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the Socialist

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16-23 March 2023

formerly **Militant**

SKY-HIGH PROFITS AND RISING BILLS

UNITE WORKING-CLASS ACTION TO KICK THE

TORIES OUT

UNIONS MUST MEET TO PREPARE 24-HOUR GENERAL STRIKE

NICK AUVACHE
CAMDEN AND HARINGEY SOCIALIST PARTY

The working class fired a powerful warning shot across the bow of the Tory government of the rich, with a powerful display of united workers' strike action on 15 March. At the same time, Tory chancellor Jeremy Hunt was unveiling his anti-working class budget.

Over 600,000 striking workers sent a clear message back: 'We have had enough of your cuts and attacks on our wages. Our class will not bear the burden of your crisis!'

The government accuses workers of holding the economy to ransom by striking, lecturing us on 'wage restraint'. But in reality it is the capitalists who are holding us to ransom, stacking up their profits.

Companies like BP and Shell are registering record profits in the midst of the greatest cost-of-living crisis for 40 years, but the Tories never call for profit restraint!

Recent analysis of the top 350 companies listed on the London Stock Exchange carried out by Unite the Union, showed that the average profit margins of these 350 bloodsuckers rose by 89% between the first half of 2019 and 2022.

I bet you haven't seen your wages rise by this amount since 2019! No wonder workers are not

only striking, but seeking out socialist ideas in increasing numbers.

The Tories are likely to lose the next general election. But Labour leader Sir Keir Starmer is desperate to reassure the bosses he is on their side, not ours. That's why he has blocked Jeremy Corbyn from standing as a Labour candidate in the next election, and it's why he has disciplined front-bench MPs for speaking out on picket lines.

The working class needs a political voice. If the trade unions backed a workers' list of candidates, independently of Labour, for the next general election, it would have a huge effect and be a stepping stone towards the creation of a new mass workers' party that is needed.

The huge wave of strikes that has swept Britain has already hit the bosses where it hurts - in their profits. Further coordination, like that on 15 March, including a 24-hour general strike, would deal further blows and must be a next step (see page 3).

To bring an end to bosses' profiteering, and to their endless attacks on workers for good, means fighting to transform society. It means taking the banks and big business out of the hands of the tiny number of individuals who get very rich at our expense and bringing them into public ownership, under working-class control and management, so that production can be planned to meet need, not profit. It means fighting for socialism.



NEU strike 1 February PAUL MATTSSON

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

Junior doctors' strike: 'We're at breaking point'

Junior doctors in England in the British Medical Association (BMA) and doctors' union HCSA began a 72-hour strike on 13 March, with young, lively and angry picket lines and protests. 8,000 protested at Downing Street on the first day of the strike.

Socialist Party members visited picket lines to offer solidarity and discuss the way forward.

Eleanor Dunne reports that the chants at a lively Basildon Hospital picket line included "Pay restoration now" and "Claps are not enough". Pickets at the main entrance were not moved away by management, which contrasts with the last strike when they were moved completely off hospital land.

"If we don't get a result on pay, I'm off!" This was how a young BMA striker at Southampton summed up the staffing crisis to Nick Chaffey. He explained that between a third and a half of junior doctors are leaving. Others said: "Our pay is low, £14

an hour, so we are doing extra shifts as locums just to make ends meet. There aren't enough of us now. Without improved pay it's going to get worse."

"I come out with £8 an hour after the student loan is taken off," a junior doctor at Queen's Medical Centre in Nottingham told Gary Freeman. At Lincoln County Hospital, strikers told Heather Rawling: "We're at breaking point. The government is deliberately running down the NHS to privatise it."

A striker at Birmingham Children's Hospital told Nick Hart: "I can't afford to have kids - the cost of childcare would be more than what I'm paid."

At Gateshead Queen Elizabeth Hospital, one of the junior doctors told Elaine Brunskill she had been unsure if their strike would get public backing, and got a "fuzzy feeling" when passing traffic was clearly supportive.



Rishi's heated pool, but we can't afford our bills



Kirby Sigston Manor, home to Sunak's new pool, and just one of his multiple properties PHOTO: PAUL BUCKINGHAM/CC

JOSHUA ALLERTON
BLACK COUNTRY SOCIALIST PARTY

The planned 20% increase in energy bills is likely to be scrapped in the budget. But whatever the Tories do, we still can't afford to pay.

£400 government support for all households is coming to an end. Workers receiving the £66 a month from the Energy Bill Support Scheme can't afford to add it to their bills.

Those paying £100 a month will see their bills rise 50%. That's another £50 to add to your other rising monthly expenses.

As our bills go higher, so do the energy companies' profits. Shell's profits soared 211% in 2022, despite windfall taxes. EDF Energy made £1.1 billion in profit in 2022.

Super-rich Tory prime minister Rishi Sunak can afford to have the electricity infrastructure near his constituency home upgraded to heat

his new 40 foot heated pool.

Our energy bills aren't a standalone crisis. With the rising cost of living, workers know that paying the same unaffordable energy bills is not enough.

Throughout winter, many were forced to choose between heating and energy. This will continue.

Hybrid workers weighed up going into the office, simply because it was warmer. They scrambled trying to feed their families and pay for their always ever-increasing transport costs just to get to work. Rail fares are rising 5.9%.

This is a capitalist crisis, and it's down to workers to end it. The fire at home may be out, but the fire that drives the workers' movement must keep burning.

We must nationalise our energy companies, and bring them under democratic workers' control. Don't let the energy bosses run away with a penny in their pocket.

Inadequate Tory childcare plans won't help me

PARENT AND SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBER

The government has promised help with childcare costs for Universal Credit claimants. Money for childcare for people on Universal Credit will now be paid up front.

The amount claimants get is also increasing. This is welcome news for many. Although, prior to the budget, the Tories haven't said how much. And, so far, the Tories have announced no plans for people not on Universal Credit.

Worse still, the Tories are combining the slight improvements in help for Universal Credit claimants with more draconian benefit sanctions. Under the changes, overworked parents could end up losing all help.

For people like myself, finding out what, if anything, I am entitled to should I return to work has already involved using multiple benefit calculators, online support groups and a call to Citizens Advice.

UK childcare is among the most expensive in the world. Full-time nursery care in England for a child under two was already more than

£14,000 last year.

I'm currently claiming Universal Credit to supplement statutory maternity pay. But once I return to work, I may be earning 'too much' to claim Universal Credit. Therefore, I will not be entitled to the payments towards childcare, which would allow me to return to work in the first place!

Much of the benefits available to parents are for children two-years plus. This is of no help to parents coming back from maternity leave. If I want to keep my job I need to return to it. My job is no longer guaranteed long before I'm entitled to help with childcare.

Many parents facing these predicaments are put off trying to return to work. According to campaign group Pregnant Then Screwed, 76% of mothers who pay for childcare say it no longer makes financial sense for them to work.

The Tories claim to have 'simplified' benefits during their time in power. There is a simple alternative. Free, high-quality, publicly funded and community-run childcare to meet the needs of all.



PHOTO: FIRST MINISTER OF SCOTLAND/CC

WHAT NEXT AFTER 15 MARCH? UNIONS MUST MEET TO PREPARE A 24-HOUR GENERAL STRIKE



WHAT WE THINK

New forces joined the fray for the biggest day yet in Britain's strike wave, on Budget Day 15 March. Junior doctors in the British Medical Association (BMA) walked out for the first time since 2016, for 72 hours from 13 March - joining teachers in National Education Union (NEU) this time taking 48 hours of consecutive action. New forces of civil servants in PCS, significantly HMRC staff, joined the action too.

Impressive in scale, the Budget Day strike, and the week of industrial action that surrounded it, has been another display of workers' potential power, acknowledged by the Tories in their attempts to bring in further anti-strike laws. Further days of mass coordinated action, including a 24-hour general strike, must now be a next step.

Individual disputes across different unions ebb and flow, at different times and with different frequencies. Weeks with seemingly endless lists of strikes follow weeks of seeming calm. But the driving force that compels workers into struggle - the ongoing cost-of-living crisis, inflation driving down workers' living standards, itself a symptom of capitalist crisis - is not abating. And the 15 March budget itself will do nothing to stop it.

Anything short of inflation-proof pay rises will mean falling living standards for workers. Unfunded pay rises in the public sector will deepen the crisis facing our public services.

Pay rises

To win from the government pay rises at or above inflation would be a significant defeat for the Tories. To inflict such a defeat will mean further escalation and coordination.

15 March brought around 600,000 workers out on strike together - partially answering the question from strikers on many picket lines: why aren't we all striking together? But in its preparation there were no reports of the trade unions meeting to plan coordination. Had it brought together all those trade unions with a live strike mandate it could have seen up to a million workers on strike.

Inspired by the struggles of the strike wave - which in its different phases has seen Royal Mail workers, BT workers, rail workers, nurses, teachers, ambulance staff, and junior doctors to the fore - thousands more are joining. Junior doctor numbers in the BMA have risen by 38.5% since June 2022. This mirrors the tens of thousands of education workers who have joined the NEU since its vote to



PHOTO: PAUL MATTSSON

strike was announced in January.

