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the Socialist

Issue 1152

21-27 October 2021

formerly **Militant**

For higher wages, permanent jobs, fully funded services



FIGHT FOR A SOCIALIST RECOVERY

NICK CHAFFEY
SOCIALIST PARTY SOUTHERN REGIONAL SECRETARY

The new normal under Boris Johnson and the Tories promises to be anything but 'new'. Johnson's talk of a 'high-wage economy' will stick in the throats of workers at Weetabix, Clarks and elsewhere.

They are striking back against the bosses' 'fire-and-rehire' offensive - boosting profits by cutting wages. Public sector workers, hit by a decade-long pay freeze, are rejecting the Tories' insulting pay offers and preparing to fight back.

With increased national insurance payments and benefit

cuts already underway, it looks likely that Chancellor Sunak's Autumn Statement will amount to nothing more than further cutbacks.

Austerity of the last decade came at a brutal cost for many, with a recent survey showing 57,000 excess deaths over the five-year period to 2015.

There must be no repeat of that nightmare. It is urgent for the trade unions to plan a coordinated response in defence of jobs, pay, pensions, benefits and public services. No one must be left to fight alone. 'An injury to one is an injury to all' must be the rallying call for action to push back the bosses' offensive.

Recent victories have been won by determined strike action and show the power of the working class to defend itself. The Trades Union Congress has agreed to organise a national demonstration in the spring, now we must apply the pressure to make sure this happens, and is used to strengthen coordinated strike action on pay, and to include the demand for a minimum wage of £15 an hour.

Fears of inflation should be answered with a clear response to make the 1% pay out of the vast profits they have amassed.

We say fight: for a socialist recovery to reverse the decade of cuts; raise wages and control rents to eliminate poverty; reduce the working week to 32 hours without loss of pay to share out the work and guarantee jobs for all. Urgent investment in the NHS and education, alongside a mass council house building programme, could easily be paid for by a wealth tax on the top corporations.

But for permanent gains, we have to stop the endless cycle of boom and bust of capitalist crisis and the anarchy of profit-driven production. We need democratic socialist planning to meet the needs of all and the environment. This can be delivered by nationalising the banks and top 150 monopolies under working-class control and management. To achieve that victory, workers need a new mass party of our own with the trade unions playing a central role, as part of the fightback we urgently need.

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Friday before publication, or Monday morning for urgent news, unless otherwise agreed with the editors.

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

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SOCIALIST PARTY

The Socialist is the weekly newspaper of the Socialist Party, the England and Wales section of the Committee for a Workers' International socialistparty.org.uk socialistworld.net



BOOKS AND PAMPHLETS

Socialist Books: our publishing house socialistbooks.co.uk Left Books: Marxist classics bookshop leftbooks.co.uk

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ISSN 1366-9621

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

Militant Issue 1: October 1964

The Socialist Issue 1: 7 February 1997

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

Tories to blame for GP crisis

JON DALE

SECRETARY, UNITE NOTTINGHAMSHIRE HEALTH (PERSONAL CAPACITY)

The UK's Covid hospitalisation rate is currently six times higher than other large European countries. Over five million people are waiting for NHS treatment. This could rise to between nine and 14 million by autumn 2022, according to the Institute for Fiscal Studies.

Growing frustration at the failures of the system is understandable when patients and their families can't get the appointments, treatment and care they need. Anger can overflow and be directed at NHS staff. Ambulance staff and paramedics face the same fury after long delays caused by hold-ups unloading patients. Tempers flare in A&E, where increased security measures have been needed.

Trying to shift the spotlight from its disastrous record, Johnson's government aims to blame general practice. The Tories' loyal friends, the Daily Telegraph and Mail, have helped whip up this vicious campaign.

Years of NHS cuts in real terms, while the ageing population's needs increase, meant the situation was grim before the pandemic. Tory and New Labour 'reforms' massively increased GP workloads, much of it linked to data collecting to help push through piecemeal NHS privatisation.

Hypocritical ministers

Last year the Tories were happy to clap NHS heroes. Now hypocritical ministers and newspaper editors imply these same workers are lazy failures. GP practices did a third more clinical administrative work - including prescriptions and referral letters - and 8% more appointments this May compared with May 2019. Covid vaccination work is on top of that.

In May when new Covid infections had fallen to 2,000 a day, the Mail on Sunday began a campaign: "Let us all see our GPs face to face again".

In August and September, a Daily Telegraph columnist made



poisonous attacks - claiming that GPs were "hiding" and "improving their work-life balance while making everyone else's worse."

