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the Socialist

Issue 1389 | 5-11 November 2026 | formerly Militant

‘WE WON’T LET THEM STEAL OUR FUTURE!’

YOUTH STRIKE 20 NOVEMBER

Eesha Khurana, Manchester Socialist Students, spoke at a rally on the eve of Andy Burnham’s first Budget:

Young people have seen our futures stolen from us.

In schools, staff are underpaid and overstretched. Uni tuition fees have gone up year on year and are going over £10k next year. Job opportunities for graduates are drying up.

So much for doing away with discriminatory wage bands! The government is keeping the youth minimum wage lower than it is for older workers – breaking their promise.

Burnham acts like he is different to the governments that went before, but he’s not.

His Chancellor John Healey wants 5% of GDP to be spent on ‘defence’. That’s more than we spend on housing and education combined!

Just like the youth in France, we’re not willing to stand by and let our futures be stolen from us.

Socialist Students is working with over 25 youth organisations across Europe taking part in the international youth strike against war on 20 November. We’re backed by the NEU, and the UCU has called a day of action too.

Thousands of school, college and uni students will be walking out. We demand that the government funds our futures, not their wars!

Join us!







the Socialist
formerly Militant
Issue 1389
5-11 November 2026

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

LABOUR'S DO-NOTHING BUDGET MAINTAINS BRUTAL STATUS QUO

Unions must act to defend living standards

Socialist Party

WHAT WE THINK

"The Budget must be the moment that the prime minister's programme starts to match his rhetoric", general secretary of biggest public sector union Unison, Andrea Egan, wrote in the Guardian newspaper two days before Andy Burnham's government had its first 'fiscal event.'

"Is that it?" heckled a Labour backbencher as Chancellor John Healey sat down after delivering it. "The prime minister came to power promising to end 40 years of neo-liberalism, and instead we got 4p off gherkins," Tory leader Kemi Badenoch quipped. Which is funny. Except it's not.


Healey and Burnham NUMBER 10/CC

Cost-of-living crisis continues

When use of the term 'cost-of-living crisis' took off along with inflation in 2021, for many the word 'crisis' implied something short – 'a six-month sort of situation'. Now it's knocking on six years.

And so the £100 off energy bills announced won't be sniffed at. Many will have been straight onto the council website to double check which council tax band they are on and work out if they will qualify - a fifth of low-income households in London and the South East won't. The measure really is 'cold comfort' when it is considered energy bills in real terms this year - once government support is factored in - are forecast to be higher than during the last energy price shock (2022-23).

When Burnham took office in July, polling by More In Common asked people how long they would give him to deliver on the cost of living. The answer with the most responses was six months – that deadline is fast closing in.

Between now and the scheduled end of the Parliament (2028-29), real household disposable incomes are forecast to fall in total by £1,050 a year. Far from so-called breathing room, what is in store is a strangulating tightening of household finances.

Ahead of the Budget, Andrea Egan said: "We expect a big, multiyear funding plan to restore investment and wages in our public services - alongside kicking profiteering vultures out of the public sector through bringing services back in-house. These measures should be funded by finally making the wealthy few pay."

Those kinds of measures are exactly what Unison's million-plus members need, so too the working class as a whole. But Burnham's first Budget fell spectacularly short of those expectations. Capitalist commentators are talking of a 'brutal' spending review next year.

What's more, the morning after being filmed downing pints to celebrate his miserable Budget, Healey took to the airwaves to promise cuts to the welfare bill - the overwhelming majority of which goes to support pensioners and disabled people. A sign the government is feeling under pressure, the Treasury frantically phoned producers of Radio 4's Today programme to plead that is not how they wanted things to be presented!

Political representation

Unison has a whole host of union-sponsored Labour MPs. Similarly, the other Labour-affiliated unions. Many unaffiliated unions have formal parliamentary groups too.

Imagine the role even a small group of MPs could play if they were to act collectively as steadfast fighters for the kind of anti-austerity policies Andrea Egan identifies as needed. Unison could, for example, make membership of its parliamentary group of MPs contingent on moving a motion or amendment to oppose Burnham's triple lock attack on pensions, for example. So too in the other unions.

On Brexit, fossil fuel licences, benefit cuts and more, the nascent splits are developing in the Parliamentary Labour Party - like they did under Starmer and in the Tory party before - because of the huge class pressures on it.

And the question of the trade unions building their own political force independently of the Labour Party will again rise to the surface. By the time Unite the Union holds its rules conference to discuss Labour affiliation in Summer 2027, it will be acute. Socialist Party members in Unite have argued for that to be brought forward to avoid a situation in May 2027, where thousands of council seats are up for election, without the working class represented.

When Burnham took office, the Socialist referred to Starmer's two-year tenure and asked: "On what basis will Andy Burnham possibly be able to significantly outlast him?"

The answer is: not on this basis!

As Andrea Egan put it: "There's no dodging a battle with the vested interests committed to keeping things as they are." Which is why the Socialist Party has been to the fore demanding the trade unions lead that battle, including by naming the date for a union-led demo against austerity this winter, which was on the table of the TUC General Council executive meeting taking place 2-3 November. What better way to back up the national strike ballots of civil servants, further education staff and probation workers? What better way to follow up the student strikes taking place on 20 November in Britain and across Europe - where mass eruptions of youth mobilisations have already been a prelude to workers' strikes, including general strikes.

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to find out more about joining us today!



MARY FINCH

Burnham Budget continues attacks on graduates

ADAM HARMSWORTH
COVENTRY SOCIALIST PARTY, PLAN 2 GRADUATE WITH £50,766.33 DEBT

Silence can be very telling. Among many issues that chancellor John Healey's Budget failed to address was the freeze on repayment thresholds for graduates.

Last year, the previous chancellor Rachel Reeves froze the salary threshold at which graduates with 'Plan 2' student loans - the loans that approximately five million students have - start to repay their debt. For up to 30 years, Plan 2 graduates pay 9% of their wages above that threshold towards their loan.

Even calling it 'repayment' is a joke, because graduates on low wages will have every payment they make wiped out by interest on the debt!

Reeves froze the threshold from 2027 to 2030 at £29,385. So in each of those three years, any pay rise that Plan 2 graduates get, even below-inflation, will mean they pay more back on the loan. Some of the lowest paid will have to start repaying from wages. This is an attack on the incomes and living standards of many graduates, that many did not expect and cannot prepare for.

MoneySavingExpert's Martin Lewis told Healey the freeze was "morally reprehensible and a breach of natural justice", to which Healey replied with half-hearted excuses, blaming conflict in the Middle East and elsewhere for him not doing anything about the freeze.

Also in response, Healey patted himself on the back for giving out £100 Household Energy Payments.

That's insulting to both students and graduates. Students living in university halls, private halls and HMOs won't be able to receive it. And many Plan 2 graduates' £100 will get eaten up by their repayments!

75%
of Plan 2 student loan holders will never pay it all off

The Burnham government is picking up right where Keir Starmer left off, attacking students and graduates alongside the whole working class. All student debt should be cancelled, and free university tuition restored along with maintenance grants. That would ensure all young people can take up university education without taking on debt or being forced to work alongside their studies, taking the wealth that is under the control of the big bosses and putting it under our democratic control to fund it.

Do socialists say 'nationalise the entire economy'?
Come and discuss at SOCIALISM 14 & 15 NOVEMBER socialism.org.uk 2026



ZOLFEQAR FATIHZADEH/CC, RALF ROLETSCHEK/CC

Budget bonus for banks and betting barons

HAMZA KHAN
WEST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

Depending on where you look, the Budget has been touted as a victory for ordinary people, or the first step to a long-desired return to economic stability. Well maybe for some! Banks, gambling companies and defence contractors all saw their share prices rise as investors celebrated a Budget that proved even less threatening to profits than expected.

Ministers fear upsetting the markets more than they fear disappointing working-class communities. Every Budget becomes a balancing act between offering just enough to try and ease public anger while ensuring that big business and wealthy investors remain satisfied with their profits left intact.

The treatment of the banks illustrates this perfectly. Investors welcomed the Budget because the increase in the bank surcharge was lower than they had expected. Billions in banking profits will continue to flow into dividends, share buybacks and retained earnings, while public services remain underfunded and councils face impossible financial pressures.

It does not have to be this way. A democratically nationalised banking system could direct those profits towards building council housing, funding the NHS, funding our councils so they can invest in local public services, all of which also create job opportunities which are desperately needed. The wealth generated by finance should be used for public benefit, not private accumulation.

With conditions worsening and the cost of living getting higher and higher, working-class people are once again told to settle for small concessions while the capitalists get richer right before our eyes. The banks cannot be left in private ownership, they need to be nationalised, democratised and run for the benefit of all of us. To stop the endless race to the bottom, we need to fight for democratic control of society's wealth.

