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# the Socialist

Issue 1229

1-7 June 2023

formerly **Militant**

## Prices keep rising, workers keep striking

# WE ALL NEED A PAY RISE



PHOTOS: CARDIFF TRADES COUNCIL, DAVE REID, PAUL MATTSSON, FACEBOOK

## Fight for fully funded inflation-proof pay rises



NATIONAL SHOP STEWARDS NETWORK CONFERENCE >>> p2



PREPARING FOR A FUTURE STARMER GOVERNMENT UNIONS AND POLITICAL REPRESENTATION >>> p8-9



ELY - YOUTH DEATHS FUEL COMMUNITY ANGER >>> p3

the Socialist

formerly Militant

Issue 1229  
1-7 June 2023**DO YOU HAVE NEWS FOR US?**

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Send us reports of your workplace and community campaigns, short letters on working-class issues, or ideas for other articles.

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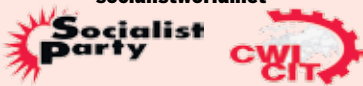
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"The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it."  
**Karl Marx**

# Why I am going to NSSN conference

## 'Support for action and debate about how we win – at the time when it counts most'



**SUZANNE MUNA**  
UNITE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBER

Organising a picket line is hard work, and you feel a lot of responsibility for the members making sacrifices to make a stand. One thing that makes it more manageable is being part of a much bigger collective of people, bigger even than your own union, who are fighting the same battles in their workplaces.

I'm likely to be out on strike again this year when pay negotiations restart at my college, and we'll be drawing again on the support of the National Shop Stewards Network (NSSN) to get the word out about when and why we're taking action. Being part of the NSSN means that at the time when it counts most, we can gather support from others in our region, we can get publicity for our action, gather messages of solidarity, and appeal for strike fund donations. This is part of the reason I'm attending the NSSN conference.

The other reason is a strategic one. Coordinating our action is essential over the coming year. Coordinating our strikes gives us the chance of making the maximum impact on the employers in return for the least sacrifice by our members. We need to unify our struggles within sectors and across sectors. The NSSN allows us to debate how to do that, to coordinate not just the days of action, but our demands too, like levels of pay increase, restoration of pensions, and safe staffing levels.

Over the last year, workers have been pushed by sky-high prices for food, gas, electricity, and travel, to get on picket lines and demand that employers start to pay enough to live on. The money is there, it's just going to the wrong people, like the shareholders of the big oil, gas, and tech companies who have enjoyed record payouts but pay minimal tax. Some of our strikes have been very successful, but for many workers, particularly in the public sector, there is a lot more to be won. The NSSN conference is one of the best places to talk about how we win it.



**nationalshopstewardsnetwork**

# NSSFN CONFERENCE 2023

Discussions to include:

## HOW WE FIGHT THE ANTI-UNION LAWS

**11am-4.30pm, Saturday 24th June**  
Conway Hall in London,  
25 Red Lion Square, WC1R 4RL  
Registration fee: £6

Logos for various unions: UCU, NUJ, napo, RMT, GMB, ECU, SWANSEA TRADES COUNCIL, EWU.

## 'It brings together some of the best fighters for our class'

**GARETH BROMHALL**  
AMBULANCE SERVICE WORKER AND SECRETARY  
SWANSEA TRADES COUNCIL

I'm attending the NSSN conference this year because as an ambulance service worker who has taken strike action in the past six months, I know the importance of coordinated action and working-class unity within our trade unions.

The tsunami of industrial action across health, transport, education, communication and the civil service shows the potential strength of our movement. An event that brings together some of the best fighters for our class is vital.

On our own picket line, and on

the many that I have visited over the past year, without exception the prevailing discussion was around the need for coordinated action, across sectors, and the need for a 24-hour general strike. The strikers have also shown, by turning out for strike rallies and pickets, and visiting pickets of other union branches, that solidarity and coordination are vital.

I believe that the discussions that will take place, and the network itself, will strengthen the fight for these aims. So I will be encouraging my fellow NHS strikers to attend. And as the secretary of a trades council long-affiliated to the NSSN, I will be encouraging our affiliates and delegates to do the same.

# Tories take first chance to limit right to protest

KATIE SIMPSON  
NORTHAMPTON SOCIALIST PARTY

New policing powers aimed at criminalising protesters were rushed in by the Tories before Charles's coronation.

In London, peaceful protesters holding signs saying 'not my king' were arrested. Some had their placards confiscated before even unloading them!

The Tories told us that peaceful protest would still be legal. And that only "disruptive" protests would be potentially unlawful.

But what is protest if not disruptive? Demonstrations against the Iraq war in 2003, tuition fees in 2010, and to save the NHS would all be considered 'noisy' and 'disruptive'.

## Deliberately vague

The Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act is deliberately vague so that the definition of what is lawful can be arbitrarily decided. Police can put conditions on any planned protest, such as a start or finish time. There's a £2,500 fine if conditions are broken.

Police have used this to keep the 'March of the Mummies' static. The Tories are terrified of growing opposition to their hated policies.

Despite originally voting against the anti-protest bill, the Labour Party has made no promise to repeal it if it comes to power.

Labour has also failed to promise to repeal all the existing anti-trade union laws, only committing to getting rid of the new Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Bill. Former Labour prime minister Tony Blair didn't repeal any Tory laws that limited the right to strike.

The unions must demand a Labour government repeals all anti-union and anti-protest laws.

# ELY - YOUTH DEATHS FUEL COMMUNITY ANGER



Above: Ely clashes with the police on 22 May PHOTO: FACEBOOK

JOE FATHALLAH  
CARDIFF WEST SOCIALIST PARTY

Two teenagers, Harvey Evans and Kyrees Sullivan, tragically died in a road accident following a chase with a vehicle belonging to South Wales Police on the Ely estate in western Cardiff on 22 May.

Alun Michael, Labour's Police and Crime Commissioner for South Wales, initially attempted to deny the involvement of a police vehicle in the incident. However, CCTV footage proved that this was a lie. Harvey and Kyrees had been pursued by police.

One local resident reported that police officers refused to tell close relatives of the boys if they were alive or dead for two hours after the incident. Police attempted to forcibly disperse the group of young people trying to see what had happened to their friends. This provoked an angry response from some in the crowd, which involved damage to property and the burning of vehicles through the night.

On the evening of 26 May, a vigil for Harvey and Kyrees was held by the community, with around 1,000 people present. There was no violence that night, and South Wales Police kept their distance.

## Cuts and austerity

Ely is a working-class community, which has suffered from a high degree of social deprivation, exacerbated by cuts to vital youth services, carried out by Labour-controlled Cardiff council over the last decade.

Dusty Forge youth centre was stripped of council funding in 2015. The facility is now closed weekends and in the evenings. North Ely youth centre is also closed on Sundays and after school hours.

Large-scale rioting previously took place in Ely back in 1991, following years of huge attacks on the livelihoods of working-class communities by Margaret Thatcher's Tory government.

Instead of meekly accepting and passing on Tory funding cuts, we need councillors who are prepared to stand up and fight for the resources we need in our communities. Cardiff Against the Cuts - launched by Cardiff Trades Union Council, and involving Socialist Party members - played an important role in the campaign against the cuts to Dusty Forge.

In 2022, Socialist Party member Ross Saunders stood as a council candidate in Ely, as part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC), on a programme of organising a mass campaign to restore lost funding for vital facilities and infrastructure.

Members of Cardiff West Socialist Party held a campaign stall on 27 May. We discussed with those living in the area about the tragic events. We put forward the need for a socialist programme to combat social deprivation and police unaccountability - the key factors in stoking the rioting.

We spoke with young people involved in the disturbance, as well as residents who had been caught up in it. We called for the immediate restoration of funding for adequate youth services in the area, and for democratically elected committees to be in charge of policing decisions.

It is clear to residents that South Wales Police are determined to reveal as little as possible about what happened. Community control over policing would ensure that all the necessary footage is made available to Harvey and Kyrees' families, to understand why their loved ones died.

Rioting is a consequence of the social alienation and hopelessness felt by young people who see no way to fight for a decent future. The capitalist system can provide huge profits for the super-rich, and yet only unemployment, low pay and squalid living conditions for working-class youth.

Anger at the inequality and oppression offered by profit-driven capitalism must be turned into action. To win decent services and a future with jobs, decent pay and housing means young people getting organised, the building of a mass workers' movement, and a new mass workers' party that fights for a socialist programme.