Three-quarters of GPs report increased abuse. Receptionists are particularly exposed. In August, a Lincolnshire GP was almost blinded when an explosive device was thrown in his face. In September, four staff members at a Manchester GP practice were attacked, two of them hospitalised with serious head injuries. Earlier this month, staff at a Burton-on-Trent branch surgery walked out for two days as abuse reached intolerable levels.

Staff stress is widespread - half of all GPs report burnout, anxiety and depression. Early retirement, going part-time or leaving altogether leaves a growing shortage of GP staff, medical and non-medical. The

number of fully trained full-time-equivalent GPs fell by 1,876 between 2015 and 2020.

Face-to-face consultations are essential in many situations and much preferred by many patients and doctors. But it can also be more convenient to speak on the phone rather than take a half-day off work and go to the medical centre.

In 2018, profit-making company Babylon set up 'GP at Hand' - an online NHS GP practice that cherry-picked mostly young, fit and tech-savvy patients, including then health secretary Matt Hancock. He described it as "revolutionary - it works brilliantly for so many patients and goes with the grain of how people access modern services. I want to see GP at Hand available to all." Where was the outcry from the Telegraph, Mail and Tory MPs then?

And where was their outcry about giant US corporation Centene taking over 58 GP practices covering 500,000 patients? Its UK chief medical officer enthusiastically described how phone and video consultations had become "normalised" last year and these changes needed to proceed faster.

The future for general practice, if controlled by profit-seeking corporations, will be remote call centres, with less skilled and lower paid staff, supplemented by fewer, more distant clinics.

Instead, there must be sufficient GPs, nurses and other health professionals to ensure everyone gets the care they need. We need an NHS that funds local, easily accessible health centres, as part of fully funded community health services, publicly owned and democratically controlled by those who use and work in them.

Container delay carnage makes the case for socialist planning

AMY SAGE

BRISTOL NORTH SOCIALIST PARTY

Recent reports of delays at Felixstowe Port, which has prompted warnings about shortages of toys and clothes at Christmas, are yet another example of the chaotic and anarchic nature of capitalism.

Felixstowe is responsible for roughly 36% of containers entering England and it is predicted that around £1.5 billion worth of goods could be affected if the delays continue into December.

But it's not just shortages of clothes and toys we should be worried about. 90% of UK imports arrive by sea, including medicine and other essentials. Readers might recall a similar situation at the end of last year where delays at the Suffolk port led to shortages of essential PPE. And, in a system that puts profit before anything else, if these delays continue, we could see a situation where only the most profitable goods are prioritised, leaving us with shortages of essentials deemed unprofitable by big business.

The government's response? Failure to solve an HGV driver shortage, and warnings to the public not to panic-buy. As if it's our fault that the system - built upon private ownership, a distinct lack of planning, production purely for profit and the anarchy of the market - is unable to deal with these problems.

After the year we have endured, and considering the government's shambolic handling of Covid restrictions over Christmas last year, who

can blame people for wanting a nice Christmas this year where they are able to buy the things they need? It's not the public that ministers should be pointing their fingers at, it's the system of capitalism itself!

The case for a socialist democratically planned economy is clear. We must take the decisions of what we produce and what goes where out of the hands of the big businesses. We must take the major corporations into public ownership and run them under democratic workers' control and management, as part of an overall plan of production. Only then will the supply and provision of all goods and services be on the basis of the needs of the majority, rather than the profits of the minority.



Unite union policy conference Discussing a 'workers' politics' in response to the bosses' offensive

KEVIN PARSLAW UNITE UNION CONFERENCE DELEGATE (PERSONAL CAPACITY)

"She's an antidote to some of the fears that are here in the conference". This was the response of one delegate to Sharon Graham's debut speech as general secretary to Unite's sixth policy conference in Liverpool. She put some flesh on the promises in her election manifesto.

Against the backdrop, acknowledged by her, that the bosses are on the offensive against the working class to make us pay for the Covid bill, Sharon announced a pushback at the workplace level.

As she spoke, Unite was involved in 33 disputes, and she vowed that Unite will be the vanguard to change what is happening to working people.

Sharon said she felt that workers' voices need to be heard. Unite will not accept what is happening to workers and she would attempt to create more power for workers.

In particular, she defended Unite's shop stewards. The union has 10% less reps than at the beginning of lockdown. If we cannot defend reps, we do not have a union, she said - "we are nothing".

Part of Sharon's manifesto involved the establishment of cross-workplace stewards' 'combinés'. Some reps had questioned whether these would conflict with the union's own regional and national sector committees. However, the proposal for combinés would be to bring reps together by sector or subsector for negotiating within the top ten companies in each sector.