The GMB-organised Amazon strike in Coventry which started a week of strikes from 13 March, shows how increasing layers of workers, many who will not have been previously organised in a trade union, are being drawn into action. 15 March included numerous localised strikes, for example nursery staff in Knowlsey fighting for £15 an hour. Even consultants in the BMA are voting in a consultative vote, to be followed by a formal strike ballot.

Days of coordinated strike action strengthen each of the separate strikes - each with their own rhythm.

From a position of intransigence in January, refusing to even meet with public sector unions to talk about pay, facing coordinated action of teachers and civil servants on 1 February, and between health unions on 6 February, the Tory government has been forced to the table. They have made a pay deal to avert strikes in the fire service, and succeeded in getting a series of NHS strikes suspended, for now. Although no sooner are nurses and ambulance strikes suspended, then the junior doctors walk out!

The bosses and the Tories are split. Their dilemma; settle some disputes and risk giving confidence to other

sets of workers to hold out for better deals, or themselves dig in or escalate and risk provoking further action. Any attempts to get some disputes over the line, or paused for talks, failed to stop the biggest day of strike action yet.

The Tory and bosses' division is best met by maximum unity of the workers' movement. On London Underground it was significant that 15 March saw strikes of both Aslef and RMT members. On the railways too, maximum unity is needed. Socialist Party members in the rail unions call for a rejection of the Network Rail deal, to stand firm in the dispute with the Train Operating Companies, and for maximum discussion between members of all unions to plan the disputes going forward - including joint meetings of the unions' executives (see page 6).

Elected periodically by members, executives are the lay leadership bodies of the trade unions. They bring together representatives, many of whom are elected workplace shop stewards, from different trades or grades, regions and industries.

Coordination

The Socialist Party calls for a joint meeting of the executives of all the unions with live strike mandates, and those heading towards strike ballots. Such a meeting would be several hundred strong, filled with leaders of the strike wave - it would be well placed to discuss and plan further coordination and escalation. An immediate task would be to agree a named date for a 24-hour general strike. Coordination of strike dates reflecting the different stages of each of the individual disputes could be agreed in the build-up, and a weekend demonstration mobilising hundreds of thousands of strikers, other workers looking for a lead from their trade unions and youth.

For millions of working-class people facing a cost-of-living crisis seemingly without end, it is increasingly clear that it is 'us vs. them'. Already the strike wave, by showing workers a means to fight back, and bringing a new generation into the trade union movement for the first time, has significantly strengthened our side - the working class.

We would be strengthened further still if, like the capitalist class, the working class had a political force fighting in its interests. Labour - historically founded by the unions, and still funded by many - has refused to back workers' strikes for pay rises. Leader Keir Starmer has promised 'fiscal restraint' under a government led by him, code for further real-terms pay cuts. Instead the unions must take steps towards forming a new mass workers' party - a start would be preparing a workers' list of candidates to contest the next general election.



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Voter ID – latest Tory attack on democracy

OSCAR PARRY
SOUTH EAST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

The government has unveiled its latest attack on democracy – a new law requiring all voters to have photo ID at the ballot box for general elections and English local elections. Two million people – more than 4% of registered voters – currently lack the accepted forms of identification, which include valid passports and driving licences.

Those who have no ID can sign up for a ‘voter authority certificate’. But only 20,000 had applied a month into it being launched.

Fraud?

One of the main reasons given for requiring ID is to crack down on voter fraud. At the last general election, 164 cases of alleged electoral fraud were investigated by police.

There was just one conviction – of a person who grabbed a ballot box to prevent others from voting. Out of a total electorate of more than 47 million, this is obviously not about voter fraud.

The Tory government’s own research found that those with severely limiting disabilities, unemployed people, people without formal qualifications, and those who had never voted before, were all less likely to have photo ID.

The richer you are, the more likely you are to have ID. People who can’t afford to go on holiday don’t have passports, and those

that can’t drive don’t have driving licences.

This is a targeted attack on voters who are the least likely to vote Conservative. As if further proof was needed, over 60s will be allowed to use their travel passes as ID, while students and younger voters will not be able to do the same.

When photo ID was first introduced for Northern Ireland elections, 25,000 people – 2.3% of the electorate – did not vote because they lacked the required identification. And the Tories say these new requirements could cost up to £180 million per decade to enforce.

Our right to protest

The capitalist system is increasingly incapable of providing for working-class people. With other attacks on democratic rights, including restrictions on the ability to protest, capitalist politicians are trying to undermine growing opposition to their system.

We urgently need a new mass workers’ party that will fight for a socialist alternative of inflation-busting pay rises, fully funded public services, council homes, rent control and more!

The Socialist Party is against the new law. But everyone without ID should apply for a voter authority certificate, so you can make your voice heard and vote for workers’ representatives – like those standing for the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) – in the next election.



ANDY FIELD/CC

Gary Lineker – Striking staff force BBC bosses and Tories to back down

JAMES IVENS
SOCIALIST PARTY NATIONAL COMMITTEE

The BBC suspended Match of the Day host Gary Lineker for tweeting criticisms of the Tory government’s attacks on migrants. But collective action has forced BBC bosses into an embarrassing climbdown.

Apparently, Gary Lineker’s tweets undermined the state broadcaster’s ‘impartial’ veneer? In the real world, that’s utter hypocrisy! This is the firm that’s run by ‘former’ Tory Richard Sharp, appointed by a panel dominated by Tory members and donors, after helping Boris Johnson secure an £800,000 loan.

The final episode of David Attenborough’s Wild Isles series wasn’t broadcast by the BBC, fearing a backlash from Tory MPs. Instead, it went straight onto iPlayer. Alan Sugar, from the BBC’s Apprentice, was allowed to tweet attacking Mick Lynch and the RMT rail strikers.

Strike wave

The background here is that the government is under siege. Workers across sectors are downing tools, demanding some reprieve from the endless muggings of austerity, inflation and fat-cat cronyism. The Tories are desperate for a diversion.

So the Tories have brought new legislation punishing migrants who risk their lives crossing the English Channel in small boats. The government tells us that those fleeing poverty, persecution and war are weighing onto cost-of-living misery in Britain. The BBC is faithfully covering for the Tories.

But is that where our money’s gone? Corporate profits in the last quarter of 2022 alone were £154 billion. That’s an all-time record. Big

business hoarded enough in those three months to close the annual NHS funding gap, and build two million council homes on top.

There’s more than enough money to provide jobs, homes and services for everyone. The striking unions have targeted the real enemy. It’s the super-rich and their government who are robbing us.

So was Lineker right? On the facts, yes. Here’s what he wrote: “There is no huge influx. We take far fewer refugees than other major European countries. This is just an immeasurably cruel policy directed at the most vulnerable people in language that is not dissimilar to that used by Germany in the 30s”.

Small boat crossings are equivalent to just 0.05% of the UK population per year. Many of those people get sent back, sometimes to the very horrors they were fleeing. Other countries do take in more, although turn plenty away too.

The other remarks are opinions, and we’re all entitled to those. We would certainly agree that this is a cruel attack on the most vulnerable, intended to whip up division.

No apology

His refusal to apologise is justified. But it’s a shame multimillionaire Lineker hasn’t backed political change that could help the whole working class, including refugees. In 2017, he dismissed Jeremy Corbyn’s anti-austerity policies as “way left”, calling instead for “something sensibly centrist”.

‘Sensible centrist’ Keir Starmer has signed up to the Tories’ austerity rules, and reproached them for not being harsher on migrants. ‘Sensible centrist’ Emmanuel Macron in France is accepting tens of millions in UK funding to hunt down small

boats, while slashing pensions for French workers.

But Lineker’s colleagues took the right approach to his suspension. Ian Wright, Alan Shearer, and a series of other hosts, pundits and commentators declined to appear on BBC football shows.

The National Union of Journalists (NUJ) and Bectu – the union for media workers, and the biggest union at the BBC – released statements in support of Lineker. The football players’ union, the PFA, rightly stated it would defend any footballers who refused to be interviewed by the BBC.

Impartial?

Members of the NUJ at BBC Local are striking for 24 hours on 15 and 16 March over pay and cuts to radio shows and other BBC resources.

Gary Lineker isn’t the only BBC employee that has the right to have an opinion. BBC staff, like teachers, civil servants, nurses and all workers, are perfectly capable of doing their jobs professionally, while participating in their unions and taking public positions on different issues outside of their workday.

It’s a sign that the leaders of British capitalism are in a real crisis that a tweet by a former footballer can send the Tories and the state broadcaster into such a spin.

The BBC had to air shows on 11-12 March with no hosts or interviews. This shows the power of collective withdrawal of labour, following the example set by rail, mail, health, education, and civil service workers, among many others.

That’s the way to beat the crisis: unite against the employers and their politicians. Take the wealth off the super-rich. Fight for jobs, homes and services for all, not racist scapegoating.



Tories attempt to stoke division

Build a working-class political alternative for jobs and homes not racism



Socialist Party

WHAT WE THINK

Britain, like many other countries, is increasingly divided as the economic crisis continues to hit. The strike wave shows that the real division is along class lines - between those who have profited from the pandemic and now the cost-of-living crisis, and those who are suffering.



The strike wave shows that the real division is along class lines

But as the Tories cling to power they are trying to push division in a different direction, attempting to blame migrants for the problems of a lack of housing, underfunded services and more. Contrary to the Tory propaganda, people only choose to try and cross the channel in small boats because they face a nightmare of war, environmental disaster or poverty at home.

