

Nurses and doctors

STILL STRIKING TO SAVE OUR NHS

For a fully funded inflation-proof pay rise



Junior doctors on strike in March PHOTO: HUGO PIERRE

MATT
NHS NURSE

For the third time this year junior doctors in England are once again taking strike action. Walking out from 7am 14 June to 7am 17 June, over appalling pay and working conditions.

Junior doctors have had their pay cut by over a quarter in real terms since 2009. Some are paid just £14.09 an hour according to their union the British Medical Association (BMA).

And on top of that, NHS underfunding means an even bigger workload for all staff. Doctors regularly work unsafe hours, some over 70 hours a week!

Reports last year indicated that over 12,000 doctor and 50,000 nurse vacancies had been left unfilled. This causes real issues with patient safety. Pay is a major reason the NHS isn't recruiting and retaining doctors and nurses. Anyone who works in the NHS will have had discussions about pay, and how betrayed we feel by the government and the pay deals offered.

The BMA has been offered a 5%

pay rise by the government. This doesn't come close to the real-terms cut over years, and definitely isn't enough to match inflation this year.

Royal College of Nursing (RCN) members, despite their leadership recommending they accept, rightly rejected the inadequate pay offer. The RCN is re-balloting its members in England for strike action to continue the fight for the pay nurses deserve. If RCN members can deliver a resounding 'yes' vote then an escalation of action is a must. In Wales, RCN members are already out on strike again (see page 11).

So far, doctors and nurses have taken strike action on different days. A real message to the government would be to unite the health strikes. Mass picket lines outside hospitals of doctors, nurses and Unite members, including ambulance workers, would show the strength of feeling and resolve NHS staff feel.

This could be part of campaigning for the TUC to unite all workers fighting for pay rises and the Tories' attempts to attack our right to strike.

As a nurse I'm proud to stand alongside colleagues in their fight. Our NHS is in crisis, caused by repeated governments' lack of investment, privatisations and attacks on our pay and conditions. We've fought off a pandemic, now we need to fight off the Tories and their insulting pay offers.

UCU in universities and colleges

University strikes break out against pay deductions

In previous issues of the Socialist, University and College Union (UCU) members have reported on the marking and assessment boycott (MAB) being undertaken by university staff, backing up the union's national campaign of strike action over pay. We argued that "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." ('UCU embarks on first-ever national marking and assessment boycott' socialistparty.org.uk)

That is now coming into play, with UCU branches agreeing strike action in response to grossly disproportionate pay deductions. These include five days of strike action at Sheffield Hallam, and indefinite action at Leeds, where a UCU member who spoke to the Socialist wanted to remain anonymous for fear of reprisals.

'We're strong'

LEEDS UCU MEMBER

It really is a ridiculous situation to be in. Management are threatening 100% pay deduction for every day an academic partakes in the marking and assessment boycott (MAB) - at which point we might as well strike and not lose any more money. The branch has produced a fund for those whose pay would be deducted. After literally months of

trying to communicate with management over the threat, the UCU branch has decided to stand in solidarity with participants of the MAB, and all go on strike. It is galling that management are willing to punish the hardworking staff over this. Mrs 'Several-hundred-thousand-a-year, with house, car and travel expenses' (the vice-chancellor) can't stand that we're fighting and winning, and so has to up the ante. It's despicable, but she'll lose. We're a strong branch, and she's a weak leader!

Why I'm going to NSSN conference

Looking for inspiration to transform our union branch

UCU MEMBER IN FE

I teach in a big FE college with four sites across West London. My college has been in formal intervention for five years thanks to appalling mismanagement by a series of CEOs, but equally to chronic underfunding. Never-ending staffing cuts, crumbling infrastructure, dying student support services, and so on - it's a well-known story. Staff morale is at an all-time low. Many members have listened to our employers' mantra, 'We're broke, striking will get you nowhere!' for so long, they have come to believe it. My UCU branch has not been active - two branch meetings only have been called in a year, with little more than 5% of members attending. On those occasions, the possibility of striking over pay (in FE amongst the lowest in the education sector) and over unsustainable workloads wasn't even discussed.

It feels like the wave of generalised strike action that has engulfed the UK over the last months has rolled past us almost unnoticed, as if in another country. So I'm going to do something about it! As a UCU branch committee member, I am going to the NSSN conference on 24 June as one way of breaking out of the lack of action and isolation I feel we have fallen into. I want to connect up with the world of trade unionists 'out there', exchange experiences with them, get some ideas, be inspired to action. I am also taking another branch member with me, so am hoping for two further outcomes. First, that together we can then trigger some lively discussion back in the branch. Second, that talk of the crucial importance of building networks of resistance and of coordinating action will rub off well on both of us. Two people on a same wavelength will surely have more leverage in branch decision-making than just one!

• See back page for NSSN conference details



Tyne Met, Bristol, Liverpool UCU strikers in FE and HE 2022-23 SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBERS



Action building in Further Education

The recent UCU congress agreed to prepare for a national ballot in September for strike action in Further Education (FE) colleges. It follows an e-consultation of 18,000 UCU members at 190 colleges, in which 87% voted for strike action. UCU is demanding a pay offer in excess of RPI inflation, a national workload agreement, and national pay negotiations. In the meantime, as pay is currently negotiated college by college, strike action has broken out in a number of FEs.

Fighting for pay and against closures at Tyne Coast College

ELAINE BRUNSKILL, NORTHERN REGION SOCIALIST PARTY

Strikers at Tyne Coast College held up placards showing the pay discrepancy over the past decade between the massive 100% awarded to the college CEO, and the paltry 3.5% to staff during the same ten-year period. The initial offer from the college was below even the recommendation from the Association of Colleges (AoC), which had already been rejected nationally. The college then put forward (in line with the rejected AoC recommendations) a below-inflation 2.5% offer. With less than two weeks to organise a ballot for industrial action, and straight after the Easter holidays, a magnificent 94% voted to take strike action. Alongside the pay dispute there were strikers at Tyne Met (part of Tyne Coast) who were angered over plans to close Queen Alexandra Sixth

Form College. Strikers told us that during Covid, while teaching staff were furloughed, the sixth form college was moved into Tyne Met. By May 2023 the college announced they were closing the sixth form. There was a public outcry. The announcement came just five days before the first AS-level exams. Lecturers on the picket line told us there were kids crying in the corridors. By the end of the week, after an emergency meeting, there was a U-turn and the closure was postponed until 2024. One of the strikers commented, that to date, even though the college have admitted to making mistakes, they have not committed to an inquiry. The Socialist Party calls for education to be under democratic control, including participation from teaching unions and students - not the edict of an unaccountable college CEO.