On the slogan of a "workers' politics", she said the Tories were not going anywhere, and Labour was not stepping up to the plate, so Unite has to deal with this. "Unite pays Labour money to be in a club [of affiliation]... but there will be no more blank cheques" for MPs who do not support us. "If Labour keeps throwing grenades, we will throw grenades back - our agenda is about what workers demand from Labour."

In reply to a member's question on Labour councils abolishing facility time, she said if a Labour politician attacks our members, Unite will not support or give money to Labour politicians attacking our members.

That poses the question of what Unite do at the ballot box in next May's local elections. Socialist Party members have been arguing at conference that Unite

members should consider standing as anti-cuts candidates themselves, and should also support anti-cuts candidates including the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition.

Conference opened on 18 October, and already Socialist Party members have intervened, putting forward a fighting programme in debates on casualisation, apprenticeships and fuel poverty.

A full report of conference will appear in the next issue of the Socialist



PHOTO: HELEN PATTISON



WHAT WE STAND FOR

The Socialist Party fights for socialism - a democratic society run for the needs of all and not the profits of a few. We also oppose every cut, fighting in our day-to-day campaigning for every possible improvement for working-class people. The organised working class has the potential power to stop the cuts and transform society.

As capitalism dominates the globe, the struggle for genuine socialism must be international. The Socialist Party is part of the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI) which organises across the world. Our demands include...

PUBLIC SERVICES

- No to ALL cuts in jobs, public services and benefits. Defend our pensions. No to privatisation and the Private Finance Initiative (PFI). Renationalise all privatised utilities and services, with compensation paid only on the basis of proven need. Fully fund all services and run them under accountable, democratic committees that include representatives of service workers and users. Free, publicly run, good quality education, available to all at any age. Abolish university tuition fees now and introduce a living grant. No to academies and 'free schools'! A socialist NHS to provide for everyone's health needs - free at the point of use and under democratic control. Kick out private contractors! Keep council housing publicly owned. For a massive building programme of publicly owned housing, on an environmentally sustainable basis, to provide good quality homes with low rents.

WORK AND INCOME

- Trade union struggle for an immediate increase in the minimum wage to £15 an hour without exemptions. For an annual increase in the minimum wage linked to average earnings. Scrap zero-hour contracts. All workers, including part-timers, temps, casual and migrant workers to have trade union rates of pay, employment protection, and sickness and holiday rights from day one of employment. An immediate 50% increase in the state retirement pension, as a step towards a living pension. Scrap Universal Credit. For the right

- to decent benefits, education, training, or a job, without compulsion. Scrap the anti-trade union laws! For fighting trade unions, democratically controlled by their members. Full-time union officials to be regularly elected and receive no more than a worker's wage. Support the National Shop Stewards Network. A 35-hour week with no loss of pay.

ENVIRONMENT

- Major research and investment into replacing fossil fuels with renewable energy and into ending the problems of early obsolescence and un-recycled waste. Public ownership of the energy generating industries. No to nuclear power. No to Trident. A democratically planned, low-fare, publicly owned transport system, as part of an overall plan against environmental pollution.

RIGHTS

- Oppose discrimination on the grounds of race, gender, disability, sexuality, age, and all other forms of prejudice. Repeal all laws that trample over civil liberties. For the right to protest! End police harassment. Defend abortion rights. For a woman's right to choose when and whether to have children. For the right to asylum. No to racist immigration laws. For the right to vote at 16.

MASS WORKERS' PARTY

- For a mass workers' party drawing together workers, young people and activists from workplace, community, environmental, anti-racist and anti-cuts campaigns, to provide a fighting, political alternative to the pro-big business parties.

SOCIALISM AND INTERNATIONALISM

- No to imperialist wars and occupations. Tax the super-rich! For a socialist government to take into public ownership the top 150 companies and the banking system that dominate the British economy, and run them under democratic working-class control and management. Compensation to be paid only on the basis of proven need. A democratic socialist plan of production based on the interests of the overwhelming majority of people, and in a way that safeguards the environment. No to the bosses' neoliberal European Union and single market. For a socialist Europe and a socialist world!

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PEOPLE'S BUDGETS

A SOCIALIST ANSWER TO CRUEL CUTS



WHAT WE THINK

There's no denying the facts. Thanks to austerity, more people are being forced onto the streets, more people are dying - and younger - and more are in line to lose their job.

50,000 extra have died due to the effects of Tory austerity over the last eleven years. Spiralling youth homelessness has risen by over 40% in the last five years affecting over 120,000 young people, not to mention sofa surfing and insecure housing.

