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the Socialist

Issue 1231

15-21 June 2023

formerly **Militant**

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- **Build a new mass workers' party**

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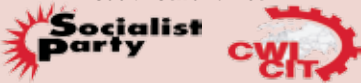
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“The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it.”
Karl Marx

Labour's climate betrayal

DAVE MURRAY
EASTERN REGION SOCIALIST PARTY SECRETARY

March's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report made for grim reading. “Finance flows fall short of the levels needed to meet climate goals.”

So bond traders and global investors cheered to learn that Labour's shadow chancellor, Rachel Reeves, decided that it is now Labour policy to ignore these warnings. Reeves has abandoned a 2021 pledge to invest £28 billion per year in green projects from year one of a Labour government.

It was already a retreat from Jeremy Corbyn's 2019 manifesto. That pledged a £250 billion green transformation fund. It also included a commitment to a publicly owned national grid, and for at least the supply arms of the big six energy companies to be brought into public ownership.

Warnings

Incredibly, Reeves describes the decision as a refusal to be reckless. This in the teeth of warnings from the climate report that failure to take timely action will result in “compound and cascading risks” of “irreversible and abrupt changes” to the systems that sustain life for billions of humans. In the UK alone, the daily death toll due to the July 2022 heatwave was 253 among over-65s.

The Labour Party has bowed its knee to the vulture capitalists of the global financial sector, who hold 30% of UK government debt.

Mike Riddell, global bond fund manager of Allianz Global Investors, said: “Any additional unexpected

borrowing risks another gilt melt-down”. This is a mealy-mouthed way of saying that, if a UK government attempts to use its position as an issuer of debt and currency to protect people from climate change, the market makers and financial predators will unleash their weapons of mass destruction and bring it to heel.

As Liz Truss last year, John Major in 1992 and Jim Callaghan in 1976 found out, these financial terrorists are quite prepared to execute their hostages. Who are their hostages? We are.

The £28 billion of green investments would not be enough. According to the Committee on Climate Change, up to 2% of UK GDP would be needed to achieve net zero by 2050 – over £60 billion.

Nationalise

If the working class was in charge of the financial system – through nationalisation of the banks and the institution of capital controls – all this would be possible.

Global climate catastrophe means millions of deaths through famine, plagues and war, which would come in its train. The climate report says massive gains in quality of life are available as part of an equitable programme of adaptation and mitigation of climate change.

“There is sufficient global capital to close the global investment gaps,” it says, “but there are barriers to redirect capital to climate actions”. The UK's Labour Party is clearly one of them.

WHAT'S YOUR VIEW?

editors@socialistparty.org.uk

‘Last Corbynista in power’ blocked from standing for Labour

ELAINE BRUNSKILL
TYNE AND WEAR SOCIALIST PARTY

Described as the ‘last Corbynista in power’, Jamie Driscoll is currently the North of Tyne mayor. He has been blocked by Keir Starmer's Labour Party from being longlisted as a Labour candidate for the new combined North East mayor.

This anti-democratic move had been widely expected. Nonetheless, it still has shocked and angered many in our region and beyond. Right-wing Labour politicians have been wheeled out to try to justify their spurious grounds for blocking Driscoll.

Ken Loach

Driscoll's exclusion has been linked to an on-stage appearance with left-wing film director Ken Loach. Some of his films are set in the north east, including ‘I, Daniel Blake’.

Ken Loach is held in high regard. Many are bemused that there is a problem with Driscoll attending such an event.

Starmer's lackeys insinuate Ken Loach has been expelled from the Labour Party because of his views on antisemitism. But Ken Loach wasn't expelled for antisemitism. He was

expelled as part of a purge of Jeremy Corbyn supporters.

Unite, currently Labour's biggest union donor, has condemned the move, alongside the Fire Brigades Union and others. Sharon Graham, Unite general secretary, said: “What is emerging from Labour is a pattern of behaviour to literally take out any MP or mayor who backs key manifestos on the renationalisation of energy, action on rampant profiteering, and investment in UK steel”.

Starmer's Labour

The Labour Party is now firmly back in the hands of the right wing, having sharply veered away from Corbyn's pro-worker policies. There is no room for the left in Starmer's Labour Party.

On Twitter, it has been reported there has been a mass walkout from the Newcastle Labour Party nomination meeting. That's good, so long as they don't walk straight back in when none of this is resolved.

The Socialist Party says this event shows the need to build a new mass workers' party. Driscoll should stand as a mayoral candidate outside the Labour Party, and as part of workers' list with Jeremy Corbyn and others in the next general election.



Climate protesters outside the Cop26 summit in Glasgow RYAN ALDRED



Workers in Newcastle striking together on 15 March ELAINE BRUNSKILL

The starting point of their programme could be Corbyn's 2019 manifesto and refusing to implement Tory cuts. The unions who have denounced Labour for blocking Driscoll could look towards financing such candidates.

Any move in this direction would have the potential to light up the sky, acting as a focus for workers and young people who are fed up with the Tories, and increasingly disillusioned with Starmer's Labour.

BORIS JOHNSON RESIGNATION RE-ESCALATES TORY CIVIL WAR

Socialist Party WHAT WE THINK

“U nite or die” because our party is facing an “existential threat”, Rishi Sunak warned the Tories nine months ago when he first became their leader and therefore - without the electorate being given any say in the matter - prime minister. Compared to the open warfare of the previous months, Sunak did oversee a brief lull in inter-Tory hostilities. But that short period is now a distant memory, and dying, if not immediately, is a far more likely perspective for the Tories than uniting. This should give confidence to all workers that this Tory government can be defeated.

Boris Johnson, prime minister just nine months ago, is no longer even a Tory MP. He resigned with showers of invective against the supposed “witch hunt in revenge for Brexit” by the “kangaroo court” of the Tory-majority Parliamentary Privileges Committee. Its report was clearly going to recommend that he be suspended from parliament for more than ten days, opening the likelihood of a recall petition and Johnson facing a by-election.

Johnson vs Sunak

Most of Johnson’s letter, however, was aimed not at the Privileges Committee but Sunak and his cabinet for not being “a properly Conservative government”. He has followed up with a broadside against Sunak for “talking rubbish” over just how many of Johnson’s cronies should be rewarded for their crimes with a sinecure in the House of Lords. On the other side, Tory MPs have laid into Johnson, accusing him of “mutiny” and demanding he “shut up and go away”.

Meanwhile Johnson’s resignation - along with two of his closest allies - has left the Tory Party with three parliamentary by-elections and the possibility, given the party’s dire poll ratings, that they could lose all of them. The Tories are busy tearing each other to shreds, fighting over who is to blame for the mess they are in, and starting to position themselves for the splits and realignments that will certainly take place beyond the general election, and maybe before.

Every one of the combatants in this war bears responsibility for the crimes of the Tories over the last thirteen years. Johnson’s goose was finally cooked by the mass disgust over his partying while the country was in lockdown, and his blatant lies about it. It is not only the Johnson wing of



“”
The Tories are busy tearing each other to shreds, fighting over who is to blame for the mess they are in

the Tories, however, that faces public fury for their crimes during the pandemic - from handing out cash to companies run by their mates, to allowing the virus to lay waste to care homes. It is not a coincidence that Johnson made a show of publicly handing over WhatsApp messages to the Covid Inquiry that the Cabinet Office had refused to release: he was deliberately highlighting Sunak’s fear of what would come out, including over his ‘Eat Out to Help Out’ scheme.

At root, the Tories growing disintegration is a result of the deep and growing crisis of ailing British capitalism. The result is misery for the big majority of the population and growing hatred of this government. Spending on consumer-facing services is currently 10% below pre-pandemic levels, reflecting a brutal fall in living standards. The Office for Budget Responsibility is now predicting that real household income per head will still be below pre-pandemic levels in 2027-28.