Yorkshire colleges join the strike wave

IAIN DALTON, LEEDS SOCIALIST PARTY

There were over 50 pickets outside Leeds City College as UCU members took strike action for the first time in many years. The strikes on 5 and 7 June were coordinated with strikes at three other colleges in Yorkshire, Bradford, Kirklees and Harrogate, with further strikes scheduled for the following week. One striker said: "Initially I think some staff members felt uneasy about striking on GCSE exam days, as we all care about our students. However, for over a decade staff have seen their wages decrease in real terms due to inflation. We have food cupboards at work, essentially mini food banks, for people who are struggling to buy essentials, whilst we

have a principal on around £250,000 a year. When you look at it like that, I think it has made everyone realise it is time to make a stand." Strikers at Bradford College have told Socialist Party members visiting the picket line similar things. At Bradford College, Socialist Students has run campaign stalls with petitions demanding college management give an inflation-proof pay rise to staff, as well as putting up posters to show staff there is student support for them. Socialist Students aims to do the same in Leeds. The Socialist Party is hosting an open meeting about the college strikes and the indefinite action about to begin at University of Leeds, on Monday 19 June, 7pm at the Adelphi pub in Leeds.

St Mungo's housing workers: 'We're going to win!'



One of the rallies UNITE

There has been an electric mood on picket lines and at rallies across London, and in Oxford, Bristol and more sites around the country, organised by the Unite Housing Workers branch. Homelessness workers, many young first-time strikers, are picketing and protesting at near-daily rallies and marches in the fight for a decent pay rise from 'the UK's leading homelessness charity' St Mungo's. As speakers at the daily rallies have explained, senior managers have seen their pay skyrocket whilst frontline staff have seen their pay fall off the end of a cliff. In a short space of time, strikers are discussing and learning lessons. The rallies around London keep up the pressure and the profile, win wider support, and keep up morale. Many strikers are also discussing and understanding the importance of maintaining effective workplace pickets to build the strength of the strike amongst members, and win more to the union, to hit the bosses where it hurts. The fifth day of strike action had 30% more picketers than at the start.

STRIKERS SPOKE TO ISAI MARJERLA

LORNA "I am striking because I don't feel able to stand and do nothing, when there are people working in a charitable organisation with not enough income to support themselves without welfare, and using food banks to get by. We are told that there isn't enough money to fund an adequate pay rise, but we are also told we cannot see the evidence for this. It's very difficult to accept the information when there is nothing to verify it.

"Among many strikers there is a general feeling that we are losing the essence of what the charity was created for. It has become increasingly corporatised. This should not be at the cost of providing sustainable income for people to be able to carry out their roles without the additional pressures of financial hardship. "We hope that the senior leadership team will be willing to return to the negotiating table. We are told that there is always the invitation for dialogue, but we are also told that there will be no amendments to the previous inadequate pay offer. We very much hope these changes. We are extending invitations for progressive conversation. We hope these are accepted and that we can return to our roles as soon as possible." LETTY "I've been doing this job for nine months. And I'm striking now in support of the pay dispute and the demand for a 10% pay rise in line with inflation, because I'm in solidarity with all the frontline workers in my organisation who are not being paid enough to live. "It shouldn't be this way. Everyone in society doing a job should be paid enough to live comfortably. I think it's really disgusting that there's such inequality of wealth - in our society, but also within St Mungo's, that ostensibly exists to support people who are suffering. And the people that we support are suffering because of poverty and wealth inequality. In this organisation, there's a CEO that's earning around £200,000 a year, and frontline workers on very minimal wages. It feels like rather than addressing the issues it's set up to address, Mungo's is actually entrenching those problems. "So for me it's really important

to utilise the power that we have as workers and withhold our labour until some of this inequality is redressed and frontline staff have their wages increased. People don't donate to charities like St Mungo's because they want to line the pockets of a few people. They donate because they see homelessness as a problem. So that's why I'm joining the strike and I'm on the picket line." ANOTHER STRIKER SPOKE TO BEN GOLDSTONE "I'm in a management position after five years with Mungo's and my salary is liveable. What made me decide to strike is knowing that members of my team struggle towards the end of a pay period. Many of them support the strike but are worried about being able to afford it - which is exactly why it needs to be done!" OTHER STRIKERS SPOKE TO A UNITE ORGANISER, TO PUBLICISE THEIR STRIKE

"We've had an amazing turnout here today [at the first London rally], an amazing atmosphere, everyone's going strong. Really confident about the campaign, we're going to win! It's great to hear Jeremy Corbyn speaking here, and we just need to keep our momentum going." EIVINAS, PROJECT WORKER AT ENDSLEIGH GARDENS AND UNITE REP

"Great atmosphere at our first rally at the beginning of our strike, we had a number of great speakers. We've got to keep the momentum going and we're going to get this pay rise." HARVEY, PROJECT WORKER AT BIRKENHEAD STREET

• Send messages of support to: info@housingworkers.org.uk

Social workers in South Gloucestershire Unison strike for fair pay, coordinating with refuse workers

DAN SMART, ADULT SOCIAL CARE REP AND BRANCH SECRETARY, SOUTH GLOUCESTERSHIRE UNISON (PERSONAL CAPACITY)

When in adult social care we found we were to be underpaid by £3,000 per year in comparison to those in children's services, we felt insulted and angry. The yearly retention payments were offered to children's social workers back in 2021 and Unison members in South Gloucestershire Council have been organising for equality in adult social care since. We have taken five days of strike action from April this year, and have a strong mandate until September. Adult social workers and occupational therapists (OTs) have exactly the same qualifications as those in children's social care, and are facing very similar challenges in recruitment and retention. We support people in some of the most challenging circumstances in society, from complex disability, to domestic abuse and mental health issues. Working flat-out during the pandemic, our reward has been to see our pay decimated and funding for services continuously slashed. We demand that the council also give us the uplift, to ensure we are keeping hold of our experienced colleagues and attracting new staff. The cost-of-living crisis means many are having to vote with their feet and go

to where the pay is better, working for an agency or another council. Some of our members told me on the picket line that they are now even taking second jobs just to make ends meet. Due to the council's intransigence over this issue, further strike action is planned to coincide with a lobby of the newly elected cabinet on 12 June. We will be coordinating our action with striking council refuse workers in Unite, who are also out that week. The Conservatives have just been ousted out of South Gloucestershire after eight years, and there is now a Lib Dem-Labour coalition. While there is some optimism among members that Tories are finally out, there is rightful scepticism towards the other two parties. Already they've started to show their colours. The Labour leader has not agreed to meet Unison and we've had absolutely no response yet from the Lib Dem leader! Unfortunately, this is an indication of what is to come on a national basis, demonstrating the urgent need for socialist councillors as part of a new mass workers' party, who are prepared to stand up and represent the workers' movement politically. Social workers and OTs in South Gloucestershire will continue to apply the pressure until we get paid fairly, which is the first step towards providing quality adult social care services to our communities.