Come and discuss
Come to a Socialist Party meeting near you

The Socialist Party has regular meetings in towns and cities across the country.
- **socialistparty.org.uk/events**
- **Or text 07761 818206 with your name and postcode.**



MARY FINCH

Labour sets sights on youth for austerity attacks

SAAD H
HACKNEY AND ISLINGTON SOCIALIST PARTY

Andy Burnham has described the past 40 years of neoliberalism as a failure for working-class communities. Yet his Budget offered no evidence of a break with that settlement. For young people, the message remained familiar: shoulder the costs and blame yourself when the system fails you.

Chancellor John Healey's promise of a "tough approach" towards young people exposes this. Rather than confronting an economy that fails to provide opportunities, Healey treats us as the problem.

The reality is stark. Youth unemployment remains above 15%, and graduate vacancies attract an average of 140 applications each. Those who do get a degree face average student debt of almost £48,000, and the aspiration of building a stable life is just an unfulfilled dream, hampered by unaffordable rents and stagnating wages.

A party looking to address these issues would commit to rent controls, funding public services, abolishing tuition fees, and investing in publicly funded job creation. However, Labour has already broken its manifesto pledge to equalise the minimum wage for young people, backtracked on a plan to introduce rent controls, and Healey's speech mentioned schools less than ten times, but defence was mentioned over 120 times. Priorities laid out clearly!

The Labour Party is forcing young people to pay for capitalism's crises. We need a mass party that represents us, which does not bow down before the bosses. We need to get organised to take on the bosses, so this generation and the next generation won't face our current insecurity.

Socialist Students, hosted by the Socialist

To assist with its drive to build the biggest possible youth walkouts on 20 November, the Socialist has invited Socialist Students to have regular space in its pages.

The invitation is initially open until the Socialist Students national conference on 5 December.

Protests confirmed so far for Friday 20 November:

- **London: 12 noon, Parliament Square**
- **Birmingham: 12 noon, University of Birmingham, Green Heart; 2:30pm, High Street, outside Waterstones**
- **Brighton: 12:30pm, St Peter's Square**
- **Bristol: 1pm, College Green**
- **Cambridge: 4pm, King's Parade**
- **Cardiff: 11am, Cardiff University Students' Union**
- **Carlisle: 12 noon, Market Cross**
- **Cheltenham: 12 noon, Imperial Gardens**
- **Coventry: 12 noon, Priory Street, outside the Cathedral**
- **Guildford: 12:30pm, University of Surrey, Philip Marchant Building**
- **Hull: 12:30pm, Queen's Gardens**
- **Leeds: 12 noon, Parkinson Steps**
- **Leicester: 1:30pm, Clock Tower**
- **Liverpool: 1pm, University Square**
- **Manchester & Salford: 12 noon, Whitworth Arch, then march to No10 North**
- **Newcastle: 12 noon, Civic Centre Gardens next to St Thomas's Church**
- **Northampton: 12:30pm, Angel Square**
- **Nottingham: 12:30pm, Nottingham Trent Students' Union**
- **Paisley: from 11am, UWS Paisley Campus Library**
- **Plymouth: 12 noon, Sundial, Armada Way**
- **Pontypridd: 12 noon, USW Treforest, outside G Block**
- **Preston: 12 noon, University of Lancashire Student Centre**
- **Reading: 12 noon, Forbury Gardens**
- **Sheffield: 1pm, Barker's Pool**
- **Southampton: 12 noon, Guildhall Square**
- **Stoke-on-Trent: 12 noon, Ember Square**
- **Swansea: 12 noon, Swansea University, Fulton House Green; 12 noon, Gower College Gorseinon, College Gates**
- **Wolverhampton: 12 noon, Wulfruna Street, outside the University**
- **Worcester: 3pm, Sabrina Bridge**
- **York: 2pm, St Helen's Square**

Join the student fightback: join....

- Visit **socialiststudents.org.uk/join**
- or text **07403 057 140**

socialist students

Organise to defeat the far right on campus!

LOUIE NARDINI
YORK SOCIALIST STUDENTS

> **The way to cut across racist division is socialist unity amongst the working class**

Capitalism's inability to provide a future for the younger generation is shown by what societies are being ratified this year at universities in York. At York St. John, there is no organisation or society for the traditional parties, Labour, Conservatives and Lib Dem, who have overseen a decline in living standards during an era of capitalism in crisis. Other than Socialist Students, and other left-wing societies, there is no other political society on the SU website other than Restore Britain - a far-right group which emerged from a split in Reform UK.

Restore frames itself as an anti-establishment party, yet its head, Rupert Lowe, claims MPs should be paid £250,000 a year - giving already out of touch political 'representatives' living standards much higher than the declining standards of the working-class majority. Long before Andy Burnham set out plans to cut the pensioners' triple lock, Restore was rallying to get rid of it completely. Not only this, in its public documents it rejects the claim that public services are underfunded! So much for offering anything different from the past 15 years of brutal austerity.

The Restore society at the University of York has gotten into a lot of trouble for its "Get Foreigners Out" social media post. The hateful division put forward by Restore has exposed them to many students, many of whom are angry and correctly understand that such right-wing groups do not represent the interests of anyone but the super-rich capitalist class.

Socialist Students agrees with calls to kick the Restore society off campus, along with similar calls across the country for Reform UK and anti-abortion groups. We are fighting to defeat them politically, rather than by administrative means.

The way to cut across racist division is socialist unity amongst the working class. Socialist Students across university campuses across the country has consistently held meetings, demonstrations, and discussions on how to fight the far right, racism, sexism, and all forms of division pushed by the bosses. We explain that far-right ideas must be defeated politically, rather than simply ignoring them if they begin to get an echo.

At the same time, anything left up to the Students Union by itself is not guaranteed to get finished – this includes the battle for our views. We cannot rely on the SU to do the job of defeating the far right for us. If we allow the SU to repress societies because of their views, they could potentially use those tactics to bite back against us. It has been the case elsewhere in the country that Socialist Students has had society applications denied, or have been barred from holding meetings, etc.

In line with our 'action-led' approach, Socialist Students is organising youth strikes on 20 November - 'fighting for our futures, not their wars' - to politically guide the energy and anger of students to a real fight against war, racism, austerity, and the move to a fully funded free education model.



York students join anti-racist protest ALI MANSFIELD

Official support for N20 youth strike!

National Union of Students (NUS)

The National Union of Students (NUS), which represents over seven million students, announced on 28 October, in its response to the chancellor's Budget, that it will be taking part in the youth strike. NUS said the Budget "does nothing for students": the chancellor had done nothing about unfair student loans in England, had slowed the growth of the minimum wage for people aged 18 to 20, breaking a manifesto promise, and had given no detail on funding universities and colleges. Students had been left out of the conversation, NUS said, and "that's why NUS is taking part in the youth strike". It is asking students to sign up to take part on the day.

National Education Union (NEU)

The national executive of the NEU, which organised staff in schools and colleges, has unanimously voted to back the International Youth Strike.

The executive resolved to "express support for the right of young people to peacefully organise, protest and make their voices heard, including those taking part in the N20 day of action", and to "oppose disciplinary action against students participating in peaceful protest activity, including detentions or other sanctions, and to support campaigns defending students' rights where required".

University and College Union (UCU)

The UCU, which organises workers in universities and colleges, has called a national day of action over the crisis in further and higher education on 20 November. Unison, another trade union, has voted to join the day of action in higher education too.

Other support in Britain

Numerous trade union branches and bodies have passed motions in support of N20. A model trade union motion can be found at: socialiststudents.org.uk/international-youth-strike-model-trade-union-motion/

The Young Greens are on board. So too, the Stop The War Coalition, which was welcomed to its first in-person meeting of the international organising group on 17 October.

This is what we're doing for N20

Taking N20 to schools, colleges, and unis

CLEO SHARP
LIVERPOOL SOCIALIST STUDENTS AND LIVERPOOL SOCIALIST PARTY

We are building towards the 20 November international youth strikes tenaciously.

Through our Socialist Students groups at University of Liverpool and Liverpool Hope University, we have been getting students involved in the campaign. They have been joining us on stalls and spreading awareness.

Liverpool Socialist Party branches are publicising the movement through our regular campaign stalls. Socialist Party members in the trade unions are doing the same. For example, Liverpool Socialist Party member Rees is an activist in the National Education Union (NEU).

The NEU is the largest education union in Europe. And has passed a motion for the union to support the 20 November youth strike. This means that teachers in the NEU will oppose disciplinary action against students taking part in the strike.

We have received an overwhelmingly positive response. School students are signing up on the Socialist Students website, asking for assistance to develop the strike at their schools.

At every opportunity, we're upping the ante. Now taking on the colossal task of stickering and postering Liverpool.

We are focusing on schools and colleges where students have reached out to us, as well as the three largest universities in Liverpool.

We are helping students who have taken an interest in the movement, to develop their political consciousness, getting them involved with our actions. This is crucial as we're amping up to be postering, leafleting, or stickering every single day of the next three weeks, until the strike.