Inflation is the highest of any developed economy except Turkey. The mortgage market is already in turmoil and the value of UK government debt (gilts) this week fell lower than during the Truss fiasco. Meanwhile, the NHS is stretched beyond breaking point. Clearly, Sunak intends the general election to take place on or probably after the May 2024 local elections. Despite his intentions, however, it is not impossible that

coming events could force him to go earlier.

It is this reality that will motivate the majority to vote the Tories out of office at the next election, rather than the mantra of ‘fiscal responsibility’ (in reality doing the bidding of the finance markets) being spouted by the latest incarnation of New Labour. While most of those who vote Labour will be doing so without any enthusiasm, it is a different story for the capitalist elite. The majority of them are now firmly of the view that Starmer’s New Labour will be better able to defend the interests of British capitalism than their historic party, the Tories.

Johnson and his allies’ Trumpesque right-populist tub thumping damages the institutions of British capitalism without any thought for the consequences for their system. Johnson’s attempt to reward his mates with peerages, and the resulting row, has further undermined the authority of the unelected House of Lords, which for the capitalist class is an important tool which could be used to try and block a future democratically elected socialist government.

Tory MP, and previous Tory Chair, Jake Berry tweeted in response to Johnson’s resignation: “You voted for Brexit - the establishment blocked it. You voted for @BorisJohnson - the establishment has forced him out. Who is in charge here... The voters or the blob?” By ‘the blob’ the

PHOTO: NUMBER 10/CC

Johnsonites mean the unelected civil service, another vital tool for the capitalist class in attempting to block a future left government, which Johnson and co. openly undermine.

Of course, Berry is also correct to say that the capitalist establishment want rid of Johnson, because he is such an extremely unreliable representative of their interests. But nor is Sunak, atop a warring and increasingly demoralised parliamentary party, able to consistently put the wider interests of the capitalist system ahead of the sectional concerns of the Tory Party. While he brought a few months of relative calm, he has also been prepared, for example, to risk the Northern Ireland Protocol, and more broadly greater cooperation with the EU, by pushing ahead with his government’s racist and repressive ‘small boats’ legislation, which is in conflict with the European Court of Human Rights. He is doing so in order to pacify his own backbenches and in the hope of winning a few more votes.

While no amount of racist rhetoric will prevent electoral disaster for the Tories, it can have an effect on increasing racism. It is clear that an incoming Starmer government will face a right-populist opposition party, possibly more than one. Nigel Farage is already claiming he is in ‘talks’ with Johnson. No doubt Johnson prefers to dream of a future comeback as Tory leader than bother with the ‘small fry’ of the Reform Party or its ilk. Whatever happens, there will still be many right-populists inside the parliamentary Tory party after the general election.

Starmer’s Labour

The bosses’ newspaper, the Financial Times, recently ran a three-part series of articles praising Starmer’s Labour and emphasising how thoroughly he had “consolidated control by sidelining the hard left and taking over party machinery”. The final part of the trilogy, however, warned that, unlike Blair in 1997, Starmer would face “a mess” of “high-debt, disappointing growth and struggling public services”. Clearly the Financial Times trusts Starmer to act in the interests of their class when dealing with this mess. Conversely, we can be confident he will not act in the interests of our class: the working-class majority. As discontent at Starmer’s austerity politics grows under the next government, the populist right will try to make gains.

What is needed to cut across that is for the working class to build its own party, with a socialist programme that fights against racism and in defence of the whole of the working class.

Just four years ago, in 2019, the capitalist elite united behind Johnson - putting aside their doubts about him - in order to defeat Jeremy Corbyn and his anti-austerity programme. Four years on, and both Corbyn and Johnson are out of their parliamentary parties. The capitalist class have found a way out of their crisis of political representation, created by the meltdown of their traditional party, by turning to Starmer’s New Labour, with its left wing driven out.

That leaves the working class with no political voice and it is urgent that begins to change. A workers’ list in the general election, with candidates from across the trade unions that have been involved in strike action, would be an important first step to prepare for what is to come.

Q&A: Tory Strikes (Minimum Service Level) Bill, and how to fight it

The Tories are bringing in a bill which could force unions and striking workers to implement a 'minimum service level' during industrial action. We spoke to **Rob Williams**, Socialist Party industrial organiser, about what the bill means and how we fight it.

WHAT DOES MINIMUM SERVICE LEVEL ACTUALLY MEAN, AND WHAT NEW POWERS WILL THE LAW GIVE THE GOVERNMENT AND EMPLOYERS?

The Tories are trying to argue that it will ensure that, in the sectors that they've defined, there will be a minimum level of workers in a workplace during strike action, despite the fact that unions have jumped through the hoops of the most undemocratic and restrictive anti-union legislation in Western Europe already.

They are now trying to argue that it's about service to the public, but actually it's a very serious attack on trade union rights. It means a government minister can use executive powers to set an arbitrary minimum service level in an attempt to undermine strikes.

Employers will be able to issue work notices, detailing which workers need to work during industrial action. Failure to comply with a work notice will leave unions and their members without legal protection from being sued for damages or dismissal.

It will give the employers the opportunity to, in effect, compel unions to organise their own strike-breaking operations. However, while the employer 'may' issue work notices, there is no legal obligation on them to do so.

WHAT SECTORS ARE GOING TO BE COVERED BY IT?

At the moment, the government has stipulated six sectors: health, education, fire and rescue, transport, border security, and nuclear

decommissioning and radioactive waste management services. But obviously, once the precedent is established, then the danger is that the law could be changed in the future to apply to all industrial action. So that's why this is not just an issue for the unions in those individual sectors, but the whole trade union movement.

In Boris Johnson's Queen's Speech, after he won the election in December 2019, he talked about new anti-union laws against transport workers. Since then it's been widened to incorporate more workers, as the Tories desperately looked for ways to hold back workers as the strike wave became more generalised.

WHAT COULD THE CONSEQUENCES BE FOR TRADE UNIONS AND THEIR MEMBERS FALLING FOUL OF THE NEW LEGISLATION?

In the law, failure to "take reasonable steps" to comply with a work notice removes trade unions' protection from being sued for damages and workers' protections from dismissal. That could include, although the legislation does not say so, a union 'advising' a member of a work notice also 'advising' them of their contracted right to self-certify as sick. Ultimately, trade unions could be under the threat of action for damages, fines or sequestration of funds. And that's why, for the trade union movement, the preparations are urgent. That's why the NSSN conference, which is taking place in the middle of all this, is such an important focal point. It will be a major theme of the conference.



PHOTO: PAUL MATTSOON

But ultimately, class struggle always decides. We are totally opposed to this and all anti-union legislation. But like everything, what the Tories get away with depends on the movement. We believe that the trade union movement can defeat these laws, they aren't being brought in by a powerful government. This is a weak, divided, and crisis-torn Tory government.

The Tories ability to bring in this law and implement it depends on the capability of the working class and the trade union movement to fight back. The Socialist Party, when we were Militant, played the leading role in defeating the poll tax in the 1990s. It was brought into law by Margaret Thatcher, but defeated by organised mass non-payment.

Ted Heath, former Conservative prime minister, brought in the Industrial Relations Act in the early 1970s. That became law, but was defeated by a mass movement. In reality it was the mass strike action, building towards general strike action by the trade union movement in defence of five London dockers that were jailed in Pentonville Prison, which dealt a fatal blow to that legislation.