ROGER THOMAS

Get all the latest union news...

nationalshop
stewardsnetwork

with the
NSSN bulletin
shopstewards.net

Two Militant MPs, the ‘longest suicide note in history’, early Liverpool tremors... 1983 ELECTION: A HARBINGER OF BATTLES TO COME

The 1983 general election occurred 40 years ago, on Thursday 9 June. The Tories won a landslide victory, which Labour's right wing blamed on a left-wing manifesto. But new left-wing MPs were elected, including Jeremy Corbyn and two supporters of the Militant newspaper (forerunner of The Socialist). We asked one of those former MPs and now Socialist Party national committee member **Dave Nellist** to recall some of the events of that pivotal year.

WHAT HAPPENED IN THE 1983 GENERAL ELECTION?

The general election of 1983 saw Tory prime minister Margaret Thatcher re-elected with an increased majority of 144. The election consolidated 'Thatcherism' and opened a decade of privatisations, deregulations, and attacks on the working class.

The Tories, and Mrs Thatcher in particular, used the previous year's Falklands War between the UK and Argentina, which ended 12 months earlier in June 1982, as a political tool to successfully boost the government and her national leadership in the general election.

The election was a significant defeat for the Labour Party, with the loss of 52 seats and its national vote falling to 27%. In addition to the 'Falklands factor', Labour's loss of three million votes between 1979 and 1983 was compounded by the creation of the Social Democratic Party (SDP).

Two years earlier, in March 1981, four 'moderate' (in reality, right-wing) Labour MPs and former MPs, all former cabinet ministers and known as the 'Gang of Four', split from the Labour Party. Twenty-eight more Labour MPs and one Tory were to join over the next twelve months (though a more significant number of right-wing MPs with the same policies as the splitters stayed in the Labour Party). It was the biggest parliamentary defection for almost a hundred years.

Shortly before the 1983 election, the SDP formed an electoral alliance with the Liberal Party (later, the two merged to become the Liberal Democrats). The SDP was set up to prevent Labour from returning to government with a series of left policies. Big business gave the SDP millions of pounds to assist in that task. Similar to the £9 million David Sainsbury gave the Liberal Democrats in 2019 to help build an alternative to Labour then under the radical policies of Jeremy Corbyn.

The press and media used that split from Labour, and the internal witch-hunt against the Militant and its supporters, to portray a divided party.

In 1979 the votes were: Tory 13.7 million, Labour 11.5 million, and Liberal 4.3 million. In 1983 it was: Tory 13 million, Labour 8.5 million, and the SDP-Liberal Alliance 7.8 million.

Five Militant supporters stood as Labour candidates. Cathy Wilson

received 2.4% on the Isle of Wight in a seat that had been (and still is) Tory since 1931. Rod Fitch gained 29.6% in Brighton Kempton - almost Labour's best result in the south of England in 1983. Pat Wall was narrowly defeated in Bradford North with 30.9%. And there were two victories.

In Coventry South East my candidacy recorded 41.1%, with a reduced Labour majority of 7% on changed boundaries (the majority in 1987 climbed to 17.6%). But in Liverpool, Labour's vote rose from 42.7% in 1979 to 47.3% in 1983. And Liverpool Broadgreen saw the third-largest swing to Labour in the country, and Terry Fields was elected with 40.9% of the vote.

WHY WAS LABOUR'S 1983 MANIFESTO DESCRIBED AS THE "LONGEST SUICIDE NOTE IN HISTORY"?

It was the description given by the late former Labour MP, Gerald Kaufman. Before becoming an MP, Kaufman was a newspaper journalist and a writer on the BBC TV satirical programme 'That was the Week That Was'.

Today's Labour right-wing still uses his sarcastic put-down of Labour's 1983 radical programme to characterise the supposedly inevitable election defeats of parties campaigning on socialist policies.

But there was more to the outcome of the 1983 election and it is arguable that, without that socialist alternative, Labour's defeat could have been greater.

Labour's 1983 programme, 'The New Hope for Britain', was radical - a clear indictment of the then Tory government and, more widely, capitalism. It proposed massive public investment, withdrawal from the European Economic Community (which would later become the European Union) and nuclear disarmament.

In a Britain of mass unemployment, for example, it drew attention to the madness of three million homes lacking basic amenities or needing major repair, while 500,000 construction workers were unemployed. Labour called for a major increase in public investment, including transport, housing and energy conservation, and in industry, especially in new technology - "with public enterprise taking the lead".

The manifesto promised to raise

child benefits, increase pensions and spend more on education, social services and the NHS.

But its limitations were similar to those of the more recent manifestos of 2017 and 2019. It eloquently described the widening chasm between rich and poor, but it sought to eliminate inequality without eliminating the source of that inequality, capitalism.

THE WITCH HUNT AGAINST MILITANT HAD ALREADY BEGUN BEFORE ITS FIRST MPS WERE ELECTED. WHAT DID IT LOOK LIKE IN 1983?

Well-known Militant supporter Pat Wall should have won Bradford North in 1983 but for a vicious press campaign led by the Sunday Times. Just over a year before the election, at the beginning of March 1982, Pat spoke in a university debate on the issue of socialism and the state.

Pat argued for real democracy, including ending the constitutional powers of the monarchy and the unelected positions of judges, and the full mobilisation of the labour movement to support the government moving on socialist lines. But, he warned, a capitalist class threatened with the loss of its power and privileges would view democracy differently. Indeed, one of Mrs Thatcher's 'liberal' ministers, Sir Ian Gilmour, had written in a book, five years earlier, that "Conservatives do not worship democracy... For them majority rule is a device... for Conservatives, therefore, democracy is a means to an end and not an end in itself".

Yet 'Marxism equals totalitarianism and violence' was the theme of the media reports, even though Pat had sought to warn that partial nationalisation, while not satisfying the problems facing the working class, could push the capitalist establishment towards sabotaging and eventually bringing down a radical and socialist government.

This was not an academic point. The debate occurred just over eight years after a murderous military coup in Chile toppled the elected socialist Allende government.

The vicious campaign against Pat included journalists camping outside his house, and letters being sent to his employer demanding he be sacked.

In the 1983 election the former local Labour MP, right winger Ben Ford, stood as an independent against him, and the right-wing SDP targeted Pat. Even 'left-wing' Labour leader Michael Foot spoke at a rally in Bradford a few days before the election and attacked Pat using the same lies of the Sunday Times.