## The Socialist Party calls for:

- Restore all youth and community services in Ely, removed by Labour, Lib Dems and Plaid Cymru council administrations passing on cuts from Tories in Westminster and the Labour Welsh government
- The right to a decent job for all
- Raise the minimum wage to £15 an hour, rising with the cost of living
- Scrap zero-hour contracts
- Training on full pay available to all young people, with a guaranteed job at the end of it
- Democratic working-class community control of the police
- Council members who actually fight the cuts

## Join the fightback

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- to find out more today!

## Socialist Party campaign in Ely to defend services in 2022

Below: The Socialist Party standing in Ely as part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition in the 2022 council elections. We said at the time: "Posters are going up all over Ely backing TUSC candidate Ross Saunders for the 5 May election, and no wonder. Places like Ely have been stripped of services. Labour councils voted to cut back the youth service, close the play centre, starve the schools of cash, cut bus routes, and more. We need councillors who will fight for the services we need."

PHOTO: CARDIFF SOCIALIST PARTY



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# Enfield – more homeless families forced out

DANA MIROV  
ENFIELD AND LEA VALLEY SOCIALIST PARTY

30 homeless families who live in a hotel in Enfield, north London, have been moved out because of demand for rooms during a Beyoncé concert. Families with children are often housed in hotels by councils due to lack of council housing. Whole families often live in one room.

Travelodge in Enfield is used by the council to house just some of the 3,100 homeless families in the borough – one of the highest rates of homelessness in the whole country. Travelodge doesn't allow long-term bookings, so the council has to renew the bookings every month, which it failed to do.

Many will be put in other temporary accommodation outside the borough, away from their schools and communities, further disrupting their lives.

### Outrage

It is an outrage that families need to live in hotel rooms in the first place, indeed that there are homeless families at all! Many families become homeless after being evicted from private-rented accommodation.

Enfield also has one of the highest eviction rates in the country. With a desperate lack of council housing, there is no surprise at the borough's shameful level of homelessness.

The Labour council could solve the problem, if there was a will to do so. It could use the massive housing development Meridian Water, built on council-owned land and where the council is the master builder, to build council housing.

The number of properties on Meridian Water is about the same as the number of registered homeless people in the borough. If 100% of those properties were council homes the problem would be solved with one stroke.

Instead, there will be 0% council



London housing march PAUL MATTSOON

housing, and none of the properties are for social rent. Most of the properties will be sold at market value, which shows that the council has developers' interests at heart, rather than its own residents.

This doesn't stop Enfield Tories opportunistically shedding crocodile tears for homeless families, claiming that the central government has given millions to the council to solve the problem. The Labour council and local Labour MPs blame the Tory government for lack of funds. The Labour council's failure

to provide decent housing has given the local Tories the opportunity to cynically pretend they care about homelessness.

The council spends half a million pounds every month on hotel rooms and other temporary accommodation. Enfield needs socialist councillors who will build council housing and fight the Tory central government for funds.

It is clearly a matter of choice not to invest in council housing, but instead line the pockets of private businesses and landlords.



## SATs controversy Teacher: 'Most challenging exam in my 29 years'

ADAM GILLMAN  
COLLEGE STUDENT AND READING SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBER

"This was the most challenging reading test I have seen in my 29 years as a teacher". This was a quote from one primary school teacher that oversaw a controversial extremely hard SATs test for 10 and 11 year olds this year.

And even younger pupils – aged 6-7 in 'year two' – sit these types of exams. SATs are nominally meant to show pupil progress.

But, in reality, they promote unhelpful school league tables. Well-off

schools (usually private) boast about their pupils' performance, rather than anything to actually benefit the students. Schools with less resources are left behind.

SATs tests cause lots of stress and anxiety to students. And the recent tests have been harder, with GCSE-style questions which left pupils in tears, as they couldn't figure out how to answer. There is so much preparation for SATs that it adds to the massive pressure on the pupils, parents and staff.

That's why the National Education Union (NEU) and the Socialist Party think SATs should be scrapped.

# Our NHS is crumbling under Tories

Our NHS is falling to pieces. Health workers are overworked and underpaid. And the NHS waiting list is the longest it's ever been – over seven million. Below, a Tower Hamlets Socialist Party member explains what can be done about some of the problems in the NHS.

## ● '40 new hospitals' – Tories compound Boris Johnson lies

Boris Johnson promised to build 40 new hospitals in a desperate attempt to win the 2019 general election. Since, he has been

under investigation into the inaccurate claim.

We already knew that the vast majority of these weren't 'new hospitals', just renovations and additions to existing hospitals. The government has now shamefully admitted that eight of the 40 building projects won't even be completed by the 2030 deadline, and will be delayed by an extra ten years.

The Tories haven't found it hard to add other NHS projects to list. There isn't a shortage of crumbling falling down hospitals!

Tory NHS underfunding and private sector profiteering means that health workers are expected to treat patients in crumbling old hospitals with age-related problems, causing problems for staff and patients.

## ● 9am pharmacy run as bad as 8am GP phone gauntlet

Almost 90% of pharmacists are on the brink of burnout. The Royal Pharmaceutical Society says that three out of four workers have debated handing in their resignation.

Fallout from the NHS crisis puts more demands on their services. Pharmacists feel they are the 'go to' option when people can't get to their GP, or don't know where to go for care.

The patchwork of pharmacy provision, dominated by competing profiteering pharmacy chains, isn't working. These should be integrated

into a fully nationalised, democratically run NHS. That way they can pay inflation-busting pay rises to solve the staffing crisis. And the pharmaceutical giants should be nationalised too, to drive down prices.

## ● Doctor apprenticeship – Tory pipe dream

The government is considering 'doctor apprenticeships' to help with the NHS staff crisis. They could start training as early as September.

But NHS trades unions – British Medical Association (BMA) for doctors and the Royal College of Nursing

(RCN) – have criticised the plans. They worry they won't deliver the standard of training which medical students currently get at university. And the overstretched health service can't provide enough experienced doctors and nurses to deliver on-the-job training.

### THE SOCIALIST PARTY CALLS FOR:

- Solidarity and support on picket lines for striking doctors, nurses and other health staff
- Inflation-busting pay rise for our NHS workers now
- End to privatisation and private finance initiative (PFI)
- A socialist NHS and care system – democratically run by elected and accountable committees, including service workers and users

# RMT and Aslef: Rail strikes must escalate and coordinate

## Train Operating Company RMT members show determination to fight on

WEST MIDLANDS RMT MEMBER

Despite some slight modifications as a result of our strike action, the employers' proposals remain completely unacceptable.

The agenda remains to embark on a cost-cutting exercise, slashing costs through attacks on the jobs, pay and conditions of railway workers at the sharp end.

The heaviest burden will land on future railway employees, as the documents propose new starters will have worse annual leave and sick pay, among other items. Of course the mass closure of ticket offices will hit disabled and vulnerable people hardest, while decimating our members' jobs.

### Real inflation

The most recent pay offer is 5% for 2022 and an additional 4% for 2023, if the proposed cuts are accepted. However the cost-of-living crisis rumbles on. With real inflation still over 10% this offer falls way short of what is needed to preserve our spending power.

Our system of privatised railways is utterly dysfunctional, with private firms leeching billions of pounds in



RMT on strike at Birmingham New Street station BIRMINGHAM SOCIALIST PARTY

profits. First Group, one of the worst offenders, boasted to shareholders that the current franchising system poses "no revenue risk and very limited cost risk". Workers are the ones who are expected to make sacrifices! That's why we have to step up our demand for renationalisation of the railways and for political representatives who will fight for it (see back page).

The RMT rail union's recent rebalot result shows that members are up for the fight. RMT must take best advantage of this by launching a renewed campaign to rally members across the country, combined with a new programme of strike dates.

The leaderships of drivers' union Aslef and RMT need to put any past differences aside and convene a special council of the national executives at a national leadership level to discuss and coordinate our campaigns for the maximum pressure on the employers and government for a decent settlement to the dispute.

The formation of committees of local and regional reps of both unions to discuss the dispute would be a step forward to making this happen.

This battle is about the future of the railway and the quality of the jobs of those employed on it.

## Aslef members must take stock and plan how best to fight to win

WEST MIDLANDS ASLEF MEMBER

As we approach the one-year anniversary since the start of our national industrial action, we must take stock and discuss how to step up our fight.

Despite Aslef members being among the key workers who delivered vital transport throughout the pandemic, moving food, medicine and frontline workers across the country, we find ourselves on the receiving end of 'reforms' attacking our terms and conditions.