AN INCOMING LABOUR GOVERNMENT REPEALED THE INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS ACT IN THE 1970S. KEIR STARMER HAS PROMISED TO REPEAL THIS LATEST ANTI-TRADE UNION LAW. BUT WHAT WOULD YOU SAY TO LABOUR POLITICIANS ABOUT WHAT THEY CAN DO TO BACK UP THE TRADE UNIONS NOW?

Well first of all with Starmer, unsurprisingly a lot of trade union activists will be totally underwhelmed by and suspicious of his promises. This is the man that has retreated on whole parts of Labour policy since replacing Jeremy Corbyn as Labour leader.

We believe all anti-union legislation should be repealed by an incoming Labour government, including that which Blair and Brown shamefully left on the statute books for 13 years of New Labour government.

There is already a Labour government in Wales, which has gone on record as saying that it is opposed to this legislation. But that's not good enough. We demand that it publicly announces that, not only is it opposed to the legislation, but it will not enforce the legislation, and not issue work notices. The same goes for other Labour authorities - such as regional transport, fire and local education authorities. And Starmer should guarantee that an incoming Labour government in Westminster would reverse any attacks on unions and workers - fines and dismissals. In fact just these simple acts could make the whole unthought-through minimum

services legislation inoperable.

IF A TRADE UNION IS FINED, OR IS TAKEN TO COURT, OR A WORKER IS SACKED, WHAT KIND OF RESPONSE IS NEEDED?

This is the key question because while it's absolutely essential to put demands on Starmer and Labour authorities, governments, and councils, in reality, the trade union movement also has to rely on its own strength. This is a general attack on the whole trade union movement. It might only be six sectors for now but might not be forever.

The whole trade union movement must come to the aid of any union and any worker that is attacked. If a trade union refused to comply with a work notice, and it was taken to court for damages arising from its strike action, we would call for an emergency mass demonstration outside of the court.

Similarly, if any workers are sacked, there should be a demonstration. But that would only be a first step. It would need to be part of a mobilisation for mass coordinated strike action. We would demand an emergency meeting of the TUC general council, discussing strike action, including a 24-hour general strike.

Now, before the law has been applied, there should be a national Saturday demonstration called to make the whole of the trade union movement aware of what is taking place and prepare for the action that will be needed.

Because of the cost-of-living crisis and strike wave, it is apparent to every worker why this legislation is coming in. It is the Tories trying to limit the ability of the working class and trade union movement to fight against the cost-of-living squeeze.

This fight against trade union rights is not in the abstract. It's clear to more and more workers that the right to strike is an absolute necessity to win pay rises to keep the roof over the heads of their families.

The strike wave has shown the working-class movement is back, younger workers are being drawn into the struggle. This is a desperate move by the Tories; actually some of the more farsighted representatives of capitalism, like some in the House of Lords, proposed a number of amendments to take the guts out of the legislation, because they understand the level of anger that this could lead to.

We believe that working-class people are showing us every day of the week that they're prepared to fight. And we don't think that they are just going to accept this brutal legislation, and that they are prepared to fight it.

nationalshopstewardsnetwork

UNITE MUJ NAPO RMT GMB ECU ESWU

NSSN CONFERENCE 2023

Discussions to include:

HOW WE FIGHT THE ANTI-UNION LAWS

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

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

Homelessness workers vote for indefinite action

Victory to the Mungo's strikers!



Protests and picket lines
LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY



Cornwall concrete drivers sick of being put through the mixer

ROB ROONEY
CORNWALL SOCIALIST PARTY

Readymix concrete drivers, sick of being put through the mixer by an arrogant employer, are striking for union recognition.

The Maen Karne company is a familiar site in Cornwall. Formerly family-owned, it was sold to an outfit called GRS, and the bullying culture and reneging on terms and conditions began.

The ten Readymix drivers, all of whom have given years of service, members of Unite, sought union recognition but, according to one striker, the firm blanked them.

"We approached them about eight months ago for recognition but they completely ignored us. Only two of us have ever been out on strike before but people have had enough. It reached a point where we either put up or shut up.

"In the yard we look at them driving in with their £70-80,000 Jags and BMWs. We've just had a pay rise to £12.50 an hour. We were on £11.56 before, with two bonuses for time-keeping and safe driving worth £1.20 an hour. Now, with the pay rise, they've taken 10p per hour off each bonus so we're paying for our own pay rise."

The firm has also squeezed sick pay.

This is an important dispute for Cornwall, with Maen Karne bussing in scab drivers, reportedly costing the company £700 a day each. The drivers are six weeks into their action, having struck for 13 days so far. They have another two weeks of strike action lined up from 19 June.

SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBERS IN LONDON AND IN UNITE HOUSING WORKERS' BRANCH

Homelessness workers at St Mungo's, members of the Unite housing workers branch, are on strike in response to a pitiful 'offer' of 1.75%.

Following an unproductive meeting with the Mungo's CEO on 12 June, a members' meeting attended by a record 276 people voted overwhelmingly to move to indefinite strike action. All members present bar one voted to escalate action, and 70% voted for indefinite action! There is a clear mood and a bitter determination amongst members to see this through to the end.

This places a special responsibility on Unite and other trade unions to enthusiastically back this dispute. It is vital that we link this dispute up with other workers' struggles. A victory would have an extremely positive effect on the whole movement.

Over ten years, frontline workers' pay has fallen by 25%. Meanwhile, senior management's share of the pie has grown. Mungo's executives' salaries have risen by 77%. The CEO

said that she thought Unite's planned strike action was "disproportionate"!

Mungo's should pay the 10% increase that workers demand. We say open the accounts to trade union inspection - no trust in the board's management of our resources.

In fighting for a decent pay rate, Unite members are also fighting to defend homelessness services. Even government figures say homelessness is on the increase, up by 26% over the last year but funding is down. Fight for the public funding the service needs!

Picket lines

Strikers are learning the importance of picket lines to build the strength of the strike among members and win more to the union. Throughout the dispute the number of picket lines has gone up, and the success of those pickets has further boosted confidence of victory.

The escalation of the dispute requires an even more intense effort on the picket line to prevent agency and locum workers from crossing the picket lines.

It also requires a further effort to turn around some workers who may

have been sitting on the fence up to now.

One rep described the growth in support at a project he visited: "In the first week, no one was out. By the end of that week, one person was out. Now everyone is out."

An agency worker discussed with the Unite branch organiser, and as a result told the agency not to send him back to St Mungo's. Picket lines are vital to build the strike and give strikers a forum to discuss tactics. There must be maximum participation of members in discussing tactics and next steps.

Mungo's projects are located in areas where commissioning authorities are run by the Greens or Labour. These authorities have power. Labour and Green politicians often say that workers should not have to bear the brunt of the cost-of-living crisis.

Here is a chance for them to be good to their word, and demand that the workers in services which they commission should receive inflation-based pay increases. We say kick out the chief executive and board - run homelessness services as public services under democratic workers' control. But Labour and Green

councils fail to fight the Tory government for the funding necessary.

Under Starmer, Labour offers no alternative. Corbyn's supporters and policies are being ruthlessly purged. Starmer doesn't support the strikes, and scrapping Corbyn's manifesto pledges on council housing is disastrous for homelessness. Strikers don't have a political voice.

That's why Socialist Party members are pushing for debates on workers' political representation at this year's trade union conferences. 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. The Socialist Party campaigns for a new mass workers' party and puts demands on the trade unions to take steps towards its creation.

● Send messages of support and requests for speakers to info@housingworkers.org.uk

● Send union branch donations to the strike fund to Unite Housing Workers LE/1111 Branch, account number 20040626, sort code 60 83 01, reference 'St Mungo's hardship fund'

Unite Executive Council – a warning to the left

The Socialist Party has published a statement online by 27 supporters of Unite general secretary Sharon Graham's manifesto, who have been elected on to the union's Executive Council (EC).