Even under the Tories' unfair and anti-refugee rules, the Refugee Council estimates that 60% of those who crossed the channel by boat last year were granted refugee status because of the horror they were fleeing from.

The Tories know that the introduction of their Illegal Migration Bill will not stop desperate people trying to flee to Britain. This is a cynical and very deliberate attempt to set the news agenda for prime minister Rishi Sunak and home secretary Suella Braverman.

Their aim is to break down the working-class unity we have seen against the Tories. The contents of the bill itself acknowledge it is more than 50% likely to be found in contravention of the European Court of Human Rights (incidentally nothing to do with the European Union).

It will therefore face significant and expensive legal challenges and delays. Already it is facing opposition from senior Tories, particularly the bill's provision to allow the government to detain children in immigration centres.

Tory panic

Polls show the Tories well behind in the polls; one recently revealed 61% of Britons want a new political party. Sunak and the Tories want to use the issue of migrants on boats to shore up some support, including in 'red wall' seats where they were able to make gains in the last general election.

Perhaps they think doing battle with a European court will help with that. Although it won't be lost on some on the right wing of the Conservative Party that Sunak met with Macron to discuss boats and agreed to transfer £480 million across the channel.

The Illegal Migration Bill can have some effect in provoking divisions. In addition, it will mean continued misery for migrants fleeing war and oppression, and can embolden racists and the far-right to spread their hatred.

Exploiting working-class anger about a lack of affordable housing and falling living standards, far-right groups have assisted the Tories joining and organising protests against migrants being housed in hotels. Keir Starmer's Labour must take its share of the blame for, failing to oppose anti-migrant propaganda and failing to fight for real improvements for working-class people. Football pundits have had far more effect in countering Tory racism than Starmer's New Labour, whose spokespeople initially condemned Gary Lineker's tweet.

Local councils spend an estimated £1.6 billion on temporary accommodation for homeless families every year, and rising.

Not a single Labour council has used its powers, such as compulsory purchasing of large-scale empty properties like hotels, for renovation into social housing for homeless people. Neither have any built the numbers of council homes anywhere near what is required to meet need.

So, while it's necessary for socialists to point out why the Tories are turning now to whip up racism further, our analysis can't end there. We have to put forward steps that the workers' movement can take to stop division taking hold, by offering a socialist programme. One opportunity to do this will be standing workers' candidates in the May local elections where possible and preparing to stand a workers' list in the general election.



We have to put forward steps that the workers' movement can take to stop division taking hold

What is needed is to build a political voice for the workers' movement, which can counter the lies, division and distortion from the Tories, while also offering an anti-austerity socialist alternative to the Labour Party that fights for jobs, homes and public services for all, and trenchantly opposes racism.

If such a party was to be formed, it would be an important tool for the workers' and anti-racist movements' preventing the growth of far-right groups, as well as being capable of defeating the Tories' racist migration laws.



SVB bank collapse exposes fragile capitalist system

NICK HART
SOCIALIST PARTY NATIONAL COMMITTEE

When the president has to go on TV to reassure the public that they'll still be able to withdraw their own money from a bank, it's a sign that something has gone badly wrong. So what happened?

Silicon Valley Bank (SVB) held much of its assets in the form of US government bonds - packages of public debt normally seen as a secure way for banks to park customers' money. The bank collapsed when the cash value of the bonds it held declined against the backdrop of rising interest rates.

\$42 billion

It found itself unable to sell enough to be certain of paying depositors their money in full, on demand. After publicly acknowledging this, \$42 billion was withdrawn from the bank in one day.

To prevent a further stampede of account holders running to take out their money from SVB, the US government said it would guarantee that all accounts in the now-liquidated bank would be paid in full. The bank's British arm was bought for £1 by giant HSBC, in a sale facilitated by the Bank of England.

Though a domino effect of panic spreading through the banking system and wider economy along the lines of the 2008 crisis seems to have

been avoided, for now, the collapse of SVB is a symptom of a highly jittery capitalist financial system.

SVB was a 'niche' bank, concentrated in limited sectors. But, there's plenty of money sloshing around other parts of the capitalist system.

Unite the Union has found that the profits of Britain's biggest companies almost doubled during the pandemic. But with capitalist governments attempting to bring inflation down by raising interest rates, there will be more unintended consequences like with SVB - and not just among the speculators of Wall Street and the City of London.

Mortgages and debt

Already working-class people in Britain and elsewhere are facing greatly increased mortgage repayments, and interest on other personal debt - such as credit cards - normally used to smooth out the effect of low wages and increasing living costs. This further takes money out of the 'real' economy, storing up problems for the capitalists, as demand for their products ebbs away.

The challenge to the workers' movement is to ensure that it's not our class that pays the price for the capitalists' inability to manage their own system. The banks and big business should be nationalised - under the democratic control of the working class - so we can plan the economy to meet the needs of all.

Rail bosses under pressure: The RMT must fight on

SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBERS IN THE RMT

In two weeks of consultation at the start of February, RMT rail union members resoundingly rejected the pay 'offers' and attacks on working conditions from both Network Rail and the Train Operating Companies (TOCs). This strong message from the members followed a thumping vote for continued action in the ballot required by Tory anti-union legislation.

Undoubtedly, the employers, with the Tory government behind them, were taken aback by the determination of rail workers to fight for decent pay and against a 'modernisation' programme that would tear up working conditions hard-won over decades.

In the face of this intransigence they are now seeking ways to separate out different groups of rail workers in the hope of fragmenting the dispute. It is therefore vital, not only that the RMT continues and escalates the fight, but that there is democratic discussion and coordination among the reps and members of the union across the different grades and employers, and coordination between rail unions.

Network Rail – reject the offer

The RMT action on Network Rail planned for 16 March has been suspended. The offer from Network Rail is now going out to members in a referendum, but without recommendation from the leadership.

We say the offer should be rejected and the union must fight on.

The offer on pay is slightly improved, with an additional 1.1%, and it is now backdated to October 2022. But despite headline reports of "an uplift on salaries of between 14.4% for the lowest-paid grades to 9.2% for the highest-paid", and "a total uplift on basic earnings of 15.2% for the lowest-paid grades", this is, in fact, a two-year pay offer. Given that in the year 2022-23 RPI inflation has been running higher than 14%, in reality this pay offer is actually half of that, and so is still a substantial pay cut. Clearly, this isn't a big enough improvement on previous offers to warrant a new referendum.

Even more significantly, it has now been made clear that for the price of a few months' extra back pay, "acceptance of the offer will mean a settlement of all aspects of the dispute and that no further strike action can be taken, including in respect of 'Modernising Maintenance'."

So the huge changes to working conditions would be imposed. Why wasn't there consultation with the wider membership, or at least the Route Council representatives, before making the rushed decision to suspend strikes and put this offer out to referendum?

Where were the mass meetings of reps? Where have the mass rallies of members in the regions taken place? Surely the voices of the members should have been listened to before making such an important decision?

What happened to the mass postcard and media campaigns that were promised to alert the public of the dangers of the company's plans on 'Modernising Maintenance'?



Waterloo ISAI MARJERLA

Train Operating Companies

The TOCs also offered talks to the RMT about what they describe as an improved offer, but made suspending the strike action planned for 16 and 18 March a pre-condition.

Most members will remember what happened late last year, when the same proposal came from the employers making vague promises on condition that we suspend our strikes: they took the mickey out of us and were just wasting our time.

We can't make that mistake again. The NEC was right to press ahead with the action.

RMT members understand that the employers have belligerently threatened to stop dealing with the RMT as one group (the Rail Delivery Group - RDG), due to the 'impasse', and that the union will now have to negotiate separately with each employer. The impasse being that workers refuse to roll over in the face of historic attacks on their terms and conditions.

The danger of reverting to negotiations at each individual TOC is that the TOC managements will undoubtedly try to play 'divide and conquer', by pressing ahead with their attacks on certain grades, e.g. by closing the ticket offices, before moving on to guards and others. But with a determined lead they can still be defeated.

Lay members discuss

It is now vital that meetings of reps

and members take place to debate and plan the next action necessary. The fight will be stronger the more unified it is across different grades and companies. But the different TOCs will all have different pressure points as well - different expiry dates for the franchises, and - notwithstanding the new national rail contracts that guarantee a certain level of income from the government - different balance sheets and so on. A determined fight can mean it is the bosses who fragment.

Coordination

That should include discussion between rail unions too. The RMT executive should propose to meet jointly with the Aslef drivers' union executive, to fight to ensure all the industrial strength is used to maximum effect. But Aslef members should be invited to be part of the discussion at every level, which will aid the pressure on their leaders.

The bosses' attempts to pressure and divide the rail workforce has included using the fact that the TSSA union, which organises, among others, administrative and station workers, accepted a pay offer after putting it out to referendum. The bosses have used this to put pressure on RMT.

But many TSSA members will want to act in solidarity and should be brought into the discussion where possible, to put pressure on their leaders to continue the broad campaign to preserve a safe railway

network with well-paid staff. The terrible events in Greece show what happens if trade unions are weakened, with unchecked, rampant privatisation on the railways.

And that also means coordination on a wider scale, with all other unions in dispute. The national strike wave which began with the rail unions last summer has new waves of workers joining - not least, 45,000 junior doctors now joining the hundreds of thousands of public sector workers striking this spring.