The Tory government sits behind the bosses of Train Operating Companies (TOCs) and Freight Operating Companies (FOCs), and time and again tries to poison public opinion against striking rail workers 'holding the country to ransom'.

These are not the actions of a strong government, but of one desperate to prevent deals that could open up the floodgates even further to demands for better pay and conditions from wider groups of workers. They want to break the effectiveness of a union like Aslef, which has

organised collective strength in the workplace and successful collective bargaining across an industry. The Tories have already let it slip in televised transport committee meetings it would have been cheaper to allow the individual TOCs and FOCs to settle the dispute themselves.

The initially leaked proposal from the bosses in the Rail Delivery Group of a 4% pay 'rise' over two years was a low-ball offer considering that real inflation is well over 10%. But the shopping list of strings attached, with the buzzwords 'modernisation' and 'productivity', including attacks on training structures and stepped increases in starting salaries, make this offer unacceptable.

### Coordinate

Now more than ever we must fight to keep morale high amongst our members, to keep on fighting. That means mobilising the strength of our own members, but vitally planning and coordinating with the RMT rail union, which is also fighting on the TOCs. We must also coordinate

with other unions across the labour movement to create a united front against common attacks and those leading those attacks.

We can take joy in our dispute outlasting two Tory prime ministers, but despite there being the mood among some of our members of 'just having to outlast this government', the lack of solidarity from Keir Starmer is a warning of whose side a government led by him will be on. He could add massive pressure onto the Tories and bosses now if he pledged inflation-proof pay rises and immediate renationalisation of the railways by a Labour government. That's why as well as escalating and coordinating our action to bring this dispute to an end, we need to fight for a genuine working-class political voice.

## Rail strikes

- 31 May - Aslef strike
- 1 June - Aslef overtime ban
- 2 June - RMT strike
- 3 June - Aslef strike



Posties in Upper Holloway during the national strike last year NICK ADUACHE

## CWU in Royal Mail: Relaunch a serious campaign Members' debate vital

SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBERS IN CWU

The leadership of the Communication Workers Union (CWU) has suspended the ballot of members on the negotiators' agreement with Royal Mail bosses.

The 'Business Recovery, Transformation and Growth 2023' deal has seen many members making their views clear: they were not happy with it! The Socialist Party has argued to reject (see 'CWU in Royal Mail: Reject' at socialistparty.org.uk).

There has clearly been immense pressure from angry members. And this comes with a complete mistrust of Royal Mail management at all levels.

### No change

It is clear from reps and members all across the country that there has been no change in the offices. Managements are still pushing ahead with unagreed work revisions. Mail delivery is failing all over, with no attempt to restore the Universal Service Obligation and the quality of service. Workers have had no choice but to walk out in some offices to beat back management attacks.

As things stand, despite the suspension of the ballot, no further action has been announced.

The union should demand reopening of negotiations to achieve a deal acceptable to the membership, and back this up with relaunching a serious campaign of action. Meetings should take place across all workplaces to prepare the members once again for strike action.

The CWU must demand that the

whole board be removed. We must demand renationalisation of Royal Mail under democratic workers' control to save it as a public service, which cannot be achieved while under the ownership of profit-driven greedy shareholders. We should demand Keir Starmer pledges right now that an incoming Labour government immediately enacts Labour Party policy to renationalise Royal Mail.

The CWU national executive has also once again delayed our national conference. It was originally due in spring 2023, then delayed to October, and now it won't happen until April 2024.

This is a time when debate by members is crucial! In addition to the ongoing struggle with Royal Mail, there are threats of 55,000 job losses in BT.

### Union members' rights

The membership has a right to look at the tactics and the programme that the leadership has taken during this period and to call them to account. We are still in a massive battle. Instead of hiding from criticism, this is the time to mobilise the members and debate a fighting strategy throughout the democratic structures of the union.

● Correction: In The Socialist 1227 a proofing mistake in the headline of an article calling for rejection of the Royal Mail deal meant that the headline read "respect the deal". The headline should have read: "Posties claim scalp of Royal Mail boss... now reject the deal"

# GMB conference Leadership must rise to challenges

## SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBERS IN THE GMB

Delegates meet in Brighton from 4 June for the GMB union's annual congress. Since congress last met in June 2022, we've seen a surge in class struggle in response to the sharpest attack on our living standards in 50 years. These strikes have put trade unions back on the map, giving confidence to millions and inspiring a new generation of workers.

As in other unions, GMB strike action has seen significant victories and a new wave of workers joining and stepping up as reps to organise pickets. The fight for pay and union recognition at Amazon marks a new era of militant organising in the growing gig economy.

With inflation untamed and Tory policy of hiking interest rates pushing the economy towards recession, the battles are set to continue.

A weak and divided Tory government has responded with even more

repressive anti-trade union legislation, and trying to divide the working class through racist anti-migrant policies.

Recently the 'GMB 3' faced court action over picketing in East Sussex. Now trade unions and members will face potential legal action for defying the new 'minimum service' legislation.

As workers and delegates face the challenges and ask what is needed to win, it is vital the GMB is part of a coordinated response both in fighting for inflation-proofed pay rises and in defence of any trade unionist attacked under the new legislation. That should include preparations for a 24-hour general strike should any action be taken against strikers and their trade unions.

The attacks on GMB members at Asda enforcing a new, worse contract are an indication of the challenges ahead.

A new round of national pay bargaining in local government and the ongoing crisis in the NHS show the

need for the GMB to offer a fighting lead to members who are suffering low pay, rather than advocate acceptance of inadequate deals as has happened so far. The union must also coordinate with other unions in those sectors.

### No cuts budgets

These issues also show the need to link this pay fight for political demands. Motion 151 instructs GMB to make a clear call on Labour councils to fight a new round of cuts and set needs budgets to protect jobs and services. After congress, we must make sure the Central Executive Council implements this motion, if passed.

GMB members desperately want to get the Tories out in a general election, yet there were significant abstentions in the May local elections. No wonder, given Starmer's unwillingness to back our strikes, and renege on pledges for the nationalisation of energy and other utilities.

### Political voice

It is clear that a Labour government led by Starmer has no intention of offering solutions to the poverty, inequality and public services crisis we face. Starmer's blocking of Jeremy Corbyn as a Labour candidate was disgracefully supported by GMB delegates on Labour's national executive. That is why we call for a debate in the union on how to win real political representation.

GMB and all unions must give clear backing to Corbyn should he stand in Islington North. The Socialist Party calls for the trade unions to mount a workers' list for the general election, to fight for a voice in parliament that argues for socialist policies to tackle the economic crisis Starmer is most likely to inherit, applying the pressure of the workers' movement to Starmer.

The storms of the last year will not abate. This year's GMB congress must now face those challenges head on, mobilise in coordinated strike action with other unions, and seize the opportunity to drive this hated Tory government from office. GMB has previously adopted policies on renationalisation of utilities, ending outsourcing in the public sector, and repealing Tory anti-union laws. Now let's fight for those to become reality.

# GMB Pilkington glass strike

JON DALE  
MANSFIELD SOCIALIST PARTY

Pilkington Plyglass workers went on strike for 48 hours on 24-25 May.

GMB members at Somercotes in Derbyshire voted 83% for action, after the company offered them a 5% pay rise plus a one-off £500. This works out at £750 less than other Pilkington plants.

The workers are angry and kept the picket going round the clock, turning a number of lorries back. If the company doesn't pay up, they intend to strike again. Pilkington is owned by the Japanese NSG Group – a world-wide company making \$200 million profit last year. It can easily find £14,000 to settle this dispute!

Solidarity was given to pickets from the National Shop Stewards Network, NHS Logistics Union (next door to the factory), and local Socialist Party members.



GMB organising Amazon workers COVENTRY SOCIALIST PARTY

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# PCS conference Fightback to continue in PCS union's national campaign Democratic debate essential

DAVE SEMPLE  
PCS WIGAN BRANCH SECRETARY, PERSONAL CAPACITY

Reps from the Public and Commercial Services (PCS) union, representing 180,000 civil servants for the UK and devolved governments, as well as workers on privatised contracts for central government, met for their Annual Delegate Conference (ADC) in Brighton from 23 to 25 May.

Convened amid significant strike action across the union, over pay, pensions, redundancy rights, and jobs, and less than a week after the surprise announcement that the General Secretary Mark Serwotka was to retire, ADC debated the union's national strategy, as well as key democratic issues for the union.

## What way forward for our national campaign?

Socialist Party members have mobilised for and support all our members in strike action. However, in our view, the union leadership (a coalition known as 'Democracy Alliance', in which the 'Left Unity' grouping plays a leading role) has mishandled the union's campaign since the mandate for strike action was first won on 7 November.