It is an explanation of the manoeuvres by the 'Members First' (MF) bloc, which currently holds a tiny majority, at the first meeting of the new EC. They pressed ahead with the election of a chair and membership of the Finance & General Purposes Committee (F&GPC) against the wishes of an almost equal number of executive councillors.

The methods used by the MF group, which includes the misnamed 'United Left', is a further warning that conservative elements in Unite want to row back on the militant industrial strategy that has developed since Sharon Graham's election in 2021. This has seen over 800 disputes across the private and public sectors,

of which over 80% have been successful, with £350 million won for members.

In addition, MF is aware that the union has also been prepared to challenge Starmer's Labour at national and local level. Sharon has recently demanded that Labour take the energy companies into democratic public ownership.

In 2022, Coventry bin workers faced down the brutal strike-breaking tactics of the Labour council after a seven-month struggle. The first policy conference under Sharon's leadership in 2021 passed a motion, initiated by Socialist Party members, that means that it is official Unite policy to call on Labour

councils to refuse to implement Tory cuts, and instead pass no-cuts needs budgets.

These events confirm the warning we made prior to the EC elections. These advances are under threat from what constitutes a new right wing in the union.

It is why the Socialist Party has long argued that a new rank-and-file led broad left needs to be built in Unite, to bring together those members determined to fight to maintain Unite as a fighting union.

● Read the statement at 'Unite Executive Council – a warning to the left' at socialistparty.org.uk.

Leeds Sulzer Pumps strike

IAIN DALTON
LEEDS SOCIALIST PARTY

Unite members at Sulzer pumps were out in force for the first of a series of Friday strikes until 7 July, called in their dispute over pay with the company. Making high-performance pumps, including for oil rigs, the Leeds site alone is projected to bring in over £20 million in profit this year.

Despite this, the company is only offering a below-inflation 6.5% pay increase and a £275 lump sum. Meanwhile RPI inflation is above 11%.

As with many other workplaces, lots of workers had not been on strike before, with the last strike at Sulzer being in the 1980s. Last year the workforce came close to taking strike action over pay, but a further year into the cost-of-living crisis, workers are determined to win a better pay offer.

As part of the 'Back to the Workplace' policy of Sharon Graham, the workplace now has its own branch. They had given their support to striking ambulance workers across the road from the factory, and now ambulances tooted support at the Sulzer picket line.

Why I'm going to NSSN conference

“Every transport worker should attend”

GARY HARBORD
LONDON UNDERGROUND RMT MEMBER

The NSSN conference is an important event that every transport worker should try to attend.

At a time when we are facing historic attacks on our pay, terms and conditions, it is vital that the trade union movement steps up to the plate.

RMT members across 14 Train Operating Companies (TOCs) are continuing their battle against job cuts and to secure a decent pay rise.

On London Underground we are preparing to escalate strike action in defence of our pensions and terms and conditions.

The NSSN was initiated by the RMT, and is a vital platform for bringing workers together to discuss and prepare for coordinated action.

At a time when TOCs are paying out hundreds of millions of pounds

2023 NSSN conference

nationalshop stewardsnetwork

Saturday 24 June
Conway Hall, London
11am-4.30pm
Attendance fee £6
shopstewards.net



in share dividends, I urge all transport workers to attend the conference and to show solidarity with all striking workers.



RMT members on strike BRISTOL SOCIALIST PARTY

“A new layer of militants”

AMANDA
NEU MEMBER

The recent strike wave has galvanised a new layer of industrial militants. In February this year, 50,000 new members joined my union, the National Education Union. Many people, including myself, have stepped up to become reps.

Support staff in schools have overwhelmingly voted yes to strike

action in their preliminary ballot. Discussing the way forward and coordinating strike action with other unions is crucial. This task is all the more vital, given the need to prepare a fightback against the anti-union laws.

This is why I am attending the NSSN conference: to stand in solidarity with the union struggles taking place across industries, and to discuss how strike action can be coordinated and stepped up.



LAURENCE DUNN
STAINES SOCIALIST PARTY

The number of people waiting for NHS care has reached over 7.3 million, the most the NHS has ever had.

A few months ago I was diagnosed, after years of being passed from pillar-to-post, with complex post-traumatic stress. It is hard enough dealing with symptoms, without the added stress of knowing I will not have access to proper treatment for three years, alongside multiple-year waits for other tests.

There are even regular problems in getting medication too. For those of us dealing with these delays to vital care, the prospects can be grim.

Long waiting lists have contributed to excess deaths. Tory austerity and privatisation have failed.

Privatisation

But Wes Streeting, Labour shadow health secretary, said that an in-bound Labour government will use privatisation to reduce waiting times. That's a ridiculous remark. Waiting times for treatment at A&E and for ambulances have increased since privatisation was introduced into the NHS.

It is important that service users vocally support striking nurses, doctors, and all workers who participate in the running of the NHS, and their demands. These are the people who

provide the service, and without them, there would be no NHS.

Underfunding, and poor wages and conditions are a political choice by the Tory government that impacts the effectiveness of the service, the lives of people working in it and the lives of people who rely on it.

The Socialist Party fights to kick all private companies out of the NHS, and to nationalise the pharmaceutical industry. By creating a socialist NHS that is free at the point of use, democratically managed by workers and service users – we can begin to provide the healthcare that working-class people deserve and reduce waiting times too.

Private health pays pro-privatisation MPs

IAN HUNTER
DERBY SOCIALIST PARTY

EveryDoctor is a doctor-led campaign group fighting for the NHS. It believes that “privatisation harms patients”.

The group monitors the effects of privatisation and outsourcing, and also the links between MPs and the private healthcare industry. EveryDoctor has revealed payments to MPs from private healthcare providers.

Conservative MP John Redwood topped the list, receiving almost £700,000 between 2020 and 2023. He receives his money from Charles

Stanley Wealth Managers – fund managers and investors in private health providers.

Labour

Several Labour Party MPs also have their snouts in this lucrative trough. Most notably, Yvette Cooper, in receipt of £295,205 during that time.

Between 2020-2023, the ignoble top comprises:

- John Redwood £699,250, Conservative
- Andrew Mitchell £395,000, Conservative
- Yvette Cooper £295,205, Labour
- John Glen £280,000, Conservative

- Owen Paterson £199,992, Conservative
- Wes Streeting £183,725, Labour
- Keir Starmer £157,500, Labour
- Tom Tugendhat £140,000, Conservative
- Dan Jarvis £137,500, Labour

This illustrates the massive conflict of interest from the pro-capitalist MPs, and also the determination of powerful wealthy corporations to continue to plunder and profit from the NHS. Meanwhile, the NHS continues to be a fragmented, underfunded, understaffed and undermined institution. We need our own new mass party to fight for a socialist NHS.

● STOP PRESS - School support staff want to fight!

The results are in: in a consultative ballot of 57,000 support staff members of the National Education Union (NEU), 84.9% voted for strike action, with a 61.3% turnout.

With ballots taking place in other support staff unions, a rebalot of teachers in the NEU, and ballots in other teaching unions, this is a huge opportunity for a united fightback in schools. Socialist Party members will continue to campaign for maximum unity between all unions in education, and for a bold fighting lead in all those unions.

● Radiographers fighting back

Members of the Society of Radiographers (SOR), like other professional health workers, are not used to industrial militancy. Last year, our leadership organised a consultative ballot with little more than a notice on the union website. Unsurprisingly, less than 30% responded, and our members had no opportunity to



NEU members on strike JAMES IVENS

demonstrate our anger at the pitiful pay offer.