It is a brutal reminder of the utter failure of capitalism that, when it comes to some of the very basics, little has fundamentally improved for the working class. In 1845, Friedrich Engels commented on the plight of the homeless: "In London 50,000 human beings get up every morning, not knowing where they will lay their heads at night". In Britain, since 2010 the rough sleeping figure has increased by 52% and figures from 2019 found over 280,000 people in England alone are homeless.

And more suffering is yet to come as the ending of furlough threatens the jobs of over one million, and the scrapping of the £20 Universal Credit uplift pushes more than 100,000 households to potential eviction.

The Tories have ever more blood on their hands and are planning £2

billion more austerity cuts in the autumn budget.

But Starmer's New Labour, and the other establishment parties, do not oppose austerity. Under Jeremy Corbyn's tenure, his anti-austerity programme received huge support. Even in the Corbyn era however, Labour councils - a bastion of the right - continued to implement brutal cuts.

Now, the pro-capitalist wing of the Labour Party is back in the driving seat. Rachel Reeves, now shadow chancellor, once pledged Labour would be tougher on benefit claimants than the Tories. While Starmer has opposed the £20 cut to Universal Credit, he is not fighting for living benefits and has refused to back the trade union campaign for a £15-an-hour minimum wage.

The multiple U-turns made by Boris Johnson and his chancellor during the pandemic, spending billions when public pressure was on them, show that with a fight the Tories could be made to pay up and the working class could win victories. But we still need more.

The working class and the poorest in society are in dire need of their own party, a fighting voice to struggle for enough homes and properly paid jobs for everyone, a fully funded non-privatised NHS and social care, public services based on need not profit,

and much more!

The Socialist Party participates in the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) in order to provide a banner for workers to contest elections. In the coming weeks, TUSC is initiating local People's Budget conferences and campaigns across the UK. We want to bring together all those who want to lay the foundations of a struggle to fight for what is desperately needed in cities, towns and communities across the country. From housing, services, countering climate change - to youth services, education, jobs and more.

Such a campaign can help lay the basis for the biggest possible anti-austerity TUSC challenge in the May 2022 local elections of trade unionists, socialists, community and anti-austerity campaigners, and any others who wish to stand with and alongside TUSC. Fighting not only against further cuts, privatisation and closures, but for councillors and councils who will fight for the houses, jobs and services urgently needed as part of a wider struggle for socialist change across society.

Below, Socialist Party members talk about their People's Budget campaigns, fighting the cuts locally and our anti-austerity election stand.

Northampton People's Budget - cuts and privatisation is a failed strategy

KATIE SIMPSON
NORTHAMPTON SOCIALIST PARTY

Northampton Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) hosted its first People's Budget meeting on 5 October.

Northampton has been victim to some of the cruelest austerity measures. The council's lack of 'duty of care' was even challenged legally.

The council's failed strategy of cuts and privatisation contributed to it going bust in 2018. Cuts to services for children, the elderly and those requiring special needs have been on top of austerity for libraries, the fire service and support for victims of domestic abuse.

Our People's Budget calls on those services to be reinstated and fully funded. With Northampton still pouring money into PFI privatisation schemes, there is plenty of money for these services.

Housing

Housing was a prominent part of the discussion. Many have their own ghastly stories of how they have been let down by the council.

Northampton is full of empty buildings. We call on the council to take ownership of any homes left empty for more than six months. And for mass building of genuinely affordable, high-quality,

carbon-neutral council housing and rent control.

Privatisation has damaged the council's waste collection service. The service should be free, brought back in-house, with a 10% pay rise for the council workforce, while improving their working conditions.

At our meeting, we had representatives from bakers' union BFAWU and Unite the Union, plus someone who has stood as a council candidate for Northampton Save Our Services. We will meet again on 2 November, before presenting our People's Budget to the council. We plan to protest when the council meets to cut a further £30 million from public funds.



Brighton bin workers on strike in 2013 BRIGHTON SOCIALIST PARTY

Brighton bin workers' victory in sight against Green-led council

JOE MOTT
BRIGHTON SOCIALIST PARTY

Brighton bin strikers have voted to accept a deal that "ticks all the boxes, and more" according to GMB branch secretary Mark Turner. Yet the union has accused the Green minority-led council of union busting by hiring private contractors to clear the city centre on Saturday, although the council cited health and safety concerns as the reason. Either way, the mood is not amicable.

The head of the Green council has refused to meet with the negotiating team up to this point, and strikers have been labelled "terrorists" by a local Tory councillor.

The Green-led council is expected to cut over £10 million from

the budget this year in continued submission to Tory austerity. This latest attack on the terms and conditions of refuse workers was clearly the council looking for ways of cost saving.

