's demands on the wording of the ballot and its timing. And that Unison should not recommend its members reject the pay and grading scheme. This has now been dropped by the council.

Socialist Party Scotland members who are activists and officers of Glasgow City Unison will argue for rejection of the scheme if the issues identified by the union remain unresolved.

While most workers' wages will increase or remain the same under the deal, a significant minority will face pay cuts. Moreover, a fifth of the council workforce still do not know what their grading is. In addition, the scheme discriminates against the lowest paid, with those at the very top of the council pay system gaining a lot more.

Unison has said it intends to fight



Glasgow UNISON has a long record of fighting to defend its members PHOTO:MATT DOBSON

We can beat Hackney bus cuts

SAAD H
HACKNEY SOCIALIST PARTY

Standing at a bus stop on Mare Street or Dalston Junction these days requires a great deal of patience. We wait longer, watch crammed buses pass by, and increasingly read notices saying that the routes we rely on are being permanently altered or cut altogether.

The latest announcement by Transport for London (TfL) is to eliminate routes 254 and 67, truncate route 42, and restructure routes 149, 106, and 253. Low-income households depend on these buses to live, work, and survive.

As routes are cancelled, the remaining buses are squeezed tighter, cramming more exhausted workers into fewer vehicles.

TfL – run by London Labour mayor Sadiq Khan – points to rising operating costs and changing travel patterns. But this is not accidental. It

is the systemic decay of capitalist infrastructure.

Over the past decade, 578 out of 700 London bus routes have seen their average speeds reduced to a historic low of just 9.18 miles per hour.

By leaving buses to rot in traffic in uncoordinated roadworks, the authorities have engineered a vicious circle of decline. They let the services become slow and unreliable, watch ridership inevitably fall, and then use that to justify cuts.

We are told there is no money. But the wealth of this city surrounds us.

The finance capital sitting in the glass towers of the City of London generates an astonishing £323 billion every year. More than enough to cover the £1.1 billion London bus funding shortfall, that TfL says it needs.

Under the current system, transport is commodified, rather than treated as an essential public good. But it's the working class which keeps the city running.

Tory and Labour governments

on for improvements and use the pe-

riod of the ballot to build support for that.

Chris Sermanni, Glasgow City Unison branch secretary and a member of Socialist Party Scotland, said: "Unison stood firm because Glasgow's workers deserved better than what was originally put on the table. That position has secured significant movement."

"There's now a path for Unison members to give their verdict without the immediate threat of dismissal and re-engagement hanging over them."

"Thousands of workers are owed substantial and long-overdue increases and we want them to receive every penny," he said.

"At the same time, other workers face significant losses and some still don't even know their final outcome."

Glasgow City Unison explained: "Whilst there's been improvements, they are still not enough to deliver pay justice across the city. Unison will prepare for a branch-wide ballot on the pay and grading proposals, which will begin later in October and run for approximately four weeks."

"We will use the time available to keep fighting for improvements before members make their decision. The ground we have won through this period of intense negotiations is important, but our strength in these coming weeks will come from organisation right across the city."

"Unison members will decide whether to accept or reject the package. This campaign has already secured movement because Unison members stood together, now we need to organise across every workplace."

Socialist Party Scotland will continue to stand with all Glasgow council workers. We will also continue to fight for a 100% anti-austerity, pro-worker city-wide election stand for the council elections next year. And for the return of the £500 million in stolen money for the setting of a needs budget for Glasgow.

demands of bus drivers and commuters, and the renationalisation of the buses.

The Socialist Party demands:

- **Halt proposed cuts to bus routes**
- **Replace private operators with a unified public service, under workers' control and management**
- **Fully funded, free-at-the-point-of-use public transport system, financed by taking the immense surplus wealth off the super-rich**

Drivers squeezed for profit

A LONDON BUS DRIVER SAID:

Unite is campaigning to end fatigue. Many buses already come late, with drivers forced to take their breaks later.

We need more buses per route. Bus drivers are being squeezed for private for profit. We're always under the threat of a sanction from performance-time targets.

The union is campaigning for minimum standards. This will improve safe and help reliable services.

The promise for air-conditioning and toilets is welcome. But there's no guarantee.

We need more buses, more running time, longer breaks – no cuts to buses. Workers and the public should be properly consulted.

£1/£2 solidarity price

socialistparty.org.uk



the Socialist

Issue 1385

8-14 October 2026

formerly **Militant**

DON'T LET BURNHAM ROB PENSIONERS

- **Defend the triple lock**
- **For pensions we can really afford to live on**
- **For a fully funded, fully public, comprehensive national care service**
- **Make the super-rich pay!**

BRENT KENNEDY
CARLISLE SOCIALIST PARTY

Where do you get your hands on ready dosh if you're too cowardly to try the banks? From little old ladies and gents – they're a pushover!

That is the essence of Labour's attack on the pensions triple lock, at the behest of the British Chambers of Commerce. Eventually it will mean depriving old folk of £15 billion a year and handing it over either to employers, or to profiteering private care home multinationals.

£15 billion is also the annual amount of tax relief that the government grants the highest earners for paying into pension pots which fund their enjoyable retirement lifestyles. Remember, the gap in healthy life expectancy between the wealthy and the poor has now widened to 20 years.

If Labour really cared about working-class folk they could keep the triple lock with just a 3% annual contribution from the 50 families sitting on a mountain of £500 billion. But that's taboo for them.

British pensioners get some of the lowest pensions in Europe, just 30% of average earnings, and Burnham's new rule will make sure it never improves on this. Whatever happened to the expectation of social progress which we baby boomers financed?

And don't buy the cynical argument that this will benefit workers of today or tomorrow. So many are dependent today on precarious working or bogus self-employment that 43% of working-aged people can't afford to save enough for retirement. They face a future on a paltry pension topped up by means-tested benefits, like a quarter of pensioners already. Then the bosses and bankers will claim we 'can't afford' the benefits bill.

Artificially stirred-up 'generation wars,' like divisions over race or gender, just divide us against each other and divert us from the real cause of our problems. We need working-class unity for a better life for all, by calling the billionaire class to account for once.

- **Read what we think: 'Unions must fight Burnham's pension pinching attack' page 5**

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