With regional branches it's not easy for the rank and file to be heard, but pressure from below saw online activist meetings forcing the leadership to hear how we feel. This time round it was clear: the majority rejected the 5% offer for 2023-24, in a consultation which reps organised for. It made the Tory anti-strike 50% turnout threshold.

Going into a formal ballot, ending 28 June, we are getting concrete support from the national leadership, with the clear message to reject and to take strike action.

But this is not just about pay, it's

about job retention and the recruitment crisis. With better pay we could attract staff to fill the 10%-plus staffing gap. And with more staff we could make a big dent in the waiting lists both for long-awaited operations and urgent diagnostic tests.

I'm encouraging our new reps to come to the National Shop Stewards Network conference, because together we can defeat this hated government and start rebuilding our NHS.

SOCIETY OF RADIOGRAPHERS REP



Abortion is not a crime!

For the right to choose



Abortion rights march in Bristol BRISTOL SOCIALIST PARTY

HEATHER RAWLING
LEICESTER SOCIALIST PARTY

This is the 21st century yet, outrageously, a 44-year-old mother of three has been sentenced to more than two years in prison for an illegal abortion. This is not only cruel, but a threat to all women seeking abortion.

My mother's generation endured backstreet abortions which threatened their lives. Others were maimed for life. We cannot and will not allow those days to return!

In Britain, abortion is only allowed up to 24 weeks if a woman can obtain the signatures of two doctors, who can refuse to sign on grounds of conscience. And everyone knows how difficult it is to get a GP appointment these days.

Dire

The woman in question discovered she was pregnant in December 2019, just before the outbreak of Covid. I find it hard to believe that any woman who believed she was 24 weeks pregnant when asking for the abortion pill would do so without being in dire circumstances.

However, whatever the individual circumstances, unfortunately, this case is not an isolated one. In fact, the number of women and girls facing police investigations and the threat of life imprisonment under abortion laws has risen over the past three years, according to the British

Pregnancy Advisory Service (BPAS). In the ten years to April 2022, police in England and Wales recorded 67 cases of procuring an illegal abortion.

When the 1967 Abortion Act was passed, allowing abortion up to 24 weeks, the 1861 Offences Against the Person Act remained in force, under which it is illegal to "administer poison with intent to procure a miscarriage" outside the parameters of the 'exceptions' of the 1967 Act. The maximum sentence is life imprisonment. It was under the 1861 Act that the woman was jailed. Recently, a 15-year-old girl was investigated because of an 'unexplained' stillbirth. The 1861 Act should be scrapped and abortion completely decriminalised.

Cuts and closures

Women should be able to control their own fertility. We cannot separate the demand for the right to choose when and whether to have children from the crisis in the NHS. Women who require surgical abortions often have to travel many miles because facilities are not locally available. Because of the cost-of-living crisis, and difficulty in accessing contraception due to cuts and closures to clinics and the GP crisis, the number of women seeking an abortion is increasing but the services are not. 99% of abortions are funded by the NHS but performed by private providers. Facilities should

be adequately funded and integrated into the NHS.

We need a fully funded NHS to enable free access to contraception, abortion and fertility services. But many women are forced into seeking an abortion because of the cost of raising children, the costs of childcare, and suitable housing, for example.

Real choice

So we need to fight for a programme that also includes the right to a minimum wage of £15 an hour linked to inflation, access to free, good-quality childcare, a massive programme of council house building, and services that will allow women to have real choice.

- Repeal the Offences against the Person Act. Scrap the two-doctor rule. Decriminalise abortion
- Defend access to telemedicine services and abortion pills by post
- A massive increase in spending on the NHS. Fully fund abortion facilities as part of the NHS
- No to cuts and privatisation. Full public funding of sexual and reproductive health services
- A £15 an-hour minimum wage, a flexible network of free, high quality, publicly provided childcare and increased spending on the services we need to bring up children free from poverty
- Build a mass movement to fight for the right to choose, including a new mass workers' party armed with a socialist programme



NATALIE OXFORD/CC

Six years since Grenfell – Fight for fire safety just as vital now

PAULA MITCHELL
WALTHAM FOREST SOCIALIST PARTY

Six years ago, 72 people died in a horrific fire at Grenfell Tower in Kensington, west London. It was a tower block lived in by working-class, mainly Black, Asian and migrant people, in the richest borough of London.

Profit-hungry companies had put their own riches before human life. Cheap flammable cladding had been attached to the tower, to give wealthy neighbours a more pleasant view.

Each year we say, the fight goes on for safe homes. What has changed?

Virtually nothing. But one change as a result of the Grenfell inquiry is the recommendation that tower blocks should have more than one staircase.

Sadiq Khan

In February, London's Labour mayor Sadiq Khan ordered that all planning applications for residential blocks over 30 metres must now include a second staircase. Khan has chosen to fall in with the Tories' proposal rather than that of fire chiefs, who call for that rule to apply over 18 metres.

But what about those already with planning permission, but not yet built, like the enormous 36- and 26-storey blocks planned for Walthamstow Town Square, with only one staircase? As things stand, Waltham Forest Labour council is allowing this obscene development to go ahead!

We have to fight for a moratorium on all new developments until they are safe. But mostly we have to fight for safe, good-quality council housing, with secure tenancies and low rents.

The privatised model of housing, pursued by Tories and Blairite Labour alike, has been an utter disaster. Selling off council housing, and selling off public land to private property developers to build blocks of tiny, expensive flats, has made a handful of people rich. For working-class people, it has meant homelessness, overcrowding, appalling housing conditions, sky-high rents and death.

Our own party

That means we also have to fight for political representatives in the interests of working-class people – a new mass workers' party. We say that because it is clear where Keir Starmer's Labour Party stands on these questions.

Emma Dent Coad was elected as Labour MP for Kensington in the 2017 general election, just days before the Grenfell fire. She championed campaigns of the Grenfell survivors, and supported Jeremy Corbyn's call for council house building. She was barred from even the long-list to be selected as a Labour candidate for the next general election.

- Save our Square campaign in Waltham Forest has a gathering in the square on 17 June at 1.30pm to remember Grenfell, and call for a halt to the building of the unsafe 'monster' blocks

TORY RENTAL REFORMS

FAR FROM THE SOCIALIST POLICIES NEEDED TO SOLVE THE HOUSING CRISIS

RYAN ALDRED
SOCIALIST PARTY NATIONAL COMMITTEE

Living in mouldy, squalid and overcrowded conditions, transferring ever-increasing sums into the landlord's bank account for the pleasure, is the grim reality for millions of renters in the private sector. The number of households renting privately has more than doubled since 2000 to 4.6 million.

Many renters will be familiar with the feeling of not wanting to do anything to remind their landlord of their existence for fear of a rent increase or eviction. Increasing numbers of people find themselves without a home - unable to pay rising rents or, after a tenancy comes to an end, unable to finance a deposit and convince another landlord to let them move in.

271,000 people are recorded as homeless in England, including 123,000 children, according to Shelter. In London it is as many as one in 58 people.

Most private-sector renters will start their tenancy with an Assured Shorthold Tenancy (AST), usually lasting six months or a year. Many will then move onto rolling, periodic, weekly or monthly contracts.

The end of an AST was the reason nearly half of homeless households with children became homeless, according to government statistics which cover until the end of 2022. Councils have seen a 25% increase in households with children seeking assistance.

A fixed-term AST might bake-in rent at a certain level during its term, although many landlords will put in a 'rent review clause'. Nothing, however, stops the landlord increasing the rent at the end of the contract period, or using a 'section 13' notice once a year.

And if they want to force you out, using a 'section 21' notice, landlords don't need a legal justification to carry out an eviction!

Renters' reform, but in whose interests?