Already in the last month, three young people have joined the Socialist Party, directly from Socialist Students groups.

Some groups in the University of Liverpool Guild of Students are attempting to cut across the movement. But, we are persevering, because we are confident in our ideas. The anti-austerity programme, that we are bringing to the strike, is connecting with people.

Socialist Students is the central organisation in Liverpool pushing this campaign. We are prepared to take it as far as it will go.

We'll be working as hard as possible up until the youth strike. We are taking a group of students down to Socialism 2026, particularly to take part in the Socialist Students rally on Sunday 15 November.

There, we will hear from speakers representing signatories to the youth strike from across Europe.

Debate: How can the anti-war movement be built? Come and discuss at SOCIALISM 14 & 15 NOVEMBER socialism.org.uk 2026

What can you do?



Queen Mary Socialist Students MIHAELA IVANOVA

London's New City College Students have a right to be heard

NORA SHAUGHNESSY
QUEEN MARY SOCIALIST STUDENTS

We handed out so many leaflets, that we actually ran out!

Queen Mary Uni Socialist Students visited New City College in Poplar, east London, to speak to students about the 20 November International Youth Strike. There was a fantastic response from young and mature students.

Two students initially came over to pick up a leaflet. After reading it, they came back to ask how they could get more involved.

We gave them a Socialist Students campaign starter pack to help them organise their own rally, and bring their friends along. We also managed to get a member of staff signed up.

Some staff seemed hesitant to approach our stall, possibly worried about openly expressing political opinions, because of their position within the college. It's important that staff and students feel free to express their opinions, and get involved in issues they care about.

As socialists, we believe young people should have a say in their education and future. Schools, colleges, and universities should be places where students can discuss issues affecting them, challenge inequality, and organise together.

The visit showed that young people aren't apathetic. They are interested, they want to be heard, and they're ready to get organised.

Is there a fascist threat across the globe? Come and discuss at SOCIALISM 14 & 15 NOVEMBER socialism.org.uk 2026



Nora (left) campaigning with Socialist Students at New City College. Read more above.

College student: Working-class unity, not racist division

*Socialist Party and Socialist Students member **Philip**, a college student in Cambridge, wanted to speak at an anti-racist protest in Stevenage in October, organised by Stand Up To Racism. The organisers didn't allow him to speak.*

But this is what Philip wanted to say. So, we're printing it in the Socialist.

I wanted to come up and speak today, not only as a Socialist Party member, but also simply as a student. Due to situations like the cost of living, climate crisis, the rise in unemployment, and the government's inadequacy in providing suitable solutions for these problems, young people have more than enough reason to worry about their futures.

Whilst coping with these pressures, I cannot imagine what it must be like for people who are struggling with the same conditions, and yet are blamed for it because of the country that they come from or the colour of their skin.

Asylum seekers living in hotels are given only £9.95 a week to live on, despite the cost-of-living crisis. Yet, they are still being accused of leeching off government resources.

Standard tuition fees for higher education are going to rise to over £10,000 next year. And the price is almost three times as high for 'international students'.

This can include young people who have spent almost the entirety of their lives inside the UK, but don't have citizenship. Often because they cannot afford it.

The rhetoric used by the likes of Nigel Farage is blatantly untrue. The same system, that has consistently failed young people born in the UK, is failing refugees and immigrants too. It isn't a case of us or them.

Regardless of where we come from, we all deserve financial security and a fulfilling future. This cannot be provided by capitalism.

Our interests will never be supported by a system that thrives off inequality and the division of the working class, by means of scapegoating and marginalisation.

Chances are, that if you have gathered here today to take a stand for your community, then we already have a common goal. Join Socialist Students and 25 other youth and student organisations internationally striking on 20 November to advocate for funding for education and in support of all young people.

And beyond these strikes, continue to cooperate with us in a sustained effort for socialist change. Fight for our future, not their wars!

The fight against racism today Come and discuss at SOCIALISM 14 & 15 NOVEMBER socialism.org.uk 2026

JOIN N20 TO OPPOSE LABOUR BUDGET AUSTERITY

London protest 'inspired by Europe fightback'

*Socialist Students organiser **Mihaela Ivanova** (below) spoke at the London protest outside Parliament, the day before Labour's Budget.*

In an ITV interview, Andy Burnham stated his Budget will not stray from the red lines of Labour's 2024 manifesto. In other words, a promise to continue brutal austerity, a grinding cost-of-living crisis, and defending the skyrocketing profits of the bosses.



PHOTO: NICK CLARE

Debate: Can councils refuse to implement austerity? Come and discuss at SOCIALISM 14 & 15 NOVEMBER socialism.org.uk 2026

While politicians of every rosette are beating the drums of war, young people across Europe have poured out onto the streets in their thousands to fight back. We are inspired. Not just by them.

But by the French teachers' unions, who have stood shoulder to shoulder with their students against the attacks on education by the Macron government. The same attacks to education that Burnham's government, and previous governments here in the UK, have forced onto young people.

That's why Socialist Students is building for the International Youth Strike on 20 November to join the hundreds of thousands of students across Europe to fight for our futures not their wars! Students in over 50 schools, colleges, and universities in the UK will be walking out of their classrooms.

We are emboldened by the NEU (National Education Union), which has passed a motion to join and provide safe stewarding. And the UCU (University and College Union), which has called a day of action.

The peaceful protests in France have shown us that when students and workers are united, we cannot be defeated. So we invite you all to join us on 20 November to fight for the funding we need, and fight back against the austerity, war, and racist division of this government.



York PHOTO: IAIN DALTON

York uni protest projects our voice

ARTHUR HERBERT
YORK UNI SOCIALIST STUDENTS

Our Budget Day protest was an opportunity for us to voice our opposition to rising militarisation, austerity, and the cost-of-living crisis. We succeeded in projecting our voices, connecting with more students at the uni.

As many York Socialist Students members are new this year, including myself, we have never organised a protest before. So this provided an opportunity to do that.

York Socialist Students has grown from three members last year to 15 this year, so far. We've quickly learned the need for strategy, defined roles in mobilising our forces, and preparing chants beforehand.

Our protest was an essential trial run for the International Youth Walkout on 20 November, which will see thousands of students and young people across the world strike out against the capitalist order, its wars, and its failure to provide for our futures.

signed up for Socialist Students at USW. Many have already come to Socialist Students and Socialist Party meetings.

Bubbling away under the surface, people are angry, stressed, and anxious about their futures. The protests in Europe point a way to make their voices heard.

We need to make sure students know how they can start to take part in that movement. At USW Trefforest, we've called a lunchtime rally on 20 November (see page 4). We're also inviting lecturers and other trade unionists to come and support us.

Socialists say £15 an hour minimum, and more

SAF
BIRMINGHAM SOCIALIST PARTY

Socialist Party campaigning on the minimum wage, speaking to people around Birmingham, shows how many people support increasing the minimum wage to £15 an hour, or more. The working class has experienced multiple cost-of-living crises in the past decade, continuing now with the disaster caused by Donald Trump's war in the Middle East.

Whilst families are struggling between choosing food or paying the heating bill, big business are making billions in profit. Tesco made £2.3 billion profit last year.

Imagine their profits for this year! All those billions, but none to show for their workers.

Now Labour under Andy Burnham has dropped another promise. The youth minimum wage rates are £2-£5 lower.

Labour previously said they'd close this gap. But now they won't. The lower youth rate should be abolished.



PHOTO: SOCIALIST PARTY

We also have a huge issue with rent. Prices are beyond what a minimum-wage worker can afford.

We are not asking for much. The government is already subsidising companies paying poverty wages.

All these billion-dollar companies can afford more than enough to pay fair wages and more. But choose not to maximise profit and increase their wealth.

Bills are increasing. So wages should increase too!

Alongside, there needs to be a ban on zero-hour contracts. Labour promised to increase workers' rights. But it has been watered down and delayed.

The working class is facing a cost-of-living crisis, which we didn't cause, but have to pay for.

The coming cost-of-living storm of struggle – and lessons from the 22-23 strike wave Come and discuss at SOCIALISM 14 & 15 NOVEMBER socialism.org.uk 2026

France inspires South Wales fightback

MARIAM KAMISH
RHONDDA CYNON TAF SOCIALIST PARTY

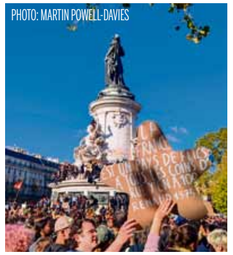
Our banner at the University of South Wales (USW) read: 'Fight for our future – not for their wars.' Our placards had 'Solidarity with striking French students,' superimposed on a photo of young people clambering all over the monument in the Place de la Republique in Paris (above right).

But the response we were getting was a little slow. Then, my phone beeped with a message.

"French students have just won some concessions", I told the next student I stopped. "Only a start, but – if you fight, you can win."