No national action was called until 1 February, and then only three days of national action in the first six months of the campaign. In reality, these were only called as a result of the immense pressure the union leadership was put under from members. Broad Left Network (BLN) supporters, the rank-and-file socialist group in the union in which the Socialist Party participates, fought for a serious campaign of national action at all levels of the union, including on the national executive. The leadership also did not ballot on action short of strikes.

Judging from the content of speeches at the conference, there was a broad unity in favour of escalation of the national campaign. Many delegates, even those voting for the motion proposed by the National Executive Committee (NEC), queried the lack of sustained national strike action, and the lack of any serious approach to industrial action short of strike action.

Socialist Party members and BLN supporters highlighted the role that an overtime ban or a work to rule could play, in magnifying the impact of strikes and limiting the employer's ability to mitigate the impact of strike action. This point simply was not answered in debate, in favour of calls for 'unity' around the leaders of the union.

Nothing was heard from the NEC about coordination with our sister civil service unions, Prospect and FDA, both of which have successfully



PCS strikers at Ofgem LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

balloted for strike action. Prospect has implemented an overtime ban, affecting specialist grades in the civil service.

The PCS leadership has concentrated on selective action as its central strategy, where small groups are paid by the union to take extended periods of up to a month of strike action. It is not impossible, in a pre-election year, with the government under enormous pressure, that selective strike action might wring concessions from them. But in a battle of this scale the best way to apply maximum pressure is with serious and escalating national strike action, overtime bans, and refusing to allow the moving of strike work between sites. The PCS leadership has not learned this lesson, but members will.

## Leadership wants to avoid debate and accountability

On several key votes, the leadership had their way – including on the call by the national executive to launch a consultation on moving away from annual, all-member elections in favour of longer terms of election, and breaking the union's national executive up into smaller constituencies. This was vigorously opposed by left delegates at the conference as these measures would reduce the ability of members to hold the leadership to account and campaign to replace them when necessary.

Socialist Party and BLN members supported a motion to extend

elections, so that any directly employed officer of PCS who exercises significant control over how the union operates should be elected by members. There were other motions arguing that full-time officer pay (i.e. the pay of PCS employees) should be linked to the pay of members of the union. Opposed by the leadership, these motions were lost.

A debate on LGBTQ+ rights at conference saw the leadership decisively defeated. After an unnecessary card vote called by the president,

over 70,000 votes were cast against an NEC motion that would have deprived 'PCS Proud' – set up by and for LGBTQ+ PCS members – of its semi-autonomous status and changed it to that of other equality forums within the union. In reality these organisational changes were proposed by the leadership in order to limit political opposition. Passage of PCS Proud's own motion, A293, was the third censure motion on LGBTQ+ issues this leadership has received from conference in the last six years.

Drama ensued on the final morning of ADC 2023, when WhatsApp messages from PCS national president Fran Heathcote were revealed to the conference. The president had privately urged supporters to unnecessarily prolong a particular debate, in order to delay the agenda and prevent later motions – especially Motion A50 – from being heard. Motion A50 tackled head-on the decision by the NEC to refuse to accept the nomination by PCS Proud of a delegate to the TUC LGBT+ Committee.

Despite such underhand manipulations, Motion A50 made it into the final guillotine section at conference and was passed decisively, to raucous cheers from angry delegates.

### Political strategy

Other motions were not so lucky, including all of the motions discussing the union's political strategy. They were crammed into a very small part of the agenda and thus did not get heard. Again, the union leadership was deliberately avoiding serious political debate that would challenge their positions.

The emergency motion from Wigan PCS branch which the leadership did not want debated is printed on page 9.

### Successful socialist fringe meetings

Both the Socialist Party fringe meeting on Tuesday night and the BLN fringe meeting on Wednesday had around 50 in attendance. Fraternal debates were had about how to continue rebuilding a genuine socialist left in PCS. This is a crucial step to rebuilding a fighting, democratic and socialist trade union that plays its full role in the struggle of workers against the ruling class of capitalists.

# Welsh RCN members continue the fight for the NHS in Wales

GARETH BROMHALL  
WALES AMBULANCE WORKER

On 24 May the NHS Wales Partnership Forum Trade Union Group voted to accept the two-year pay offer from the Labour-led Welsh Government.

It is an improved deal, with an extra lump sum for 2022-23 and 5% for 2023-24, but with real inflation still over 10% this is still a pay cut in real terms for NHS workers in Wales.

This followed five months of strikes and negotiations that saw nurses and ambulance service workers take action for the first time.

Unite, Unison, GMB and the Royal College of Midwives in Wales accepted the deal with a majority of the membership voting in favour. Many activists across the health unions organised to coordinate a campaign to reject.

RCN members voted to reject. The RCN in Wales has vowed to continue striking, with days called on 6 and 7 June and 12 and 13 July, to continue the pressure the Welsh government to increase pay for nurses.

'Social partnership' between union tops and the Labour-led Welsh government meant that, during the course of the dispute, some strike



RCN members striking in December in Merthyr SOCIALIST PARTY WALES

days were called off, and the leadership of unions such as Unison and GMB were keen to accept inadequate deals.

In these unions, sizeable minorities voted to reject, and we will be building support for the RCN nurses. What is clear from talking to workers across the service is that, while many have voted to end this immediate battle, the war is still raging. Those that have taken action have been steeled, and those that have not have seen what can be achieved. That bodes well for further struggles on pay, conditions and the future of the NHS in the hands of Labour in Cardiff and the Tories in Westminster.

- Gareth is going to the 2023 conference of the National Shop Stewards Network. See why on page 2
- shopstewards.net

## TUSC invitation: discuss preparations for the next general election



After the 4 May local election results showed Keir Starmer on course for number 10, the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) All-Britain Steering Committee has written to over twenty campaign groups and socialist organisations inviting them to join the discussion about the general election.

Dear comrades,

You will recall that last October the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition wrote to you, along with more than twenty other campaign groups and socialist organisations, to ask you to discuss with us your plans for the next general election (see [tinyurl.com/4na5acj7](http://tinyurl.com/4na5acj7)).

We thank all those who responded, even if it was to inform us that they had no clear plans at that point. But we make no apology for returning to this matter again. The events of the intervening months – the ongoing strikes against the cost-of-living crisis; the formal exclusion of Jeremy Corbyn as a Labour candidate followed by the suspension of Diane Abbott; and now Keir Starmer's open declaration that he will go "further and deeper than New Labour's rewriting of Clause IV" to change the character of the Labour Party after Corbyn – are justification alone.

It is true that, since we wrote, there have not been definitive moves by the left-led trade unions with Jeremy to establish a new vehicle for working-class political representation; or even to co-ordinate a list of workers' candidates to contest the general election, although steps towards this are being debated this summer at a number of union conferences. It is still our hope that something will be initiated by more authoritative forces than those currently involved in TUSC.

But the fact of TUSC organising a successful clearly identified working-class electoral challenge in the recent English local council elections – involving socialists from four different organisations and none – has renewed our belief that even in the absence of such an initiative it will still

be possible to bring together a significant force of trade unionists, socialists and working-class community and social movement candidates in a common general election campaign.

We hope you think so too; and will begin serious discussions with us about the next steps.

### The next steps for an election challenge

The TUSC All-Britain Steering Committee is planning to step up election organising on the ground, including working to establish local steering committees in local government areas or parliamentary constituencies where a general election challenge is being considered by any of our constituent organisations, as in our How TUSC Functions rules (see: [tinyurl.com/y4asa76j](http://tinyurl.com/y4asa76j)). The participation of representatives from your organisation in such committees, with the same rights as all other participating organisations, would be very welcome.

The all-Britain steering committee is not recommending early moves to select candidates – we have not, for example, produced an Application Form for Parliamentary Candidates at this stage – but instead local campaigns for a workers' candidate. This could include, we have suggested, along with public meetings, debates and so on, the organisation of local delegations of trade unionists, students, social movement campaigners etc to Labour's prospective parliamentary candidates (PPCs), to see where they stand, particularly on the policies in Labour's 2017 and 2019 manifestos under Jeremy Corbyn. Again, your organisation's participation in this type of campaign would be most welcome.