The Tories' Renters (Reform) Bill, moving through the House of Commons, includes a ban on these 'section 21' no-fault eviction notices. In introducing the bill, housing secretary Michael Gove acknowledged: "Too many renters are living in damp, unsafe, cold homes, powerless to put things right, and with the threat of sudden eviction hanging over them."

Readers will be less than surprised that Gove hasn't suddenly happened upon a social conscience, for in the very next breath he reveals: "Our new laws introduced to Parliament [last month] will support the vast majority of responsible landlords who provide quality homes to their tenants."

So, the Renters (Reform) Bill would appear to be a bit of a misnomer. While it does grant tenants the right to request a pet, and intends to protect potential tenants with children being discriminated against, the bill will actually strengthen the hand of landlords to evict 'problem' tenants.

According to the government website: "The new bill also protects over two million landlords, making it easier for them to recover properties when they need to - so they can sell their property if they want to, move in a close family member, or when tenants wilfully do not pay rent. Notice periods will also be reduced where tenants have been irresponsible - for example breaching their tenancy agreement or causing damage to the property."

The government website also claims the bill will increase protections against backdoor evictions by ensuring tenants can appeal against excessive rent rises. Tenants already have the right to go to tribunal, where a court will decide whether or not your landlord is charging above the market rate. With prices rising across the board, this offers little consolation.



A shortage of homes

The number of homes on the rental market fell by a third in the 18 months to March. This helped drive rents for new tenants up 11%. More people than ever are looking to rent privately, unable to afford to buy and unable to access social housing.

In its attempt to rein in double-digit inflation, the Bank of England has ratcheted up interest rates to their highest level since before the global financial crash of 2007-09. Yesterday's aspiring buy-to-let landlords are quickly looking to jump ship before they are shipwrecked by spiralling mortgage rates. In its current form, the Renters (Reform) Bill seeks to protect these landlords looking to sell up far more than the tenants who would be forced to vacate as their home is put on the market.

A number of banks such as Santander, TSB and the Coventry Building Society have recently made changes to their mortgage rates, which will lead to a squeeze on 100,000 mortgage holders. What measures will prevent these extra costs from simply being passed on to tenants in the form of rent rises?

The bill will make it easier for landlords to evict tenants in rent arrears by reducing the notice period required. This will penalise those in financial hardship, and be used as a stick to beat those who withhold rent or go on rent strike.

There are simply not enough homes for people to live in. According to the Economist magazine, England has 434 homes per 1,000 people, comparing badly with France which has 590 per 1,000. Added to this, with lack of investment in infrastructure, the Economist reports that new house builds are becoming harder to accommodate into the existing National Grid, which is further exacerbated by the increasing necessity and speed of rollout of charging ports for electric vehicles.

The housing question cannot simply be addressed by building more houses alone. It requires proper investment

and planning of necessary infrastructure and public services.

"If you want to be an open, trading, free-market economy, you cannot leave your housing system, your land market to the open market. Because if you do, the property market will basically swallow your economy." This is a quote from Toby Lloyd, once special advisor to Prime Minister Theresa May, in an interview for the BBC Radio 4 series Rental Health. What is this, if not an effective admission that the market economy is woefully ill-equipped to deal with the question of housing?

'Affordable' or council housing?

The government's so-called 'affordable' housing scheme builds properties to sell at 80% of market value. These houses are still unaffordable to the majority of young people, and do little to check speculative housing developers. With the jobs market saturated with zero-hour gig-economy jobs, home ownership is increasingly out of reach for young people. The average age of first-time buyers is now over 30 in every region of England, reflecting young people's financial insecurity and inability to get a footing on even the first rung of the property ladder.

Housing available at 'social rent', linked to local wage levels, is shrinking. In the year 2020-21, there was a net loss of 15,000, according to Shelter.

Getting a council home is simply not an option for all but a few of those in the most severe need. And many of those can spend years in temporary accommodation, often whole families in single hotel rooms.

The building of new, high-quality council

homes on a mass scale would provide an immediate solution to the ever-growing demand for housing. It could house the hundreds of thousands currently living in temporary accommodation, and be made available for tenants who wish to move out of the private sector. Such a building programme would have the added benefit of applying downwards pressure on out-of-control private rents, which should be democratically controlled by the local community.

New council homes could be built to incorporate climate-friendly technology, using the best methods of home insulation, heat-pump boilers and solar panels fitted as standard.

A council with the political will to do so could start to implement such a council house building programme immediately, choosing to use its borrowing capacity to invest in meeting the needs of its people. In the 1980s, Liverpool's Labour council, led by Militant (the Socialist Party's predecessor), was elected promising to build thousands of council homes. And that it did - with front and back gardens and community leisure facilities - mobilising thousands of working-class people to support it and winning millions of pounds from Thatcher's government.



PHOTOS: PAUL MATTISON (RIGHT) MTAVLOR848/CC (ABOVE)

Fighting for renters' rights

Tenants have some limited existing legal rights; however many working-class people cannot afford to exercise them. Restoring full legal aid to all those who need it would be a step in the right direction, giving tenants a fighting chance at challenging landlords.

Similarly, scrapping ASTs, brought in by Thatcher in 1989, and reintroducing Regulated Tenancies with much better security of tenure, would give tenants some more much-needed stability.

The planned ban on no-fault evictions should be extended to include a ban on evictions for those unable to pay due to the effects of the ongoing cost-of-living crisis.

A mass council house building programme and democratic rent controls, which cap rents at a level agreed by elected committees of tenants and trade unionists, would end rip-off rents.

Local authorities could set up a compulsory register for landlords, holding them accountable for repairs, safety and conditions. Council-employed housing officers could inspect properties to uphold standards. Landlords that refuse to comply could have their properties put up for compulsory purchase by the council. These are all measures which Labour councils could implement now.

In some areas, tenants are already getting organised to fight collectively for their rights. Campaign groups such as Acorn and London Renters' Union are campaigning on tenant rights. The Social Housing Action Campaign (SHAC), set up to bring together social housing tenants and housing workers in the trade unions, has organised numerous rent and service charge strikes. Communities can get organised to collectively resist evictions, like the 'Butterfields Won't Budge' campaigners in Walthamstow in 2016.

Students learned valuable lessons during the pandemic, taking collective rent strike action and forcing serious concessions from some universities and private student accommodation providers.

A political alternative

If the ban on no-fault evictions does make it onto the statute books, the pressure on many renters might be released slightly. But the pressure of rising rents and awful conditions will remain. The Tories, acting in the interests of big business, will not introduce policies that seriously threaten profits.

In 2019, Labour under Jeremy Corbyn went into the general election with a manifesto pledging 100,000 new council homes a year. It promised: "We will take urgent action to protect private renters through rent controls, open-ended tenancies, and new, binding minimum standards."

Though not enough, if implemented these policies would have made a difference. Now, Labour leader Sir Keir Starmer says the slate is wiped clean and has abandoned the pledges included in that manifesto.

Renters and working-class people need a party that is prepared to carry out policies in the interests of the working class and renters, and is prepared to seriously hit the profits of big business, the property speculators and the banks. A party that is prepared to build council homes to meet need and to introduce rent controls at a truly affordable level.

Socialist Party members stood as part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) in this May's local elections, fighting for policies like these. We campaign for a new mass workers' party, with mass organisations of the working class, the trade unions, at its core - fighting for socialist policies.

And for the next general election, whenever it is called, we call for the trade unions to back a workers' list of candidates that could include Jeremy Corbyn and others barred from standing for Labour or deselected. Such a stand, or if one is not brought together in time, a number of TUSC candidates standing, could fight for socialist policies to deal with the housing question at the next general election.

