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# the Socialist

Issue 1224

27 April - 3 May 2023

formerly **Militant**

**Inflation still over 10%**

# FIGHT ON FOR FULLY FUNDED INFLATION-PROOF PAY RISES

## ORGANISE FURTHER MASS COORDINATED STRIKES



# TORIES OUT WE NEED A NEW WORKERS' PARTY

## Vote Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition on 4 May

**INTERNATIONAL WORKERS' DAY 2023  
MAY DAY GREETINGS 12-PAGE PULL-OUT INSIDE**



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formerly Militant

Issue 1224  
27 April - 3 May 2023

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The Socialist goes to press on a Tuesday night. We publish online on Wednesday and in print on Thursday.

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ISSN 1366-9621  
Published by Socialist Publications,  
PO Box 1398, Enfield EN1 9GT  
Registered as a newspaper at the Post Office  
Printed by trade union labour at Reach Printing Services

Militant issue 1: October 1964  
The Socialist issue 1: 7 February 1997

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

# Diane Abbott letter Oppose Starmer's witch-hunt, oppose all racism



Diane Abbot speaking at a Corbyn leadership rally August 2016 PHOTO: PAULNUK/CC

**HELEN PATTISON**  
LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY REGIONAL SECRETARY

Labour leader Sir Keir Starmer has acted "swiftly" to Diane Abbott's recent controversial letter to the Observer newspaper about racism.

But we should be clear - Starmer has swiftly taken the opportunity to deal a blow against a key Jeremy Corbyn-supporting MP. Another move in his bid to demonstrate to the capitalist class that he is prepared to jettison not just the personnel but the anti-austerity programme of his predecessor.

Starmer has not taken this step because he is serious about opposing racism, either in the Labour Party or in wider society. If he was, he would have organised mass opposition to the Tories' divisive and dangerous Illegal Migration Bill. Starmer would have also moved decisively against the serious and long-running racist and sexist abuse which Diane Abbott herself has experienced as a Labour MP. At one point it was reported that 45% of all abusive tweets aimed at female MPs were attacking Diane Abbott.

Abbott's two paragraph letter takes the wrong approach. Not least because it fails to point out people's common oppression under capitalism and to put forward a programme of workers' unity against all forms of racism and oppression. Instead, it falls into the trap of emphasising the differences between different oppressed groups.

It does not point to the route to challenge racism in society through mass action against the bosses, for legal rights and protections as well as against capitalism and for a decent living standard for all.

That said, Diane Abbott is not a racist or an antisemite. She has campaigned against racism throughout her time as an MP.

Today, despite struggles against racism succeeding in many ways pushing racist ideas back in society,

it clearly remains a huge problem. Just a few years ago Black people were still 56% more likely than the national average to have a 'persistent low income'. In the last year there was a 19% increase in racially aggravated offenses.

Racism and other reactionary ideas are used by the capitalist class to divide workers, and to help establish scapegoats for the failures of their system - crumbling public services, a lack of housing and devastating cost-of-living crisis. The struggle to stop racism needs a political programme to fight for the funding and resources working-class communities need, and a socialist alternative to capitalist exploitation.

A Starmer-led government could be in power before the end of 2024, and he has made it clear that such a government would be one of "fiscal restraint". In other words, it will be responsible for huge attacks on working-class people, acting in the interests of the capitalist class.

So what should Jeremy Corbyn, Diane Abbott, and other left MPs blocked from standing for Labour do at the next general election? Give it up as a bad job? Or be part of forming a workers' list, alongside striking trade unionists and other ousted Labour MPs?

If they launched such as list, it could get the backing of important sections of the trade union movement. Such a stand would have a galvanising impact on the millions of mainly young people who looked towards Corbyn and his programme in the 2017 and 2019 general elections.

It could form the basis of a left opposition to any future Starmerite Labour government and force him to look over his left shoulder rather than to the right. It could also be a concrete step towards the building of a new and independent working-class political voice, with a socialist programme to end inequality and oppression.

# Build a new mass workers' party Start by voting TUSC on 4 May



TUSC campaigning in Mansfield

Tories are imposing pay cuts and bringing in new anti-strike laws, and Labour shadow ministers refuse to support nurses, teachers and others on strike. But in the local elections on 4 May, strikers and other working-class people in 250 seats will have the chance to vote for candidates prepared to fight their corner. Socialist Party members are standing with others as part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC).

The working class has shown its strength throughout the tremendous strike wave. It would be strengthened further still if it had a political force fighting in its interests against the bosses, and armed with a socialist programme. The Socialist Party is determined to help develop such a mass party; this year's TUSC stand is part of that process.

**You can read more about our election campaigns on pages 6-7, 10 and 16.**

# AFTER MAY DAY MEGA-STRIKES, STEP UP ACTION FOR FULLY FUNDED, INFLATION-PROOF PAY RISES

## Socialist Party WHAT WE THINK

The strike wave goes on! The action that has developed over the last year or so is proving stubbornly resilient. The May Day weekend, including International Workers' Memorial Day on 28 April, is always an important one for the workers' movement. But it is apt that this year, over four days, over half a million workers will take strike action. This includes national action by the Royal College of Nursing (RCN), National Education Union (NEU) and civil servants' union PCS, along with a whole number of localised disputes. In Northern Ireland, teachers and civil servants strike on 26 April.

It might have seemed to some on occasion over the last couple of months that action was beginning to peter out. But time and time again, workers have won re-ballots to refresh their strike mandates and voted to reject totally inadequate pay offers. Perhaps the most incredible example of this was the reject vote by nursing members of the RCN, overturning their union leadership's recommendation to accept.

In each of the unions striking now, there needs to be a serious plan for escalating strike action to win. That must be coordinated wherever possible - nurses and junior doctors; unions in schools, and so on. Support staff in the NEU are demanding to be balloted again urgently, having only just narrowly missed the Tory turnout threshold.

There appears to be a trend of a number of union leaderships looking to resolve their disputes but on detrimental terms. Even in these disputes, members' action has forced concessions out of the employers, including Sunak's Tory government that was adamant in the autumn that it wouldn't even talk to unions about pay. It has been forced to the negotiating table by determined strikes.

But the cost-of-living squeeze is relentless, forcing workers to maintain their action. Some union leaders have settled their disputes, by recommending pay deals of 5% for this year, on the basis that 'inflation will be falling'. They will be nervously looking at the monthly inflation figures, which are refusing to substantially decrease.

Against expectations, March's figure barely budged, with the Tories' preferred lower CPI rate still in double-figures at 10.1%. The more realistic RPI rate is at 13.5%. But even this is likely to be an underestimate of the real burden of spiralling price rises facing workers and their families,



PHOTO: PAUL MATTISON

with food inflation over 19%. But workers don't need to wait for statistics, they are seeing every week how little their shopping budget buys. There is more and more of the month left at the end of the money.

Postal workers in the Communication Workers Union (CWU) will be consulted on the proposed deal negotiated by the union's leadership with Royal Mail senior management. While a year of determined action by posties has forced back Royal Mail on a number of issues, Socialist Party members will be campaigning for a reject vote. This is because it fails to answer a whole series of workers' demands, including only offering a 10% pay rise over three years while over 400 union reps and members remain sacked, suspended or disciplined (read more page 4).

Workers in local government are the next to vote on pay, with Unison, the biggest union in the sector, moving to a strike ballot. PCS, RCN and NEU are all re-balloting to maintain their ability to strike. This legal requirement, along with the undemocratic 50% voting thresholds in strike ballots, is due to the Tory Trade Union Act, a raft of anti-union laws

brought in by Cameron in 2016 on top of those of Thatcher and Major from the 1980s and 90s. Now Sunak is pushing ahead with his Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Bill, which would try to force unions to organise scabbing to undermine their own strikes! It would target whole sectors of workers, including those most prominent in the strike wave. Those under attack would include rail and bus workers, nurses and teachers, along with school support staff and firefighters.

In several strikes there is already pressure applied - in the NHS and schools particularly - to provide 'safe' staffing levels or support students. But who decides? Socialist Party members argue that those issues should be discussed and decided by the strikers in their union groups - not by the bosses or the Tories.

But this isn't an offensive by a strong and confident Tory government - it can be defeated. The RCN is opposing the legal challenge to their strike by the Tories and NHS employers. This would be one of the first examples of such defiance, albeit in the courts. Such is the pressure of members on the union's leaders, that

the RCN has moved from the union that health workers joined to avoid going on strike to one that escalates action and resists court injunctions. No wonder the strikes in health and education are so persistent when newly qualified teachers and nurses are estimated to owe £50,000 and £35,000 in student debt. Placards on the BMA junior doctors' strike rallies complain of being weighed down with such debts of £70,000.

The strike wave so far has given just a glimpse of the potential power of the workers' movement, compared to what would be on show if it was mobilised together in a fight against the cost-of-living crisis and Tory anti-union laws, which could pass onto the statute books as early as the summer.

The unions must meet urgently to prepare for mass co-ordinated action up to and including on the scale of a 24-hour general strike, on an even greater scale than that of 1 February, 15 March Budget Day, and the May Day weekend strikes. The TUC should organise a national demonstration to launch such a campaign.

The annual conference of the National Shop Stewards Network, on 24 June in London, will be a vital forum for union reps, members and activists to come together, to share their strike experiences and hammer out a fighting strategy for the union movement. The national elections currently taking place in a number of unions, such as NEU, PCS, Unison and Unite are also of huge importance in the fight to build militant leaderships in the unions.

### Tory crises

The resignation of Dominic Raab from the Cabinet is yet another in a long line of Tory crises, with Rishi Sunak himself set to be investigated for parliament's standards watchdog for alleged undeclared family business interests. Raab had to walk because it could have led to a series of resignations in the Tory party and senior civil service. But it will itself further polarise the Conservatives.