Two weeks of industrial action has resulted in the council conceding and offering a pay rise to a thousand council workers, as well as ditching cost-saving plans to change driver routes. This shows what can be won through union action. The workers have voted to suspend action with immediate effect for the deal to pass in its entirety through the council's policy and resource committee.

Council funding from central government has been strangled during ten years of austerity. Without a fightback to demand the resources

needed for the city, the council will find itself increasingly in a battle with workers fighting to defend their jobs and services.

The Greens and Labour have shown they are not willing to stand up for the working class. Brighton Labour councillors voted through the Green budget cuts this year. Brighton needs a budget that meets the city's needs, decided by the community and trade unions.

We need councillors prepared to vote against cuts, and campaign with local people to demand the money from central government. That's why we are building for a people's budget meeting, and preparing to stand in May's local elections as part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition.

Fight to defend homelessness services

PAUL KERSHAW
CHAIR, UNITE HOUSING WORKERS LE1111 BRANCH

Councils in England have warned that the cost of homelessness services will increase by 27.2% in the next three years. The Conservative-led Local Government Association (LGA) says there are "extra cost pressures of almost £8 billion".

The LGA statement is aimed at extracting more money from the government in the upcoming spending review. They calculate that without an increase from central government, council tax would need to rise by a quarter simply to cover

increased costs. They warn that vital services, such as care for older and disabled people, child protection, homelessness prevention, waste and recycling, and road maintenance are threatened.

But speeches at the Tory conference confirm that the government has an avalanche of post-Covid austerity in the pipeline. We need to prepare to defend homelessness services. We urgently need to fight for the funding needed and a pay rise for local government workers, and those who work in local government-funded services.

Homelessness services are hugely

overstretched now, before the full impact of ending the eviction ban, ending furlough, and cutting Universal Credit is felt. Local government workers and staff in local government-funded services have faced a downward pressure on pay and conditions.

Industrial fightback

Workers across the homelessness sector are coming together to fight for change. We are committed to building a fightback in the workplace with the possibility of industrial action. But we also demand that councillors must take a stand and fight austerity.

As Unite general secretary Sharon Graham wrote on LocalGov.co.uk in June, prior to her election: "It is not enough for councillors to shrug their shoulders and pass the buck... It is perfectly possible for them to use their reserves and borrowing powers to plug gaps, while at the same time campaigning for adequate central government funding to safeguard council services."

Sharon has committed to asking the Unite executive council "to support candidates who oppose cuts to Unite members' jobs and services, and councils and councillors who fight against them". Where existing Labour councillors have a record of attacking members' jobs and pay, Unite should be prepared to support anti-austerity candidates independently of Labour, to fight for workers' interests.



Workers on strike at One Housing in 2013 LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

A local council prepared to set a budget to meet the needs of workers could:

- Use council borrowing powers to fund capital spending to build secure, green council homes, while campaigning for the government to divert its subsidies for private developers to finance a mass programme of affordable public housing
- Use councils' powers to register private landlords and set up council-run lettings agencies, as a means to tackle repair standards, high rents and overcrowding for private rented homes
- Restore full council tax benefits, funded from council

reserves not council tax rises, and campaign for the government to reimburse councils that do so

- Give rough sleepers immediate, decent, and comfortable accommodation and support to transform their lives
- Act immediately on cladding and fire safety - by carrying out remedial work and billing the government. They could compulsorily purchase the buildings of private and housing association landlords which do not also act immediately
- Pay council workers, and those employed in council-funded services, a minimum wage of £15 an hour and ensure trade union recognition



Protesting against the arms fair LIVERPOOL SOCIALIST PARTY

Fighting the cuts at the ballot box in Liverpool

ROGER BANNISTER
LIVERPOOL SOCIALIST PARTY

A by-election has been called in the Kirkdale ward of Liverpool following the resignation of right-wing Labour councillor Malcolm Kennedy.

Kennedy moved to Spain in March 2020, but refused to resign his council seat. He continued to 'represent' this socially deprived, inner city ward from afar - attending meetings via Zoom! Under council rules Kennedy would have had to attend a council meeting in person during October. He refused. Another by-election has been called in Clubmoor.

Meanwhile, the Labour-led authority seems to be hell-bent on alienating the Liverpool electorate. Police are still conducting investigations into municipal affairs; the Tory government has sent commissioners to take over the council functions of regeneration, highways and improvement for three years; the former Labour mayor is waiting to see if he will face criminal charges; the current Labour mayor refused to take action to stop a highly unpopular arms fair in the city! The latest allegations that have emerged following a freedom of information request are

that in 2014 nine acres of council-owned land were given to a local building company free of charge, and the company started to sell the land, already netting a profit of £115,000 on just two sales!