Nationalise

All these disputes have the divided and crisis-ridden Tory government behind them - either directly, or backing vicious private sector bosses. Governmental action - by the Tories, or clear commitments to immediate action by an incoming Starmer-led government - would end these disputes, in this case by ensuring inflation-proof pay rises and committing to renationalise the railways.



Meetings of reps and members must take place to plan

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NEU Cymru/Wales: Vote to reject the inadequate offer

• Escalate the action!

BULLETIN PRODUCED BY SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBERS IN THE NEU

The solid strike action taken by National Education Union (NEU) members in Wales has forced the Labour-led Welsh government to table a new offer. But it still falls well short of what the union set out to win.

Accepting the offer means accepting two more years of real-terms pay cuts

When the NEU Cymru 'Valentine's Day' strike on 14 February was called off in order to consult with members over the first Welsh government offer, members rightly rejected the deal and instead went ahead with strike action on 2 March. That action was solidly supported.

Joint general secretary, Kevin Courtney, told BBC Wales that members "have emphatically informed us that the offer of an additional 1.5% added to teachers' pay, plus an additional 1.5% lump sum, is simply not good enough" and insisted it failed to address the cost-of-living crisis, inflation, or the "damage" to pay since 2010.

So what is being offered now? For 2022-23, it is still that additional 1.5% plus an additional 1.5% non-consolidated add-on. It was not good enough then and it's still not good enough now!

The change to the offer is an additional 5% increase for 2023-24, making 11.8% over two years. But 11.8% doesn't even match inflation for one year, let alone two! With RPI inflation still forecast to be around 10% for the rest of 2023, accepting the deal means accepting not just one year but two more years of real-terms pay cuts. That's not good enough.

There's no more money from Westminster, only funding from the Welsh reserves

The Welsh government has said that it can fund the additional pay being offered from its own reserves. Strike action has forced it to do so. But nothing more has been won from Westminster, and relying just on Welsh government funds is just not sustainable in future.

Instead of expecting its teachers and nurses to accept below-inflation pay, we must demand that the Labour-led Welsh government join with unions in fighting the Tories for the pay and funding we need.

The 'no detriment' clause - promising to match any higher pay award that might be won in England - is a hollow promise. In reality, if teachers in Wales settle for this two-year pay cut, it will set a benchmark for the maximum that the Tories will offer in England too.

Accepting an offer without winning any more funding from Westminster lets the Tory government off the hook. It means throwing away the leverage we have over them through the collective action being taken across both Wales and England. It gives them no reason to 'pay up' to boost school funding in Wales - and will make it harder for colleagues in England to force them to 'pay up' for their schools too.

There's nothing in the offer for support staff, nothing that really addresses workload

The Welsh government has said that "negotiations will continue" on workload. But if action is called off, why should we expect to end up with anything more than the usual vague promises? There is nothing concrete in the offer that will really cut workload. It's still 'simply not good enough'.

NEU support staff in Wales beat the anti-union ballot threshold and took strike action alongside teaching colleagues. But there is no offer being made for them. We must stand together, not leave our poorest-paid staff without any gains to show from their action.

We don't need to settle for this - we can win more!

Why do we need to settle for such an inadequate offer now? Our strike action has been strong. Picket lines have been growing. The strike on 15 and 16 March would have been solidly supported. It should have gone ahead.

Instead of settling for an inadequate offer, NEU Cymru members need to reject it and maintain our united action with members across England and Wales.

Members in England will need to escalate with further strike action - and members in Wales should do so too. Socialist Party members on the NEU executive have made a proposal for escalation, which can be seen at 'Proposal for escalation' www.socialistparty.org.uk

Vote to reject the offer!

The following Socialist Party members are standing for election to the NEU National Executive:

- Sheila Caffrey, sitting NEC member in district 12
- Sean McCauley, sitting NEC member in district 8
- Steve Scott, sitting NEC member in district 3
- Anna Scott, district 3

To join Louise Cuffaro, already elected unopposed in district 16



Teachers and support staff on strike in Wales WALES SOCIALIST PARTY

UCU: After the 'period of calm' comes a period of storm



Leicester HEATHER RAWLING

LLUIS BERTOLINI BIRMINGHAM UCU

After suspending seven days of strikes over two weeks in order to "create a period of calm" for negotiations, the University and College Union (UCU) has resumed its strike action. One more day was added to the calendar - Budget Day - joining PCS and NEU in one of the biggest coordinated strikes for a long time. The remaining UCU strike days under the current ballot are 16-17 and 20-22 March.

It is clear to members that the strike action has got under the employers' skin. After years of hard-balling and making threats, sector-wide strike

action forced the employers to the negotiating table, having seen that the mood was strong and a bad deal could not be imposed.

Socialist Party members did not agree with the leadership in UCU suspending the strikes. While UCU honoured its part and members went back to work, the employers unwisely decided to sow the seeds of unrest! They unilaterally imposed an accelerated and underwhelming pay award of 5-8% and argued that that closes the pay dispute.

This rise had already been rejected by members before! Not only are they ignoring this, but the bosses are completely forgetting that this strike is due to far more than pay. Now that

employers have been forced to recognise that casualisation is a problem, it is time to put pressure on them so that they do something about it at a national level.

Furthermore, overworking and the gender pay gap are still extremely important issues that need properly addressing. Members can see that a 5% rise, a real-terms cut, does not solve the issues.

This latest move by the employers is all for naught, for UCU members are once again dropping their anchors at the picket lines.

It is also vital members vote yes in the rebalot, which closes on 31 March, to extend our strike mandate into the summer term and beyond.

20 years ago, in the Spring of 2003, the Iraq war began with the US-UK bombing and invasion of Iraq. Mass opposition to the war, including up to two million marching in London on 15 February, and further action including school student walk-outs on 'Day X', when the invasion began on 20 March, were not enough to stop George Bush and Tony Blair's 'War for oil'. The lives of millions of Iraqis were devastated, Tony Blair's Labour Party permanently damaged, and the authority of US imperialism dealt a major blow. **Alistair Tice**, Socialist Party National Committee member, looks at the events and lessons for anti-war campaigners and socialists to learn from the Iraq war.

Bloody war for US imperialist interests

Prior to him being deposed as president, captured and subsequently executed, Saddam Hussein had previously been backed by US imperialism for its own strategic interests. It supported him in Iraq's war against Iran (1980-88), hoping for the defeat of the Ayatollah's regime that came to power after the Iranian revolution in 1979, which overthrew the pro-western Shah.

But Saddam's invasion of oil-rich neighbour Kuwait in 1990 put him into conflict with US imperialist interests in the Middle East, leading to the first Gulf War. A quick US military victory in 1991 left Saddam in power but contained by United Nations sanctions (which led to the deaths of 500,000 children) and no-fly zones.

It was the 2001 9/11 terrorist attack by al-Qaida on the Twin Towers that gave US capitalism the pretext to extend its influence in the region. After another quick initial victory against the Taliban in Afghanistan (accused of harbouring Osama bin-Laden), Bush turned his sights on oil-rich Iraq, which he'd named as part of the 'Axis of Evil' in the 'War on Terror' declared after 9/11.

In an attempt to overcome public opposition to war in Iraq, a huge war propaganda campaign was launched on both sides of the Atlantic. The 2003 invasion was justified by Bush and Blair using the lie about Saddam having 'weapons of mass destruction', and his alleged harbouring of al-Qaida terrorists. But the weapons were never found, and al-Qaida and its off-shoot Islamic State hardly existed in Iraq prior to the US occupation. Blair's 'dodgy' intelligence dossier even claimed the lie that Iraq could launch weapons of mass destruction against British military forces within 45 minutes. The United Nations was

sidelined and, with splits in the NATO military alliance, Bush and Blair formed a 'coalition of the willing' to go to war.

A three-week long "shock and awe" bombing campaign led to another quick military victory overthrowing Saddam Hussein, Bush declaring "mission accomplished"! But the ensuing power vacuum, left after the US dismantling of Saddam's Sunni-dominated state apparatus, led to a lengthy insurgency against the occupying US-UK coalition forces, and sectarian clashes between the majority Shias and previously dominant minority Sunnis. With the occupation bogged down, imperialist forces increasingly resorted to colonial-type rule, such as the sieges and destruction of Fallujah city in 2004 as a form of collective punishment - symbolised by the grotesque images from the Abu Ghraib detention centre of hooded Iraqi prisoners being humiliated and tortured by US troops.

The installation of pro-western and sectarian Shia prime minister Nouri al-Maliki from 2006-2014 fuelled Sunni resentment and intensified the sectarian civil war. After a US troop 'surge', occupation forces reached a high point of 170,000 but still could not contain the insurgency and sectarian conflict.

As US and UK troop casualties mounted, opposition to the unwinnable war based on lies and oil grew. US combat troops were officially and ignominiously withdrawn from Iraq by the end of 2011, but not before contracts were awarded to international oil companies for some of Iraq's oilfields.

US military forces returned with air strikes and covert operations in 2014 to prop up the sectarian Maliki government, which was overwhelmed by the advances of Islamic State and other forces. By exploiting Sunni resentment and attracting international jihadists, Islamic State had taken the cities of Mosul and Tikrit, and controlled 40% of Iraq territory.