Her eyes came alive. "That's true", reaching for our sign-up sheet.

This year at freshers, 173 students


PHOTO: MARTIN POWELL-DAVIES

Italy: One million workers on strike, part of an international walkout



PHOTO: HUGO PIERRE

HUGO PIERRE AND MARCO TESEI REPORT FROM ITALY

Dockworkers, teachers, local government workers and, most noisily, thousands of youth took action in Genova as part of the international strike on 30 October against the cost-of-living crisis and the use of ports to continue the genocide against the people of Gaza.

Students blockaded all Genova University buildings along the Via Balbi from as early as 8am and assembled on a march to the port. Dockworkers blockaded the main commercial port and nothing went in or out. Public sector workers put up a picket in the town hall. They would have been joined by bus and train workers but the threat of a personal €1,000 fine from Minister of Transport Matteo Salvini prevented them from joining.

The youth made clear their determination to fight and boldly shouted out their thoughts on the Meloni government and where it should go! Many on the march expressed their dissatisfaction with the sectarianism of the trade union leaders and their failure to unite the workers' movement. They saw Maurizio Landini, the leader of the largest trade union federation, the CGIL, as only prepared to act to either dampen action or opportunistically claim the movement for himself.

However, it is clear that had the CGIL also called a 24-hour general strike alongside the smaller independent 'rank-and-file' unions which had called the 30 October nationwide strikes (USB/CUB/COBAS), the action would have been stronger, more widespread and the threat from Salvini overcome. Just like last year when he was unable to take any action on the unlawful joint CGIL/USB 3 October strike.

Members of the CWI distributed over 1,500 leaflets on the day. Many protesters were eager to read how the struggle against poor pay and war could be strengthened and won. And also, how to get rid of Meloni at next year's general election.

20 November general strike

CGIL has called a general strike for 20 November, the same day as the scheduled international Youth Strike under the slogan 'Fight for our future, not their wars.' The leadership has been pressured to act so as not to get left behind by the youth movement, which is increasingly seen as a key force in the fightback against austerity and war.

All the trade union federations should call this day theirs too. A bold call to end austerity along with the youth strike would help to transform the situation. This could easily become a protest of much bigger dimensions.

The action on 30 October across Italy involved over one million. Militant demonstrations took place in most cities. Workers and youth could now discuss in various cities how to remove Meloni and her government of robbers from power and replace them with a workers' government in 2027.

This is a moment to be caught – the broad left ('campo largo') coalition being proposed by the social-democratic Democratic Party (PD) and Five Star Movement as an alternative to Meloni would be no match for a Workers' List with a truly socialist programme.

Greece: Workers and students take to the street in defence of education

PANOS TSIOLAKIDIS

Last year in Greece, due to the lack of funding in public education infrastructure, a ceiling collapsed inside the classroom of an Athenian primary school. Instead of pointing to the root cause of the issue, two decades of brutal austerity measures, the local education authority instead responded by imposing disciplinary action on 22 teachers.

On 21 October, Greek students, educators, nurses and workers of all professions united in national mobilisation against austerity under the slogan: 'From France to Greece, we fight for free public education.' The two-day protest took place in more than 50 towns and cities across the country. Being a movement spearheaded by students, protesters' demands initially centred around increased funding towards education and student housing. Before long, educator, healthcare and civil servant unions joined the fight calling for strike action amongst their members, expanding their demands to include increased pay, hiring of permanent staff, and measures against the cost-of-living crisis.

More than 10,000 people took part in the Athenian protests. Students gathered in Syntagma Square, opposite the Greek parliament, and set up their tents in preparation for the overnight protes, despite the rain. A sign glued on one of the tents reads: "Future student accommodation". Placards and banners were written in Greek, English and French, as the demonstrators, inspired by their counterparts on the rest of the continent, stand united in international struggle.

Soaring rents, energy and grocery bills have turned higher education into a matter of survival, states Nina Nifakou, the President of the Student Union at the University of West Attica. Existing halls of residence, she said, are not even equipped to handle 4% of the students' needs. Many universities, including her own, lack halls altogether, forcing students to privately rent €600 studios. These conditions leave some students unable to attend higher education. In her closing statement to the reporting news agency, Nifakou notes that students are aware of the true cause of this crisis: "We know that when they tell us there's no money to meet our needs, there is money for military armaments, money for frigates to be sent out to slaughter peoples."

Bleak prospects, fighting back

The material conditions of all young European working-class people are one and the same. Our schools are crumbling, the threat of dying in a pointless forever-war looms over our heads, and our jobs - if we are lucky enough to have one - barely cover our eye-watering energy bills and rents. At the same time our governments are committed to spend billions in rearmament, all funded by cuts to our public services.

It is apparent that young people are not buying the lies of the ruling class and their lobbied politicians any more. With bleak-looking prospects ahead, students have nothing to lose but everything to gain in joining the fight to ensure a future worth living for. A future that cannot be secured under capitalism. As our states are not equipped to deal with the inevitable, multi-faceted crises arising from this very system, waves of protest will keep sweeping Europe and beyond until our needs are met.


Workers and students protest in Greece in 2023 PHOTO: NIKOSPERAKIOS/CC

French protests continue - make 5 November a 24-hour general strike!

On Saturday 31 October protests saw more than 320,000 people take to the streets around France in the build-up to Thursday 5 November, when trade unions, students plus France's "yellow jacket" (gilets jaunes) movement - that staged demonstrations for over a year in 2018, during Macron's first term as president - have announced strikes and huge protests.

Read the latest on where next for the movement in France from Gauche Révolutionnaire (CWI France), published 21 October: 'France: Make 5 November a 24-hour general strike!' at socialistworld.net

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

Spanish State: Deadly train crash leads to further anger ahead of general strike

As the general strike in Spanish State on 11 November draws closer, anger has again erupted in Spain, this time provoked by a horrific train crash which killed at least 69 people on 28 October. It follows the huge recent protests over the housing crisis and only months after another deadly train crash which killed 46. The government were quick to try and blame the workers citing "human error". But the workers have accused authorities of chronic underinvestment in infrastructure. All of this and more, such as the cost-of-living crisis gripping Europe, feeds into the general strike on 11 November, ahead of a general election.

20 NOVEMBER YOUTH WALKOUT

Interview with a youth striker and organiser

When Britain's youth have walked out

1985 school strikes against Thatcher's YTS



PHOTO: DAVE SINCLAIR

The first big strikes took place in Glasgow, organised by the Labour Party Young Socialists with Militant (the Socialist Party's predecessor in the lead). "A general strike swept through Clydeside schools, bringing 20,000 pupils out... They gave Thatcher a defiant message – "We're not having YTS job conscription" (Militant). The Glasgow Daily Record described it as the "biggest show of pupil power ever in Britain".

From there, a School Students' Action Committee was formed to call a national school strike. 'A quarter of a million school students have given a crushing answer to the Tories'.

2003 Iraq War Day X

In the run-up to the invasion of Iraq in March 2003 mass protests swept the world including in Britain. Socialist Party members played a leading role organising youth walkouts on 'Day X', the day the invasion began. Even before the day, school walkouts were breaking out.

On the day, in Waltham Forest, east London, 'It all started at 8.45 when 200 school students from Kelmscott School walked out... Not long after they were joined by a similar number from Walthamstow Girls School... Together they marched chanting and shouting from school to school in the borough.' Similarly events like these took place nationwide. Internationally, millions protested.



PHOTO: PAUL MATTSSON

Helen Pattison is the Regional Secretary of London Socialist Party. As a teenager, she walked out against the Iraq War in 2003. Since, she has been a socialist organiser helping to build for walkouts over tuition fees in 2010, against academisation, against Trump's state visits to the UK and as part of the Fridays for our future youth climate strikes. Helen spoke to the Socialist.

When was your first walkout and what was it like?

It was against the Iraq War. I was at secondary school. I remember knowing that something that I disagreed with [the invasion of Iraq] was going to happen and that the idea was being floated of people walking out.

And I did start talking to my friends who also opposed the Iraq war about the idea of joining.

We must have been talking about it in art class, actually, because I knew my art teacher was also against the Iraq war. And she said to us that we could use some of the old art materials to make banners if we wanted. From that, we organised a lunchtime to meet up in the art department and made banners for the walkout!

I remember talking to someone in my history class during which the walkout was meant to start. It had been planned to start at a certain time of the day.

I remember being a bit nervous, thinking if were we really going to do this?

But I think the thing that made me and him decide that we really were, I remember looking over and making eye contact. Me and him sort of being like, 'right, this is when we should stand up, we're going to walk out of this class.'

In the backs of our minds was the horrors of the situation that was being posed with a war beginning, and thinking that we did not want to live in that kind of world. And so me and him stood up and walked out. Other people joined from my class too.

I remember really vividly that we could hear chairs scraping on the floor above, and all around the building. Other people were going to walk out with us. And so, suddenly, in the middle of a lesson, the halls were full and hundreds of us were leaving the school building!