These Tory divisions are caused by the dire position facing British capitalism. It is still most likely that workers will vote for Starmer's New Labour to get the Tories out of office. But this wouldn't be with any enthusiasm for his pro-business agenda. The nurses on strike this weekend now know that their allies won't include Sir Keir or his shadow health minister Wes Streeting, who refused to give support when questioned on TV.

A Starmer government will dutifully carry out the dictates of big business, as shown by the Labour leadership's refusal to respond to Royal Mail management hinting at plunging the company into insolvency, threatening the jobs, pay and pensions of postal workers - by pledging for an incoming Labour government to immediately carry out Labour Party conference policy to renationalise Royal Mail.

The unions must draw the conclusions now from Starmer's opposition to their strikes and the attacks on Jeremy Corbyn, and now Diane Abbott. It points to the need for workers to have their own party, backed by the trade unions, fighting for their members and policies. A workers' list in the general election, preferably headed by Corbyn, would be an essential step in this direction, and a vital asset for the workers' movement now in the battle to get rid of the Tories and beyond the general election.

# CWU in Royal Mail:

## Reject!



Leyton, East London MARTIN REYNOLDS

### SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBERS IN CWU

Communication Workers Union (CWU) reps have been meeting in, without doubt, one of the most important series of meetings in our history, to discuss the negotiators' agreement with Royal Mail senior management.

The CWU leadership is recommending acceptance. But we have not concluded an agreement yet. This will only end when the members decide it's over.

In what has been the most bitter dispute we have ever seen, against the most anti-trade union management, hell-bent on smashing our union, our members have stood firm. We saw the strongest picket lines we have ever seen, but at the same time we have seen around 400 reps and members suspended and a number have been sacked.

The intention of management was clear from the outset. To break us, to clear the way for more profits to go to the major shareholders at the expense of our members.

Nine years ago, when Royal Mail was sold off, we knew this fight would come. The CWU leadership was unprepared for the type of battle this has turned into. Instead of the national strikes we have had in the past, of two or three days before coming to a national agreement, we have faced a hard battle. The union's leadership should have prepared, through discussion at all levels of the union, for escalating action, and with a serious mass appeal for a strike fund, instead of a low-key national appeal and local areas needing to establish their own ad hoc arrangements.

### Reinstate victimised reps and members

There can be no agreement without reinstatement of all suspended and sacked reps and members.

The pay offer of around 10% over three years is a major pay cut in real terms for our members. When RPI inflation has been 14%, this is an offer of effectively 3.3% a year! We require an inflation-proof pay rise.

The current proposals would decimate our national agreements, hard-won by our members over decades.

What we lose now will be hard to win back. The changes on sick pay will put members into situations where they feel forced to attend work when they are ill. Other key changes are to attendance procedures, ill-health retirement (from 34 to 16 weeks), and worse terms and conditions for new starters. This is alongside executive action taking place all over the country, where members have seen start times changing.

It's clear our determined 18 days of action have forced Royal Mail back on a number of issues. But it is not enough.

### Prepare serious campaign

It is not just about voting to reject, but preparing again for a major campaign of serious escalating strike action. That should include mass rallies in every major city, building a campaign in the trade union movement and communities to defend the service. We should call on the TUC and the whole labour movement to come to our aid.

Our national union leaders have often commented recently about the financial state of the company, but this is directly due to gross mismanagement and privatisation, carving up the organisation to leech out huge sums from the most profitable parts.

CWU's leaders should have publicly called for the renationalisation of Royal Mail, particularly when CEO Simon Thompson and co threatened administration. The CWU leadership should have demanded that Keir Starmer publicly commit to the policy passed at last autumn's Labour Party conference, of taking Royal Mail back into public ownership. That could have put real pressure on Sunak's Tory government who have backed Royal Mail bosses.

We need nationalisation, with compensation only on the basis of proven need, and with the complete removal of the board. A publicly owned postal service under democratic workers' control would enable inflation-proof pay rises, secure our terms and conditions, and allow for a shorter working week without loss of pay. It would provide the basis to build a public delivery service to evade a door that could be a huge resource for local communities.

## MAY DAY WEEKEND MEGA-STRIKE

### NEU 27 April and 2 May: For inflation-proof pay, and to defend education

STEVE SCOTT, NEU EXECUTIVE MEMBER, PERSONAL CAPACITY, AND ANNA SCOTT, STANDING FOR ELECTION TO THE NEU EXECUTIVE

National Education Union (NEU) members across the country are continuing our struggle against the government after they came to the table with a desultory offer. This was decisively rejected by members - by 98%! Tory prime minister Rishi Sunak told the media 'his door is open' to the NEU, yet his education secretary doesn't seem to have got that message. NEU members are making sure the strength of feeling of educators is in no doubt before the next round of talks!

NEU members are not just on strike for inflation-proof pay, but a fully funded education system. The battle is to save education from yet more rounds of cuts, whoever is in power.

School funding has been neglected for years, meaning schools cannot afford the resources they need to allow the pupils to learn. School budgets have been cut by 8% in real terms since 2010, with this figure rising starkly to 14% for schools in deprived areas. This disparity in education spending shows exactly what the Tories think of the importance of working-class children's education.

There is a chronic shortage of teaching assistants and support staff who provide help to our most vulnerable children, from the most disadvantaged backgrounds. We have a teacher recruitment and retention

crisis, meaning one in six students is taught maths by a non-specialist, and some primary school pupils don't have a permanent teacher for the year. This year, fewer than 20% of the required number of physics teachers entered the profession.

You do not need to study maths to 18, whatever Sunak says, to know that if more teachers leave the profession than join, you are going to run out of teachers!

This crisis is only going to worsen as conditions in schools and colleges continue to decline, and pay fails to keep up with inflation. It is well known that this teacher shortage is in no doubt before the next round of areas harder.

This is why teachers are striking, to defend education, and save our schools and colleges!

But we need to have a plan for what to do next. We need strong and decisive leadership through the period of exams, to ensure that despite the break in action - which Socialist Party members on the Executive argued against - members remain engaged.

It is going to be a huge task for local officers and reps to secure a successful ballot, required by Tory anti-union laws, to allow the dispute to continue in the next academic year if necessary. We need to fight on 2023-24 pay as well as continuing the fight for 2022-23.

Since starting the national fight-back, the union has gained over 50,000 members and hundreds of new people have come forward to be reps. This shows that the best way

to build a union is by leading from the front as well as organising from below. But it will still take detailed and hard work by reps and officers to make sure the rebalot is a success.

We also need to rebalot our support staff, who narrowly missed the Tory turnout threshold first time around, many of whom having joined the union to take action alongside teachers and play their part in saving education. Lots have already refused to cross picket lines, but delivering a successful ballot and calling all school and college staff out on strike together will send a strong message to the government! That will be even more effective if we seek maximum unity with other education unions as well.

We are serious, and we will win!

The following Socialist Party members are standing in the NEU national executive elections. Re-elect sitting NEC members: **Sheila Caffrey**, district 12 **Sean McCauley**, district 8 **Steve Scott**, district 3 Also vote for **Anna Scott**, district 3 If successful, they will join **Louise Cuffaro**, already elected unopposed, in district 16

**nationalshop stewardsnetwork** [www.shopstewards.net](http://www.shopstewards.net)

If you've been on a picket line, this is where you need to be next!

**2023 National Shop Stewards Network Conference**  
**Saturday 24 June**  
**Conway Hall,**  
**London WC1R 4RL**  
**11am-4.30pm**

**FIGHT THE TORY COST-OF-LIVING SQUEEZE AND THEIR ANTI-UNION LAWS!**

The 2023 conference of the National Shop Stewards Network is an important opportunity for strikers, reps, young people, and all those fighting the cost-of-living crisis, to discuss the way forward

MARTIN POWELL-DAVIES

### PCS 28 April: We can win - let's get serious!

CRAIG WORSWICK PCS SECRETARY GREATER MANCHESTER, PERSONAL CAPACITY

Civil servants organised in the Public and Commercial Services Union (PCS) are taking one day of national strike action on 28 April as part of our dispute over pay, pensions, job security and redundancy terms. Along with reps and activists all over the country, Socialist Party members have fought hard to make this day as successful as possible. Our members cannot go on with pay so low that many are effectively on the minimum wage.

Socialist Party members in PCS believe this is a dispute we can win. The anger of members can win major concessions from the government, but there must be a commitment from the leadership to escalating national action. We participate in the Broad Left Network (BLN), a rank-and-file socialist group in the union, which has campaigned for a serious and escalating strategy all along.

Socialist Party members in PCS have raised concerns with the strategy implemented by the 'Left Unity' grouping in the union's leadership, and it is likely that this dispute will be the single most important issue in the minds of the membership as we move into the annual elections for both the National Executive Committee (NEC) and the Group Executive Committee (GEC) in the union's two largest sections, DWP and HMRC. Socialist Party members are standing in these elections as part of the BLN list.

Since winning a strike mandate on 7 November 2022, the Left Unity strategy has been reliant on long periods of small-scale 'targeted action', involving relatively small groups of members taking paid strike action for weeks at a time, with national all-out action being called only three times, each a single day and with many weeks separating each of these days. The strategy to win the dispute has lacked clarity, momentum, and the mass mobilisation of the entire

membership behind the union's demands.

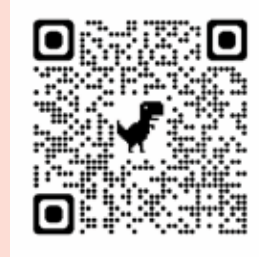
The union leadership recently suggested that the Cabinet Office had agreed to talks, when in reality this was the standard and regular meeting where the employer sets out the pay remit for the new financial year. We were offered nothing for 2022-23 and 4.5-5% for 2023-24.

More and more questions are being raised by members as to the logic and effectiveness of the current strategy. The mood amongst the members risks being affected. Reps and activists will work to make sure we win a renewed strike mandate in the current rebalot. It is essential that members vote 'yes' in the rebalot and fight for a serious campaign of escalating national strike action, with targeted action and action short of strikes to back that up.