Against this background it would be criminal to sit idle and deny working-class voters in Kirkdale and Clubmoor the opportunity to register a socialist vote in opposition, and build a campaign to stop the £33 million cuts planned for the next financial year.

The Socialist Party supports standing candidates as part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition - pledging to vote against all cuts, and to fight for a needs budget for the city, backed up by a working-class-based campaign to remove the Tory commissioners, demand the funding needed from government, and end the transfer of council services and assets to the private sector.

The elections will take place on 18 November.

Ealing People's Budget - cuts can be resisted

DAVID HOFMAN
WEST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

For every £1 received from central government in 2010, Ealing, in west London, now gets 36p. There is no let-up in the Labour council's relentless cuts to jobs, services and facilities.

Ealing now has only three purpose-built youth centres, and the council has decided to demolish the young adults centre in Southall, one of the borough's most deprived areas, and redevelop the site for yet more unaffordable housing.

There is for sure enormous demand for housing - 12,000 households are on the council waiting list. But the new-build blocks appearing all over the borough have asking prices way beyond what ordinary people can afford to buy or rent.

But these attacks on our living conditions can be resisted. 'Low-traffic neighbourhoods' - placing bollards and cameras, with no local consultation - caused uproar. For once, the council backed down and withdrew most of its proposals.

The People's Budget meeting, hosted by the Trade Unionist and

Socialist Coalition (TUSC), on 6 November will be an opportunity for people to channel this anger positively, and discuss a no-cuts alternative. In preparation, the Socialist Party, part of TUSC, is undertaking a borough-wide publicity drive. We are contacting community organisations and campaigns, such as the campaign to save Southall young adults centre, union branches and other workers.

We have also started door-to-door canvassing about standing anti-austerity candidates next year. Dozens of people have given us their contact details, including ex-Labour Party members disgusted with Keir Starmer's shift to the right.

There is a far warmer response this time around to an anti-austerity challenge to Labour. The People's Budget meeting could be the first step to making this a reality.

Ealing TUSC meeting for a People's Budget

● Saturday 6 November, 3pm, Acton Hill Church, Woodlands Avenue, London W3 9BU (opposite Acton police station and Morrisons)



How can a workers' politics be achieved? see p3

Gwent valleys Stagecoach bus drivers strike for fair pay

DAVE REID
SOCIALIST PARTY WALES

It was pouring with rain but pickets had been out since 4am this morning at Blackwood, Cwmbran and Brynmawr Stagecoach depots fighting for a decent pay rise.

Over 250 bus drivers, members of Unite the Union at the three Stagecoach depots in the Gwent valleys, have started 16 days of strike action to fight for a basic pay rise.

Bus services across the area have ground to a halt as drivers walked out at all three depots. They are demanding a rise to £10.50 an hour with no strings. Stagecoach is offering £10.10 but even that low wage would have to be funded by cuts in sick pay and breaks.

The drivers, who have kept services running throughout the pandemic, are paid just £9.50 and hour and have not had a pay rise for three years - in effect a 10% pay cut after inflation. Stagecoach was full of warm words for the efforts of the drivers through the pandemic and admit

they deserve a rise but those words have proved to be empty while it has continued to give seven-figure pay-outs to company owners.

About half the workforce at Cwmbran depot turned out to support picket lines on the first day of the strike and the mood was absolutely determined to fight for as long as is necessary to win what is a basic wage demand.

Blackwood pickets reported that they have set up a WhatsApp group in which they're sharing memes and stories of passengers and 'bus spotters' supporting them.

As Russell Edwards, shop steward at Cwmbran depot, explained: "Some drivers in the south west of England have won well over £11 an hour".

Public support has been solid too with passengers wishing the drivers good luck the day before the strike and car drivers hooting their support.

A victory here would be a step towards fighting for a real living minimum wage of £15 an hour.

University workers ballot for strike action in pay and pension disputes



BEA GARDNER
SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBER IN UCU

University and College Union (UCU) members in universities are being balloted over whether to take industrial action in two disputes. The first is in defence of the 'USS' pension scheme and the second over pay and pay-related issues - 'the four fights' dispute.

Both ballots will take place on a disaggregated basis, meaning any branch that surpasses the 50% threshold will be able to take part in any industrial action taken.

The anger is there among university workers to deliver a strong mandate for industrial action. The pandemic exacerbated all of the existing issues confronting university workers including unsustainable workloads and chronic work instability. Now university workers face another real-terms pay cut and a decimated pension.