What's the first piece of advice that you would typically give a young person getting in touch with you for help organising a walkout?

I think the thing that I say to everyone is there's always more people than you think who are angry at the situation and therefore the job is to find them.

People say to me something like: 'I'm angry about this, but no one else in my school is angry about it.'

From my experience, usually hundreds of other students are angry too. It might be you're the only person that you know of. But that's the thing, there'll always be more, you've just not met them yet!

So, for example, preparing for one of the N20 walkouts in a North London school, we're leafleting for a meet up on 6 November, ahead of the walkout taking place.

We're advertising it to people to say: 'if you're interested in helping or being involved, come along. Come to the square and meet with us so that we can organise together'.



PHOTO: PAUL MATTSSON

> **I remember really vividly that we could hear chairs scraping on the floor above, and all around the building. Other people were going to walk out with us!**

What other things can people do to prepare ahead of the day itself, have you got any examples of things that have worked in the past?

Banner making is a good one. I think the first step is an organising meeting. Meet other people who are interested in doing it. But then, definitely a banner making session.

It's a little bit of fun, and it is also an opportunity to talk politically with people, to discuss what the walkout is about and why they want to be involved.

In the past, students from different schools have made banners with their school's name on to kind of represent themselves when they go on to take part in a bigger rally. You can march behind your banner on the day!

I remember when we were opposing academisation of a school in South London, the students organised a ballot. We just got a box that we, you know, put vote on, taped it up and had voting sheets asking: 'Do you want your school to become an academy or not?'

The headteacher had done an assembly to tell everyone why they thought the school should become an academy. This was an opportunity for the students themselves to say what they thought about the future of their school, rather than just being lectured.

It was an opportunity to show that actually the students did understand what becoming an academy meant and they didn't want it.

When the walkout took place, students had confidence that the majority supported the cause.

On the day itself, when you turn up at school or college ready for the walkout, what is the number one thing to remember to do to be prepared?

I think definitely can get your hands on a megaphone. That way you can keep people together. I think meeting at the school is a good idea. It's like when workers on strike picket a workplace, it's because they want to persuade other workers to join them.

It can be scary, but mostly its exciting. The point is, you want to make sure that people know it's today and that we are actually doing this. You can use the megaphone to remind people what we're doing and show that we're doing it collectively. That there is a group of us is doing it all together.

After that, it's good to have a plan of what you're going to do. Are you going to have a rally in your high street and then make it make your way to a city centre protest? Are you going to march to other schools or colleges to encourage them to join?

At every stage, the megaphone can be used to give the opportunity to people to say why they've walked out. It's a collective movement, but people will be motivated and angry for lots of different reasons.

There will be some people who are planning their walkouts, but are also a little bit worried about repercussions from teachers or the school telling them that they shouldn't be taking part. What would you say about how that can be overcome?

First, one of the arguments we do get told is that 'school is too important to miss.' But that's why we're protesting! We're fighting for properly resourced schools, a decent future, and it's necessary to take this action.

The best way to prevent repercussions is to do things collectively. So doing some of the preparatory stuff is the first defence, including talking to teachers now, explaining that the biggest trade union for teachers - the National Education Union (NEU) - has given the day its backing. The NEU has said that it doesn't think that students who walk out should be punished.

But also, again, going back to the example of the anti-academy walkout, it was the student leaders who were targeted by the headteacher. So we publicised when one of the student leaders was taken into the headteacher's office and told off, and we had a collective response. The students had a sit-down protest.

20 November is the big day, but if anyone who takes part is picked on, then the protests will continue to defend them!

Is there anything you can think of you would like to add?

Well, today I've been helping students organise at Imperial College London. We've been told by one student we have met that they were already planning to join. We have met one student from Thailand who has been telling us about the protests she has been involved in there.

This really is a movement representing generational anger about a system that does not meet our needs. It's going to be a really important day of strikes and protests that we're part of in the UK – but also all around Europe and all around the world too!

> **There's always more people than you think who are angry at the situation and therefore your job is to find them!**

2010 student movement



PHOTO: PAUL MATTSSON

In Autumn 2010, Britain was swept by protests. Towards the end of November and December, student protests, walkouts and occupations were taking place several days a week in different locations. For example, in London on 24 November: "From 11am waves of chanting, angry and determined students poured into Trafalgar Square. Some in school uniforms, many carrying homemade placards, they were all clear: 'These cuts are unfair and we will fight them'."

Climate strikes 2018-19

On 15 March 2018, in 1,000 cities and 100 countries, millions went on strike and demonstrated against the huge threat to the environment and human populations posed by rapid climate change. This was the second of monthly school student protests, with Great Thunberg as a key figure.



PHOTO: MARY FINCH

Walkout against Trump 2025 (and 2018)



PHOTO: NORTH WEST SP

Hundreds of school and college students walked out to protest Donald Trump's state visit to the UK on 17 September 2025, organised by Socialist Students.

In 2018, school students at a number of schools in London responded to the call of Socialist Students and Young Socialists to protest – and walk out. There were walkouts and protests in Southampton, Leicester, Birmingham, Leeds, Hull and beyond.

Budget 2026: Civil Service cuts deepen

PCS members: Vote YES/YES!

PCS BROAD LEFT NETWORK

The Labour government's Budget, the first under Andy Burham's premiership, supposedly promising a 'new direction', makes one thing absolutely clear: Civil Service jobs, workloads and conditions remain firmly in the firing line. PCS members must respond with a resounding YES/YES vote in our national ballot.

Despite years of real-terms pay cuts, staffing cuts, office closures and attacks on our terms and conditions, the government is preparing to go even further. The Budget explicitly commits to delivering "significant reductions in its size and cost", declaring that the Civil Service will become "smaller, more strategic".

Clearly, this a euphemism for thousands more jobs losses, increased workloads for those who remain and further pressure on the public services that millions rely upon.

90,000 jobs at risk

The government has increased its planned reduction in departmental administrative budgets from 16% to 20% by 2029–30. Rather than backing down on the cuts planned by the Tory government, this Budget increases them. 90,000 jobs are at risk.

The Budget also announces £35 million for a new GovAI programme and £50 million for a Civil Service AI Transformation Fund.

New technology should be used to improve public services, reduce workloads and make working lives easier. But the government explicitly links AI adoption and digital transformation to its programme of spending reductions.

PCS must resist any attempt to use technological change as a vehicle for job losses, deskilling or the deterioration of working conditions. Productivity improvements should benefit workers and the public, not simply provide the Treasury with another opportunity to cut staffing costs.

In our dispute with the government, we are demanding a job security agreement, no compulsory redundancies and that efficiency improvements are put towards a shortening of the working week with no loss of pay.

While the Budget sets out detailed plans for cutting the Civil Service, it offers no specific commitments to improve Civil Service pay, pensions or terms and conditions.

There is no announcement of a meaningful pay rise to restore the value of our wages after years of real-terms cuts. No commitment to address the pension overpayments that have seen members paying more than they should. No guarantees against compulsory redundancies or further attacks on working conditions.

Voting 'Yes' is more important than ever

These announcements underline why PCS's national campaign on pay, jobs, pensions and conditions is so important.

Our demands are both reasonable and necessary:

- A 10% pay rise as a step towards pay restoration, with a minimum wage of £18 an hour and proper pay progression
- Job security, an end to staffing cuts and opposition to compulsory redundancies
- Justice on pensions, including addressing the pension contributions members have overpaid
- Protection and improvement of our terms and conditions, with manageable workloads and properly resourced public services

Experience has shown that without sustained pressure, governments will continue to impose cuts while offering little in return.

We can force the government into negotiations and concessions through a massive mandate for industrial action, backed by members organised and ready to fight.

Vote YES to strike action. Vote YES to action short of a strike.

- **Our national statutory ballot runs from 20 October to 1 December.**



PCS members during the strike wave PHOTO: SHEFFIELD SP



PHOTO: LONDON SP

Unite Havering bin strike forces talks

'We have to stay and fight!'

Unite school workers start two weeks of strikes



PHOTO: LONDON SP

After a week-long strike, bin workers in Unite the Union have forced their employer, outsourcer FCC, to the negotiating table, despite management trying to break the strike.

On the picket line, workers talked about their anger about their working conditions and safety concerns, which are on top of the massive disparity of their pay compared to bin workers in neighbouring boroughs.

The workers ended the week by holding a rally outside the Havering Council offices in Romford, now run by Reform. They were joined by supporters, including from Barking, Dagenham and Havering and Waltham Forest trades councils, as well as the National Shop Stewards Network (NSSN) and members of the Socialist Party. They were all welcomed by the striking workers and their Unite reps.

Unite Regional Officer Danny Hoggan reported to the rally that, despite FCC management looking to bring in scab drivers from outside Havering, paying for their travel and accommodation, the strike action had forced the company to ask for talks.