A new factor has been added with the announcement by the senior managers' union, the FDA, that they will ballot their members for strike action for the first time in 40 years. This presents a new opportunity for the three largest civil service unions - PCS, FDA and Prospect - to co-ordinate strike action to create the maximum pressure on a weak Tory government.

Fight for the union's 2022-23 10% claim, and for an inflation-proof increase for 2023-24!

Vote **Marion Lloyd** for PCS president. The full set of NEC candidates can be seen here:



British Library HUGO PIERRE

## MAY DAY WEEKEND MEGA-STRIKE

### RCN 30 April - 2 May: We will not be bought off - we will fight to secure the future of the NHS

CHARLIE KENNEDY RCN MEMBER

As a nurse it is fantastic to see the fight for a fair and inflation-busting pay rise will continue.

The outcome of the RCN's pay offer ballot has shown that nurses will not be bought off. Despite the pressure from our union leaders to accept it, we stood by our beliefs and showed that power comes in numbers.

So strong is the mood of members to keep fighting, that the RCN leadership is standing up to the Tories and employers in court.

We are fighting for the future of the NHS. Alongside the junior doctors, we are fighting to return to the world-leading nationalised service that attracted workers and supported them in delivering a high standard of patient care.

The vote to reject the 5% pay offer and one-time payment has demonstrated that we will not stand down. Now is the time to secure the future of our NHS before we let it fall further into austerity and privatisation.

The RCN plans to run a continuous

48-hour strike that will remove all derogations (agreements to provide a certain level of cover). Intensive care units and Accident and Emergency will therefore be included.

The intention of this strike is to demonstrate how central nursing professionals are to the NHS.

We want to be respected for the hard and difficult work that we put in and the toll that this takes on us. We want our patients to have safe staffing levels all the time and a properly funded NHS.

We cannot let the NHS become further privatised and closer to the American system, where only those with money can afford safe healthcare.

Many nurses now feel striking is the only option. We must use the coming weeks to demonstrate to all workers that change is possible if we stand united. We will not stop until we are respected for our labours.

We need to create a system that works for the 99%, not the 1%. Now is the time for real socialist change, so stand alongside us in fighting for our NHS!



University College Hospital, London PAUL MATTISON

Join the fightback Visit [socialistparty.org.uk/join](http://socialistparty.org.uk/join) or call 020 8988 8777 or text your name and postcode to 07761 818 206 to find out more about joining us today!

# JOIN THE SOCIALISTS

## Reject the NHS pay offer in Wales

BETH WEBSTER RCN MEMBER IN WALES

NHS workers in Wales will begin voting on their latest pay offer this week. The Labour-led Senedd (Welsh parliament) is offering an additional 3% one-off payment worth around £1,000 for 2022-23, and a 5% consolidated rise for 2023-24. This offer is still below inflation, and therefore a real-terms pay cut. In total for 2022-23, with the last two pay offers already implemented, a top-of-Band-5 registered staff nurse will have received a 6% consolidated pay rise.

The one-off lump sums on top will not help those on Universal Credit, or help recruitment of new staff. To justify this, much is being made of the non-pay elements of the deal. These include a review of faster career progression up the pay bands, exploring the feasibility of a 36-hour week without loss of earnings, and the unsocial hours allowance being reinstated sooner after sickness absence.

They also promise to reduce use of agency staff by increasing incentives for NHS workers to do overtime. But relying on already burnt-out workers to do even more overtime to fill staffing shortages is not sustainable.

Measures such as reversing student bursary cuts, which would be a sustainable part-solution to the staffing crisis, are not mentioned. Promises to 'explore' and 'review' in the future will be cold comfort to NHS workers experiencing extreme stress, short staffing and financial hardship now.

Unison and the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy have recommended members accept the deal. RCN, GMB and Unite have not put a recommendation on the offer in Wales.

The bankruptcy of 'social partnership' is illustrated by union leaders making excuses for the Labour-led Welsh government, saying they acknowledge the pay deal is inadequate, but it's all the Senedd can afford without more funding from Westminster.

The Senedd says they have "drawn on reserves and underspends" that can't now be used for "other purposes". They would rather make cuts to other services than support workers and fight the Tories!

So far the mood among the active rank-and-file members has been to reject. NHS workers should vote to reject this pay deal and continue the fight for an above-inflation increase. We still have public support, and should coordinate our next strike action with other unions fighting for decent pay.



## Photo ID – cynical Tories block two million from voting



Bromsgrove

OSCAR PARRY  
SOUTH EAST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

The Tories continue to pursue their voter suppression tactics, requiring all voters to have photo ID at all elections in England, and everywhere for UK general elections too. Photo ID will first be required for the local elections on 4 May.

The Local Government Association fears polling station staff could be “overwhelmed”. A quarter of people still don’t know that photo ID is required to vote.

People who do not have the right photo ID can apply for a ‘voter authority certificate’. But the deadline to register has passed for the upcoming local elections.

60,000 people registered for voter ID. But two million people still don’t have an accepted form of ID.

Voter fraud is almost non-existent in the UK. In the past seven years, there have been just three convictions for voter impersonation.

Instead, there are barriers to democratic participation for

minority groups that pose much more of a problem than the small number of cases of electoral fraud. Half of black people don’t have a driving license, and only two thirds of people from a Gypsy, Roma or Irish Traveller background have a passport.

The capitalist system is increasingly incapable of providing for working-class people. With other attacks on democratic rights, including restrictions on the ability to strike and protest, capitalist politicians are trying to undermine growing opposition to their system. It won’t work.

We urgently need a new mass workers’ party that will fight for a socialist alternative that includes inflation-proof pay rises, fully funded public services, council homes, rent control and more! The Socialist Party is against the new law, and we are fielding candidates as part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) on 4 May.

● Read ‘Voter ID – latest Tory attack on democracy’ at [socialistparty.org.uk](https://socialistparty.org.uk)



Leicester

## We need council homes and socialist plan to end housing crisis

ALI COOK  
DORSET SOCIALIST PARTY

Our problems with housing are countless. One-in-six people aged 18-34, 2.6 million people, live in poor-quality accommodation, which is worsening their physical and mental health.

The average house now costs more than ten times the average salary. And the cost of renting is the highest in UK history. This is on top of the absurd cost of everything else we need.

When he was Labour leader, Jeremy Corbyn’s manifesto promised to build half a million council houses. This would have gone some way to closing the housing deficit.

Over one million households are waiting for social homes. Even this is dwarfed by the eight million people in housing need.

**Failed**  
The Tories have failed us. But can we rely on a Keir Starmer Labour government to deliver anywhere near this?

The Labour Party doesn’t even mention housing as one of its main five ‘missions for a better Britain’. Keir Starmer has ditched Jeremy Corbyn’s bold promise of 500,000 council homes.

On the local level, Labour councils and mayors up and down the country have attempted to ‘solve’ the housing crisis by handing public land over to private property developers to build tower blocks of small, expensive flats that nobody can afford. Many of these properties lay empty, used for property speculation to benefit the rich.

Right now, councils have the power to build many good-quality, environmentally friendly, and affordable council houses. Instead of going into the pockets of greedy private landlords, the rent generated could actually be put towards public services.

**Labour councils**  
Councils could also implement rent control, fund fire safety measures, and make homes energy efficient. If Labour councils used their large financial means to do all that, they could launch a mass campaign to win the money back from central government.

This is one of many reasons why the Socialist Party is standing as part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) in the local elections, and why it is important to vote TUSC on 4 May.

We urgently need housing, and we cannot rely on Sunak and Starmer to deliver this. Workers also urgently need our own mass party that will fight for the bold socialist policies – nationalising the large building companies, land, and the banks – so we can sort out the housing mess.

**SOCIALIST PARTY DEMANDS ON HOUSING:**

- A mass programme building council homes with lifetime secure tenancies. Take over empty property for council housing
- End housing privatisation
- Regeneration without loss of social housing. No more handing public land and homes over to property developers. Residents’ right to vote on all regeneration schemes
- Rent control that caps the

level of rent. Fair rent decisions should be made by elected bodies of tenants, housing workers, and representatives of trade unions

- Reverse the cuts to housing benefits – end evictions due to austerity cuts
- Remove all dangerous cladding now – councils should do the job immediately and bill the government
- Decent pay, conditions, and safety for all housing and construction workers, including stopping the use of blacklisting firms
- For genuinely independent, democratic tenants and residents associations. Genuine accountability and control, including over repairs
- Sell-back option and ‘portable discounts’ for current leaseholders and shared-ownerships to escape the trap. End any future leasehold and shared-ownership – we need council housing and cheap mortgages instead!
- End the commercialisation of housing associations, and end the registration of for-profit social-housing providers – these are only in the interests of big business and hedge funds. Take the housing associations into democratic public ownership. This could include the option to return to council ownership with independent tenant democratic control, or co-ops
- Nationalise the large building companies, land, and banks to ensure enough good standard council housing and cheap mortgages
- A democratic socialist society could plan and provide decent homes, jobs and services for all

# WHY WE’RE STANDING FOR TUSC

## Brighton hustings – cuts councillors face consequences of their policies

Brighton Socialist Party member David Maples is standing for TUSC in Goldsmid ward

Many Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) candidates have been excluded from hustings – the established forces in society are desperate to suppress our message. Fortunately, some organisations genuinely want to hear from different candidates.

I had the privilege of being invited to speak in Hove at the hustings organised by Grace Eyre. This is a charity which supports people with learning disabilities and autism.

### Real world

The hustings was going so well for most of the wannabe councillors until the real world intervened. The first question was from a parent about adult social care charges.

Following the cut in the grants from central government, most local authorities now levy charges for adult social care. Some of these charges are punitive.

Haringey Labour council, which has been well and truly purged of Jeremy Corbyn supporters, leaves service users with £24.90 per week to live on, for example. Councillors aren’t prepared to put up a fight for resources, and see service users as easy pickings.