The SDP took 25% of the vote, and Ben Ford 9%. Pat's vote was squeezed, and he lost that election by 1,600 votes but won in 1987 with a 12% swing, one of the highest in the country!



Militant MPs elected in 1983: Dave Nellist and Terry Fields PHOTO: DAVE SINCLAIR



The Militant editorial board expelled from Labour PHOTO: MILITANT



Labour leader Michael Foot PHOTO: GILLETTO/CC

Margaret Thatcher PHOTO: ROBB BOGAERTS/CC

In the post-election period, Labour's right was able to complete the expulsion of the five members of the Militant Editorial Board at the party conference at Brighton.

Although the expulsions of Peter Taaffe, Ted Grant, Lynn Walsh, Clare Doyle and Keith Dickinson were steamrollered through by right-wing union leaders, 80% of the constituency Labour Party delegates at the conference voted against, and the 'Militant Five' were given a standing ovation.

Unfortunately, that was not seen on the live TV coverage of the conference, as the national executive ordered the expulsions to be heard in a closed session. Even many of those who voted for expulsions did so in a mistaken attempt to 'get unity' and 'improve the image of the party' after the worst electoral defeat in its recent history.

WHAT WAS UNFOLDING IN LIVERPOOL?

It seems unfair to discuss 1983 in Liverpool in the context of one election result. But that result, the election of Terry Fields as MP for the Broadgreen constituency, was a product of a momentous class struggle unfolding in that city which reached its peak over the next couple of years.

As Peter Taaffe and Tony Mulhearn noted in 'Liverpool, A City That Dared to Fight', Liverpool became "synonymous with militancy". "When visiting Indonesia in 1984, Tory Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher was greeted by demonstrating students chanting 'Liverpool! Liverpool! Liverpool!' - and they weren't referring to the famous football team."

Liverpool's left-wing surge had been reflected by the selection by party membership of Militant supporters as prospective MPs: Tony Mulhearn in Toxteth, Terry Fields in Kirkdale; Terry Harrison in Edge Hill; and Derek Hatton in Wavertree. Though boundary changes were to leave Terry as the only Militant supporter standing, in the newly created Broadgreen constituency.

Despite the Conservatives winning the 1983 general election with a landslide majority and Labour's support falling from its 1979 level, Terry won Broadgreen with a majority of 3,800!

The Broadgreen campaign evidenced the scale of the enthusiasm for socialist ideas in the election. A minimum of 200 canvassers were involved over weekends in the run-up to the election. On election day, 500 workers from Liverpool and other parts of the country worked in the constituency.

The city had seen a major strike of 20,000 workers against privatisation of the council's refuse and street cleaning services. Liberal control of the council had collapsed in the 1983

council elections with Labour gaining 12 seats, including several won by Militant supporters.

22,000 more Liverpudlians voted Labour because of its programme of "no privatisation, a £2 rent cut, no spending cuts, a massive housing repairs programme, 6,000 new council houses, 4,000 new council jobs, and no rate rises to compensate for Tory-Liberal cuts!"

Until 1964, Liverpool could be described as a 'Tory city', mainly represented by Tory and Liberal MPs. In the 1983 general election, with the Tories winning a landslide nationally, there was not a single Tory MP in Liverpool for the first time in 100 years.

MILITANT'S TWO NEW MPS TOOK THEIR SEATS IN PARLIAMENT. HOW DID YOU AND TERRY USE THE PLATFORM?

Terry Fields' maiden speech in Parliament, on 24 June, reflected the bitterness that most workers on Merseyside felt for the Tories. He disdained the parliamentary pleasantries and the convention of an uncontroversial first speech (which for most MPs consisted of congratulating opposition speakers and wishing their retiring or defeated predecessor well).

Terry announced he was not there to appeal to the ruling class but to express the real feelings of working-class people against the Tory government and the system they represented. "Having listened to the cant and hypocrisy from the Conservative benches, it is difficult to keep my temper, let alone observe the proprieties of this place." (His speech is still well worth a read today and can be found at [bit.ly/Terrymaidenspeech](https://www.bbc.com/news/politics-1983-06-24)).

Terry ended: "The media and my political opponents during the election, in seeking to denigrate me and the socialism I stood for, made great play of the label 'militant'. Let me make my position clear. I wear the badge of a militant with honour, and do not forget that a militant is only a moderate who has got up off his knees. In time, the whole of the working class will arise from their knees, and you will not be laughing then."

My own maiden speech, on 8 July, was about youth and unemployment because "in the city of Coventry, once the richest working-class city in the country with two-thirds of the workforce in manufacturing industry, the prospects for our school leavers are now bleak. Only one in ten of those leaving the fifth form last summer have found work. In a city that was built on engineering, only 243 out of 5,000 who left school this summer have found apprenticeships."

Working with young workers on government training schemes - previously Youth Opportunities Programme (YOP), and from 1983 Youth Training Schemes (YTS) - would

occupy much of our time in the months ahead. Not least because the schemes had an appalling health and safety record.

In the previous three years, there were over 3,000 reported injuries and 17 fatalities on the YOP. Two more trainees died in the first two months of the YTS that year. We worked with several families in protests, organising meetings with ministers, lobbies and demonstrations.

WHY IS 1983 WORTH REVISITING TODAY?

1983 was just a harbinger of nine years of battles inside and outside parliament, for Terry and myself. Momentous struggles in Liverpool, in the miners' strike, against the rightward move of Labour and the witch hunt against Militant and other socialists, the Gulf War, the defeat of the poll tax and the resignation of Mrs Thatcher!

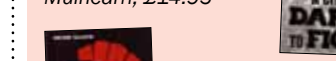
Labour's 1983 manifesto had radical policies that echoed in the 2017 and 2019 manifestos with Jeremy Corbyn as leader. There were the attacks and sustained character assassinations on the proponents of socialist policies, as we have seen again in more recent years.

Then, as now, there were thousands of activists trying to build a socialist alternative; then grouped around the Militant newspaper inside the Labour Party, today outside in the ranks of the Socialist Party.

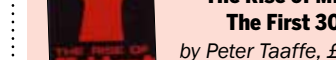
Our opponents are still the same: a capitalist class determined to enrich its power and privileges at the expense of working people, and those layers currently at the top of the labour and trade union movement who defend that system, rather than challenging it. The battles of 1983 are still with us today.