Rob Williams, from the NSSN and branch chair of Unite LE1228 spoke to bring solidarity, including a £50 donation, from his branch which includes Waltham Forest Council bin workers who also work for FCC.

The Reform council was showing its true anti-worker credentials.

Rob said: "Councils of all parties are outsourcing services and making workers pay the price. We demand that the bin contract is brought back in-house so that bin workers are put on nationally agreed pay, pensions and terms & conditions, to do away with the scandal of multi-tiered pay rates."

Danny ended the strike rally by sending a warning to FCC that more strikes will be called if an acceptable deal can't be reached.

Unite strikers at Forest School in London were out again this week (2-6 November) after management refused to engage in discussion to scrap the 13.5% attack on workers' pay. This is the start of two weeks of action following a previous week by low-paid cleaning and catering staff at the £10,000 per term, per student, fee-paying school.

Tessa Warrington spoke to the strikers:

"The main thing is that we're not asking for more money. We are just fighting to keep what we have. Most of us couldn't survive losing £3-400 from our monthly wages. It's outrageous.

"The warden (the head of the school) is making us out to be greedy and acting to the parents as though the strikers are intimidating their kids. This is a woman who earns £300,000 a year! The truth is that management are the ones intimidating us. Some of our members have gone back to work because they have been scared into thinking they could lose their jobs.

"I've been looking for other work myself but there's hardly anything out there. That's why we have to fight and win here, and why our colleagues should come back out and join us! A few of the teachers have said that they support us - they went out on strike a few years ago over their pensions. I think they feel intimidated by the warden as well.

"The school is trying to find ways to keep us fearful and divided, but we're not about to give in to bullying. And the kids are so supportive. They smile as they pass the picket line on their way into school and chant 'Unite! Unite! We stand up and we fight!'"

The strike fund is now live online for anyone who wants to support this important dispute. An injury to one is an injury to all, working-class unity is the way to fight back.

- Donate to the strike fund: UNITE 1/1228 Branch; 60–83–01, 33207980; Reference: 'Forest School'
- Messages of support should be sent to kevin.parslow@unitetheunion.org

Strengthen the trade union fightback – strengthen the Socialist Party!

BEA GARDNER
SOCIALIST PARTY FINANCE ORGANISER

There are now over 6.6 million trade union members in Britain and growing. In fact,192,000 workers joined a union last year.

Workers are confronted by vicious attacks on jobs, terms and conditions. They have experienced over a decade of stagnant wages and an intensifying cost-of-living crisis. There is no shortage of reasons why workers are looking toward the trade unions to defend their interests in the workplace and beyond.

Socialist Party members are at the forefront of fighting in the unions for the strategy needed to do that. Our members on national executive committees (NECs), working alongside others where we can, have pushed reluctant trade union leaders to call sector-wide, coordinated industrial-action ballots on pay, including in the PCS and the UCU.

The National Shop Stewards Network, in which we play a leading role, has connected militant trade unionists and put the trade union leaders under pressure to act. We have battled for the TUC to take the lead in the fight against ongoing austerity policies that have decimated the very public services where the majority of trade union members in Britain work. We are not letting up in demanding that the TUC call a Saturday anti-austerity demonstration as agreed at September's TUC Congress. And of course, we have been calling on the unions to back-up students striking on 20 November, winning official support from the NEU.

6.6 million union workers

We understand that those 6.6 million workers, when mobilised collectively, can be a powerful force to transform society. As part of that process, the Socialist Party is actively organising for those 6.6 million trade union members to have a political voice.

These are all reasons why your donations to the Socialist Party are so vital.

In the first few months of the new year, NEC elections will take place. We want to stand more candidates who will be prepared to back workers in their struggle. They will fight for what is needed on those leading bodies and channel members' anger into pressure on the union leaders to act.

Pending the outcome of national ballots, we will be battling within these unions for the industrial action strategy needed to win - we will need to produce and distribute strike bulletins to put forward what is needed and overcome any attempts to undermine workers' confidence they can win.

We will continue to bring solidarity to striking workers in dispute and discuss how to take their fights forward. We will continue fighting with the unions for councils to resist austerity using no-cuts needs-based budgets. We will continue to appeal for a trade unionist stand in next year's local elections. All of that comes with a cost. So as part of our Socialism 2026 appeal, we ask you to fund the party leading the fight back in the trade unions.

Help us reach our £50,000 target. Donate to our Socialism 2026 appeal today!



PHOTO: NICK CLAIRE

Healey's data centre covenant: a charter for dirty profit

PETE DICKENSON
TOWER HAMLETS SOCIALIST PARTY

As recently reported in The Socialist, a struggle has been taking place in Tower Hamlets, East London, against a proposal to build another data centre in the borough (see 'Data centres: Tower Hamlets needs homes' at socialistparty.org.uk). Six years ago, a proposal was put to the council to redevelop a large, disused brewery site in the Brick Lane area that would include offices and a shopping mall. The council rejected this in favour of a plan including 345 social housing units. After much delay, early in 2026, the developers submitted a revised proposal for a data centre on the site, as well as offices and shops. The social housing 'offer' was six units.

This proposal then went to a public inquiry, but halfway through the Minister, then Steve Reed, called it in for him to make a decision, bypassing planning regulations. He could do this because the government had designated the development as having critical national importance because it included a data centre. Reed was removed when Andy Burnham took over, but Angela Rayner, the new housing minister, nodded the data centre plan through within days of taking office, despite massive local opposition.

Against this backdrop, Chancellor John Healey announced his 'British Data Centre Covenant' in the Budget. The 'Covenant' says data centre developers must invest in local communities and create local jobs among other apparently positive soundbites. In return, the developers will get priority access to connections to the electricity grid.

The 'Covenant' is notable for what it does not say. What type of local investment will be required (there is no mention of housing) and how big it will be is not specified, nor how many local jobs should be created. Giving developers priority for grid connection is a particular threat to desperately needed housing, 30,000 are on the Tower Hamlets council house waiting list alone. In 2022, a London Assembly report found that housing developments were being crowded out from connection to the electricity grid due to data centre demand. This was before the current explosion in power-hungry AI data centres. Regarding jobs, the data centres themselves will employ very few, probably about six workers at any one time at the Brick Lane site.


An Amazon data centre PHOTO: TEDDER/CC

The Covenant says that AI data centres may be allowed to generate their own power, on site, if there is a delay in connection to the grid. No mention here of any requirement for this to be done sustainably. The developers will be able to build their own gas-fired power stations, dedicated to AI, giving another twist to global warming. Research even before the present AI data centre boom began showed there was no prospect of them being sustainable.

Healey has kicked the can down the road on some of the key areas mentioned above by saying he will publish a 'Data Centre National Policy Statement' for consultation. Local opposition to AI data centres is already huge and needs to be built further in the interim period before the consultation starts. This is of course subject to Andy Burnham's plan to secure an AI niche for British capitalism going up in smoke when the present speculative bubble bursts.



Crunch time for Bristol Greens

BRISTOL SOCIALIST PARTY

The Greens are the biggest party on the council in Bristol, the eighth-biggest city in Britain. Bristol has a population of almost half a million people and in 2026 had a budget of £850 million. In the last local government elections in the city in 2024, the Greens won 34 of the 70 seats. Labour has 19, the Lib Dems have nine, the Tories have seven and there is one independent councillor. Green councillor Tony Dyer was appointed leader of the council, and committee chair positions were shared among the Greens and Liberal Democrats.

On 16 October, Bristol City Council began consultation on its 2027-28 budget containing another £32 million of spending cuts for 2027. This comes on top of years of austerity that have left council services cut to the bone.

As with all council consultations, this budget consultation is written with a healthy dose of euphemism to disguise what the real impact might be. But there is no hiding that these cuts will make life harder for many working-class people. For example, the council claims it will save money by providing more supported accommodation for young care leavers but concede the changes could "reduce the availability, suitability, or stability of their accommodation or support."

Under the heading "Helping people with dementia stay at home for longer" in the council's 'Savings proposals table,' it proposes to help people stay in their homes for longer. But the 'equalities impact consideration' acknowledges that the £300,000 cut to residential or nursing care is likely to impact women who are more likely to be unpaid carers or disabled adults. Adult Social Care is one of the areas for which Green councillors are responsible.

The council wants to save over £5 million from mental health support, including for children, by trying to pass the cost to the NHS. They claim that it won't affect the support people receive, but the NHS mental health services are already stretched to breaking point.

'Savings' and 'reviews'

There will be a "review" of care services provided directly by the council, potentially leading to their closure and the transfer of services to the private sector. A consultation on the future of Redfield Lodge, the one remaining council-owned residential care home in the city, states that provision is much cheaper in the private sector and claims "there may be enough independent care providers to support the population in Bristol." A further "review" calls into question the future of day-care centres, and they propose cutting £250,000 from the transport to school for disabled children.