### The 'fair media coverage' issue and core policies

In our October letter we raised the issue of the threshold set by the broadcasting authorities for 'fair media coverage' in election periods – including a party election broadcast – of contesting 15% of the seats (which for a general election would be 98 for the

UK as a whole) under one of the TUSC descriptions registered with the Electoral Commission or an additional agreed joint description. We would still like to explore this further with those who were non-committal on the matter, as we believe that reaching the threshold would make for a qualitatively different campaign compared to a 'clash avoidance' arrangement not to stand candidates against each other.

One factor in the responses, understandably, was a questioning of the political basis of a joint election challenge, with arguably a greater degree of agreement required to stand under a common name. As you know TUSC is actually constituted to include candidates on its lists from a wide range of organisations provided the candidate accepts a minimum core policy platform for the relevant election (beyond that they are free to run their election campaign in whatever way they wish). But there still has to be a minimum policy platform.

After a series of discussions, including at the TUSC conference in February, the all-Britain steering committee has produced a draft core policy platform for the next general election (see: [tinyurl.com/yvmcfhnu](http://tinyurl.com/yvmcfhnu)). But again we see this as a draft minimum platform, which we would be happy to discuss with your organisation.

We ended our October letter with the observation that "none of us can be sure of the date of the next general election". But also then with the appeal that "if a new authoritative working-class party has not been formed by the time it is called, at the very least the discussions that we have now can hopefully ensure that there will be the most unified and effective alternative possible available on the ballot paper that defends the basic principles of trade unionism and socialism".

We still believe that to be so and look forward to engaging with you.

In solidarity,

**Dave Nellist**, TUSC National Chairperson, former Labour MP 1983-1992  
**Clive Heemskerck**, TUSC National Election Agent

# PREPARING FOR A FUTURE STARMER-LED GOVERNMENT

- For a union-backed workers' list of candidates
- Fight for a new mass workers' party

**L**abour lead in the polls, the Tories took a drubbing in the 4 May local elections, all arrows point to Sir Keir Starmer being the next Prime Minister. But what will a Starmer-led government look like, and how should trade unionists and socialists prepare?

Speaking recently, Starmer said his tasks to prepare for government will be like "Clause IV on steroids" – in reference to Tony Blair's 1995 rule change, abolishing Labour's historic commitment to public ownership, as part of his counter-revolution

transforming Labour from a party with the working class at its base into an out-and-out capitalist party.

But, unlike Blair's New Labour Party coming to power in 1997, the next government will inherit a stagnant economy with stubborn inflation, and with living standards taking a decline of historic proportions. Starmer has already promised "fiscal restraint".

It is clear that he has no intention of fully funding services and offering public sector workers an inflation-proof pay rise. In fact, Labour shadow health secretary Wes Streeting says he doesn't support junior doctors striking for pay rises, and in defence of their profession and our NHS.

In Wales, Royal College of Nursing members are striking on 6-7 June and 12-13 July, demanding a pay rise from the Labour-run Welsh government. The Welsh Senedd has just passed a social partnership act, supposedly committing it and employers to working together with the trade unions.

Then why not give nurses and other public service workers the pay rises they deserve? And why not join the Scottish First Minister Humza Yousaf in pledging not to issue work notices as part of Westminster's new anti-strike laws?

Welsh Labour in power and cut-making Labour councils around the country give a flavour of what a Starmer government will offer. The trade union movement needs to prepare now.

That's why Socialist Party members are pushing for debates on workers' political representation at this year's trade union conferences. How can civil servants, for example, put maximum pressure on an incoming Labour government to offer pay rises, end job cuts and halt workplace closures? (see [The motion PCS union leaders didn't want debated, below right](http://The motion PCS union leaders didn't want debated, below right))

How should Unite the Union, Labour's biggest financial backer, be using its money to campaign politically?

Socialist Party members in Unite are fighting for a rule change to allow the union's funds to be used to back candidates beyond Labour, who back the union's policies. This would free the union up to back Jeremy Corbyn's stand at a general election, for example.

Having been challenged in the general election by a trade union-backed list of workers' candidates, a Starmer-led government would govern under more working-class pressure. More still if even a handful of workers' MPs were elected.

The Socialist Party campaigns for a new mass workers' party, and puts demands on the trade unions to take steps towards its creation. The Socialist Party's participation in the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) – including standing candidates under its banner at the general election, if preparations are not made in time for a union-backed stand with more authority – is an important part of that fight.



## TUSC to stand Unison shop steward in parliamentary by-election in Scotland



Candidate Chris is the shop stewards convener for Glasgow City Unison social work department and played a leading role in the 2015 successful Homeless Caseworkers strike in Glasgow PHOTO: SOCIALIST PARTY SCOTLAND

The Scottish Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) steering committee has agreed that Chris Sermani, a leading trade unionist and a Cambuslang resident, will stand in the likely forthcoming Rutherglen and Hamilton West by-election.

Chris is the shop stewards convener for Glasgow City Unison social work department and played a leading role in the 2015 successful Homeless Caseworkers strike in Glasgow. He is a member of Socialist Party Scotland.

Chris said: "This likely by-election is taking place amidst an unbearable cost-of-living crisis for working-class people. The Tories' pro-bosses

policies have meant economic disaster, increases in poverty, inflation and devastating cuts to our NHS and council services.

"In the wake of an unprecedented strike wave by trade unionists over the past year, the need for a workers' election alternative has never been greater. That's why Scottish TUSC is standing in this election.

"With the SNP in a political crisis, rooted in their implementation of austerity and their support for anti-working class policies generally, there has never been a more important time to offer a socialist alternative.

"And nor will that come from the

neo-Blairite dominated Labour Party, both at a UK and Scottish level. All vestiges of Corbynism have been eliminated. Labour offers no alternative for the working class as they have shown by implementing cuts locally in South Lanarkshire council.

"That's why I'm prepared to stand on policies like the need for the trade unions to launch a new party for working-class people that would support no-cuts budgets, for above inflation pay and benefit rises, socialist nationalisation of energy, the banks and big industries like Royal Mail, as well as the right to a second independence referendum and an independent socialist Scotland."

## The motion PCS union leaders didn't want debated

The following emergency motion, passed without opposition at the PCS Wigan area branch of civil servants' union PCS, was not discussed at its Annual Delegate's Conference (ADC). What reason did the PCS Left Unity leadership have to avoid debate on this crucial issue? (See more on PCS conference page 6)

Conference notes the passage of A38 at ADC 2022 regarding political strategy. It agreed to "support political networks of PCS members active in political parties and campaigns to build support for our industrial demands within those organisations".

Conference further notes that PCS took a clear position to give "national union support for a Corbyn-led Labour government" in 2018 not least because the manifesto, if implemented, would have clear benefits for all PCS members and in line with our policy objectives, not least his pledge to restore national pay bargaining for civil servants.

We note with regret the decision by the Labour Party National Executive on the 28 March to ban Jeremy

Corbyn from standing for Labour at the next general election. Jeremy Corbyn's consistent support for our strike action, and our union's consistent support for his anti-austerity programme means that one of the few voices that fights for our members interests could be lost.

PCS took a clear position against the attempts within the Labour Party to sabotage Corbyn's leadership. In 2016, our general secretary correctly made clear PCS's support for Jeremy Corbyn against "a choreographed and undemocratic attempt to unseat him".

Further, we note:

- That Keir Starmer has made clear his intention to 'wipe the slate clean' of Jeremy Corbyn's 2019 anti-austerity election manifesto and that he has made no commitment on restoring national pay bargaining for civil servants.

- The 'Blairite' wing of Labour has now succeeded in their "choreographed and undemocratic attempt" to ban Corbyn and to abandon the programme he stood for.

- That two members of our parliamentary group, Jeremy Corbyn and

Diane Abbott, are now being blocked from standing as Labour MPs.

Conference believes that it is beneficial to our members to fight for voices in Parliament that support and will campaign for policies in line with the aspirations of PCS.

Conference therefore asserts:

- That it is time to enact our 2012 membership ballots 78.9% decision, to 'stand or support candidates in national elections that would help to defend members' jobs, pay, pensions and public services'. Average real pay fell by 7.75% last year, the biggest fall in over half a century. This constitutes the "exceptional circumstances" required to enact this decision.

- That we should give political and material support to Jeremy Corbyn if he stands in the general election, including should he stand as an independent candidate.

- That we should provide political and material support to other genuine pro-trade union, anti-austerity candidates in the next general election, with any elected executive committee of the union free to propose such support, and this support for candidates to be ratified by the NEC.