FURTHER READING

Liverpool - A City That Dared to Fight
by Peter Taaffe and Tony Mulhearn, £14.95



The Rise of Militant: The First 30 Years
by Peter Taaffe, £11.99

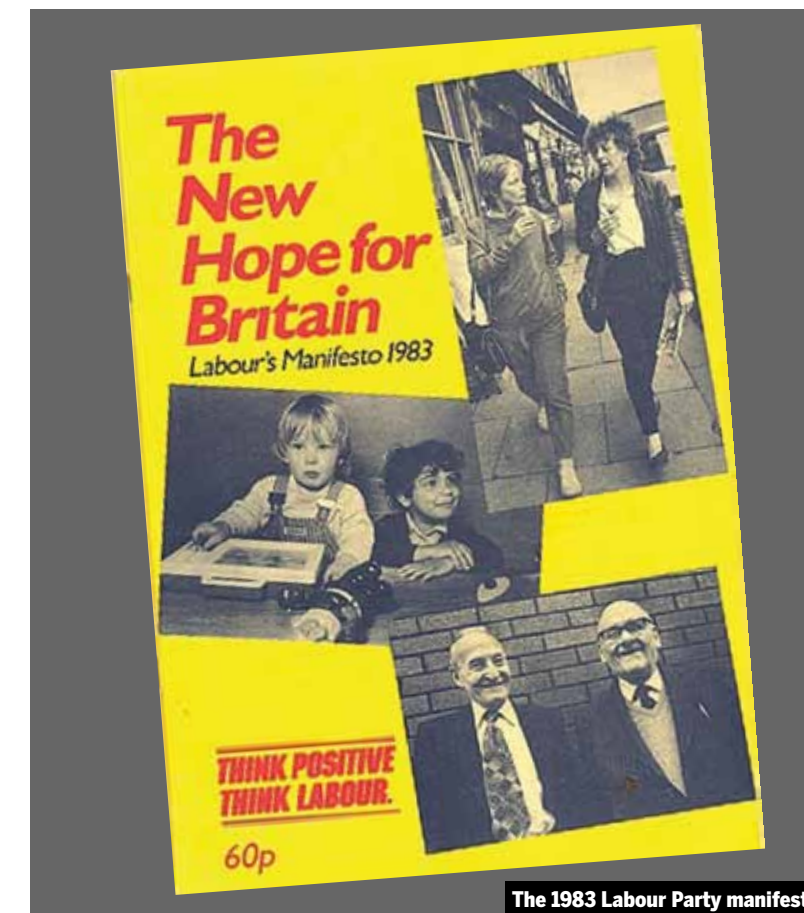


LEFT BOOKS

The bookshop of the Socialist Party

New and second-hand Marxist classic books and pamphlets

- Visit leftbooks.co.uk
- or call 020 8983 8789
- PO Box 1398, Enfield EN1 9GT



The 1983 Labour Party manifesto

Oppose suspension of PCS national campaign

DAVE SEMPLE
PCS BRANCH SECRETARY WIGAN,
PERSONAL CAPACITY

The union's National Executive Committee (NEC) met on 5 June to discuss the outcome from formal discussions with the Cabinet Office.

The Treasury Pay Remit has capped average pay rises for 2023-24 to 4.5% (or 5% if there is a focus on low-paid staff). The remit allows for individual departments and agencies to pay a non-consolidated one-off £1,500 in addition.

Our strike action has forced concessions from the government, but they are nowhere near enough.

It is not new money: departments are expected to come up with this money themselves. Not all are likely to be able to.

The Cabinet Office has outlined other concessions, including that no change to the Civil Service Compensation Scheme (CSCS - that covers our redundancy rights) would be implemented before 2025, but that the consultation on cuts would continue.

Although the PCS website says the lump sum is "in recognition of cost of living pressures in 2022-23", no direct mention has been made of 2022-23 pay, nor of pensions.

There is no doubt that, in a pre-election year, the Tory government would quite like to put the dispute in the civil service to rest. This is leverage we can use to benefit every civil servant in the UK, and to benefit the public services we deliver.

With none of our demands met, and the union far from being at the limit of the action we can take, there is no basis for resolution of our dispute.

However, following the meeting of the PCS NEC, it's clear that the leadership, under president Fran Heathcote and general secretary Mark Serwotka, has taken concrete steps to stand down the union's national campaign.

The majority 'Left Unity' group has



PHOTO: PAUL MATTSSON

decided that planned rebalots of key areas that missed the 50% turnout threshold in the recent national strike ballot, which were agreed by PCS conference in May, have been suspended.

The NEC has agreed that pay negotiations at departmental or agency level, that had been halted to force the government to negotiate nationally, can now take place if the departments sign up to pay the non-consolidated £1,500.

According to the PCS website,

already-planned sectional strike action for this month will go ahead as planned.

As a strategy, this fragments the strength of PCS. Suspending rebalots tips the balance back in favour of the employer. It stalls any momentum built up by the action so far, by allowing delegated pay talks to begin on the basis only of the 4.5%-5% pay remit.

This was not what activists and members signed up to fight for in the debates and votes at May's

conference, or in the 2022 and 2023 strike ballots.

The NEC has stated that further talks will be held with the Cabinet Office at the end of June to consider progress in getting all areas to pay the non-consolidated £1,500 lump sum. The implication here is that if all areas get the £1,500 and pay talks over the pay remit of 4.5-5% go well, the campaign is over.

If only Mark Serwotka, Fran Heathcote and the NEC 'Left Unity' leaders hadn't waited three months to call national strike action!

Members and reps will be alarmed that the press release from the NEC is utterly vague on what happens next. It gives the real impression that the dispute could be concluded by a judgement of views at members' meetings, rather than even a membership vote. Lay member control of the dispute and its progress must be a key demand.

The Broad Left Network, the socialist rank-and-file group in which the Socialist Party participates, does not believe it is the best that we can get.

We should reiterate our pay claim of 10% for 2022-23 and an above-inflation increase for 2023-24. We should serve notice for a two-day national strike, with further dates of national strike action announced. Reballots of areas that did not get over the threshold should go ahead. All ballots should include action short of strike action.

BLN has scheduled a recall conference of all our supporters on 1 July. If you are as determined as we are to make sure we fight on, and build a fighting, democratic trade union, led by socialist policies, then join BLN and attend our conference.

Get all the latest union news



with the NSSN bulletin
shopstewards.net

TV review: 'Strike: Inside the Unions'

RICHARD GINGELL
BLACK COUNTRY SOCIALIST PARTY

In the second and final episode of 'Strike: Inside the Unions', we rejoin the ongoing struggle of workers in the strike wave. The first episode had us follow Mick Lynch of the transport workers union RMT, Pat Cullen of the nurses' RCN, and included some appearances from Unite's Sharon Graham. The second offering continues that trend, and also includes numerous GMB union reps fighting hard in Amazon warehouses and beyond.

Featured between the action shots of union leaders in action is footage of numerous strikes, demonstrations and protests. Unfortunately, these images are used purely for their imagery and with little time to elaborate their message.