Alistair Tice selling the Socialist newspaper at an anti-war demo in Manchester. PHOTO: ALISON HILL

Islamic State was deemed to have been defeated by 2017, but US troops stayed on. After Donald Trump's unilateral assassination, on Iraqi soil, of top Iranian general Suleimani and an Iraqi militia leader in January 2020, the Iraqi parliament voted for all foreign troops to leave the country. New US president Joe Biden withdrew all remaining US combat troops by the end of 2021 making, along with Afghanistan, a second humiliating retreat from a disastrous war, but another war with horrific costs for the victims.

At least 200,000 Iraqis were killed during the occupation, with some estimates as high as one million deaths. Two million refugees left the country with a further 4.4 million internally displaced. One study found that 60-70% of children were psychologically disturbed.

It is estimated that the war has cost the US over \$2 trillion and rising. Nearly 5,000 coalition forces died, including 179 British soldiers.

Tony Blair, depicted as Bush's

poodle and derided as a war criminal for his complicity in lying Britain into war, was forced to stand down as Prime Minister in 2007, three years before the general election was due. Since his invasion of Iraq, Labour Party membership had halved and Labour lost five million votes compared to 1997. Even the official Chilcott Inquiry which finally reported in 2016 concluded that the war was "unnecessary", "unsatisfactory" and based on "flawed information".

For US imperialism, the two humiliating withdrawals from Iraq and Afghanistan demonstrate its declining global influence, especially in the Middle East. These were reinforced the 'Vietnam syndrome' of US public opinion opposing foreign military interventions, a factor Trump played on in "Putting America First" in his 2016 presidential campaign.

Socialists maintain implacable opposition to imperialist wars. But that cannot mean giving support to 'my enemy's enemy', just because they use anti-imperialist demagoguery. Support

for the rights of oppressed peoples to defend themselves, including by armed resistance, does not mean giving any political support to dictators like Saddam Hussein or Assad in Syria, or to right-wing Islamists like Hamas in Gaza or communal-based Hezbollah in Lebanon. Instead, we stand on the side of the working-class and poor masses, demanding independent class organisations and mass struggle.

As the Socialist issue 292, published on 21 March 2003 the day after US ground troops entered Iraq, said: "The only alternative that will prevent future Saddams and guarantee a decent future for the Iraqi people and workers and poor internationally is to build the forces of socialism in Iraq, in the Middle East and globally. To this end, we must support the building of mass workers' parties and of links between them, so that workers internationally can aid Iraqi and other workers in their struggles for decent living standards, real democracy and a socialist future."

IRAQ WAR 20 YEARS ON



Some of the crowd in Hyde Park at the end of the 15 February demo. PHOTO: LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY



School students walk out on Day X in South London. PHOTO: LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

Mass opposition and biggest-ever protests

The war build-up provoked a tidal wave of opposition globally, culminating on 15 February with an estimated 30 million people demonstrating against war in over 600 cities, probably the largest protest event in human history. Up to 2 million marched in London. This pressure from below forced 122 Labour MPs into a parliamentary revolt against Blair, and three ministers resigned. But the protest movement, without sufficient organisation and political programme, was not enough to stop the US capitalist class, with its junior partner Britain, going to war to reassert the dominance and prestige of the USA on the world stage, not to mention the oil!

I was one of the organisers on one of the nearly 30 coaches that travelled from Sheffield to London that day. I took my youngest son on his first-ever demonstration; there were so many people that we couldn't move off from Gower Street for hours. We never even got to Hyde Park because the three-and-a-half-mile march took so long and we had to get our coach back home.

Even the police said that there were 750,000 people there. A contemporary ICM poll recorded that at least one person from 1.25 million households had demonstrated, so there were more likely nearer two million protesting on the day - an exhilarating and inspiring day to be alive, full of hope to stop the war.

But it was not enough. Many had illusions that the United Nations (UN) would prevent the war, an illusion reinforced by the leaders of the Stop the War Coalition (STWC), including the Socialist Workers Party, giving an uncritical platform to the Lib-Dem leader Charles Kennedy and Labour 'rebel' Mo Mowlam who only opposed the war without a second UN resolution. But the UN has only ever been an institution representing the world's ruling classes, dominated by the big imperial powers in the Security Council, which, if they can't reach agreement, is ignored or by-passed by the US, as in the case of the Iraq invasion as well as countless resolutions condemning the Israeli state over its actions in Palestine.

What was needed from 15 February was building a mass campaign of civil disobedience, including arguing the need for strike action by trade unions as the only means of stopping Britain's involvement in the war. With Blair committing Britain's strategic interests to that of US imperialism, he needed to feel that the opposition movement at home threatened his and capitalist rule more than the

loss of prestige caused by pulling out of the war.

That had happened before; when the British government sent troops and arms to Russia to try to overthrow the new workers' government established after the overthrow of the Tsar in 1917, they were stopped by British workers threatening a general strike. The Socialist Party-linked International Socialist Resistance distributed over 50,000 leaflets on 15 February calling for school, college and university student walk-outs on Day X, the day war was to be declared, something that to a large extent took place around the country.

In Sheffield, hundreds walked out of schools, marched and occupied the biggest roundabout in the city. From the Hyde Park platform, the late Bob Crow, then general secretary of the RMT transport workers' union, called for strike action.

A week later, Socialist Party member Bernard Roome successfully moved a resolution at the Communication Workers Union (CWU) executive committee stating that the CWU would "campaign for all members to take protest action on the day war is officially declared". While there were some walk-outs, the widespread strike action up to a general strike that was necessary didn't take place. The STWC and trade union leaders didn't seriously attempt to build for it.

The other missing factor was a political voice to give expression to the anti-war movement. Those coming from the left of the Labour Party were constrained by membership of Blair's New Labour. George Galloway, then in Labour, was the most prominent anti-war MP. The Socialist Party had discussed with him prior to 15 February, about him using his authority to launch a new workers' party. But in the end he spoke about reclaiming Labour.

Eight months later he was expelled but the best opportunity to harness the component parts of the mass anti-war movement - the left Labour MPs, the 'awkward squad' of the new trade union leaders at the time, the anti-war youth movement and the different socialist organisations - into a working-class based new party had passed.

The need for a new mass workers' party still exists today and, after over a decade of austerity and now further attacks on the working class, the issue is more pressing than ever. The ongoing strike wave offers new opportunities to build a political voice for the working class based on the trade unions. Such a new workers' party would be able to play the lead role in organising mass opposition to Britain's involvement in future wars, which are inevitable under crisis-ridden global capitalism, as the war in Ukraine shows.

Come to a Socialist Party meeting near you

The Socialist Party has regular meetings in towns and cities across the country. We discuss socialist ideas, lessons from past struggles, campaigning in our communities, supporting workers and young people in struggle and much more.

If you would like to participate:

- Go to www.socialistparty.org.uk/events
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- Or email info@socialistparty.org.uk

March to save our NHS

DARA FITZGERALD
WEST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

The NHS is at breaking point. Years of Tory underfunding and cuts have led to longer waiting times, reduced services, underpaid staff, and a huge list of vacancies. This was true even before the pandemic hit, which has considerably exacerbated the issue.

On 11 March NHS SOS, a coalition of campaigns to save the NHS, organised a march through central London. A few thousand people attended, including representatives from trade unions, trade councils, and local NHS campaigns. Holly Johnston, a nurse, NHS Workers Say No and Socialist Party member, spoke from the

platform and said: "Minimal staffing isn't met when we're not on strike, yet the government wants to push through minimum levels [anti-strike] legislation, and we must reject this... We know that if we all strike together we can force the Tories out"

Demonstrations such as this show the support for saving our NHS, and opposition to privatisation and the selling off of our great public institution. We need a fully funded NHS that is free at the point of use, that properly pays and supports its staff, is publicly owned and with democratic oversight from health unions and patient groups.

● See page 2 for updates from the junior doctors' strike



NHS SOS demo PHOTO: MARK BEST

Corbyn supporter blocked from standing as Labour candidate in Broxtowe - workers' alternative needed

GARY FREEMAN
NOTTINGHAM SOCIALIST PARTY

There was anger in the local trade union movement and among many Labour Party activists when it became known that Greg Marshall, a Jeremy Corbyn supporter who stood for Labour in 2017 and 2019, was not on the long and short list of Labour's possible prospective parliamentary candidates for Broxtowe, Nottinghamshire.

Greg posted on social media: "Despite having the backing of the vast majority of members in the local party, eight trade unions, society affiliates, and respected regional Labour figures from across the political spectrum, the party has determined that I am unfit to stand."

Greg is a local councillor, Unison lead negotiator in the Environment

Agency who are currently in dispute, and has a history of community campaigning. The Constituency Selection Committee resigned in protest posting a statement on Twitter:

"The constituency party has been sidelined throughout the entire process and our choice of candidates has clearly been rigged to suit the leadership's preference."

That was followed by the entire Constituency Labour Party executive committee resigning their positions.

The Fire Brigades Union (FBU) union protested Greg's exclusion from the Labour Party vote as did other trade unions. The FBU referred to the support from themselves, Unison, Unite, the CWU, TSSA, Aslef, NUM and GMB unions for Greg's candidacy.