Most of the candidates did not have a clue, and made promises that would have made Pinocchio proud. Flying completely in the face of what their councillors have voted for when the council had set its budget, they claimed they did not support charges.

### No cuts

What a privilege to be able to explain TUSC’s no-cuts position.

And so the hustings continued. Five candidates in favour of “difficult decisions”, and one standing for TUSC.

I tried to take the other candidates seriously, until the Labour candidate explained how diverse their candidates are. I was conscious I was representing TUSC, and trying not to lose it. I had had enough.

I explained that the Corbyn supporters are being kicked out of Labour, and that all 54 Labour candidates in Brighton would all meekly, and in some cases enthusiastically, vote for cuts. Brighton Labour passed on Tory cuts for years when it controlled the council. That’s not my idea of diversity, and most of the audience were in agreement.

Follow, comment, like  
Instagram  
@socialistpartycwi

## Labour and Tories fear record of Liverpool’s socialist council

OISIN DUNCAN  
NORTH WEST SOCIALIST PARTY

Merseyside Socialist Party members are standing as Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) candidates in the local elections on 4 May in Liverpool, Sefton and Knowsley. We’re putting anti-austerity, socialist policies on the ballot paper.

The establishment fears a resurgence of the fighting spirit typified by Liverpool’s Labour council of the 1980s. Under the influence of the Militant, the Socialist Party’s predecessor, the council refused to implement the cuts of Margaret Thatcher’s Tory government. Instead, the council built thousands of homes, as well as leisure centres and libraries, and created thousands of jobs.

Today, Labour councils pass on Tory cuts. In fact, a Labour leaflet in

Garston even tries to use the record of Liverpool’s socialist council as a scare tactic.

This year, the anti-democratic decision has been made to elect all the councillors at once, instead of a third of the council elected at a time over a four-year cycle. This is a clear attempt to insulate the Labour council, and the commissioners sent in by the Tories, from popular opinion.

### Left behind

Our TUSC candidates are trade unionists, student activists and community campaigners, representing lots of workers and youth left behind by vicious Tory and Labour cuts.

Roger Bannister, TUSC candidate in Kirkdale East in Liverpool, said: “One in four children in Liverpool City Region live in poverty – that’s 80,000 kids! I have lived in Kirkdale for over 20



Liverpool

## Torbay – We shouldn’t live like this in 2023

Socialist Party member Michelle Goodman is standing for TUSC in the Tormohun ward in Torbay

Like many seaside towns, Torquay, where I live, has its fair share of problems for people living and working here. More and more people are losing their homes, as incomes fall and the cost of living rises at a ridiculous speed.

This means more people are turning to support from local food banks, or sitting in closed shop doorways in the town on cardboard or wet blankets, gratefully receiving any coins people give. People should not be living like this in 2023!

I’ve been in a union all of my working life, starting with the Confederation of Health Service Employees, and then Unison. And I joined the Socialist Party many years ago. I felt it important to stand, under the banner of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC), to ensure residents have the opportunity to vote for a candidate who will help them live the better lives they deserve.

### Vicious cuts

These vicious Tory cuts are hitting everyone.

Feed A Child Torbay is a charity that was founded as children of parents in work were going hungry when schools were closed, and free dinners not an option. Let’s open those kitchens.

Retired people, those unable to work, and many others, are sat at home under blankets too scared to put heating on as energy costs soar. Let’s nationalise the energy companies to reduce our bills.

People in Torbay are being told to vote Lib Dem to get the Tories out, but we deserve better. With Labour councils also passing on Tory cuts, we need a new mass party that will put forward immediate emergency measures to ensure no one is cold, hungry or homeless.

### SOCIALISM TODAY

Monthly magazine of the Socialist Party  
May issue includes...  
● Attack on Corbyn  
● France: where now?  
● What lay behind Mao’s Cultural Revolution?

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● Go to [tusc.org.uk](https://tusc.org.uk) to find a full list of candidates standing for TUSC

SEAN FIGG

COMMITTEE FOR A WORKERS' INTERNATIONAL (CWI)

A brutal power struggle is under way in Sudan. On 15 April, heavy fighting erupted between different factions of the armed forces. Civilians have abruptly found themselves in war zones, especially in the capital Khartoum. The death toll is already in the hundreds, and thousands are injured. A refugee crisis is developing as civilians rush to escape the fighting. Civil war is now a serious threat, especially given the different regional and ethnic powerbases of the different factions, posing the disintegration of Sudan, as has happened elsewhere in the region, for example in Libya and Syria.

The ruling military clique's return to settling disputes by armed conflict is the sharpest manifestation yet of reaction against the Sudanese revolution, which has ebbed and flowed since December 2018. The central demand of the revolution is to replace military dictatorship with democracy and civilian rule. Across Sudanese society there is a determination to end the brutality and arbitrariness of military rule, and bring peace and stability to daily life. For the working class and poor especially, the demand for the military to exit the government completely, and for 'democracy', is part of the struggle to forge a weapon that the majority can wield to end poverty, create jobs, raise wages, and develop services, health, and education.

The conflict signals an increased confidence to resist the demands of the revolution across the different factions of the ruling clique, even as they face the possibility of annihilation at each other's hands. This is a symptom of a revolution that reached an impasse and has been retreating. Despite the determination and heroism, especially of the youth in the neighbourhood 'Resistance Committees', the grip of the ruling class on the state, military and economy has not been smashed. Instead, it has repeatedly been given the space to regroup.

### Warlords

Orchestrating the unfolding barbarity on one side is General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, the head of the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF), and head of the governing council. On the other, General Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo (aka Hemedti, or "little Mohammed"), leader of the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), and deputy head of the government. The conflict has already taken on an existential character for these two warlords. Al-Burhan has ordered the RSF to dissolve, while Hemedti has denounced al-Burhan as a criminal who must be brought to justice or "die like a dog." They are compelled to fight to the end now that battle has begun. One must deliver a blow severe enough to eliminate the other as a rival, or face elimination himself.

Both al-Burhan and Hemedti are creations of the military regime in power since 1989. Their rivalry was consciously fostered in this period. The RSF was developed out of Hemedti's notorious Janjaweed militia as a counterweight to the 'official' army, the SAF, headed by al-Burhan. One could be played off against the other as the situation demanded.

In Sudan, as in many ex-colonial countries, the army, often the most cohesive social force within weak and small neocolonial ruling classes, uses force to control both the state and to

# SUDAN REVOLUTIONARY MASSES MUST END GENERALS' COUNTER-REVOLUTIONARY VIOLENCE

dominate the capitalist economy. High military rank and the ability to unleash overwhelming force against rivals are used to build and defend business empires. Vast wealth accrues to the officer caste in Sudan through the ownership of banks, import-export companies, flour mills, and transportation and fuel companies. Largesse from these enterprises in turn buys the loyalty of the soldiers under their command. Hemedti, for example, has amassed a fortune through the seizure of gold mines. Whatever their 'official' standing, army and police units, special forces, intelligence agencies and irregular militias become de facto private armies owing loyalty to specific officers. This has developed so far in Sudan that different factions even have independent, and mutually exclusive, foreign policies.

All factions had been united however by the need for the military to remain in overall political control. The revolution threatened this. Until now, it had compelled al-Burhan and Hemedti to limit their rivalry and march broadly in-step with each other, manoeuvring against the revolution, at different stages, through different combinations of concessions, co-options and repression.

Under the pressure of the mass movement the two generals played key roles in April 2019 in carrying through the palace coup that removed President Omar al-Bashir, the military ruler since 1989. Their hopes that this would appease the mass movement and demobilise it did not materialise. After brutal repression also failed, the regime realised that, for the time being at least, it was impossible to rule in the old way. A 'power-sharing' government was formed in August 2019 between the military and sections of the revolutionary movement, though not without questioning from its more radical wing. Al-Burhan and Hemedti sat as chair and vice-chair of a new governing council, alongside a civilian prime minister, Abdullah Hamdok. In October 2021 al-Burhan and Hemedti cooperated in a coup that removed Hamdok. However, despite widespread dissatisfaction with the prime minister, mass protests forced the generals to retreat again, at least partially. Hamdok was reinstated, albeit with severely curtailed powers. The continuation of protests then forced Hamdok to resign in January 2022, leaving al-Burhan and Hemedti at the head of a de facto military junta.

Throughout these years of revolution and counter-revolution, the desperate manoeuvring of al-Burhan, Hemedti and the regime has taken place under the pressure of wave after wave of heroic and determined mass struggle. The generals have proved utterly incapable of fooling the masses who stand firm against military



Sudanese soldiers and demonstrators face off during the 2019 coup outside army headquarters in the Sudanese capital Khartoum  
PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

dictatorship and the different fig-leaves used to disguise it. The CWI has analysed each phase of the revolution as it has unfolded through 2018-21.

### Evolution of the movement

In the earliest phase of the revolution the figure of al-Bashir stood as a lightning rod for the different grievances of every section of society. An extremely broad multi-class opposition coalition, the Forces for Freedom and Change (FFC), developed around the call for his removal. However, once this was achieved disagreements inevitably appeared over the way forward. These deepened massively after the 2021 coup, and the movement split, broadly, into 'pro-coup' and 'anti-coup' wings, i.e. those willing to cooperate with the military and those not.

After accepting the invitation to return as a stooge prime minister, Hamdok positioned himself decisively as a 'pro-coup' figure. That he was forced to resign just months later under the pressure of mass protests, showed that the 'anti-coup' wing was ascendant, and decisively so. The military's anti-democratic manoeuvres could still be blocked despite the ranks of defectors and collaborators growing.

Denied their fig leaf, the regime ratcheted-up repression against the revolution. Simultaneously, the imperialist powers, especially the US, but also the UK and EU, alongside regional powers (and dictatorships) such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, increased their diplomatic interventions. Pressure was applied on both the regime and sections of the 'anti-coup' movement to work together. That it was necessary for these powers to condemn the coup - at least publicly - and posture in favour of civilian rule was another nod to the power of the revolution. However, the starting point for their interventions is a fundamentally anti-democratic one - the revolution must negotiate with the military regime and a place for it, and its leaders, whose hands are dripping with blood, must be found in a future 'democratic' Sudan.