# GKN factory occupation leader speaks

Leader of the GKN factory occupation in Florence, Italy - Dario Salvetti - spoke at a meeting in London on 19 May. The struggle, similar to that of the Lucas Aerospace struggle in Britain the 1970s, has been going for nearly two years now. Hundreds of workers have been struggling to save their jobs. In Britain too, GKN workers have been involved in a fight to save jobs (see 'Save jobs, save livelihoods, save GKN Automotive - nationalise the plant!' at socialistparty.org.uk).

The Florence 'Collective' has drawn up plans for producing component parts for environmentally friendly forms of transport, and has won popular support.

A leaflet, written by Socialist Party member Marco Tesei, who recently visited the Florence occupation, was handed out at the meeting and can be read at tinyurl.com/2rjfs8ht

WHAT'S YOUR VIEW?

editors@socialistparty.org.uk



# Donate to help our party play its role in the fight for socialism

in helping to cohere the working class around a programme for socialism.

Today, with new forces currently joining the trade unions, our tasks include helping them to become consistent fighters to transform their unions and build a new workers' party, as well as winning them to the struggle for a new society.

Anyone who has spent time on the websites of the Socialist Party and Socialism Today, and on socialistworld.net, will know that vast archives of Marxist analysis can be found there, going back over decades and drawing on the accumulated experience of working-class struggle. It is not for nothing that the revolutionary party is called the 'memory bank' of the working class. While history never repeats itself exactly, the collective experience of the working class in struggle casts light on today's and tomorrow's challenges. To produce, publish and protect for posterity those articles requires the efficient storage and

management of data - and we strive to do this to the best of our ability within the limits of capitalism.

Keeping the wheels of our party's internal functions turning is also important. This includes backing up and supporting our members on the ground, in the unions, workplaces, campuses, colleges and communities. Our ability to produce a weekly paper, a monthly journal, up-to-date leaflets and posters, and maintain a printshop is dependent on having functioning IT systems.

What will we get for the money? The £15,000 comprises a necessary upgrade of IT hardware at the national headquarters, the design and creation of the new system, and the migration of our data from the old system to the new.

The Socialist Party is also running a campaign to raise the regular income we generate from membership subscription payments by asking every member if they can up the amount they pay. There are many reasons why this is needed: funding the running costs of the new IT system; the

need to take on new party organisers in our national centre and on a regional basis; inflation! And more. These regular payments are in many ways even more important. Get in touch if you can raise your subs - or want to join and start paying one!

Be part of history: help fund the maintenance and development of our party organisation for the struggles to transform society today and for the future.

Visit [socialistparty.org.uk/donate](http://socialistparty.org.uk/donate) or scan the QR code and put 'IT upgrade appeal' in the comment box when you make your donation



# Save Folkestone Library campaign petition to force council debate

ERIC SEGAL  
KENT SOCIALIST PARTY

'Save Folkestone Library' campaigners are on the front foot in our fight to save the library from the Kent County Council (KCC) councillors' attempts to permanently close it.

Following the successful demonstration through Folkestone called by South East Kent Trades Union Council, we decided to start a petition and set up a stall in the centre of Folkestone to collect signatures. We used a loudspeaker to let people know why we were there and that we wanted to keep the library, which is at the centre of our community, open. Once local people realised that there was a petition, queues began to develop around the stall. Over a period of a month we have collected 2,800 signatures crashing through the figure of 2,500

**2,800 signatures collected. More than the number of votes most councillors in Kent received in the last election**

signatures necessary to force KCC to review its decision.

A young worker who signed the petition on his way to work said: "I was unemployed and didn't have internet at home. I went to the library and they helped me to use the library computer to prepare my CV. I now have a good job because of the library so I support the campaign."

We agreed to keep pressure up on the councillors, so we organised a protest outside the County Hall in Maidstone to disturb their Annual General Meeting followed by their lavish lunch. Around 20 campaigners from Unite the Union, the RMT and other groups told councillors that we will not accept the forced closure of the library.

We are determined to win this battle against a council running scared after the local elections. We hope that the protest gave the councillors indigestion.



Sefton Park Stall

# A thirst for socialist ideas in Merseyside

CONOR O'NEILL  
LIVERPOOL AND DISTRICT SOCIALIST PARTY

The atmosphere was lively and discussions productive at the Socialist Party campaign stall on 25 May at the gate of Sefton Park in Liverpool. This was the first time Socialist Party members had set up shop in this area but it proved fruitful. Many young workers and students voiced their dissatisfaction with the Tories and Starmer's Labour, and supported the ongoing strike wave, as well as being open to socialist ideas.

We found an echo especially among young people, which is refreshing and encouraging. This stall was the beginning of a streak of successful paper sales across Merseyside over the following days in Bootle, Liverpool City Centre and a reprise of the Sefton Park stall. Merseyside Socialist Party comrades hope to keep this hot streak up.

Help fund the fightback **DONATE** [socialistparty.org.uk/donate](http://socialistparty.org.uk/donate)



# Making Birmingham Pride political

HARRIETT MCCORMICK  
BIRMINGHAM NORTH SOCIALIST PARTY

On Saturday 27 May Socialist Party members attended Birmingham Pride, with a campaign stall and LGBTQ+ focused leaflets. Despite being surrounded by corporate representatives and police officers, we received an overwhelmingly positive response. People recognised there needs to be a change.

'Rainbow Capitalism' has seeped into Pride events like a virus over the last couple of decades, after realising that the LGBTQ+ community was ripe for consumer exploitation. However, a good percentage of participants were receptive to our demands. From students to social workers and even members of banks' parade floats showed support for socialism. We got 60 people signing our

'Tories out' petition, many wanted more information about joining the Socialist Party. We raised fighting fund and sold a number of copies of the Socialist, it was an extremely successful intervention.

We received shouts of encouragement and people literally running towards us to sign our petitions. People told us they are tired of Tory austerity and the ever-rising cost of living. LGBTQ+ people are disproportionately affected by poverty, unstable unemployment and housing, and healthcare restrictions. These factors seem to be taking a layer of LGBTQ+ people back to the radical origins of the movement. Speaking to people, they recognise the need for strike action and solidarity between oppressed minorities and the rest of the working class, and were receptive to our calls for a mass workers' party.

# Socialist Party relaunches updated LGBTQ+ charter

## Unite and fight for the rights and resources we need

MICHAEL JOHNSON  
SOCIALIST PARTY LGBTQ+ GROUP

The next general election will be fought on a "mix of culture wars and trans debate," according to Tory deputy chairman Lee Anderson. Fighting elections on anything but their own record is becoming the main strategy for the Tories.

They will enter the next election riven with splits and infighting, and facing an economy which is in crisis and has delivered the biggest fall in living standards in over half a century. The Tory party is swinging away from the cynical attempts under David Cameron and Theresa May to be something other than the 'nasty party', returning to the LGBTQ+phobia of old.

Given their crisis-ridden state, the Tories are subject to pressures, from all directions. That's what's behind the U-turns of U-turns of U-turns on conversion therapy.

But there are threats to the gains LGBTQ+ workers and young people

have won, as indicated by the pushing of backward revisions to equality laws and guidelines for trans people, alongside an increase in general antitrans and anti-LGBTQ+ rhetoric.

Under Keir Starmer, the Labour Party has shown the same passion to challenge the Tories over these attacks on LGBTQ+ people as they have elsewhere; they've done nothing at best and echoed the rhetoric at worst.

And our issues are not restricted to the dire state of the policies for LGBTQ+ rights from the two main parties in parliament. Over the last few years we've seen rising hate crime figures, including in recent weeks attacks on people and businesses in Manchester's gay village. Drag queens performing can attract crowds of protesters. Healthcare is increasingly hard to access, with many services unable to meet demand and with years-long waiting lists. The Met Police being shown to be institutionally LGBTQ+phobic. In education, divisive ideas from the Tories and those running academies. In sport, the drive for profit cuts across genuine negotiation about how to organise in an inclusive and fair way. And the media of the billionaires is further stoking this division.

However, in the face of all these attacks, recent years have also seen the working class fight back. The strike waves have clearly shown the potential power we have when united and taking action. Striking workers have shown the government and bosses can be forced to make concessions on pay and conditions. LGBTQ+ people have a proud history of fighting for our rights. The rights we have now haven't been gifted from on high but are there because we struggled for them. And the working class organised within

trade unions could lead a fight and win rights and resources for the whole of the working class, including what LGBTQ+ people need.

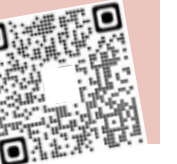
Trade unionists and socialists can also make a difference at the ballot box. At the recent local elections hundreds of Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) candidates stood on a programme that challenged the politics of austerity and division of the establishment parties.