Currently the banks and big business profit from the shortage of housing and sky-high rents. Thousands of homes lie empty as investment portfolios for the super-rich, and only the most profitable homes for sale and rent are built. Building homes for need not profit, on the scale needed, means bringing the big building developers and banks into democratic public ownership - so building can be planned and financed accordingly.

Ultimately, a fundamental break from the chaos of free-market capitalism, with a move to a democratically planned, socialist economy is what is needed. This will ensure that we are able to eradicate homelessness and squalor permanently, at the same time paving the way for decent quality, cheap, green housing benefiting all, not just the richest.

Come to a Socialist Party meeting near you

The Socialist Party has regular meetings in towns and cities across the country, in which we discuss socialist ideas, past events in working-class history and how we can apply those lessons to the fight for socialism today. If you would like to participate:

- Go to socialistparty.org.uk/join
- Or text 07761 818206 with your name and postcode.
- Or scan the QR code:





Swindon protests against anti-LGBTQ+ group

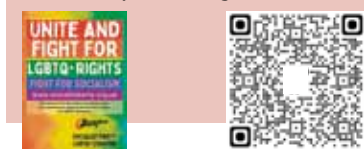
SCOTT HUNTER
SWINDON SOCIALIST PARTY

On Sunday 11 June, Socialist Party members attended a demonstration in support of LGBTQ+ rights in Swindon town centre. Swindon's Wyvern theatre hosted Drag Queen Story Hour – an all-ages show where drag queens read children's stories. Far-right group Patriotic Alternative had announced their intention to protest against the event and, in response, local groups in Swindon organised a counter-demonstration to support the show and those families attending, as well as to advocate for LGBTQ+ rights. Happily, our numbers on the day

far outweighed the far-right. Socialist Party members put forward a programme that links the fight for LGBTQ+ liberation to a broader socialist programme for the transformation of society. This met with a good response from the other demonstrators who know too well that the progress made in LGBTQ+ acceptance over recent decades is in danger of being ripped away as the capitalists seek scapegoats for their crises. The Tories' 'culture wars' stake and, in response, local groups in Swindon organised a counter-demonstration to support the show and those families attending, as well as to advocate for LGBTQ+ rights. Happily, our numbers on the day

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You can order a copy of the newly reprinted Socialist Party LGBTQ+ charter by going to leftbooks.co.uk or by scanning the QR code.



Orgreave - justice delayed is justice denied

KATE FLANNERY
ORGREAVE TRUTH AND JUSTICE CAMPAIGN SECRETARY

The Orgreave Truth and Justice Campaign was launched over ten years ago to call for an inquiry to get justice for picketing miners striking for the right to work, and to ensure the true narrative of what really happened throughout the 1984-85 miners' strike is in the public domain. Miners were ambushed and brutalised by a state-directed paramilitary police force at the Orgreave coking plant on 18 June 1984. 95 miners were arrested and charged with either riot (with the potential of a life sentence) or unlawful assembly. Almost a year later, when the cases went to court, all miners were acquitted when it became clear the police had falsified evidence. No one in the police or government has

ever been held to account for the violence and lies. The Tories have refused to hold any kind of inquiry into their role and the actions of the police. The 84-85 miners' strike was a turning point in our trade union history. The Tory Thatcher government mobilised unprecedented resources to demonise and criminalise the powerful National Union of Mineworkers (NUM). The Tories tried to destroy the trade union movement to advance their neoliberal agenda – the mass privatisation of public services and nationalised industries and the erosion of civil liberties. They used the full force of the state against the miners and our communities who were fighting against the Tory plan for mass pit closures. Many have raw memories and physical and emotional scars because of the injustices meted out against

strikers and protesters. The outcome of the miners' strike set the tone for industrial relations and the policing of strikes and protest in Britain. Fast forward to Tory Britain today with a ferocious free market, public sector cuts, poverty wages, soaring food and energy bills, and draconian policing laws. The Tory neoliberal plans have come to fruition. However, we currently see hundreds of thousands of workers fighting back and striking on a massive scale for better services, jobs, pay and conditions. Our campaign has amassed incredible support and is creating awareness amongst younger generations who see that the injustices they campaign against have many similarities with the miners' struggle. This year our annual march and rally, to mark the anniversary of Orgreave, takes place on Saturday 17 June at 1pm in Barkers Pool, Sheffield. Come along and join us alongside a line-up of impressive speakers and demand truth and justice.



A Socialist Party public meeting in Sheffield heard from the Orgreave Truth and Justice campaign

For more background on the miners' strike read '1984-85 miners' strike: Coordination and fighting union leaders would have been decisive' on www.socialistparty.org.uk Or buy: 'A Civil War Without Guns: The Lessons of the 1984-85 Miners' Strike' at www.leftbooks.co.uk

Protest for increased support for child services in Sefton

CONOR O'NEILL
LIVERPOOL AND DISTRICT SOCIALIST PARTY

Socialist Party members attended a demonstration outside Sefton Town Hall in Bootle on 6 June. The protest took place during a meeting of the children's overview and scrutiny committee. People protested against the poor and inadequate state of children's services, and because of a desperate need for "further support in educational services as well as with SEN children" across Sefton. The protest was well attended by local activists as well as parents involved in the campaign, who voiced their concerns about their vile treatment at the hands of the local children's services. When asked for comment, one of the mothers on the demonstration described the Labour council as

"pointless". In her view, Sefton council was "failing in its duty of care for families and children".

Labour councillor Judy Hardman was sent out as a representative of the scrutiny committee to engage with protesters. Socialist Party members questioned why she had chosen to vote though millions in cuts to public services, despite the council having over £20 million in usable reserves. Councillor Hardman avoided the question, and said that her aim was to ensure a Labour government at the next election. Socialist Party members fight for the election of real socialist councillors, as part of a new mass workers' party, who will oppose all spending cuts. We fight for a mass working-class movement to demand the funding stolen by the government to restore our services, including children's services.



Protest against cuts in Sefton

Fund a party that will fight all the Tories

CHRIS NEWBY
SOCIALIST PARTY FINANCE DEPARTMENT

"We must understand now what an earthquake we have created. The way in which we have changed the political map of this country." These were the words of Boris Johnson following the Tory general election victory in 2019. These sentiments were echoed by the vast majority of commentators and political activists at the time, predicting many more years of uninterrupted Conservative government. But as the current Tory bloodbath gathers apace with Johnson, Nadine Dorries and Nigel Adams all resigning their seats, how hollow these words now sound. You would get a different view from the pages of the Socialist newspaper. We explained how weak that Tory government was, despite its 80-seat majority. In our general election special produced the morning after the Tory victory, we wrote:

strength of Johnson's government will be shattered by coming events". Throughout Covid and the cost-of-living crisis the Socialist has consistently put a clear strategy of how these crises can be overcome. But we can only continue to produce the Socialist, our leaflets and posters by continuing donations from our readers and supporters. Our current fighting fund campaign ends on 2 July so we urge as many of you as possible to send in your donations today to make sure we smash through our target. Many of our Socialist Party branches are also making the most of the good weather with successful campaign stalls. In Newport, South Wales, £48 fighting fund was raised, followed by £57 at a stall in Caerphilly. In Coventry, campaigning against hospital parking charges, our Socialist Party stall raised £30.51 and, in Norris Green, Liverpool raised £30. 85% of the fighting target has been paid in so far. All donations help us in reaching this target.