Simultaneously with these 'official' interventions, a complex web of more opaque networks further complicates the situation. For example, Russia's Wagner Group is active in Sudan, collaborating with Hemedti in particular to secure an independent source of gold for the Putin regime and its war in Ukraine in the face of Western sanctions. The Observer newspaper has

revealed the role of Libyan warlord Khalifa Haftar in supporting the RSF, detachments of which have fought in the Yemeni civil war.

Unfortunately, these interventions and influences, combined with the lack of a clear way forward from the 'anti-coup' forces, including from its more consciously anti-military and radical organisations, have had an effect in deepening divisions in the movement. In July 2022 al-Burhan felt confident enough to announce plans to open military-led negotiations on a new 'national accord' to plan a return to civilian rule. A few weeks later, Hemedti announced his support for the process. This consolidated a split in the FFC, which has divided, again broadly, into 'anti-accord' and 'pro-accord' wings. The latter signed a 'framework agreement' with the military in December. It appears as though the 'pro-accord' FFC forces are dominated by elements whose support for the revolution was always opportunistic - for example different armed rebel groups and decades-old political parties so ineffectual they had largely been accommodated by the military dictatorship.

A split of this character is not a setback. It should be seized on to clarify

and consolidate the genuine anti-military and pro-democracy forces as a more conscious revolutionary wing around a programme that can unite all those exploited by the military regime. But this will not be the end of the road that needs to be travelled to build a force capable of overthrowing the military and transforming Sudan. At a certain stage, a class differentiation is posed within the revolutionary wing. Even after the departure of the 'pro-accord' forces, it is still, fundamentally, a multi-class movement. United action against military rule is possible but conflicts will develop, especially over the future political and economic order of a post-revolutionary Sudan. This will pose further splits with pro-capitalist forces that are inevitable and necessary. Socialists, genuine Marxists, worker activists and revolutionary youth must prepare for this by developing a programme that welds the democratic demands of the movement together with a programme to realise the aspirations of the working-class and poor masses for a fundamental transformation of their living standards. For

the youth especially, from whatever class background, a conscious choice must be made now to stand on the side of the working-class and poor masses and for the socialist transformation of Sudan.

### Power plays

The outbreak of fighting between the forces of al-Burhan and Hemedti coincided with the deadline for the finalisation of the 'national accord'. The 'framework agreement' had proposed the absorption of the RSF into the SAF within two years. Hemedti agreed to this in principle but proposed eleven years. The disagreement over the timetable arises from the two generals' calculations on the manoeuvres each must make to emerge at the head of the future combined force - and be the real power behind any future nominally 'civilian' government. Al-Burhan is leaning on the 'pro-accord' organisations, and those imperialist and regional powers sponsoring the process, to corner Hemedti. If the absorption happens quickly while he is secure at the head of the SAF, Hemedti's powerbase can be weakened, forcing him into a permanently subordinate role.

Unfortunately for al-Burhan, and tragically for the people of Sudan, Hemedti is too sly to fall into the trap. With the stalling of the revolution he felt sufficiently free to move against al-Burhan and settle their power struggle by force. However, a revolution in an impasse, even a revolution in retreat, is not a revolution defeated. In fact, no decisive defeat has been inflicted on the masses throughout the now years-long revolutionary process. Reflecting the deep roots the revolution has sunk, even now, al-Burhan and Hemedti both feel it necessary to appeal to its democratic goals to justify their counter-revolutionary barbarism.

### Turning point

For now the generals are refusing to bow to pressure from imperialist and regional powers for a ceasefire. Most pro-democracy organisations, across the political spectrum, have also called for an immediate ceasefire. The revolution must find a way to intervene in the situation and impose the democratic wish of the people for peace.

The eruption of open warfare is of course extremely unfavourable terrain for the continuation of revolutionary work. Activists will be risking their lives to undertake it. The Economist has quoted Ahmed Ismat, a spokesperson for Resistance Committees in south Khartoum, as saying: "We don't back either side... Any war means the end of the revolution." It is correct not to take the side of either general and it is understandable that the initial response of activists and revolutionaries can be shock and even despair. But Ismat is not correct

about the relationship between war and revolution.

The outbreak of armed conflict now is not something that stands separately to the revolutionary process under way in Sudan since 2018. The revolution upturned Sudanese society. The overthrow of al-Bashir created a power vacuum both within society and within the ruling class. An inchoate dual power in the form of the revolutionary movement has checked the ability of the ruling class to restore political and social equilibrium on their own terms. It likewise forced the generals to postpone the question of who would succeed al-Bashir as strongman, not least because the survival of the regime itself was in doubt. But it has survived. The revolution failed to decisively place itself in the power vacuum. Revolutionaries do not have the luxury of closing their eyes to the fact that this conflict is ultimately the product of an incomplete revolution.

Matters are now being settled by the gun. The cover of the conflict will be used by the ruling class to settle scores with the revolution. The eventual victor will likely move to snuff it out once and for all. A generation of revolutionaries is in danger of being drowned in blood. This is what is posed if the revolutionary masses do not assert themselves as a decisive factor in bringing an end to the conflict. It is true that war can cut across and derail revolutions. But war can also act as a midwife to revolution. This is the perspective that the revolutionary masses must base themselves upon.

A road must be opened to the rank and file of the military on both sides. There must be an appeal not to be used as the pawns of the counter-revolutionary generals against the people of Sudan. Instead, the rank-and-file should follow the example of the Resistance Committees and form their own rank-and-file organisations around a programme to defend the revolution by arresting the senior officers, locking down the military bases and caching all weapons. The power over the question of war and peace can be placed under the democratic control of the revolutionary people.

Such a campaign must unfold simultaneously with the creation by the Resistance Committees of neighbourhood defence organisations to protect working-class and poor neighbourhoods, both from being turned into battlefields, and from military incursions that use the cover of the conflict to settle scores with activists. The question of which forms of mass action - strikes, marches and so on - could be effective in imposing a ceasefire must be discussed.

The revolutionary movement must prepare itself to emerge, through the splits and ruptures that have engulfed the military regime, as the decisive power in Sudan. A revolutionary government of the workers, the poor and all those oppressed by landlordism and capitalism could then impose peace, convene a revolutionary constituent assembly, possibly in the form of a conference of Resistance Committees and other popular mass organisations, to build genuinely democratic institutions, and, through the adoption of a socialist programme for the economy, transform the living standards of the masses. Ultimately this poses the need to develop the Sudanese revolution into a consciously socialist revolution that can destroy the capitalist social relations upon which the competition of the generals ultimately rests.

# Open Letter to the Green Party: Don't stand against Jeremy Corbyn in Islington North

The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC), an electoral alliance of which the Socialist Party is a part, has written an open letter to the Green Party to call on it not to stand a candidate against Jeremy Corbyn in the Islington North parliamentary constituency at the next general election.

The Socialist Party calls on Jeremy Corbyn to stand, following his exclusion as a Labour candidate, as part of a trade union-backed workers' list of candidates in the next election.

To: Carla Denyer and Adrian Ramsay, co-leaders of the Green Party

We are writing to urge the Green Party to declare, at the earliest possible moment in accord with its democratic procedures, that it will not stand a candidate against Jeremy Corbyn if he decides to contest the Islington North seat independently of the Labour Party at the next general election.

We believe that the decision of Labour's National Executive Committee (NEC) to debar Jeremy from standing again as a Labour candidate is not just about renouncing him as an individual but his radical policies too. Sir Keir Starmer, who instigated the NEC decision, had previously made it clear that the 2019 manifesto has been "put to one side. The slate is wiped clean."

This includes not only the pledges to end private sector involvement in the NHS and renationalise Royal Mail, the water companies and public transport, or the promise to abolish university tuition fees. It also includes the significant commitments made to a 'Green Industrial Revolution', which were rated by Friends of the Earth as being the most impactful policies on the climate and ecological crisis of all the parties contesting the 2019 general election.

In this situation, where Starmer's Labour is increasingly seen not as an alternative to the Tories but as an alternative Tory party serving the interests of the capitalist establishment, how other parties respond to a

prospective independent candidacy by Jeremy Corbyn will be an important measure of where they too stand politically. Put simply, which side are you on?

We are aware that the Green Party has consistently stood a candidate in Islington North, not in 1983 when Jeremy Corbyn was first elected but in every contest since, including 2017 and 2019. But to stand against Jeremy again in the next election, rather than support him if he fights the seat against an imposed 'Labour' candidate, would be an unambiguous political choice in favour of the establishment and their parties.

Signed:

- Dave Nellist, TUSC national chairperson, former Labour MP 1983-1992
- Clive Heemskerck, TUSC national election agent
- Nicky Downes, NEU national executive committee (personal capacity)
- Hugo Pierre, Unison national executive council Black members rep (personal capacity)
- Adam Harmsworth, Napo national executive committee (personal capacity)
- Chris Baugh, PCS assistant general secretary 2004-2019
- Amy Murphy, Usdaw president 2018-2021
- Hannah Sell, Socialist Party general secretary
- Pete McLaren, TUSC individual members steering committee representative
- John Maher, System Change (formerly Resist)



Corbyn's 2019 manifesto was rated as the most impactful of all parties contesting the General Election  
PHOTO: GLOBAL JUSTICE NOW/ACC

## Councils must take real action to address the climate emergency

### Vote TUSC on 4 May

DUNCAN MOORE  
PLYMOUTH SOCIALIST PARTY

Whatever local authority area you live in, it is overwhelmingly likely that it will have declared a "climate emergency". The vast majority of the UK's local authorities and all the devolved administrations have made this formal acknowledgment that climate change threatens suffering and death for millions this century, and have pledged to mitigate it by reducing carbon emissions.