While it was great fun to pause

every few minutes to explain what was happening, or even to note the demonstrations I had personally been on, I couldn't help but wonder why there was such a focus on the union leaders when really the strikes were about the struggles of working-class people.

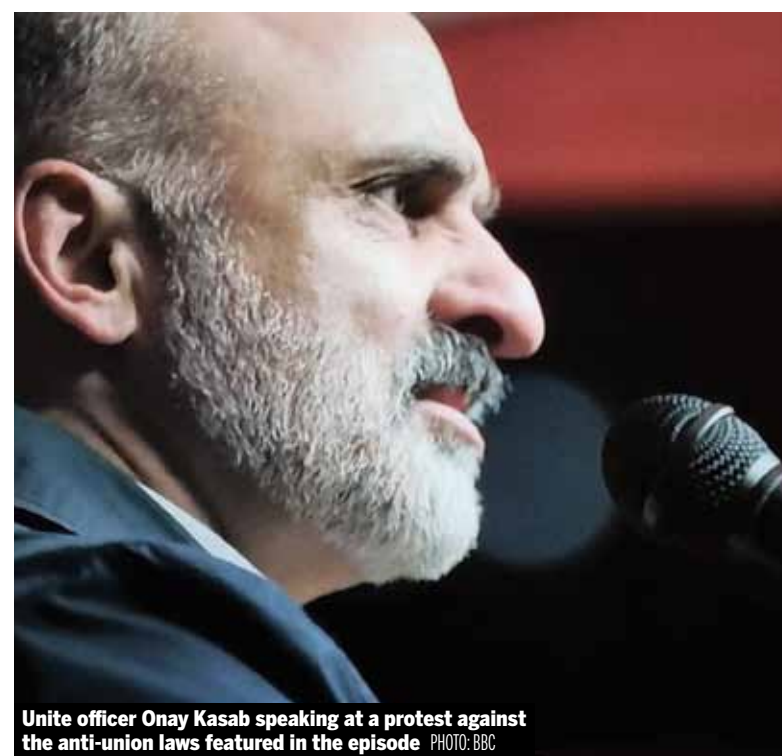
I'm extremely sceptical of the BBC at the best of times, so I went into this cautiously optimistic. I was very happy with the portrayal of Unite's Abelio London bus drivers and their monumental 18% pay rise, and the determination of the GMB's Coventry Amazon workers.

But the way the RMT and RCN disputes were presented left more questions than answers. Why had these much larger, fierce and protracted battles not been able to secure decisive victories for all involved? Throughout the episode there is an overwhelming lack of context.

A tired and dead-eyed looking Sunak appears on screen multiple times to berate unions and workers for daring to stand up for themselves - of course failing to point out the underhanded and disingenuous manoeuvres that he and his ministers have employed to cause the situation in the first place!

Time is given over to sound bites and interviews discussing the horrors that the members of the public have been subjected to during the strikes, failing to acknowledge that these striking workers are also members of the public, being subjected to their own horrors by tyrannical employers.

Ultimately, the fact that workers fighting back is being seen on our TV screens is a good thing. Workers feeling the squeeze themselves may find comfort watching it and even be galvanised in their own struggle.



Unite officer Onay Kasab speaking at a protest against the anti-union laws featured in the episode PHOTO: BBC

Rail strikes continue: 'It's a big movement now'

HEATHER RAWLING REPORTS FROM LEICESTER

There was confidence and gritty determination on Aslef and RMT picket lines, helped by support from public. Rail union RMT struck on 2 June; train drivers' union Aslef on 31 May and 3 June.

RMT member Nigel said: "I can still see us being here at Christmas."

An RMT guard said that passengers, seeing his RMT badge, often comment that they support the strikers.

On Aslef picket lines, passengers were turning up having been sold tickets online that morning, despite Leicester station being completely shut. They were angry with the train company for selling the tickets and supported the strikers. Two of them bought a copy of the Socialist.

Aslef members were also prepared for a long battle, with both sides in the dispute digging in. There was a mood for coordination among the strikers.

ASLEF STRIKERS AT NEW STREET STATION SPOKE TO BIRMINGHAM SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBERS

At Birmingham New Street, one striking rail worker told us: "This strike isn't just about our pay and conditions now, but protecting jobs and conditions on the railway for years to come. I hate to think what things could be like in 30 years if we lose this."

Other strikers told us: "Right-wing news rags are trying to turn key workers against each other, and use train drivers as a scapegoat for the Tories making a mess of the railways."

"People think this job is just pressing a button and could be automated. But less than half of this country's railway is electrified, and some lines still use Victorian signalling!"

"Our union financially supports Labour, but Sir Keir Starmer doesn't want to support us!"

AN ASLEF MEMBER IN DEVON SPOKE TO TOBIAS ROBBSHOW

"The media want to say it's all about pay, but it's about the working conditions that the union has fought for, for decades, that's the main reason we're here. The other reason is to stand up to this corrupt Tory government. That might not be the union's view, but it is mine."



Birmingham Aslef picket line PHOTO: BIRMINGHAM SP

"They want to make changes to our rostering process so it's done centrally by the company, instead of having our involvement, where every timetable change we can scrutinise the diagrams they give us, and check they match our terms and conditions, such as maximum driving hours. We have to have scheduled breaks at certain times depending on the length of the job, that's a big one for us."

"We've not actually seen the fine detail, we get bits and pieces from the higher-ups in the union, but there was talk of overruling arrangements on monitoring our sickness. So that is a red line for us straight away."

"They offered us 4% pay rise for both years, so that straight away was a slap in the face as well. We've not had a pay rise in four years."

"Welsh Aslef negotiated a 20% rise over two years, plus RPI inflation in the third. Negotiating with Transport for Wales, they got a much better deal than we are getting with the Tory government in Westminster."

"An important aspect for those on strike is the mystery of what exactly is meant by 'general reforms'. Potentially that could mean they want to increase our working hours. Do they want to reduce our leave, or enforce more continuous driving time?"

"It's a big movement now, over the last 12 months. It started off with the RMT, it's snowballed now, everyone's backing each other. I've been stood on picket lines for the BT guys, the post office; we get all sorts coming down to support us, students, there's big solidarity."

Why I'm going to NSSN conference

Solidarity and coordination never been more important

PAUL REILLY
FORMER RMT NEC MEMBER

During this last 12 months, I have been heavily involved in organising and campaigning, both on a personal level as a worker affected by the dispute, and also as an RMT representative, branch secretary and activist.

This was the first time in my 30+ years as an RMT member that we have had a national rail strike with all sectors of the railway industry in dispute. Not only against the companies involved, but with the Tory government, hell-bent on pushing through with reforms to attack our terms and conditions, jobs and wages.