However, the union leadership has been slow to launch and build campaigns in both disputes. This lack of leadership could contribute to branches being unable to hit the required 50% turnout for action, with some members not yet convinced of the strategy for the disputes. Additionally, there is a tight balloting window, with the ballot opening on 18 October and closing less than three weeks later on 4 November.

The short ballot does not automatically mean the union will not hit the 50% turnout threshold required by law, but without a sustained campaign leading up to it, it is much harder for branch activists to get out the 'yes' vote.

The timeframe has been set for tactical reasons, allowing industrial action to be taken this term. In the USS dispute, such action is needed this side of Christmas to cause maximum impact ahead of critical decision points.

However, we would be in a stronger position had the union leadership launched a campaign to prepare for industrial action, as instructed by the UCU higher education sector conference in June.

Despite leadership failings, Socialist Party members will work with branch activists and build the strongest possible 'get the vote out' campaign in the time available. That so many UCU branches have successfully organised and won local ballots during the Covid period shows that a strong turnout is possible.

The decision of what action to take in both disputes and which branches will be called out will be made by a special meeting of the UCU higher education committee on 8 November.



Unite and fight for 30,000 permanent DWP jobs

PCS UNION REP IN DWP

During the pandemic, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) was forced to launch emergency recruitment of more than 13,000 additional staff. This ensured that roughly 23 million people were paid their benefits during the unprecedented spike in claims in 2020.

The DWP was caught unprepared for the crisis due to its long-term programme of slashing 30,000 jobs and closing offices. The emergency recruitment saw the government rely on employment agencies to secure sufficient staffing - filling private coffers instead of spending this money on public needs.

Even such significant recruitment, however, has fallen short of what is needed, especially in Jobcentres assisting the unemployed. Thousands of staff working there are on temporary contracts and tens of thousands

are forced to see up to 20 claimants per day, drastically reducing the amount of help they can give to those who actually need it.

Our union, PCS, has historically campaigned for 20,000 permanent jobs. However, in the last three years this campaign, under 'Left Unity' leadership, has largely been in name only.

Negotiators put pressure on management - which we agree with. But they fail to mobilise union members. PCS Broad Left Network members believe this is vital to give real force to the campaign, including preparation for industrial action against a management which would rather throw temporary staff - many of whom have had thousands of pounds spent on pre-employment checks and training - back into unemployment.

All staff in all areas of DWP have a common need: extra staff to relieve continuing pressure, and permanent

jobs for the temporary staff who are so vital to our work right now.

This fight for sufficient staff to ensure support for those claiming benefits must be linked to the fight for benefits to be more than a poverty trap. The savage £20-a-week cut to Universal Credit will plunge millions of workers and the unemployed into further hardship.

We want the £20 reinstated. But we want much more. We want fair pay with a minimum of £15 per hour. We want decent permanent jobs. We want a fair deal for all workers - those in work and those not. We want safe working. We want a union leadership that will campaign and fight on these issues.



Scunthorpe scaffs strike for pay "The picket line is here and we're not leaving"



Picket line 18 October ALSTAIR TICE

Around 60 scaffolders, members of Unite the Union, who work on the maintenance contract at British Steel in Scunthorpe, are on all-out strike to win the industry rate for the job. One of the strikers talked to the Socialist:

We're in dispute with our contractor Actavo, because we want fair pay for the job we do safely and skilfully day in, day out. Working at height is the biggest risk and most dangerous task in the industry. When other trades cannot access something safely, we're asked to make it safe. Scaffolders are the front line working at height so that there's a safe area to work, then others can do their jobs safely.

We're now entering week three of the strike. We've had to change things throughout the strike, such

as times on picket lines and manning, to try to stop other scaffold firms crossing if they're not showing support or solidarity, even driving past fellow scaffolders on a picket who just want the same pay as them.

We're demanding our company Actavo pay us the national agreement of pay for our trade, a rate of pay their other scaffolder employees elsewhere actually receive. I see no difference, I would like to know what difference Actavo see?

Solidarity and morale is high and everyone is strong on the picket line with plenty of support off the public. Doing the marches round the plant, even stopping the traffic this week, is to remind the company that we're here and we're not leaving while they try to look the other way and ignore what's right.

Reinstate Gary Evans! Llanelli postal workers strike to defend victimised union member

GARETH BROMHALL
SWANSEA AND WEST WALES SOCIALIST PARTY

Postal deliveries in Llanelli ground to a halt on 13 October when workers at Llanelli Delivery Office walked out to force Royal Mail to reinstate Gary Evans, who has been wrongfully dismissed.