My own council in Plymouth, for instance, has pledged to make the city carbon neutral by 2030. But achieving this will require measures which none of the main parties contesting the 4 May local elections are willing to take. This year, just 725 homes in Plymouth (a city of 250,000 people) will get energy-saving improvements from large housing associations that have received government grants to pay for installing insulation and double glazing in the homes they provide.

Councils have financial reserves and the ability to borrow money to pay for insulating homes and installing heat pumps. They could help reduce the impact of soaring bills from profiteering energy companies on residents' finances and help to reduce carbon emissions.

By taking measures such as these, councils would win massive popular support. By helping to mobilise local trade unions and working-class communities, councils would be in a strong position to demand the restoration of local authority grants cut by the Tories.

In 1984, 49 Labour councillors in Liverpool, led by Militant (the Socialist Party's predecessor), refused to transfer the burden of Margaret Thatcher's Tory government cuts onto the backs of the Liverpool working-class. Their willingness to mobilise the city to fight back against the Tories meant it was the only council to succeed in extracting extra funding from the government.

On 4 May, Socialist Party members are standing as part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC), ready to do battle with the Tories just as the Liverpool councillors did.

Much like the Militant-led Liverpool council won popular support to build thousands of good-quality council homes, a council prepared to defy Tory austerity could implement the building of energy-efficient council housing, and install wind turbines and solar panels, as democratically agreed by the community. In coastal cities such as Plymouth, investment in tidal power too.

In recent years, Sheffield and

Plymouth councils have cut down trees in their city centres, spoiling the urban environment we live in and destroying a natural method of removing carbon dioxide from the air. Socialist Party members oppose the undemocratic means by which councils, acting hand-in-glove with big development companies, have vandalised our public spaces in this way against the wishes of residents.

Instead of imposing congestion charges and taxes on polluting vehicles, which can unfairly affect working-class people less likely to be able to afford compliant vehicles, councils could invest in green public transport to give residents a free and environmentally friendly way of getting about.

By taking bus companies back into council ownership, services could be planned and run to meet need rather than to make profits for companies running expensive, infrequent and unreliable services. Services could be made freely available for all.

None of these changes will be won without a struggle. But if we fight we can win these demands, to improve living standards for working-class people rather than making endless cut backs. Rather than empty rhetoric about the 'climate emergency' from Labour, Tories, Lib Dems and Greens, we need real action!

# UCU embarks on first-ever national marking and assessment boycott

LLUIS BERTOLIN  
BIRMINGHAM UCU MEMBER

On 20 April, the University and College Union (UCU) kicked off its first-ever national marking and assessment boycott (MAB), as part of its action short of strike action. Thousands of university workers across the country are now asked to cease grading and providing feedback for 'summative assessments', that is, assessments that contribute to a student's grade.

MABs can be powerful disruptive tactics that employers fear, and can be an effective addition to strike action. If strike action is an open battlefield, a MAB can be a bit like guerrilla warfare. In the management view, universities are businesses providing certifications and titles, and this conception disregards the quality of education provided. MABs set procedural obstacles without reducing the quality of the education. The 'bottom line' of the university is disrupted. Effectively, the 'assembly line' keeps moving, but nothing comes out of it.

MABs have been tried before quite successfully at a local level, putting immense pressure on senior management. But this is the first time this tactic has been tried at the national level. This will be a test of the resilience and determination of the union and the quality of its leadership.

MABs are notorious for the many threats and tactics that managements use to try to break the action. For example, at Queen Mary University (QMU) they hired a consultancy firm to mark essays, and were lambasted in the national press over the dreadful feedback the external contractors provided. In QMU, management also



**If management tries punitive pay deductions (such as deducting 50-100% of pay when all the rest of the work is being done), that must be met with immediate strike action**

moved to dock 100% of wages, which was resisted by the UCU branch.

Managements are sure to try everything to break the MAB, so determination and a means to fight effectively is key. It is essential that the union makes it clear it will back up members against any attacks by university bosses. For example, if management tries punitive pay deductions (such as deducting 50-100% of pay when all the rest of the work is being done), that must be met with immediate strike action.

A MAB was originally planned to take place in the autumn term. This time it was planned on the conditions of the renewal of the ballot mandate and rejection on the part of the members of the so-called 'offer' on pay and conditions. The ballot

was overwhelmingly renewed, and the dreadful offer from employers was turned down by 56%. The UCU special Higher Education conference passed motions recommending going ahead with the MAB.

The rejection of the offer and the endorsement of the MAB shows that most members are willing to fight, with an understanding among some that the leadership needs to be pushed.

Many members see this as a 'fight-or-die' dispute for our sector and are willing to push for a proper inflation-proof offer through thick and thin. As not all members are involved in a MAB - and some, such as those on a casual contract, lose more pay than others - it is important to sustain the action with plans that bring

all workers together, for example in rallies and protests, and to prepare to escalate national strike action in the autumn.

Management always tries to drive a wedge between university staff and students. MABs can delay graduation and introduce practical problems for students. However, union members need to discuss with and involve students to encourage the annoyance that students can feel to be directed towards the real cause: senior management and the Tory government. Communication with students, and encouraging them to demonstrate their support, for example with protest actions, will increase the pressure on senior management and help the MAB win.



UCU strikers at Aston University PHOTO: BRUM SP

## Students disrupted by university bosses and the Tories not staff

ADAM POWELL-DAVIES  
SOCIALIST STUDENTS NATIONAL ORGANISER

With the UCU announcing its ongoing marking and assessment boycott at 145 UK universities starting 20 April, many students will be looking on anxiously at how this action affects us. Members of Socialist Students offer support to UCU taking action in their dispute to defend pay, conditions and pensions.

Like the national strike action that has already hit universities this year, the current boycott will cause disruption to students. Work, including exams, will go unassessed for as long as the dispute between UCU and university bosses over staff pay and conditions continues - and UCU has already won an overwhelming mandate to continue action into the autumn if needed. This means that the final-year students may be delayed from graduating for months to come.

It is therefore understandable for students to feel that, not for the first time, they aren't getting the university experience they signed up for.

However, it would be a mistake for students to direct our frustration at underpaid and overworked university staff in UCU who, like millions

of other striking workers, are simply fighting to stay afloat amid the cost-of-living crisis.



**Would the settling of the current UCU dispute mean an end to the disruption students face? Of course not!**

If university staff collectively were given a decent pay rise in line with inflation, with secure contracts and pensions protected, then they wouldn't be taking this industrial action. Any disruption caused by the current marking and assessment boycott therefore falls squarely at the feet of university bosses and the Tories, who have presided over the deterioration of university workers' living standards - and higher education generally - over many years.

Some vice-chancellors have said that universities can't afford to meet UCU's pay demands. Those

universities should have their finances opened to democratic inspection by the campus trade unions, along with democratically elected committees of students. If a university genuinely can't afford to give its staff at least what the UCU demands, then the government should step in to make up the difference, with money given to universities under trade union oversight.

While still hugely inadequate, the fact that the Tories offer a central fund worth £276 million for universities to draw on to provide student hardship grants shows the potential for a similar fund to be developed for universities to settle the UCU strikes.

But would the settling of the current UCU dispute mean an end to the disruption students face? Of course not! We'll still have to skip lectures to work part-time jobs, or forgo buying the books we need for our courses, or choose not to travel to campus some days, all because our maintenance loans don't go far enough. And we'll still face the prospect of future university strikes for as long as managements try to compensate for chronic underfunding by slashing staff pay and conditions. As the University of York vice-chancellor wrote in the

Financial Times: "The current disputes will not end until undergraduate funding is fixed".

The root cause of all the disruption students face in our day-to-day lives is the lack of resources for higher education - whether that's the wages staff need to live and work comfortably, the maintenance support students need to focus on getting a university education, or any other university service facing cuts. The ending of these strikes won't mean our university experience is all fine again. Students are facing a major cost-of-living crisis of our own as inflation far outstrips our maintenance loans, with a record number of dropouts so far this year. And we leave university burdened with debt the majority of us will never pay off.

### Fight for free education

If UCU is defeated in the current dispute, the vice-chancellors and the Tories will only feel more emboldened to continue their attacks on students, staff and higher education.

That's why students must do all we can to support the marking and assessment boycott. The best way to end this disruption is to support a speedy UCU victory on pay and conditions.

Crucially, a UCU victory would force money from the vice-chancellors and the Tories, showing that more could be won in future through a mass campaign to fully publicly fund our universities and end marketisation - for free education.

But as long as university funding is decided by capitalist governments looking for spending to cut and avenues of profit to open up, our universities will always be at risk of attack. That's why Socialist Students fights for a socialist society where we, the working-class majority, democratically plan where resources should go in order to meet people's needs - including the need for a high-quality, fulfilling and free lifelong education.

Join the student fightback: join...

socialist students

● Visit [socialiststudents.org.uk/join](http://socialiststudents.org.uk/join)  
● or text your name and school, college or uni to 07749 379 010



Plymouth TUSC taking part in an environment protest



# 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 cutting jobs or claiming they can't afford to pay a real living wage. State subsidies, where genuinely needed, for socially-useful small businesses.
- For trade unions independent of the capitalist state, with members having democratic control over their own policies, constitutions and democratic procedures. For all trade union officials to be regularly elected, subject to recall by their members and paid a worker's wage.
- Reduce the state retirement and pension age to 55. For decent living pensions.
- Replace universal credit and the punitive benefit system with living benefits for all who need them.

### PUBLIC SERVICES

- A massive expansion of public services including the NHS and council services. Reverse all the cuts, kick out the privateers. Bring private social care and childcare facilities into public

ownership under democratic control, in order to provide free, high-quality services for all who need them. Expand services for all women suffering violence.

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

### ENVIRONMENT

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

Do you agree? Join the fightback!

## JOIN THE SOCIALISTS

- Visit [socialistparty.org.uk/join](http://socialistparty.org.uk/join)
- or call 020 8988 8777
- or text your name and postcode to 07761 818 206 to find out more today!

Help fund the fightback!