Trade union activists including FBU, PCS, CWU and RMT members



Socialist ideas at the 'Defend Israeli Democracy' protest

ELLEN KENYON PEERS
WALTHAM FOREST SOCIALIST PARTY

'Democracy for ALL', read a chorus of banners at the 'Defend Israeli Democracy' demo on 12 March. What began as protests to stop changes to the judicial system - in part an attempt by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to avoid corruption charges - has begun to grow into a movement to oust the current far-right government.

Demonstrations have been held in Israeli-migrant communities around the world, with the protest in London highlighting not only a desire to uphold women's and LGBTQ+ rights, but also a more developed understanding of the occupation than seen

in recent years. Many home-made placards featured Palestinian, Israeli and Trans-rights flags, in addition to shows of solidarity with the people of Hawara, who were recent victims of a horrific state-sanctioned pogrom by a band of settlers. (see 'Israel-Palestine: Violence escalates with settler rampage - united working class struggle needed' on socialistparty.org.uk)

The Socialist Party's intervention was warmly welcomed, with protesters keen to display our posters which called for democratic workers' organisations in Israel and Palestine, a socialist alternative to end poverty (20% of Israelis live below the breadline) and a two-state socialist solution to the conflict.

A good chunk of the estimated 1,500-person crowd engaged with our material, with some taking leaflets and over 20 buying papers. A passer-by, who identified as Arab, spoke to us about the inequality they encountered and raised their fears about the impact of the creeping fascist elements present in the current regime.

One attendee clutched his just-purchased copy of The Socialist as he told Socialist Party members that it was good to see us, 'the only left wing group' on the demo. It demonstrates that, if we want to build unity between ordinary people, showing up and flying the flag for an alternative is just as important as analysing the struggle from a distance.

clear they see Greg as the best representative of their interests.

"If Greg's exclusion is maintained, this increases the possibility of the Tories retaining the seat as quite understandably, many will see no point campaigning or voting for the long-listed candidate."

Nottingham Socialist Party says that if Greg is not the parliamentary candidate for Labour in the next General Election then he should stand as part of a workers' list of candidates supported by the trade unions, joined by Jeremy Corbyn and others, as a step towards a new workers' party.

We believe that there is a layer of Labour Party activists who would support and work for Greg if he was to stand, as well as others no longer in or having never been in the Labour Party, and we welcome that stance.

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Students meet to plan cost-of-living fightback



Students are facing a cost-of-living squeeze and a crisis in university funding with institutions already planning cuts and closures to courses and departments. Socialist Students is holding its 2023 conference on 18 March. We print here edited extracts of the main motion setting out tasks and perspectives for a fighting student movement:

No generalised fightback has yet emerged on the campuses against the attacks students face. The response of students so far has been to 'grin and bear it'.

This is largely down to the weakening of student organisation over the last decade, which includes the abdication of the National Union of Students and local students' unions from helping to organise and lead students in struggle. But this is not a reflection of the lack of appetite of students to struggle.

Central then, to the building of a fighting student movement in this period, is the rebuilding of democratic fighting student organisations on the campuses, capable of linking up nationally in the fight for free education. Students also do not have a

political alternative to the policies of the Tories. Starmer's Labour has ruled out introducing free education, and continues to show big business that Labour is now a safe party to represent the interests of the bosses. That's why Socialist Students fights for a new workers' party.

The strike wave demonstrates in practice the power of the working class and the potential of mass collective action. Socialist Students argues that students need to get organised to more effectively link up with workers in struggle and support the strikes on campuses, but also to formulate our demands to fight the cost-of-living crisis.

A fighting programme for students

- Our demands include:
- For emergency cost-of-living grants available for all students who need them. Replace student loans with living grants, rising with the rate of inflation
 - For subsidised university canteen meals for students struggling to feed themselves; against early closures of campus spaces due to the energy cost crisis
 - For heated and safely staffed campus spaces available 24/7 to students and staff who need them
 - To take third-party student halls under the control of our universities,

as a step towards introducing democratic rent controls

● For an end to and a reversal of cuts to our education, including courses, jobs, and student support services

Campaigning for these demands poses the need to win university funding from central government, and therefore the need to build a national student movement that fights to abolish tuition fees and write off student debt - for free education.

The crisis of capitalism is pushing students and young people towards socialist ideas and conclusions. That's why vital in this period is to boldly raise socialist ideas as well as explaining what a socialist transformation of society would mean - i.e. the democratic public ownership of the banks, monopolies and major industries to provide young people with a future.

Socialist Students resolves to launch cost-of-living campaigns on university campuses and colleges where Socialist Students is present and to campaign as widely as possible - including stalls on campuses, building for public meetings, campus protests, open letters and petitions to management, to students' unions and course reps, and inviting trade union branches and other campaigning organisations to participate within them.

Obituary: Cath Ellis - a lifelong campaigner for the working class

JANE NELLIST
COVENTRY SOCIALIST PARTY

Cath was a long standing Coventry Socialist Party member who cut her teeth as the Secretary of the Carlisle Anti-Poll Tax Union, once famously chasing Tory MP (and future leader) Michael Howard down the street.

Cath was a campaigner for the Hillsborough 97, as her father was the oldest victim, killed in April 1989 at the FA cup semi-final between Liverpool and Nottingham Forest.

Cath also campaigned for more resources for women experiencing domestic violence. More recently, Cath found it hard to be an active member due to ill health, but she supported our campaigns, especially on the NHS.

Her family placed a copy of The Socialist newspaper in her coffin "so she would have something to read".

Obituary: Andi Soshal - missed by Northampton Socialist Party

KATIE SIMPSON
NORTHAMPTON SOCIALIST PARTY



Andi Soshal sadly passed away in his sleep on the 3 March. Andi first attended Northampton Socialist Party meetings in 2018. He described himself as a big, gay, atheist goth. Having grappled with his faith and sexuality while living in Texas, he had found pride in who he was and came to Northampton searching for an organisation that supported his views.

He joined the Socialist Party immediately and was incredibly enthusiastic about Marxism, keen to learn as much as possible as quickly as possible. He threw himself into political activity, attending a local protest within his first month of joining (pictured). Unfortunately, Andi suffered serious health issues shortly thereafter.

Visiting him in the hospital, as we walked into his bay he was having a heated debate with another patient. He apologised (a common trait of Andi's) and told us of his health struggles and how brilliant the staff were.

Andi would often have a whole room belly laughing at his quips. He was infectious positive and kind with endless praise for those he looked up to politically. He made it abundantly clear that he was proud to be a member of the Socialist Party. We will miss him terribly but remember him as the struggle continues.

AREA	£ RECEIVED	£ TARGET	Q1: MARCH 2023	DEADLINE: 31 MARCH 2023
South West	3,155	1,800		175%
Northern	1,281	750		171%
Wales	2,872	2,300		125%
West Midlands	3,009	2,600		116%
London	5,060	4,600		110%
Southern & SE	2,479	2,350		105%
North West	1,080	1,150		94%
Yorkshire	2,387	2,550		94%
Eastern	930	1,200		77%
East Midlands	1,386	1,850		75%
Other	2,004	3,850		52%
TOTAL	25,641	25,000		103%

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Defend Brian Debus and Hackney trade unionists



Brian Debus (left) speaking at a Hackney Unison libraries picket line. PHOTO: HACKNEY SP

On 15 March, Hackney council workers protested both in solidarity with the masses of public sector workers on strike, and also, importantly, against redundancies in the council. Unison members registered their disgust that six library workers, including Hackney Unison branch chair Brian Debus, are due to be made compulsory redundant. This despite the fact that there are more than enough posts available in the restructured library service.

Brian, a Socialist Party member, has been leading the campaign of

the library workforce against devastating cuts to jobs and the service. He has been a thorn in the side of the cutting Labour council for decades as a Unison activist, campaigning in defence not just of libraries, where he has worked for years, but alongside street cleansing, refuse, parks, Housing With Care, and many other groups of staff. This is clearly a case of victimisation, intended to weaken the fightback tradition of Hackney Unison, with Brian playing a key role in its leadership for over 20 years.

Interview with arrested Sussex bin picket: 'We must continue to stand fast'



Gary Palmer being arrested on the picket line. PHOTO: GMB SOUTHERN

In early 2022 there was a wave of bin worker disputes as the cost-of-living crisis developed. On 27 May that year, Gary Palmer, a full-time official of the GMB union was arrested in Hailsham, Sussex. The Socialist talked to Gary.

WHAT WAS THE BACKGROUND TO THE DISPUTE?

A pay dispute with Biffa. Our members are low-paid and wanted recognition for what they do. Workers are now valuing themselves more, so the GMB happily supported them. We got to the point they wouldn't negotiate or make an offer so we took strike action.

If the vehicles didn't leave the depot they couldn't deliver the service. Talks didn't materialise, or if they did, the offers were absolutely shocking. Members rejected them immediately. The company tried to harass members by writing to them week after week with the same offer to come back to work. Biffa was making a huge amount of profit on this contract.

Suddenly, after five weeks, it became apparent that something had changed. There hadn't been vehicles in the depot, but then it was absolutely full of vehicles, and every member of staff who was working was told to report.

We were spoken to by the police. Within a few moments the inspector stood back and two lines of police suddenly appeared at the entrance. They arrested three of us. We were charged with obstruction of the highway.

I think the police, the council and Biffa worked together. Everybody, every man and his dog was there on that Friday morning just to make the arrest. It was contrived. That's not a good use of policing.