Fund the fightback
DONATE TODAY
● Visit socialistparty.org.uk/donate or call **020 8988 8777**
● or make cheques payable to Socialist Party, PO Box 1398, Enfield EN1 9GT

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

Marking and assessment boycott – students stand with staff Fight for free education

ADAM POWELL-DAVIES
SOCIALIST STUDENTS NATIONAL ORGANISER

In April, the University and College Union (UCU) launched a marking and assessment boycott at 145 universities across the UK. University staff are striking for pay amidst the cost-of-living crisis, and to defend terms and conditions as university bosses try to squeeze as much as possible from them. And the quality of our education has suffered as a result. Socialist Students supports the strike and has shown solidarity at picket lines up and down the country. University students now have a clearer picture of how the boycott impacts us. At Durham University, hundreds of students have been told that they won't progress to their next year of study. Queen's University Belfast has announced that 1,200 students may not be awarded degrees this summer. And at the University of Cambridge, hundreds of politics and sociology students won't receive their exam results until October.

from moving on to the next stage in their life, such as the next year of their course, a job or internship, or graduate study. While university managements have been eager to blame striking staff for the disruption to students' lives, some students speaking on social media and in the national press have challenged this narrative. They have correctly pointed out that the onus is on the employers' association, UCEA, to meet UCU's demands on pay and conditions, and end the current dispute.

Although many vice-chancellors have finally been forced to admit the 'broken' nature of university funding, none have come out and called for what is necessary: fully funded, free, higher education. Meanwhile, at most other universities, managements have dug in and cobbled together a whole range of 'mitigations' aimed at allowing students to progress without the usual assessment-based checks and balances.

No doubt, some students will be grateful for these measures. But we say it should be university unions who should hold the decision-making powers over mitigations, in discussion with elected student representatives. Mitigations shouldn't be left in the hands of the bosses, who are attempting to drive a wedge between students and staff. As the marking and assessment boycott continues, many students will feel caught in the middle between the UCU and the university bosses. That's why Socialist Students says that students have to get organised ourselves, to unite with staff in a mass campaign to fully fund our universities and win free education.

Any university that claims it can't afford these demands should open its books to inspection by the campus trade unions and democratically elected worker and student representatives. If a university genuinely can't afford to give its staff at least what the UCU demands, then the government should step in to make up the difference, with money given to universities under trade union oversight. At a few universities, vice-chancellors have joined students and staff in calling on UCEA to re-enter negotiations with the UCU nationally. This shows that the marking and assessment boycott is having an effect.

University students now have a clearer picture of how the boycott impacts us. At Durham University, hundreds of students have been told that they won't progress to their next year of study. Queen's University Belfast has announced that 1,200 students may not be awarded degrees this summer. And at the University of Cambridge, hundreds of politics and sociology students won't receive their exam results until October. Many students affected by the boycott have been left frustrated and demoralised. As things stand, thousands of students could be prevented

University of Bristol: PhD students – back the boycott



Bristol UCU strike rally

BRISTOL SOCIALIST STUDENTS

University of Bristol Socialist Students Society has been made aware of attempts by university management to undermine the University and College Union (UCU)'s marking and assessment boycott. PhD students have been offered £18.85 per hour to mark first and second-year undergraduate assessments, almost double the rate of pay usually offered to PhD students who undertake teaching and marking duties alongside their studies. Bristol Socialist Students wholeheartedly condemns this latest move by university management to both undercut the ongoing industrial action being taken by staff in UCU and to drive a wedge between staff and students. We call on PhD students at the University of Bristol to refuse to take part in any marking whilst the boycott is ongoing. Instead, they should join UCU, which PhD students can do for free, and stand in solidarity with striking staff on the next day of strike action on Friday 16 June. We also recognise that this is an attempt to persuade striking PhD students, who are among some of the lowest-paid staff at the University and are employed often on short-term, unstable contracts, to break the boycott. As students ourselves, we understand the impact a marking and assessment boycott has on undergraduate students. However, we recognise that this disruption is due, not to those members of staff exercising their democratic right, but to the failure of Bristol university management

and the Universities and Colleges Employers Association to properly and sincerely negotiate with the UCU over pay and working conditions. However, we also recognise that even if the current UCU dispute is settled soon, it won't mark the end of the disruption to our higher education. Students at every level are feeling the sharp end of the cost-of-living crisis. The Office for National Statistics found last year that 40% of students are studying at home more to save money. A fifth are attending lectures remotely. An additional survey by the Sutton Trust found that 18% of students have avoided buying educational resources needed for their courses. But it isn't only in the realm of study that students are feeling the cost-of-living squeeze. 11% of students now use food banks. 28% reported skipping meals to save on food costs, 47% are going out less with friends, and 14% are travelling to campus for free energy use. So for students, while building support for the current UCU and Unison strikes on the university campuses is vital, this must be linked to a mass campaign against the student cost-of-living crisis and the fight for free education for all – for publicly funded universities and an end to marketisation.

- ### Socialist Students says:
- Support the UCU marking and assessment boycott – PhD students should not undertake any marking whilst the boycott is ongoing
 - No punitive pay deductions for staff taking part in the boycott
 - Organise joint student-staff meetings on campus to discuss how we fight the attacks on our universities – and where next for our common struggle against the cost-of-living crisis?
 - Fight for the funding our universities need to end disruption to students' and workers' lives. Fight for high-quality, free education – scrap fees, cancel student debt, and replace loans with living grants rising with inflation
 - Build a new mass workers' party to coordinate the struggles of students and workers in one fight against the bosses and their politicians
 - Fight for socialist change – for democratic public ownership of the banks, monopolies and major industry to provide us with a future

Join the student fightback!
Visit socialiststudents.org.uk/join or call **020 8988 8789** or text your name and school, college or uni to **07749 379 010**

£1/£2 solidarity price

socialistparty.org.uk



the Socialist

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formerly **Militant**

'SOMETHING NEEDS TO CHANGE'

JUNIOR DOCTORS STRIKE AGAIN TO SAVE OUR NHS



PHOTO: WAKEFIELD SOCIALIST PARTY

“We need to carry on striking, because something needs to change. Otherwise junior doctors will continue to move abroad to better pay, or into career paths with less stress or better working environments and more respect. The current state of the NHS

disincentivises the next generation of students from becoming doctors.”

Those are the words of a recently qualified junior doctor, ahead of the latest 72-hour strike by junior doctor members of the British Medical Association (BMA), starting on 14 June. This latest strike comes a week after Royal College of Nursing (RCN) members walked out again in Wales on 6-7 June, and a week before RCN members in England find out the result of their latest strike vote on 23 June, this time on an aggregated basis.

71% of junior doctors in Scotland

have voted to reject an offer of 14.5% over two years from the Scottish government and will strike on 12 and 15 July if an improved offer isn't made.

Ambulance workers in Unite working for West Midlands Ambulance Service took strike action on 12 June, and Yorkshire ambulance workers will strike on 23 and 26 June.

Health-worker anger is not abating, and neither is the level of crisis in the NHS. Waiting lists continue to grow (see page 6), and more workers yet to have taken part in the strike wave could still join. Society of Radiographers members are voting on whether to strike in a ballot closing 28 June (see page 6).

The strike wave in the health

service, like elsewhere, is far from over. And the Tory government is more weak and divided than ever.

What better time for rank-and-file workers, from across the trade unions, to come together and discuss a strategy for the strikes going forward? To plan what is needed to win fully funded inflation-proof pay rises and a fighting response to the incoming new anti-trade union laws.

The National Shop Stewards Network (NSSN) conference on 24 June in London will bring together hundreds of fighting trade unionists from the strike wave. Be part of those discussions. Register to attend on the day or in advance by visiting tinyurl.com/5n8jj2wf

2023 NSSN conference



**Saturday 24 June
Conway Hall, London
11am-4.30pm
Attendance fee £6
shopstewards.net**



WHAT WE STAND FOR: THE SOCIALIST PARTY'S MAIN DEMANDS >>> see column on page 14

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