## DONATE TODAY

[socialistparty.org.uk/donate](http://socialistparty.org.uk/donate)

all workers involved in the production, processing, distribution and retail of food.

### DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS

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

### SOCIALISM AND INTERNATIONALISM

- No to imperialist wars 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.

# Extinction Rebellion protests against climate change



XR 'big one' PHOTO: MAYA KAUFMAN-IRISH

MARK BEST WEST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

Thousands of people angry at the destruction of the environment gathered over four days in London to take part in 'The Big One' series of protests and events organised by Extinction Rebellion (XR).

This protest was called as part of a shift in XR's tactics away from 'disruptive' actions trying to get their members arrested towards more inclusive protests (See Socialism Today Issue 265 'Global Warning: XR debates tactics for climate struggle'). This included appealing, in a limited way, to trade unions to back their action, which the civil servants' union PCS did.

The questions for many after attending these protests will be: how do we effectively fight to prevent climate catastrophe? What demands can effectively rally people to our cause? And, which force in society is

capable of undertaking the change we need?

Socialist Party members on the protest put forward that, as the root of environmental destruction is the profit-driven capitalist system, we need to fight for socialist change to prevent climate change. The strike wave has shown that working-class people have the power to act collectively, to win real change and to democratically run society for the good of us all, including protecting the environment.

We fight for nationalising the banks and big business including the polluting fossil fuel companies, with no compensation paid to the fat cats. The working class could then democratically plan to produce what we want and need in a way that won't damage the environment, and could put the required resources into infrastructure and research to shift away from the current polluting modes of production.

# Wales conference leaves members enthused and galvanised

JOE FATHALLAH CARDIFF WEST SOCIALIST PARTY

On Sunday 23 April, around 40 members of Socialist Party Wales gathered in Cardiff for our annual conference. This came against the backdrop of the ongoing strike movement.

Hannah Sell, General Secretary of Socialist Party England and Wales, introduced the discussion on perspectives for Britain and Wales in the coming period. With the Tories discredited and the likely coming to power of a Starmer-led government in the near future, members discussed the prospects for building a new party to represent the interests of the working class. The question of perspectives for the strike wave also came up. In Wales, we have a so-called 'Labour' government, and this has provided justification for the leadership of the Wales TUC to push a policy of 'social partnership', letting Welsh Labour in power off the hook

for cuts or attacks they try to implement! As a result, some disputes, such as the NHS nurses, have been settled in Wales with below-inflation increases. Nevertheless, the anger of these workers will inevitably return to the surface, and a new round of struggles is on the horizon.

Alec Thraves, from Swansea Socialist Party and the National Committee introduced the session on party organisation. His message: 'We've got to be ready to rise to the challenges that this period is going to bring!' That includes having the necessary financial resources, and the fighting fund collection raised over £1,300. A new Wales Committee was elected by the conference for the coming year, including young and newer members who are playing important roles in their party branches and trade unions.

We went away afterwards enthused and galvanised for the coming challenges.



Wales conference 2023

**LEEDS TUC MAY DAY MARCH AND RALLY**

# MAY DAY

## LEEDS DEMANDS BETTER

SATURDAY 29<sup>TH</sup> APRIL. ASSEMBLE 11.30 AM. MARCH 12 NOON  
OUTSIDE THE ART GALLERY  
VICTORIA GARDENS, THE HEADROW, LEEDS, LS1 3AA WITH RICHARD BURGON MP, JANE AITCHISON LEEDS TUC PRESIDENT.

### TOGETHER WE CAN WIN!

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# London Socialist Party meets to plan work in the capital



London Socialist Party conference PHOTO: BERKAY

JAY WITSEY SOUTH EAST LONDON BRANCH

Sunday 16 April saw London Socialist Party meet for our conference. Every night on the news we hear of new cost-of-living attacks and the working class striking back. We could not have convened at a more crucial time.

The conference began with London regional secretary Helen Patison giving a summary of socialist perspectives on the state of things in London and Britain as a whole. This was followed by a compelling discussion with a range of contributions. Many people spoke about the housing crisis which is particularly acute in our capital city.

We discussed the need for a socialist programme to tackle the housing crisis, with demands such as the immediate introduction of secure tenancies, rent controls, and an end to no-fault evictions. But this also needs to be linked to the campaign to elect

fighting representatives on councils who will advocate for the mass building of council houses that is needed.

The discussion also emphasised the importance of the strike wave. We had just heard that RCN members had voted to reject the offer from the government, an offer their leadership had called for members to accept. We discussed how this was all part of the new layers of workers moving into the trade unions. Hundreds of people have become reps in many different unions, forced to organise against their failing living conditions with a renewed militancy and a willingness to struggle.

The conference agreed a document of perspectives and analysis for London, and elected a new regional committee.

In the afternoon there were discussions on: the fight for working-class political representation, the role of Marxists in the trade unions, building the Socialist Party among young

people and students, and the importance of our Socialist newspaper. All were lively discussions.

I pointed out in the discussion on political representation how 'Enough is Enough' had managed to gain momentum quickly and tap in to the appetite for change that exists in our society, in part through a successful social media campaign. But it doesn't offer a political solution to these issues and therefore the campaign has not developed.

The fight for the workers' movement to have its own political voice dominated the discussion. The Starmer-led Labour Party could form the next government. But it will come into conflict with workers as people are forced to fight in defence of local services and the NHS, and for decent pay.

The day ended with a financial appeal to help put the Socialist Party's fighting programme into action and to help fund our work.

# SOCIALISM 2023

Tickets at 2022 prices until the end of August!

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Socialism 2023 is the place where hundreds of workers, socialists, trade unionists and young people discuss how we can fight back, win and change the world!

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- Is another financial crisis beginning?
- 100 years since Trotsky's Left Opposition formed
- Can we change the world? Tasks for revolution today
- What is Marxism?
- Met scandal - Racism and the police

**Socialist Party**  
Hosted by the Socialist Party

# Fight dire water crises with renationalisation



FAISAL ANJAM/CC

CLARE DOYLE  
HACKNEY AND ISLINGTON SOCIALIST PARTY

A mass trespass of the Kinder Reservoir in the Peak District on 23 April by 'wild' swimmers. But swimming in Britain's lakes and rivers is threatened by more than the feudal rights of the super-rich. It is beset by the appalling criminal negligence of private water companies and the total inefficiency of government bodies like Defra and the Environment Agency that are meant to control them.

The crisis of polluted, lifeless rivers and lakes in Britain (and elsewhere) is now constantly in the news. On 12 April, the Guardian carried the headline: "Boss of most polluting water firm retired after selling shares for £1.4 million." It reported water bosses paying themselves no less than £24.8 million in 2021-22 and a boss of Thames Water receiving £2.8 million even after being sacked!

The slow suffocation of Lake Windermere under a carpet of algae bloom appears irreversible. Popular bathing spots in rivers as well as lakes have been ruled out of bounds (including in the constituency of the environment minister, Thérèse Coffey). A new study has shown toxic foam floating on the surface of at least an eighth of Britain's waterways - a direct result of wastewater and rainwater travelling along the same pipes.

Newspapers compete for the most sensational news and are running their own campaigns. The 'i'

newspaper has its 'Save Britain's Rivers' campaign, complete with a 'Planet Patrol' app. It aims to expose the 'terrible effects' of pollution, 'raise awareness' and draw up a 'cross-party plan'. But not a word about taking management of water supply and waste disposal systems back out of the hands of the vast, profit-making companies.

The Times has joined the bandwagon with its 'Clean it Up' campaign. On 27 March it seemed to be claiming credit for the fact that the amount of time untreated sewage is being released into our waterways has fallen by 34%, but it reports the staggering figure that it "still amounted to 1.7 million hours!"

## Crises sell papers

This life and death issue sells papers to a concerned public and newspaper owners (like water company bosses) are, of course, in business to make money. Organisations like 'Surfers against Sewage' and 'Windrush Against Sewage Pollution' have long been condemning the desecration of our rivers, but profit is still king.

In March, Perenco, the company operating one of the largest onshore oil fields in Europe, was responsible for a deadly oil slick that spread across the second-largest natural harbour in the world - Poole, in Dorset. It's reported the problem is now 'contained'. Oil (and profits) can flow again... but how many fish, sea plants and other living things have been killed, and how long before sailors and swimmers can feel confident about going back into the water?

For genuine health and safety reasons, waters in and around the British Isles - from the Yorkshire Dales to the Channel coast - are now out of bounds. Dying rivers and lakes are not just a cause of grief to anglers and swimmers, but actually to everyone. The availability of fresh water is vital to all life, but, in our class-ridden society, a plentiful supply is by no means guaranteed even in this 'advanced' capitalist country.

Yet every household in Britain is being asked to pay increasing amounts in water rates to these profit-hungry companies. Nearly 5 million households may not be able to pay their water bills this year. In the context of the already crippling rise in the cost of living, this is a further turn of the inflationary screw bearing down on working-class households.

## Powerful indictment

In March this year, a two-part TV documentary called 'Our Troubled Rivers' was shown by the BBC. It took a comic actor (and angler), Paul Whitehouse, joined by a singer - Feargal Sharkey - to put together a really hard-hitting exposé of the way in which Britain's rivers, lakes and beaches are being polluted to death.

They set out to show conclusively that the country's privatised water companies have done little or nothing to stop the continual overflow of sewers into the country's waterways. They graphically illustrated what was happening by showing samples of the effluent including not only human and animal excrement but nappies, sanitary towels and condoms.

It was a hard-hitting indictment first of Margaret Thatcher's wholesale privatisation of the country's water industry and then of the continual "corporate greed and profiteering" of the companies concerned. But socialists would add that the account books of all these companies should be open to scrutiny by trade union representatives of those who work in them.

## Make them pay!

The government-run Defra estimated it will take a £56 billion investment programme to overcome the major problems that have developed. Paul Whitehouse quite correctly pointed out that water companies had made no less than £72 billion in profit already, so why were they not forced to take the urgent action necessary?