Council plans to partially staff libraries with volunteers are reminiscent of David Cameron's 'big society,' which was a cover for huge public sector cuts. They have been opposed by Unison, the trade union representing library workers, who point to the safety risks and concerns that opening hours would become less reliable.

Austerity isn't necessary. The council could use some of the £193 million in its usable reserves and mobilise a mass campaign to fight for the money from central government needed to provide all the jobs, homes and services needed in Bristol. The colossal profits of big business show that the wealth exists in society to provide the jobs, homes and services that we need, but it's in the wrong hands.

But mass pressure can win concessions. Even the previous Tory government had to give improved pay deals to workers when faced with the mass strike wave beginning in 2022. This is an important lesson for the anti-cuts movement.

Keir Starmer was hated and pushed back by mass anger on cuts to the winter fuel payment and disability support. To be able to continue, Andy Burnham has to pose as an alternative. Bristol council could now put that to the test by demanding central government funding for the jobs and services we need.

Over the last 16 years, councils of all political makeups have meekly passed on government budget cuts. The unpopularity of all those governments is shown in the fact that Burnham is the seventh prime minister in ten years. If councils had refused to do their dirty work, the fight against austerity would have been strengthened.

With the Bristol council leadership now consulting on more cuts, a new phase in the fight for jobs, homes and services in the city has begun. A crunch point is coming for Green members and councillors who oppose austerity. They will be faced with a clear decision - do they accept this budget or do they fight? Given the council make-up, even a small group of Green councillors refusing to vote for this cuts budget and presenting an alternative based on need could change the situation.



Zack Polanski PHOTO: PAUL MATTSSON



Marching against the cuts in Bristol PHOTO: MATT CAREY

Council's spending power

Councils have power and resources to fight back. Together they control budgets of £150 billion, one-fifth of public spending. If the Green minority administration in Bristol linked up with the eight Green-led councils, they could, for example, begin a mass building programme of eco-friendly affordable council homes. The same goes for all the issues that have been raised in the consultation process. The council could start to implement what is needed in Bristol and in that way mobilise mass support to take the campaign to Burnham for the money.

The background to the latest Bristol budget consultation is a growing wave of mass struggles by workers and young people across Europe. Trade unions in Britain in further education, probation, consultant doctors, and the civil service are preparing for national strike action.

Students across the continent are organising for the international youth strike on 20 November, 'Fight for our futures, not their wars.' The Young Greens are one of the organisations backing it in Britain. Green members and councillors should follow their lead in fighting back, not acquiescing to the demands of the capitalist establishment.

This isn't a question of waiting for Burnham to announce national funding. Campaigning has succeeded in pushing back cuts in Bristol. Marksbury Road Library was saved from closure with a local campaign led by the Socialist Party ten years ago. It has remained open and is a thriving local library since. Pressure in the last two years has seen rollbacks on proposed cuts to museums, public toilets and the Bottle Yard. Council trade unions have clear anti-cuts positions too, and could lead a mass campaign along with local communities.

Even a handful of rebel councillors in Bristol refusing to vote for this cuts budget and instead linking up with the movement in the city to present a no-cuts budget based on what is needed would take the anti-austerity struggle forward.

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Eye on the Greens

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

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

After 14 October mass strike

Ireland public sector pay battle in the balance

- *As we go to press, union leaders have threatened another public sector general strike on 12 November, pending talks*

CIARÁN MCKENNA
SIPTU NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COUNCIL (PERSONAL CAPACITY)



Striking on 14 October PHOTO: MILITANT LEFT

The 14 October strike delivered a real blow to Micheál Martin's government. A mass public sector strike severely dented his swagger and bluster. The overwhelming public support for the 320,000 public sector workers on strike, and the tens of thousands who took to the picket lines, clearly unsettled him and his sidekick, Jack Chambers. Their arrogance led them to badly misjudge the public mood and to make a serious political miscalculation. Their dismissal of workers' legitimate pay demands will come back to haunt them.

14 October has forced the government to engage with public sector unions. The strike planned for 21 October was suspended to allow talks. The question arises for workers: what is a win? It is not clear what proposals will emerge from the current talks. Will it be enough to protect living standards, in a situation where the world capitalist economy is moving, once more, into deep crisis? Almost certainly not.

Union negotiators cannot agree a deal that sees another real cut in pay. Any deal must protect incomes over the coming years. It must protect real-terms incomes - and help make up for the losses suffered by workers over the past years. Importantly, there must be a mechanism to allow the reopening of any deal, if there is a sharp spike in inflation in 2027. The money is there to fund a proper pay increase. We are bombarded with talk of the 'surplus' and 'windfall' corporation tax receipts. We can't afford one that just leaves workers running to standstill over the next few years.

Defend the value of wages

The need to protect and increase the value of wages is fundamental to protecting the living standards of the working class under capitalism. This government only cares about protecting and increasing the value of profits and rents. It will never act to ensure real wage increases for the working class. We must demand a bigger share of the wealth our labour generates. We need to not just defend the value of wages. We need an industrial offensive to increase the share of national income that goes to workers.

Working-class people have responded very positively to a glimpse, just a glimpse, of the slowly re-emerging power of workers' organising collectively.

This shift in consciousness needs to be methodically built upon by the trade unions in the period ahead. Implementing collective bargaining rights for workers in the private sector, particularly the hundreds of thousands who are badly exploited every day by cut-throat bosses, must form part of any deal agreed. No decent person could oppose this demand.

Micheál Martin's government is an anti-worker, right-wing outfit whose only ideas are rooted in a long-discredited Thatcherism. The risible 'SME Test' that dominated their programme for government was an early warning sign that they would do little or nothing for workers. Their claims to be 'a pro-worker government' are hollow lies.

We must truthfully reckon with the blunt fact that there is no political force that represents workers. That makes workers' rights and living standards a matter of principle. The main 'left alternative' parties, particularly Labour, will not defend workers when it comes to the crunch.

The public sector workforce is still grappling with the Labour Party's savage austerity cuts to sick leave, annual leave and pensions, implemented in the infamous austerity coalition between 2011-16. Workers and trade unions can place very little faith in these parties. Instead, unions must begin a discussion aimed at truly advancing our political interests in the form of a new mass workers' party. One that will never compromise on workers' rights or living standards.

Resist wage suppression

Some are struggling to understand why the government let the issue of public sector pay drift for months. The answer lies in the bosses' agenda of wage suppression. Lower wages for all workers across the economy means higher profits for the capitalist class. A below-inflation pay award for public sector workers sets the stage for lowering the real wages for workers across the private sector. We must be ready and organised to face them down.

Should the deal that comes back from the present negotiations result in a real pay cut, we must be prepared to strike again. Public sector workers know what is at stake here. They are prepared to take action to defend their living standards. If another one-day strike fails to knock some sense into the government we must escalate to, at least, a two-day strike, all the way, if we have to, to all-out strike. While the talks continue, the work to rule must be consolidated. Joint union committees in workplaces should be built to prepare for the next phase of what could be a prolonged struggle.

The capitalist class are ruthless and unapologetic in defending their profits and wealth. They don't care who suffers so long as their wealth is protected. All workers must adopt the same approach, while protecting vital services. 2026 will prove a turning point for the Irish labour movement. As Jim Larkin famously put it: "The great appear great because we are on our knees: let us rise!" A victory for public sector workers in this pay battle will be a victory for all workers.

- **Ciarán Mckenna is a speaker at the Socialism 2026 rally on Saturday 14 November**

SOCIALISM TODAY



Monthly magazine of the Socialist Party

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- **Workers' politics:** What does Burnham's leadership of the Labour Party mean for working-class political representation?
- **The Celtic Alliance and the national question:** Looking at the recent development of the various national questions across the UK in the context of the new Burnham government
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HISTORIC ELECTION VICTORY FOR SERBIA'S STUDENT MOVEMENT

MIRA GLAVARDANOV
ENFIELD AND LEA VALLEY SOCIALIST PARTY

After 14 years, Serbia's right-wing authoritarian President Aleksandar Vucic is beaten. He conceded defeat in the general election less than two hours after the close of the ballot on 25 October. This came as a surprise to many as big police contingents were gathering around the parliament building and other key centres of power in the capital Belgrade. But this time the opponent was simply too strong for Vucic to attempt to rig the vote, claim victory and use force. The opposition Student List (SL) was set up by the student movement that began exactly two years ago. The Student List won with 53% and a 14% lead.

The student movement began after the collapse of a concrete canopy at the railway station in the city of Novi Sad, in November 2024, killing 16 people. It was the consequence of dodgy contracts, shabby work and profiteering. The student protests that followed quickly became the strongest movement that the country had seen for decades. It was grassroots, democratically organised in student plenums (assemblies), where students made decisions about university blockades, organised huge protests in the cities and towns, and marched between the towns, visiting villages and talking to rural populations who otherwise had limited access to information.