The NSSN was originally formed by the RMT back in 2006 when the late,



great Bob Crow was at the helm, with the aim of bringing together grassroots trade union activists and reps from all industries and trade unions to work together in support of each other's struggles.

If this last year has shown us anything, it's that workers' solidarity and coordination has never been more important. By supporting each other and encouraging workers, most of whom have never been involved in industrial disputes in their lives, never mind attending picket lines, we have reinvigorated working-class unity and trade union activism, making our movement stronger in the process.

This is exactly why I will be attending this year's NSSN conference and why I'll be encouraging many other trade union activists from across the rail industry and from other industries to do the same.

Let's make this the biggest one yet!

• See back page for NSSN conference details



Swansea RMT picket line PHOTO: ALEC THRAVES

Nurses in Wales still striking for decent pay

BETH WEBSTER
RCN MEMBER IN WALES

The nurses' strikes continue in Wales. As many as 40 were on our picket line at University Hospital Wales, in Cardiff. Public support has been excellent from passing traffic.

Staff feel the turnout on the picket line has been affected by the acceptance of deals by other unions and the Royal College of Nursing (RCN) leadership's last-minute cancellation of the most recent strike days.

Pat Cullen, RCN general secretary, visited on 6 June. She spoke about continuing

the fight and not giving up, despite having recommended acceptance of a below-inflation deal in England!

Plaid Cymru MS's (Members of the Welsh parliament) visited too - they spoke of increasing nurses' pay but put forward no real strategy of how to force the Labour administration to pay up. In fact, Plaid are in a 'cooperation agreement' with Labour in the Senedd.

We had a good response inviting strikers to come with us to the NSSN conference in London on 24 June. The strike continues on 7 June, and 12-13 July.



Cardiff PHOTO: JOE FATALLAH



Swansea PHOTO: ALEC THRAVES

Thousands of students take universities to court

Build a mass struggle for fully funded free education

THEO SHARIEFF
SOCIALIST STUDENTS NATIONAL ORGANISER

Nearly 1,000 students at University College London have brought a legal group claim against the university to the high court. They are demanding compensation for disruption to teaching on the campus owing to the Covid pandemic and ongoing university strike action. Students are angry at the state of further education with crammed lecture theatres, and overworked and underpaid staff. And at the end of it all, thousands of pounds worth of debt. A small expression of that anger is the 100,000 students reported to have registered their interest to make similar claims at other universities. The organisation making the legal challenge, Student Group Claim, estimates students could get as much as £5,000 compensation. If the claim is successful, demand will grow for all students to be compensated, and across institutions. Socialist Students backs the calls

for students' tuition fees to be refunded in full, and fights for free education and a cancellation of student debt. We fight for a fully publicly funded university education for all those who want to access it. **Disruption** Students have faced disruption to their education over the last period owing to university workers taking industrial action. This disruption is not the responsibility of striking workers, but of university managements and the Tories who have carried through vicious attacks to the pay and conditions of university workers. And therefore to the quality of education students receive. Faced with paying out large sums in compensation, university bosses, some paid as much as £714,000 a year, will say it is unaffordable. To those bosses who threaten course closures, pay cuts, pension attacks or administration, we say: 'Open the books!' Let us see the real state of our universities' finances by opening

them up to inspection by trade unions and democratically elected worker and student representatives. A collective fight of university workers and students is needed to win full funding from the weak and divided Tory government. Demands must also be put on an incoming Labour government to return to its 2019 manifesto pledge promising free education. The tuition fee funding model has spelt disaster for students and university staff alike. Socialist Students calls for a mass struggle to win free education – the scrapping of fees, introduction of living grants available for all students, and the cancellation of all student debt. We also call for the democratic running of our universities and campuses by elected bodies of campus trade unions, students and wider society. We would be able to collectively make decisions about how the higher education system could be run for the benefit of students, staff and us all, not in the interests of the Tories and the bosses.



PHOTO: MARY FINCH

Secretary of State gives nod for Merseyside toxic medical waste incinerator

NEILL DUNNE
STOP THE SIMONSWOOD INCINERATOR CAMPAIGN AND SOCIALIST PARTY

Secretary of State Michael Gove has given the green light for the Simonswood medical waste incinerator in spite of huge local opposition. Stop the Simonswood incinerator campaign group has urged a judicial review regarding the needless approval of a medical waste incinerator. This incinerator will spew out toxic substances that affect the lives of residents in a ten-mile radius. Similar plants have seen an increase in respiratory problems, cancers and environmental issues in the surrounding area. (see 'Campaigners to seek judicial review in fight against Lancashire incinerator' on socialistparty.org.uk) Nobody in the immediate vicinity of the plant wants or supports this plant being built. Local residents supported the anti-incinerator campaign, descending on Kirkby for meetings, leafleting and marches. The towns of Kirkby, Melling, Bickerstaff, Aughton and Rainford rallied against the planning application, only for Lancashire County Council planning committee to ultimately approve it. After multiple delays we were told that members of the public would not be able to attend or express disagreement at the planning committee. Eventually the committee did take place, but the campaign was limited to only 15 objections to the plans. The committee approved the incinerator with a vote of four to three with two abstentions. Not being deterred, Stop the Simonswood Campaign wrote to the Secretary of State to "call-in" the decision because the objections to it are so strong. We have waited for half a year for the news to come through that the Secretary has accepted the application process as reasonable and allowed the council to continue with the process. This was a huge disappointment for the campaign but we will fight on. Next steps could include a judicial review by neighbouring council, Knowsley. The fight continues.



Yorkshire conference brimming with confidence

LEAH BYATT
SHEFFIELD SOUTH EAST SOCIALIST PARTY

The Socialist Party regional conference for Yorkshire and the Humber, was hosted in Sheffield on Saturday 3 June. 65 people attended from across the region. Socialist Party general secretary Hannah Sell kick-started the day with an invigorating speech introducing a discussion on perspectives for Britain. The talk covered the current state of the British economy, and how we as socialists should prepare and organise ourselves against a seemingly inevitable Starmer-led government. The discussion heard contributions which highlighted how food banks in the region are seeing

shortages of stock and demands for local councils to focus on food provisions for struggling communities. We also heard various members report the activity they are undertaking in their respective trade unions, to encourage rank-and-file workers to place pressure on union leaders to continue battling for better pay and working conditions. This included mobilising grassroots campaigns like NHS Workers Say No. Three workshops were held in the afternoon on recruiting people to the Socialist Party, running effective campaign stalls, and on the fight for a new mass workers' party. All three workshops helped attendees in confidence and welcomed suggestions on how to campaign effectively. Regional secretary Iain Dalton

A fantastic engaging event with lots to learn and advice to take back to building our Socialist Party branches
Paul, Wakefield

rounded off the day with a discussion on building the Socialist Party in the region. We discussed campaigning amongst young people and the student movement in preparation for universities reopening in September. And how branches can best prioritise their work to win more people to the Socialist Party's ideas. The fighting fund appeal raised £1290.70 and 21 members agreed to increase their membership subs. The conference comes after a year of growth for branches within the region and established a clear strategy for the year ahead.