So, it's in this context that the Socialist Party's LGBTQ+ group has revised and updated our charter for LGBTQ+ workers and young people. When we first published this charter in 2021 we said we hoped to start a discussion about the demands needed to fight for the rights of LGBTQ+ people, and what programme is needed to end LGBTQ+phobic discrimination. And discuss we certainly have - with young people and workers at Pride events and other protests up and down the country where this charter has been keenly taken up.

Help us to build a mass movement to smash LGBTQ+phobia and fight for a socialist society democratically planned and organised to meet all our needs free from exploitation, discrimination and poverty. Appeal for support for the charter in your workplaces, youth organisations and trade unions.

To purchase your copy search 'Unite and fight for LGBTQ+ rights' on [leftbooks.co.uk](http://leftbooks.co.uk)

Or scan:



Save Folkestone Library protest PHOTOS: NICK CHAFFEY

# 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 about joining us today!



# SOCIALIST PARTY FIGHTING FUND

AREA	£ RECEIVED	£ TARGET	Q2: APRIL-JUNE 2023	DEADLINE: 30 JUNE 2023
Wales	2,137	2,300		93%
Eastern	1,003	1,200		84%
South West	1,268	1,800		70%
Southern & SE	1,200	2,350		51%
Northern	353	750		47%
London	2,035	4,600		44%
Yorkshire	989	2,550		39%
East Midlands	696	1,850		38%
West Midlands	895	2,600		34%
North West	360	1,150		31%
Other	965	3,850		25%
TOTAL	11,900	25,000		48%

# Socialist Party South West conference a success

LYNN GUNNIGLE  
DEVON SOCIALIST PARTY

Socialist Party members from across the South West convened in a packed-out venue to attend the South West regional conference in Bristol on Saturday 27 May. A discussion on perspectives for class struggle was introduced by Sarah Sachs-Eldridge, Socialist Party Executive Committee. This was followed by one great contribution after another by members of the various branches across the region.

It was great to hear what other branches had been doing and we celebrated the establishment of a new branch in Swindon. Hearing the passion from younger members and the thoughts and ideas from new members was inspiring.

After lunch the focus was on building support for the Socialist Party

and our finances. With the cost of pretty much everything skyrocketing we must all explore opportunities to raise funds large or small where ever they arise. The fighting fund appeal reached more than £4,000 on the day, with commitments from comrades to continue to raise as much as possible going forward, including as part of the IT upgrade appeal. (see opposite page)

The whole conference passed far too quickly but I carried a warm and determined socialist feeling with me all the way home from sunny Bristol to sleepy South Hams. Where, even here in Conservative Dartmouth, the seeds of socialism may be fresh and few but we have strong roots growing. I look forward to watching them flourish here and across the South West.



## TV documentary review Strike: Inside the Unions

SCOTT HUNTER  
SWINDON SOCIALIST PARTY

For those who have spent the last year on picket lines, the first episode of the BBC documentary 'Strike: Inside the Unions' is a reminder of the scale of events through which we are living. Filled with footage of the last 12 months of action, seeing our struggles rendered in montage really makes it clear that we are living through history. Millions of workers will watch this programme and see themselves reflected in the strike wave; if not on the picket lines, then in the poverty faced by the strikers.

Beginning with the RMT rail strikers, Strike delivers a broadly sympathetic portrayal of the unions and strikers as it follows rail workers, nurses in

the RCN, and Abellio bus drivers organised under Unite. Mick Lynch of transport union RMT and Pat Cullen of the Royal College of Nursing (RCN) feature most prominently, with Lynch in particular putting across the RMT case with his usual charisma in front of the camera.

Strike largely allows these union leaders to speak for themselves, for better and worse. Lynch and Cullen effectively argue their respective union's causes, while the programme remains uninterested in criticising these leaderships from the left, or discussing whether their strategies of isolated days or short periods of strike action will be effective in moving the government and employers. It will be interesting to see how the second episode treats the RCN

leadership's backing of the government's pay offer contrasted with the membership's vote to reject.

Of course, for socialists a BBC programme is never going to contain the extent of analysis and discussion we are used to seeing in our own publications. Simply seeing a programme that is broadly sympathetic to the unions and strikers is a phenomenon in itself from the traditionally conservative BBC.

The programme is at its most effective when it focuses on the lay members and organisers in the unions. A simple scene in which a nurse stores hot water in a flask, to avoid boiling the kettle multiple times a day, demonstrates in sharp relief why workers everywhere cannot continue to take pay cuts.

Strike won't move hardened Tories, but the majority of the population - whether they've been out on picket lines or not - will find themselves reflected in this lookback on the last 12 months of historic workers' struggle.

● *Strike: Inside the Unions* can be viewed BBC iPlayer, episode 2 airs Thursday 1 June at 9pm



PHOTO: BBC

## Harlow council maintenance workers rally and strike

TREVOR PALMER  
STEVENAGE SOCIALIST PARTY

On 25 May, 40-50 members of Unite the Union and their supporters protested at the council offices in Harlow, Essex, before the council meeting.

300 workers are in dispute over pay, with strike days having taken place over the last four months. Strike days have included a march through the town centre in April.

Workers voted 87% for strike action.

These workers provide essential repair and maintenance works for Harlow's council housing stock, as well as cleaning and maintenance of council grounds and buildings. They mostly earn less than £12 an hour and many are using food banks.

The workers are employed by HTS, an 'arm's length' outsourced company, which is wholly owned by Harlow District Council with a board of

directors made up of councillors.

Unite general secretary Sharon Graham said at the start of the dispute: "Harlow council is fooling nobody. It is using HTS to keep these workers on inferior pay, terms and conditions. HTS is Harlow council's company and this dispute is the council's responsibility."

Unite national lead officer Onay Kasab added: "Harlow council's deliberate and needless curbing of HTS' workers' wages is the ugly face of outsourcing."

Harlow is a Tory council but the 12 Labour councillors should be demanding all such services are immediately brought back in-house and the workers paid a minimum of £15 an hour.



Harlow council workers rally outside council offices PHOTO: TREVOR PALMER

## Labour Party leadership imposes regime change in Birmingham



Birmingham Council PHOTO: ELLIOT BROWN/CC

NICK HART  
BIRMINGHAM SOCIALIST PARTY

In the latest attempts to try and consolidate its total grip on the party, Labour HQ has imposed a regime change at the top of Birmingham City Council.

The Starmerite right wing in control of the Labour Party National Executive Committee used the publication of a report, criticising the atmosphere within the Labour group on Birmingham City Council, as being "toxic" to show former council leader Ian Ward the door.

In his place, John Cotton has been installed as the head of Europe's largest local authority, on the basis of behind-closed-doors interviews with the Labour Party top brass. In a sign of Labour leader Keir Starmer and his associates' contempt for democracy, they didn't even seek to hold a vote among local councillors before telling Ward to resign and announcing Cotton as the heir apparent.

Never mind what's left of local Labour Party branches after membership purges. The million people who live in the city, now only get to vote for their local councillor every four years following changes introduced to insulate councillors from criticism.

Not that Ian Ward, or the rest of Birmingham's Labour councillors, have many enthusiastic supporters left in the city. Since Labour regained control of Birmingham in 2012 its councillors have unanimously voted for cuts to services totalling over £600 million. During this time Ward was first deputy leader of the council and then from late 2017 was overall leader.

He took charge that year following the first of two strikes by bin workers, in opposition to fire-and-rehire tactics being pioneered by the Labour council. The bin workers defeated these attempts to cut their pay and pensions, but not before the council spent £6 million hiring scabs to

break the strike and taking the union to court!

Having not learned his lesson, Ward then attempted to cut the hours and pay of low-paid homecare workers, effectively making the job unliveable. As a result of the victorious 15-month strike campaign by these mainly women workers, open warfare broke out within the Labour group on the council. Though the outcry by some councillors centred on the tactics used by Ward and senior management in attacking the homecare workers, not on principled opposition to cuts. The 23 councillors who signed an open letter of protest to a man and woman voted for cuts in the years before and after both strikes!

According to reports, the recriminations from the homecare and bin strikes were a critical factor in the row between different factions of Labour councillors in Birmingham, along with unspecified allegations of racism, misogyny and bullying.

With John Cotton having been part of the pro-cuts council cabinet for the last six years, there's unlikely to be a change of direction under his leadership. Already failings with the rollout of a new IT system are seeing council workers underpaid, with the cost of the system ballooning five times over to £100 million likely to be used as a justification for further cuts and underinvestment down the line.