WHAT TACTICS WERE YOU USING IN THE DISPUTE?

We had to affect the service if possible, so residents complain and get the council involved. It is about bringing the company's name into disrepute and affecting their profits.

WERE THE POLICE COLLUDING WITH BIFFA AND THE COUNCIL?

At the start they appeared to maintain a neutral position. At any demonstration or picket line we always try to speak to the police to tell them what's happening. This time you could see there was a change. Each day we were seeing more and more senior officers. The day after we were arrested I was given an exclusion order. Everything was built into this one event.

YOU WERE ARRESTED AGAIN LATER IN THE YEAR.

I've been arrested a few times since then on picket lines. I was arrested twice in two days. Their tactic was to arrest me, put me in a car and then de-arrest me. They said it saved paperwork.

We can only expect stronger and stronger responses from the police on behalf of the government and private employers. Recently we were at the Fawley oil workers' dispute. 40

to 50 police turned up. They demonstrated very clearly they were going to help get the tankers out. That's about money for private companies. We must continue to stand fast. We are not going to change our approach.

WHY HAS IT TAKEN SO LONG TO COME TO COURT?

At the first court appearance they expected we would plead guilty. We won't ever do that. We're not guilty of anything apart from standing for our members. After the arrests they actually started to negotiate on a deal which our members were very happy with.

Arresting us was a huge mistake. I fail to see that there is enough evidence to convict us in any way, shape or form.

THERE IS A LOBBY OF THE COURT ON 24 MARCH. WHAT ELSE CAN TRADE UNIONISTS DO TO SUPPORT YOU?

Take the fight to their own employers. Each employer has to be pushed as far as possible to win for workers.

DO YOU THINK LABOUR WILL REPEAL ALL THE ANTI-TRADE UNION LAWS?

I would hope so but I am yet to be convinced. I don't want to say never because you hope. I am a trade unionist first. I want Labour to work with me and do something for my members. The employers have absolutely no respect for us.

• Join the protest in support of Gary and the other defendants 9.15am at Brighton Magistrates Court, Edward Street, Brighton Friday 24 March

New government domestic violence law not fully funded and not enough

HANNAH POWER
CAMDEN AND HARINGEY SOCIALIST PARTY

The Tories are introducing a law which will allow violent domestic abusers to be added to the Sex Offenders Register (SOR). It is being seen as one of the first steps to show that the police consider violence against women "a national threat". With this new law change, domestic abusers convicted on a sentence of over a year will be added to the SOR, which will allow the police, prison and probation services to jointly manage the rehabilitation of abusers and, it is hoped, protect domestic violence victims from further repeated abuse.

However, there are serious doubts about the government's willingness to properly finance this law change. Nicole Jacobs, the domestic abuse commissioner for England and Wales, said monitoring convicted domestic abuse perpetrators would require large-scale investment, adding: "We need to make sure that this is properly resourced and that is not in this announcement today".

Previous anti-abuse policies in recent years have not been given sufficient backing, and Jacobs warns of the risk that after the announcement "the attention and ongoing commitment is dropped". Ms Jacobs also highlights a major flaw in the new scheme, that "the vast majority of all perpetrators are not known to the police and may not have a conviction", meaning they would not be subject to the new requirements.

This announcement also follows in the wake of several high-profile cases of violence against women, of which many involve police officers themselves. In the Metropolitan Police alone, the force is investigating

1,000 sexual and domestic abuse claims involving about 800 of its officers.

In recent months, the two high-profile convictions of police officers David Carrick and Wayne Couzens show the public that there is a serious lack of accountability within police forces around violence against women. But this new policy expects victims to trust the police to protect them from domestic abusers! Even public figures like singer Mel B have said that they didn't believe the police would have taken her report on her domestic abuse 'seriously', and that she would only report it if "the whole entire system" of justice was reformed by the government.

That is why the Socialist Party not only calls for fully funded services and support for all women affected by domestic violence and other associated crimes, but says that these services must be specialised, publicly funded and democratically controlled by service workers and users, and open to all women.

Trust and faith in police institutions is shrinking, and it is becoming apparent to many that police priorities mainly serve capitalist interests. Which is why we call for the police, alongside the legal system, to be democratically controlled by the working class.

This would mean giving real control, including over firing and hiring, and policing priorities, to democratically elected representatives of the trade unions and local communities, so that the police would be accountable to the areas and the people they should be protecting. This would be the only way to begin to tackle the institutionalised racism, sexism, and the class interests that the police ultimately represent.



PHOTO: SOCIALIST PARTY

Croydon council pushes through 15% tax hike and cuts



Croydon Council PHOTO: OSDEBINFO/CC

BERKAY KARTAV
SOUTH LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY ORGANISER

Despite opposition from local people, Croydon council, led by the newly elected Tory mayor, passed a budget that would increase council tax by 15% and make a further £27 million of cuts. Shamefully, all Labour councillors abstained, effectively enabling the budget to pass.

Normally councils are required to hold a referendum if they want to increase council tax by more than 5%, but in this case they were given permission from the Tory government to do so.

These attacks come after a decade of cuts to the funding of jobs and services in Croydon, where both the Tories and Labour have implemented a programme of austerity.

Rather than fighting for the resources we need and setting a no-cuts needs budget, previous Labour administrations obediently passed on Tory cuts and got involved in private housing projects to make up for lack of funding, projects which subsequently lost millions of pounds. With a £36 million shortfall between income and expenditure, the council received a section 114 notice over two years ago, providing only statutory services since.

Over the last decade, hundreds of council workers have lost their jobs, children's centres and libraries were shut down, and vital services were cut to the bone.

Reports indicate that Croydon has lost 50% of its funding in the last ten years or so. Both Tories and Labour

have chosen to make the working class pay through brutal cuts.

This is in stark contrast to what Militant, predecessor to the Socialist Party, did in Liverpool in the 1980s when we led a tenacious mass campaign with the trade unions against Thatcher to win the funding Liverpool needed.

Ordinary working-class people are already being forced to pay for extortionate rents and energy bills and now face a 15% council tax rise. Residents will be paying much more - on average an extra £285 annually - for much less. Undoubtedly, many working-class people in Croydon will struggle to pay their council tax and fall into arrears. The council and debt agencies will penalise those who can't afford to pay the bills.

A mass campaign needs to be built by trade unions and the local community to defend non-payers against persecution, and to fight against the 15% council tax hike and for the resources that Croydon needs.

It is crystal clear that neither Labour nor another pro-austerity party will fight council cuts. Ordinary working-class people need our own political party, armed with a fighting socialist programme, who will stand up for us. The Socialist Party has stood in previous council elections in Croydon and elsewhere as part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC). We fight for needs budgets which refuse to implement Tory cuts and fight for campaigns based on the trade unions and local communities to win back the funding we need.

Crumbling NHS buildings are not safe

GARETH BROMHALL
AMBULANCE SERVICE WORKER IN WALES

Our NHS is crumbling. Figuratively, yes, but also literally!

Only 62% of buildings owned and operated by Betsi Cadwaladr - the body that runs north Wales NHS - are considered operationally safe. It's estimated that £350 million is needed to bring these buildings up to code. And this is just for one health board in one nation. It is a striking example of the effect of NHS cuts.

In the last 12 months, there have been 450 leaks of physical sewage or sewage gas into wards and NHS buildings in England - putting patient safety and the integrity of these buildings at risk. Another glaring indictment of the ideological underfunding and undermining of the health service.

£10 billion is needed to fill the hole in the maintenance budget that currently exists, let alone improve, expand and modernise these sites to ensure our NHS is fit for the 21st century.

Boris Johnson promised 40 new hospitals, and the £350 million a week for the NHS promised during the Brexit referendum never materialised. It's clear that the Tories won't ever do what's needed to maintain and improve the NHS. And Keir Starmer and Wes Streeting have said that Labour will extend the tentacles of the private sector into our health system.

In order to defend, maintain and expand our NHS, we need a fully funded, and fully publicly owned and controlled health service, under democratic workers' control, and planned to meet the needs of our class.

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Threat of strike brings new pay offer from National Express West Midlands

As we go to press, Unite the Union has announced that the all-out continuous strike at National Express West Midlands, originally scheduled to begin on 16 March, has been postponed following an improved offer being made by the company. The offer will now be voted on by 3,200 drivers and 200 engineers.

After resorting to desperate

tactics of threatening garage closures and bringing workers in for 'one-to-ones', management have been forced to give ground, thanks to the workforce's determination to win a living pay increase following years of wage erosion. If Unite members choose to reject the offer in the ballot, the union remains ready to bring them out from 20 March onwards.

Back the paper that backs the workers
May Day Greetings in the Socialist



Take out a May Day Greetings ad - email scottjones@socialistparty.org.uk or visit socialistparty.org.uk/mayday for campaigning resources



Nigeria presidential election

Tinubu elected president amid mass disenchantment

PELUOLA ADEWALE

DSM ORGANISING SECRETARY (CWI NIGERIA)

It is no news that the former governor of Lagos State, Bola Ahmed Tinubu of the All Progressives Congress (APC), has been declared the winner of the presidential election held on 25 February. He received only 8.8 million votes - just 37% of the total votes cast. It is also significant that only 27% of registered voters turned out to vote in the election, a decline from the 2019 figure of 35%, and the lowest in Nigerian history. This means that Tinubu was elected by less than 10% of those who have permanent voter's cards. Essentially, he will rule with an abject minority government which will, sooner or later, be faced with crises and mass opposition.