Help fund the fightback
DONATE
socialistparty.org.uk/donate



Socialist Party campaigners in Bristol

Donate to the fight for a socialist world

ISAI MARJERLA
SOCIALIST PARTY TREASURER

Capitalism gives you thousands of reasons for feeling down and making you feel like you can't change a thing. But we in the Socialist Party have a programme and ideas to change the world we live in. Everyone reading the Socialist can play help play a role in the socialist transformation of society. So that instead of struggling to survive, we could all live to our full potential. There is enough wealth to solve the many crises facing working-class and young people, but that wealth is concentrated in the hands of a few super-rich capitalists and big businesses - whose profits have been increasing. We say take the wealth off the super-rich, to use the resources as part of a plan to provide jobs, homes and services for all. Bring these big businesses into public ownership to be run democratically under workers' control and management. Workers are fighting back. We are seeing a new layer of workers taking their first strike action. And fresh campaigners are fighting on issues including ending the housing crisis, saving the NHS, for free education and more funding for our vital services. The Socialist Party is proud to stand in solidarity with all those

taking strike action and involved in the struggle to improve our living standards. We have carried articles written by workers involved in numerous struggles. Socialist Party members have taken part in rallies, protests and demonstrations for an inflation-proof pay rise for all. Every quarter the Socialist Party has a target to raise £25,000 so that we have the tools to produce our weekly paper, monthly in-depth Marxist analysis in the Socialism Today magazine, and materials such as leaflets and pamphlets to help take the ideas of socialism to a broader audience. The current quarter ends on 2 July. We have so far raised £15,932, from donations we have received through public activities and fundraising. At the Socialist Party's recent South West conference, £4,310 was raised during the finance appeal, and Yorkshire regional conference raised £1,290. Our members and supporters are based in the working class, and the donations we receive are a financial sacrifice. We want to thank all the donations we have received. We also want to thank all those that have contributed towards the £15,000 IT Upgrade Appeal. This ensures that the Socialist Party will have the necessary funds to upgrade the IT 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. (see 'Donate to help our party play its role in the fight for socialism' at socialistparty.org.uk)



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



Neill campaigning against the incinerator

Why I joined the Socialist Party

RYAN LYDDALL
SURREY SOCIALIST PARTY

I hadn't been involved in any political groups before joining the Socialist Party. My voting history was limited, sticking to Labour as they seemed like the best option. Everything changed during lockdown, when I immersed myself in political theory, fuelled by my passion for philosophy and a book on politics gifted to me by my A-level teacher. Over the following years, my burgeoning interest evolved into an all-consuming obsession. All I would read were books exploring leftist theories. It took a while before I could articulate my political position, I knew I was some sort of leftist but couldn't get more specific. As my confidence grew, I began engaging in conversations with those around me. Friends, family - anyone who would listen. But despite these discussions, I battled with a sense of helplessness. My knowledge of the system felt like a burden, not a gift. I understood what was wrong with the world but

felt powerless to effect meaningful change. Things began to change this January. An Instagram story promoting an emergency protest organised by the Enough is Enough campaign caught my attention. Finally, I found myself presented with an opportunity to make some sort of contribution to a greater cause. The next week I journeyed into London and upon arrival was hit with an initial wave of disappointment at the seemingly small crowd. But, as the crowd grew my disappointment was replaced with hope. It was during this protest I encountered a stall promoting the Socialist Party's mission to replace capitalism with a fairer system. I approached the man behind the stall and asked him some questions. A few minutes later, I had given my contact information so that someone from a local branch could contact me. True to his word, I received a call the following week from a local Socialist Party member. He answered some questions, and the week after that I met him in person as I attended my first meeting. Being in a room full of like-minded individuals with a shared goal of ending capitalism was an incredible experience that left an indelible mark on me. At the end of the meeting, I eagerly enquired about properly becoming a member, and a couple days later, I was signed up. Witnessing the growth of the party, and the impact of our collective efforts, has been inspiring. I take pride in the role I've played thus far. The weight of despair I carried for years, disheartened by the state of the world, has been replaced by confidence that the working class can change society. Since January, I've found myself surrounded by an extraordinary community of like-minded individuals and engaged in endeavours I never thought myself capable of.



Socialist Party members campaigning in South London

JOIN THE SOCIALISTS
socialistparty.org.uk/join

£1 / £2 solidarity price

socialistparty.org.uk



the Socialist

Issue 1230

8-14 June 2023

formerly **Militant**



ORGANISE TO DEFEAT TORY ANTI-UNION LAWS COME TO NSSN CONFERENCE

11am – 4.30pm, 24 June at Conway Hall, London. Registration fee £6

Confirmed speakers so far: NIPSA General Secretary Carmel Gates, BFAWU General Secretary Sarah Woolley, POA General Secretary Steve Gillan, NAPO National Official Annoesjka Valent, GMB Officer Gary Palmer from the victorious #GMBthree

On 21 June it will have been a year since the first national rail strike by RMT members took the already-developing strike wave to the next level. Twelve months on and over 3 million working days have been lost to strikes, according to the government's own figures.

The strike wave has transformed things. Many workers, especially younger workers who have never seen strikes on this scale, are seeing for the first time a means to fight back – and it terrifies the Tories.

2016's set of anti-trade union laws were designed to make nationwide strike action more difficult, some hesitant trade union leaders said near-impossible. But in their hundreds of thousands, rank-and-file union members have voted for strikes – smashing through the 50% turnout thresholds. Picket lines, supposedly limited by law to six people, in many cases have swelled to scores and hundreds.

The latest, very serious attack, Rishi Sunak's Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Bill, is another attempt by a desperate and divided Tory government to stop strikes. The law, which in a matter of weeks will be rubber stamped by the king, gives employers the power to serve a 'work notice' to identify people required to work to achieve a 'minimum level of service'. Failure to comply by a trade union or worker removes existing protections from being sued for damages or dismissal.

These laws can be resisted and defeated. There is no better time for rank-and-file trade union activists to get together, get organised and develop a fighting strategy to beat back the Tories. This year's National Shop Stewards Network (NSSN) conference comes at a crucial time. Join the discussion in London on 24 June.

• In the pages of the Socialist, workers and activists say why they are coming to this year's NSSN conference. RMT p11 - UCU p4-5 - Amazon (GMB) p7



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