The water industry's 'regulator' Ofwat reported last December that "poor performance has become the norm". £66 billion had been paid out in debts over 30 years of private ownership, and new debts of £54 billion taken on, but little or nothing done about sewage treatment or drought resilience.

"The companies have been levied only £142 million in fines for negligence since 2015", said Paul. "Some of the top CEOs are being paid two, three or four times that amount per year!" Fergal exclaims: "And go dumping shit on the beach!"

The workers in these companies, many no doubt low paid, should demand that the company books be opened to trade union inspection to see where the money is going. This would inevitably give rise to demands for a return to public ownership of water processing and distribution.

One of the many viewers of 'Our Troubled Rivers', commenting online straight after the first episode, wrote: "Record fines are just a fraction of the profits these companies are making - and (it's) pointless if they just keep on doing it. Stop all sewage outflows now! I pay Severn Trent to pollute the Severn! I do not want my money feathering shareholders' nests. Renationalise the water industry!"

## A real alternative

This is the obvious answer to the water crisis in Britain. As with all the other public industries and services swept up in the Tories' privatisation mania, renationalisation in itself is not sufficient. In Scotland, water is a state-owned enterprise, yet the figure for untreated sewage is rising and the highest since records began!

State ownership needs to be accompanied by a system of management and control by elected committees of workers' representatives. This would mean the services and industries being planned and run in the interests of working-class people and not a tiny minority of very rich so-called entrepreneurs.

Unfortunately, the party most likely to win the next election - Labour - advocates "mandatory monitoring and automatic fines" and "accountability for negligent water bosses"; not a word about renationalisation and democratic, state planning.

The dire crises that have developed over water in Britain and elsewhere in the world make fighting for a socialist alternative to capitalism more urgent than ever.

# Socialist councillor fights for re-election in Northern Ireland



On the campaign trail - Donal on the right PHOTO: CWI IRELAND

Cross-Community Labour Alternative councillor and CWI member **Donal O'Cofaigh** is standing for re-election on 18 May to Fermanagh and Omagh District Council in Northern Ireland. Donal was elected in 2017 and has fought for socialist policies and an independent voice for the working class, in opposition to the sectarian and capitalist parties.

Since 2017, Militant Left member Donal O'Cofaigh has used his seat on Fermanagh-Omagh Council to unapologetically push for partial but significant wins that benefit working-class people.

These include: ending the council's reliance on casual employment; freezes on charges to use council facilities; a package offering an above-inflation pay increase to council workers during the worst inflation in a generation; the defeat of plans that would have closed six play parks in Enniskillen town; some extra barriers in the local development plan to both fracking and gold mining; and, recently, a commitment to progress towards becoming an accredited 'Living Wage' employer - meaning that any business wanting to get a council contract or getting a council grant would have to pay its workers at least the Living Wage. It is a track record that few if any councillors in the establishment parties on any council in Northern Ireland could hope to match.

As a socialist, Donal has also used his position to raise support for broader trade union and social struggles. He has joined picket lines

and brought motions of support for striking NHS and housing executive workers into the council. He has raised motions challenging the police in Northern Ireland on their heavy-handed policing of 'Black Lives Matter' protests in 2020. He has exposed corporate bosses cutting corners and even inaction by the Health and Safety Executive during the Covid pandemic. He has highlighted the behaviour of greedy bosses who shut down their businesses at the start of lockdown giving workers, often but not always foreign nationals, no redundancy whatsoever.

Given that he is a councillor in Fermanagh - the place suffering the worst crisis in the NHS - he has exposed failures; railed at privatisation; and, marshalled the council's authority to challenge other public authorities. He secured council support for the demand for a public inquiry into the deaths in care homes due to Covid policies and another to investigate the disastrous Health Trust handling of the South West Acute Hospital surgical crisis.

Donal has also used the council as a platform to hammer the failure of Stormont departments on funding for schools, inadequate investment in public housing, water infrastructure, rail and the environment. He highlighted the total absence of emergency accommodation for women and children fleeing domestic abuse, and as a direct result secured a commitment from an embarrassed Stormont minister for four such units in Fermanagh.

Militant Left member Donal O'Cofaigh has shown that a socialist public representative always stands with the working class, regardless of the cost, and fights to win real results. Elect a fighter for working-class people. Elect Donal O'Cofaigh!

# Usdaw conference

## Socialist Party members take on leadership to offer the lead members are looking for



Socialist Party fringe meeting at ADM PHOTO: USDAW ACTIVIST

### SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBERS AT USDAW ADM

At the time of writing, shop workers' union Usdaw's Annual Delegate Meeting (ADM) is halfway through proceedings and already a number of propositions have been heard taking up a range of issues.

Amy Murphy, Socialist Party member and former Usdaw president, successfully moved a proposition committing the National Executive Committee (NEC) and national officers to negotiate pay uplifts taking account of the Retail Price Index (RPI) to ensure wages keep pace with inflation. Speaking to the proposition, Amy said: "We cannot rely on the companies we negotiate with to do this [uplift pay] out of the goodness of their hearts."

It is clear from the number of first-time delegates and issues raised like

scrapping no-strike clauses in workplace agreements that members are looking for a lead in the fight to win these pay rises and other demands. Yet, the union leadership invited the CEO of the British Retail Consortium, an organisation of retail bosses, as guest speaker!

Kieron Murphy moved a proposition which passed calling for the outlawing of fire and rehire which has impacted Usdaw members. Similarly, Ryan Aldred spoke on a proposition which calls on a Labour government in Westminster to urgently reform trade union rights, strengthened by an amendment by his Plymouth and District General branch demanding an incoming Labour government repeal the 2016 (anti-) Trade Union Act.

Iain Dalton, newly elected secretary of the Usdaw Broad Left, successfully

moved a proposition calling on the executive to campaign for nationalisation of water companies. Iain highlighted the 3 billion litres lost each year to leaks and prolific sewage dumping, polluting rivers and beaches while shareholders have hoovered up £2 billion in dividends a year since privatisation began.

There are still plenty of propositions and debates to be had, including one on restoring the Labour whip to Jeremy Corbyn which the executive is opposing. The Socialist Party is calling for Jeremy Corbyn to stand as part of a trade union-backed workers' list at the next general election.

There will be a full report in the next issue of the Socialist but with a number of new people signing up to the Usdaw Broad Left, it is clear that members are keen to join the many other unions striking for better pay.



The protest PHOTO: JOANNE FOWLER

# Justice for Lee Fowler

OISIN DUNCAN  
LIVERPOOL SOCIALIST PARTY

On 20 April, Socialist Party members attended a protest organised by blacklisted construction worker Lee Fowler at the site of his former employer, Cargill PLC.

Lee is a long-time trade unionist and has been campaigning against blacklisting in the construction industry for more than a decade. He

himself has been blacklisted previously. This time it is a blatant attempt to silence safety concerns raised by union reps.

A number of issues were at play: unequal pay for reps and the rest of the workforce, and accidents being treated lightly by management. But fundamentally, this is an attempt to victimise a committed union activist for the crime of standing up for safe conditions for construction workers.

The message from the protest is clear. Lee isn't backing down and he has the support of Unite, his union, and the wider labour movement. With a wide range of activists attending to give support, including Socialist Party members, we will continue to back Lee's campaign for

justice. The supporters included two who drove all the way from Scotland, along with National Shop Stewards Network national chair Rob Williams, some of the 47 socialist Liverpool City ex-councillors, and Dave Walsh from Liverpool Trades Council.

The firm was clearly rattled, as several police officers were called out and had clearly been briefed on the situation beforehand. A gate usually left open for deliveries was shut the day of the protest. Given the strong evidence Lee has on his side, the company is likely to come off second best.

The Socialist Party will keep supporting Lee and all other blacklisted workers against vicious employers, and the capitalist system which allows their exploitation.



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# the Socialist

Issue 1224

27 April - 3 May 2023

formerly **Militant**

# WE NEED A NEW PARTY

## TO FIGHT FOR FULLY FUNDED SERVICES AND A REAL PAY RISE



# VOTE TUSC ON 4 MAY



**W**e need a new party! And most people agree.

61% of people think the UK "needs a completely new type of political party to compete with the Conservatives and Labour for power", according to the Edelman trust barometer.

Tories have spent the last decade destroying our public services. Keir Starmer's Labour promises a government led by him will be one of "fiscal restraint" - code for more cuts.

The last time the Lib Dems were in power, it was to assist the Tories to begin the austerity onslaught. And the Greens have shown their true colours as part of cuts-making alliances

in the Scottish parliament, and in a number of councils.

In most of the council seats up for election on 4 May, voters will choose from a spectrum of candidates, none of who are prepared to fight the Tory government for the funding our communities need.

But in over 250 seats, including every ward in Sheffield, Coventry, Plymouth and Southampton, as well as mayoral candidates in Mansfield and Leicester, and many more places too, working-class fighters are standing as part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC).

TUSC candidates, which include many

Socialist Party members, pledge to "oppose all cuts", and "support all workers' struggles against government policies making ordinary people pay for the crisis, and for inflation-proof pay rises" (see TUSC core policy platform at [tusc.org.uk](http://tusc.org.uk)).

A vote for TUSC on 4 May will send a message that we are not prepared to take more of the same - attacks on workers, our communities and services.

We need a new type of party - a mass workers' party, armed with a socialist programme. Standing socialist, anti-cuts fighters in the local elections is a step in the process of helping to bring one into existence.

A workers' list of candidates backed by the trade unions to contest the next general election, would be an even bigger step towards creating the kind of mass party we need.

And Jeremy Corbyn - who has been barred from standing as a Labour candidate by Keir Starmer - should stand at the next election, outside of Labour, too. If Corbyn launched a new party with the unions, it could have 100,000 members in a week.

- Go to [tusc.org.uk](http://tusc.org.uk) to find a full list of candidates standing for TUSC
- Read more about TUSC's election stand, and what's happening in Labour, on pages 2, 6, 7 and 10.