The low turnout largely shows mass disenchantment with the electoral process following the failure of the previous APC Buhari government and its predecessors to provide basic necessities, plus a lack of belief among the vast majority of the electorate in the leading capitalist candidates to do any better. Even in Anambra, the home state of Peter Obi - who was presented as the best capitalist candidate in local and international media, and truly enjoyed support based mostly on illusions from sections of urban youth and middle-class people - the turnout was 24%, less than the national average.

Obi's promise to improve the economy resonated with layers of the masses while his seemingly austere lifestyle in comparison with others was also a factor. But his commitment to the pursuit of capitalist programmes which would ultimately translate into attacks on the working class and the poor, cannot be overlooked.

Despite winning the presidential election, Tinubu lost in Lagos, the state where he holds a fierce political grip and is considered the 'lord of the manor'. While Obi, who won the state, has a mass base among Igbo people, significantly his campaign appealed to all the ethnic groups in Lagos.

By and large, Obi's victory in Lagos on a Labour Party (LP) platform is significant for a number of reasons. Lagos is not just the economic hub of Nigeria, it is the home of the organised working class and urban middle class. It was also the main theatre of the EndSARS youth revolt three years ago.

However, outside Lagos and a few other states like Osun and Benue where results reflected the prevailing local politics, the result of the election shows a significant ethnic and religious pattern. Different sections

of capitalist elites exploit ethnic and religious divisions, accentuated by the unresolved national question, to win support on a sectarian basis for their own self-serving interests.

Flawed election

The election was characterised by irregularities and pockets of violence including voter intimidation, vote suppression and physical assaults in many places, especially in Lagos, Rivers and Kano states. The inability of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to upload the results in real-time raises a serious question about the transparency of the process. The leading opposition candidates - Atiku Abubakar of the PDP (Peoples Democratic Party) and Obi of the LP have rejected the results, alleging rigging and manipulation by the APC and INEC.

We condemn rigging, violence and other irregularities in this election. In reality, the electoral process was rigged in favour of leading capitalist parties at the expense of radical parties which could genuinely represent the aspiration of working people and youth like Socialist Party Nigeria (SPN), which has been undemocratically deregistered.

The Democratic Socialist Movement (DSM, CWI Nigeria) stands for the rights of those disenfranchised and those whose votes were not allowed to count due to manipulations, technical problems and violence. We support any public meetings, rallies, protests and demonstrations, alongside the judicial efforts, to challenge the process and outcome of the election.

Sowore and Obi

While sympathising with those who, because of their burning desire to get rid of the rotten establishment, invested illusions in Peter Obi for the transformation of Nigeria, DSM did not call a vote for him. Given his history as a former state governor and his consistent pro-capitalist policies, Obi was not a real 'friend' of labour let alone a workers' leader. Instead, we critically supported and called for a vote for Omoyele Sowore of the African Action Congress (AAC) who put forward elements of the socialist programme needed to transform Nigeria.

Despite this however, we cannot dismiss the effect that Obi's limited critique of corruption and anti-establishment rhetoric had on the working masses and radical youth, both before and during the elections.

It shows the masses' burning desire for a transformative change after eight years of Buhari's failed regime. That a pro-capitalist Obi, and a Labour Party without real workers' membership, has managed

to become a symbol of this change-seeking mood, is another testament to the complicated, yet revolutionary, potential of the situation.

Currency crisis

However, while the presidential election is over, the cash crunch as a result of the policies of the Buhari government, which came to a head shortly before the election, is getting worse. Main streets and markets are largely deserted, not largely as a result of the post-election tension but due to lower economic activities caused by a shortage of Naira (Nigerian currency). A report in the Punch newspaper revealed that, as of the end of January, the Nigerian central bank had reduced the currency in circulation from N3.29 trillion in October 2022 to N1.38 trillion.

The acute shortage of Naira, together with the fuel scarcity which has not fully abated, has worsened the pre-existing economic hardship suffered by working people and the poor.

The leaderships of both the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) and Trade Union Congress (TUC) refused to organise action over the deep hardship or provide leadership when pockets of protest broke out across the country before the election. Now, the crisis is getting more excruciating for the working masses, while there is no end in sight.

We call on the leaderships of NLC and TUC to and organise mass action, including a 24-hour warning general strike as the first step, that could force the Buhari government to end the current shortage of Naira as well as petrol scarcity.

Resist Tinubu's anti-poor policies

NLC and TUC, working people, youth and pro-masses organisations have to be prepared to resist the anti-poor economic policies Tinubu has stated that he would implement in his election speeches and manifesto. These include increases in petrol prices under the guise of deregulation or scrapping the so-called subsidy and devaluation of Naira.

Tinubu also plans to impose high tuition fees and introduce a student loan scheme ostensibly to tackle the crisis of funding of public universities and workers' strikes. This must be resisted by students, working people and trade unions as it will deny children from a working-class and poor background access to university education or burden them with lifelong debt.

He is also an anti-labour politician, sacking militant union leader Ayodele Akele, and many workers, over their struggle for the minimum



Voting PHOTO: GPA PHOTO ARCHIVE/CC



New president Tinubu PHOTO: CHATHAM HOUSE/CC



Peter Obi (centre) PHOTO: ARVINJNR/CC

wage when he was governor of Lagos state.

Most importantly, such a struggle against Tinubu's anti-poor capitalist plan, which Atiku and Obi also fundamentally subscribe to, has to be linked with the building of a mass working people's party on a socialist programme. We call for a conference involving NLC, TUC, individual trade unions, left coalitions, left parties and socialist organisations to discuss the country's crises and what to do. In addition to preparing for the struggle to resist the current hardship and the planned attacks, to discuss the building of such a party or the possibility of rebuilding and democratising the Labour Party, with a view of transforming it into a genuine, democratically run, mass workers' party.

Labour Party

We welcome the statement of Joe Ajaero, the new NLC President, that the NLC "will be involved in politics", and note his claim that the NLC "had a political party: the Labour Party". But for this to really happen the NLC and TUC must ensure that the Labour Party has a clear pro-working class and poor programme, that it is fully democratic and stops the outrageous policy of charging fees to stand in any party election, a policy which automatically excludes working people from leading and running the party. Ajaero has also rightly said that LP National Assembly members must work to "stop any anti-labour bills".

LP representatives at all levels, federal and state, must be consistently called upon to stand with the working class during struggle and strikes, and to resist all anti-poor policies, otherwise, they will be shown to be 'labour' in name only. Putting forward such a programme shows that a genuine LP representative should fight for, and if it proves impossible to transform the LP, a campaign should start to build a genuine working people's party.

Fight for socialist change

Stormy times are ahead. All classes and ages in Nigeria are fearful of the future. The DSM is not alone in seeing the many crises afflicting Nigeria but we have confidence in the ability of Nigerians, especially the workers and youth, to struggle to both win improvements now and to support the idea of socialist change to get rid of the capitalist system that is both blocking Nigeria's development and threatening the world's future.

• See socialistworld.net for full article



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 £15 an hour minimum wage for all, 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 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

• 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.

• 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

• 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 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.

• No to imperialist wars and 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 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.

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.

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formerly **Militant**

BUILD A UNITED WORKERS' MOVEMENT AGAINST RACISM



PHOTO: MARY FINCH

LAWANYA REFUGEE RIGHTS CAMPAIGN

It is working-class and poor Black and Asian people who are the most directly affected by racism, discrimination and poverty. The struggle against racism has erupted among working-class young people around the world. The Black Lives Matter movement against racist police brutality in the United States and in Britain is an inspiring example.

But at the same time the Tories are attempting to stir racist division in communities, at a time when workers are uniting in a fightback against the cost-of-living crisis.

Tory Home secretary Suella Braverman has announced that migrants entering the UK illegally on small boats will be detained and "swiftly removed" under the new legislation - another hostile, racist immigration policy.

The Tories want to direct attention away from workers striking back to attack the rights of people arriving on small boats, risking their lives seeking safety in the UK, fleeing war and oppression.

Immigrants should not be blamed for lowering wages, attacks on the NHS and other services, and economic misery in general. Instead, capitalists, their politicians, and their policies must be blamed.

We don't fight capitalism and poverty with racism - we fight it with solidarity. The struggle of immigrant workers and refugees should be linked up with other workers fighting back.

The Socialist Party says:

- Build a united working-class struggle for jobs, homes, and services for all
- For councils to set no-cuts budgets based on what our community needs - not what the Tories want to give us
- Defend the right to asylum - with democratic community control of emergency funding and resources. No to racist immigration laws

- Support the strikes! For fully funded above-inflation pay rises for all
- Fully fund our NHS - no to cuts and privatisation
- No more austerity - reject council cuts and tax rises on workers
- Tories out! Starmer's Labour doesn't speak for us, so fight for a new working-class party
- Nationalise rail, mail, energy, utilities and the banks under democratic working-class control and management, with compensation only on the basis of proven need - nothing for the fat cats
- Take the wealth off the super-rich. For a socialist alternative to capitalism's poverty and crisis

WHAT WE STAND FOR: THE SOCIALIST PARTY'S MAIN DEMANDS >>> see column on page 15