Widely embraced as a hopeful and reinvigorating force, the movement began mending deep-seated wounds stemming from the post-Yugoslavia era and civil war, years marked by hardship, dashed expectations, and widespread public cynicism. Student plenums inspired neighbourhoods to also organise in assemblies, taking initiatives in local and national issues.

Vucic's regime was badly shaken by the student protest movement but it didn't fall. This is because the most powerful force was missing, the organised working class. Students called on workers to join them in strikes many times but, although many workers supported the students and attended protests as ordinary citizens, apart from teachers no other section of organised workers took action. This was in many cases due to fear of losing jobs, especially in the public sector where jobs were dependent on the support of the ruling clique, and due to close ties between some union leaders with the regime.

After months of mass protests, students raised the demand for an early general election. Previously, Vucic had been extremely keen on elections, calling them every year simply because he was addicted to winning (by any means), believing in his own invincibility and irreplaceability. But not this time. It took almost a year and a half before he finally called the election.

Many on the left correctly saw the danger of limiting an essentially anti-establishment movement into the framework of parliamentary politics. Once the election was called, most correctly gave support to the Student List, even if conditional.

The students have made history; never before has a grassroots student movement stood in an election and won. However, they will only continue their history-making if the electoral win results in profound systemic changes, brought about inside and outside of the parliament.

The Student List was entirely created by students but chose not to have any students as candidates on it. Of its 250 candidates. the majority are university lecturers, scientists and farmers (several known anti-lithium mining activists), and workers. The ideological mix is wide, as it is among the students themselves.

In a period of low class consciousness and general political confusion in most countries that has lasted for decades since the fall of the Berlin Wall and the 'triumph of capitalism,' the alternative to the capitalist system is still difficult for many to see. Although that is changing, at least among youth who indicate support for some type of 'socialism,' in many countries.

It is the same in Serbia, and this is certainly a factor determining the character of the Student List and its programme. But there are additional important factors. The Student List stood against what is seen as a corrupt regime that was enriching itself while working people are among the poorest in Europe. The regime gave away resources to foreign mining companies while bullying the local population, and advertised workers as cheap labour to foreign companies, all of which is essentially the behaviour of a government that serves foreign big capital. Any struggle to defend homes from mining, or a struggle for higher wages, is a battle against big capitalist interests, even if not seen as such at that point.

Student List programme

The programme of the Student List has many progressive commitments, such as raising all wages, including the minimum wage; limiting temporary contracts to twelve months; paid maternity leave; making strikes easier to organise, including a general strike; the protection of the environment; bans on privatisation of water and stopping further privatisations of public assets; good relations with the neighbouring countries; solidarity with all oppressed peoples, notably Palestinians (Vucic was a close Netanyahu ally and partner in the arms trade); and more.

This is to be welcomed, even though the programme of the Student List is not explicitly anti-capitalist. Any attempt to put the programme into practice will result in confrontation with big capital, foreign and domestic. It will be a learning curve. Corruption, bullying, and profiteering is part of the capitalist system that rules in most corners of the world. Vucic didn't attempt to resist the diktat of big capital and its institutions; he acted as its manager while enriching himself and his cronies, while ruthlessly suppressing discontent.

The job of the new government will be difficult, in unravelling the extent of the corruption of the previous regime, and in implementing any progressive changes. After the students called for resignations of top figures in the police, intelligence and judiciary, the chief of police has been arrested and senior figures in state television have resigned. To form a government, the students will need to decide on a figure to act as prime minister. And, because Vucic stood down as president to stand in these elections, a presidential election is scheduled to take place before the end of this year.

Sweeping change can be achieved on the basis of mass mobilisations by the student movement and wider, and most importantly by organised workers who should now feel more confident. It will help that a miner (from a still state-owned mine whose workers were instrumental in toppling Miloševic) who opposed Vucic's regime and who fought against the corrupt leadership of his trade union, was on the Student List list and will become an MP.

Europe-wide protests

The election in Serbia happened at the same time as students and young people are protesting all over Europe. There have been some reports of solidarity messages between them, and of exchange of ideas with the Albanian students involved in mass protests.

It is important for young people in the Balkans to realise that they all have the same enemy, which is the capitalist system itself. The example of the French students should show to both Serbians and Albanians that the system doesn't provide good education and a decent life even in the "developed" capitalist countries.

It is still remarkable that most Serbian students never showed any pro-EU leaning; they refused to carry EU flags and distanced themselves from the pro-EU official opposition (or any other opposition). This is quite unique for a country that is not a member of the EU, where a pro-democracy movement is fighting against an authoritarian regime. The reasons are partly historical. NATO's bombing of Serbia in the 1990s and the remaining anti-Western powers' sentiment, and the more recent EU attempt at getting lithium from Serbia that would have resulted in horrific pollution and trampling on human rights, are all key factors explaining the attitude of most Serbs towards the EU.

The pro-EU opposition party got 0.3% of the vote. Even though this election was seen as a referendum between the students and Vucic and many people didn't want to risk wasting their vote, this is still an incredibly low result for the pro-EU party.

It is positive that Serbian people, in general, have no illusions in the EU, which is a bosses' club. This anti-Western capitalist mood needs to be channelled into developing a programme for a democratically managed planned economy in Serbia, to stop the exploitative foreign "investments", renationalise the industries looted after the break-up of Yugoslavia and the disastrous restoration of capitalism.

There is a general feeling that the people have 'got their country back,' where young people want to stay and build their lives. But under capitalism no country belongs to its people because the working class has next to no say, in a economy based on private ownership.

What next?

The student plenums that have taken place have included wide-ranging political discussions and debates. These democratic forums can continue to be used to digest the experience of the Student List government in power and to continue to determine and decide its policy.

It is important that the student movement, as well as neighbourhood assemblies, continue to self-organise beyond parliamentary politics too, to act as a strong lever on the new government, demanding pro-student, pro-farmer and pro-worker policies, and also to continue to develop as separate political forces. Genuinely independent trade unions, democratically run and combative, need to be forged.

Most importantly, a party of the working class with a strong base in workplaces, communities, universities, colleges, and schools, with bold socialist policies that can make a class appeal to small farmers and middle classes and can also appeal to the wider Balkans working class, needs to be urgently built to ensure the potential of the mass struggles are realised.

The next chapter in Serbian politics is going to be very challenging but also offering big opportunities.



PHOTO: STEFAN MILJUŠ

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



A march during the mass protests in Belgrade on 24 January 2025. The banner in the foreground reads "Only a Student[s] Saves the Serbs", a play on the national slogan "Only Unity Saves the Serbs" PHOTO: SERGIODREN/CC

Socialist Party

WHAT WE STAND FOR

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

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

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

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

WORK, PENSIONS AND BENEFITS

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

PUBLIC SERVICES

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

ENVIRONMENT

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

DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS

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

SOCIALISM AND INTERNATIONALISM

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

Do you agree? Join the fightback!

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FIGHT FOR JOBS AND A FUTURE!

Youth walkout on 20 November



PHOTO: NICK CLARE

LEON TURNER-DENHAM
STOKE SOCIALIST PARTY

Behind the figure of 'one million youth – not in education, employment, or training' are people desperately trying to get a foothold. The effects go well beyond having less money.

What should be an exciting start to adult life, instead becomes a struggle to find any kind of security. Unemployment damages confidence, worsens mental health, and leaves young people feeling isolated.

The soon to be published Milburn Review has brought attention to the scale of this crisis. But rather than confronting the lack of jobs and opportunities, young people are being blamed for our situation.

Labour politician Alan Milburn has suggested cutting welfare spending to supposedly fund 'employment support'. We're expected to take responsibility for a crisis we didn't create.

What are young people supposed to do? We can't create jobs that don't exist. Or magic up experience that employers refuse to give us.

Cutting support won't fix that. We need free, fully funded education and training.

We need a major expansion of apprenticeships offering proper training, secure employment, and decent wages. We need a mass programme of council house building, and investment in renewable energy and public services, creating thousands of skilled, well-paid jobs.

But these demands also raise a bigger question: who controls the wealth and resources in society?

There is no shortage of work that needs doing, or wealth to pay for it. Yet under capitalism, decisions about investment and employment are made according to the profits of big business, not the needs of ordinary people.

We need socialist change: public ownership of the major banks and big businesses, under democratic workers' control and management, so resources can be used to meet social needs rather than private profit.

After leaving uni, I spent months looking for work, applying for 100 jobs in a single week. Eventually, I accepted a minimum-wage job, completely unrelated to my degree.

This is the reality facing young people, doing everything expected of us, gaining qualifications, but still struggling to find decent work.

Across Britain and Europe, young people are fighting back. On 20 November, students will walk out under the slogan 'Fight for our futures, not their wars'.

By linking up with workers and trade unions, we can build a movement to fight for a different future. We don't have to accept a system that puts profit before people.

A socialist society, democratically run in the interests of the majority, could give young people the future we deserve.

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

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