Rather than a revolving door of career politicians, working-class Brummies need councillors who will take on the political establishment locally and in Westminster, to fight for the funding for decent jobs, homes and public services in the city. Socialist Party members are campaigning as part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition to ensure that at the next elections in 2026 there's the widest possible challenge at the ballot box to the likes of Ward, Cotton and all the other councillors responsible for running down our city over the last decade.

## Rich City of London challenged by its workers

JAMES IVENS  
LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

The richest local authority area in Europe was rocked by a workforce-wide pay strike on 25 May.

Members of general unions GMB and Unite are demanding a rise of 15% or £5,000, whichever is greater. Their employer is the City of London Corporation, governing body of the capital's traditional finance district, the 'Square Mile'.

Around 200 workers flooded the square outside the Guildhall, home to the City's council chamber.

Pressing against the mirrored glass, they chanted "Pay up!" at the 'common councillors' and 'aldermen' processing into their meeting. One striker pulled cash from his wallet and waved it at the Lord Mayor of London in his ceremonial hat, shouting "This is what you want!"

GMB reps tell us it's only their third strike in the history of the Corporation - an authority which predates both capitalism and parliament, and whose special privileges are still protected by the Magna Carta of 1215. It's their first-ever strike directly on pay.

The Square Mile is home to the Bank of England, the insurance industry, and much of big finance. Wealthy businesses that profit from soaring inflation get votes in the City's elections. Yet their politicians claim they can't pay up to beat inflation!

The Corporation also owns or runs senior national courts, tourist attractions, schools, housing, the London Port Health Authority, its own independent police force, and 10,000 acres of forest and parkland, in and around Greater London.

GMB put on 13 picket lines - as far out as the Port of Tilbury, where vets downed tools. At the Barbican theatre and housing complex, workers got a worried-sounding enquiry about the strike from an expensive suit entering the elite corporate law multinational opposite.

Workers from West Ham Park, run by the City, told us that surrounding parks run by the local borough got much higher bonuses for working through Covid. Their own amounted to just a pound a day.

The City's handful of Labour councillors reportedly spoke in favour of the pay claim at a previous council

meeting, which is welcome. But on the strike day they announced they wouldn't 'cross the picket line' to attend.

It's not scabbing to take your elected seat and argue the workers' case. This was an opportunity to be the voice of the strike outside, maximising pressure. Workers need political representatives that act in their interests.

Pay talks are expected in mid-June. If the City's pay committee tries to stall, union members will want a programme of further strike action to keep the pressure on.

A striker told the Socialist: "It's been a real learning experience for most of us who have never been out on strike before. The organisation and commitment within the branch has been amazing, along with the support given at regional and national levels. Lessons have been learnt. We left the Guildhall yard stronger and more united in our fight for fair pay."

Get all the latest union news  
nationalshop  
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NSSN bulletin: shopstewards.net



PHOTO: JAMES IVENS



It's been a real learning experience for most of us who have never been out on strike before. The organisation and commitment

within the branch has been amazing along with the support given at regional and national levels. Lessons have been learnt. We left the Guildhall yard stronger and more united in our fight for fair pay.  
- Striking worker

## GXO logistics strike to defend victimised Unite shop steward



Socialist Party members at the picket line with victimised steward, Paul Roberts holding the Socialist (third from left) PHOTO: LIVERPOOL SOCIALIST PARTY

MERSEYSIDE SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBERS

"Please come down to our picket line and support us." This was the call made by Paul Roberts, an HGV driver and victimised Unite shop steward, speaking to Merseyside Socialist Party members.

As a result of Paul's sacking, HGV drivers employed by GXO logistics company, and based at the company's Lockheed Road depot in Warrington, are taking indefinite strike action. The workers are on a contract to supply PTS and City Plumbing outlets, delivering taps and pipes across the UK. The strike began on 22 May and Socialist Party members have visited the picket lines in support.

Paul was successfully signing

workers at GXO up as members of Unite, and fighting for better terms and working conditions. The workers have raised issues around poor pay and toilet facilities, and some pay rises had been won. The branch members are now determined to defend their rep and their ability to organise in the workplace.

Unite general secretary Sharon Graham says the union "will leave no stone unturned until our member has been reinstated."

Socialist Party members on Merseyside will offer whatever support they can to Paul and his members. If the trade union movement mobilises, Unite can win this dispute and send a signal to big business that workers will not take attacks from ruthless and unscrupulous

employers lying down. HGV drivers have organised and won big pay rises in several companies in the last couple of years.

Ultimately, it is the drive for profit that lies behind the attacks big business are inflicting on workforces like those at GXO, and on determined fighting trade unionists like Paul.

Socialist Party members are encouraging the pickets to link up with other striking workers in the private and public sectors at the conference of the National Shop Stewards Network on 24 June. And we are also talking with strikers about how only socialist public ownership, and democratic control and planning, of essential infrastructure needs in society can provide a long-term cure to these attacks.

## St Mungo's homelessness workers start month-long strike

Unite members at the homelessness charity St Mungo's started a month-long strike from 30 May with Socialist Party members visiting picket lines across London, as well as in Bristol, Oxford and Brighton.

Workers are on strike over pay, after seeing wages fall while over the last decade the charity has increased its spending on senior managers by 350%.

Pickets, many on strike for the first time, came together in London to rally at St Mungo's head office. There was a lot of anger about how the charity used its funds. Workers said that there always seems to be money for a new fancy head office, and pay increases for those at the top, but never

for the frontline staff supporting clients in difficult conditions and in often understaffed services. In Bristol pickets said that housing workers are so poorly paid in some cases they fear homelessness themselves!

At the rally, Unite national officer Onay Kasab spoke, telling members they have the full support of the union and that members are in control of the dispute. Jeremy Corbyn highlighted his 2019 Labour manifesto and what it would have done to tackle the homelessness and housing crisis.

● Support the hardship fund: [justgiving.com/crowdfunding/unitesmstrike](https://www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/unitesmstrike)



Rally at head office PHOTO: ROB WILLIAMS





# NATIONALISE THE RAILWAYS

- **Save jobs and conditions**
- **Cut fares**

**JOHN REID**  
SURREY SOCIALIST PARTY AND FORMER RMT  
NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBER

**R**ail privatisation has been a disaster for the travelling public with rising ticket prices, increased delays and cuts to services. But it has brought huge profits to private companies!

### Money for the bosses

Permanent management contracts for the various rail companies will have handed over £955 million from the taxpayer to company dividends by 2027.

Britain's rail infrastructure owner Network Rail's £561 billion debts are underwritten by the taxpayer. It spends more on interest on loans than it does on infrastructure and improving the rail network.

Three rolling stock companies control 88% of Britain's trains and paid out £949 million of dividends in 2020 alone.

During the last 13 years of Tory-led governments we have seen privatised rail companies fail and be nationalised temporarily, only for the franchise to be sold on again. TransPennine Express is the latest dismal failure (see 'Tories take over TransPennine Express' at [www.socialistparty.org.uk](http://www.socialistparty.org.uk)).

### Chaos for commuters

While private companies are handed millions of pounds, passengers have seen fares rise by around 40% since 2010.

There is chaos in services, with cancellations and disruption caused by understaffing, ageing rail stock and poor signalling systems. This is due to decades of a lack of investment.

Around 50% of railway stations are unstaffed. The rail companies now

want to close all ticket offices, slash maintenance and engineering jobs, and cut guards from trains; all of these measures would hit track and passenger safety.

### Striking for our railways

Rail unions have been striking over the last year against cutbacks and to defend working conditions won over decades of struggle (see page 5).

Private companies have made more than £300 million in profits since the government put them on new contracts when the Covid pandemic hit. And a further £300 million of taxpayers' money was spent indemnifying companies so that they would not lose a penny during these strikes. The government has spent more fighting the strikes than it would have cost to settle them. The money handed over to companies, if given to rail workers, would amount to a 10.6% pay increase.

### Nationalisation

The RMT rail union and the vast majority of the public want to see the rail system renationalised. Socialist Party members in the RMT and other unions call for the public ownership and integration of all sectors of transport under the democratic ownership and control of the working class, with compensation paid only on the basis of proven need. To end all privatisation and to run services for need not profit.

We would reopen closed stations and lines, particularly in rural areas, fares would be massively reduced as part of a massively expanded, free to use, publicly owned transport system. This would take cars off the road and be a massive boost to improving the environment. A democratically run rail network would improve the wages and conditions of rail workers alongside the travelling experience of passengers.



RMT strike at Bristol Temple Meads  
PHOTO: ROGER THOMAS