Postal workers in the Communication Workers Union (CWU) at Llanelli Delivery Office had voted 98.6% for strike action in defence of Gary.

The picket line was visited

throughout the morning by members of Carmarthenshire Union, the Socialist Party, and Swansea Trades Council, all of whom received a warm welcome, and heard how the posties where determined to stand up for their fellow worker, the latest case of victimisation by Royal Mail management.

Ongoing proceedings meant the branch members couldn't divulge the details of the charges against Gary but pointed to the high vote, and sheer number of supportive members on pickets at both

entrances to the delivery office, as an indication of their support and solidarity in this case.

CWU general secretary Dave Ward called in via video later in the morning, and the message that the full weight of the union was behind Gary and the branch was well received.

The branch has announced a further 24 hours of strike action for 28 October, starting at 4am.

Any messages of solidarity to CWU South West Wales Amalgamated branch are greatly appreciated. Email cwusuw@btconnect.com.



SWANSEATRADES COUNCIL

Napo AGM 2021: Union placed on war footing against pay freeze

ADAM HARMSWORTH
NAPO NEC MEMBER (PERSONAL CAPACITY)

"Should this engagement with the employer not result in an improved offer, formal notice of a trade dispute should be lodged and members balloted on industrial action, including strike action and action short of strike action."

These are the last words in a bold emergency motion on pay which passed nearly unanimously at the annual general meeting on 14-16 October of Napo, the union that represents probation staff.

It followed three other motions mentioning industrial action which all passed.

Napo's leaders are buoyant after the indicative ballot result - 99% rejecting the pay freeze. It was Napo's national chair Katie Lomas who

proposed this motion, and beforehand general secretary Ian Lawrence expressed great confidence in beating the Trade Union Act's requirements after the ballot turnout.

In the last issue of the Socialist I said "probation workers are drawing a line". Now they have. The popular motions at AGM focused on pay, workloads, and conditions. Speeches were filled with anger at the decade of destruction of probation and family court services.

Assuming no improved pay offer will come from HM Prison and Probation Service, Napo must throw its full weight behind supporting industrial action to break the pay freeze. A cross-union campaign to build for strike action is crucial to showing this government can be beaten by the collective action of the working class.



PAUL MATSSON

THE FALL OF APARTHEID IN SOUTH AFRICA

Why didn't its overthrow end poverty and inequality?

APRIL ASHLEY

SOCIALIST PARTY AND UNISON NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COUNCIL, BLACK MEMBERS' REP (PERSONAL CAPACITY)

Twenty seven years ago, the world rejoiced as the monstrous apartheid regime was overthrown with the election of the first black majority African National Congress (ANC) government.

Black majority rule - one person one vote - was finally achieved in a negotiated settlement with the De Klerk National Party regime and a bright new South Africa potentially dawned. The end of violent racial oppression and exploitation and an equal opportunity for black workers to thrive in the new 'rainbow nation' was expected and promised.

The hopes and dreams of a better life for all in this new South Africa rested on the shoulders of the ANC government led by the hero of the nation, Nelson Mandela.

However, this year we have seen widespread looting and rioting sweeping across South Africa as thousands of desperate and hungry people stormed shops, warehouses, and factories, burning them to the ground in rage against the ANC government which has turned their promises into bitter ashes.

Hundreds have been killed in the rioting stoked up by the ANC factional struggle between ex-president Jacob Zuma and current president Cyril Ramaphosa. The riots have caused damage amounting to billions of rand (see 'South Africa: Riots and looting a dead end - Build working class unity to win jobs and services for all' and 'South Africa: Eyewitness report of community self-defence against rioting and looting' on socialistworld.net).

But how has the overthrow of apartheid with the promise of a bright new future collapsed into the disaster that is South Africa today?

The historic 1994 elections symbolised the triumph of the national liberation struggle. It was the first time the black majority in South Africa was able to vote - and they did so decisively to end white minority rule.

Many may remember the images of queues snaking around the polling booths as millions lined up to vote - waiting for hours, all day in some instances, to cast their first vote.

There was a huge anti-apartheid movement around the world against the international pariah regime in the 1970s and 1980s - involving demonstrations, lobbies, and boycotts. It was the main international campaign of the youth, and the labour and trade union movement. Therefore, the victory against apartheid was seen as our victory.

In South Africa, black workers struggled bitterly for decades against ferocious oppression as they were driven off their own land and confined to live in 'Bantustans'. These so-called 'homelands' were in reality rural slums to hold unemployed workers for the migrant labour system which was the main tool of capitalist oppression.

These native reserves were dumping grounds - barren lands with no running water, no facilities, abject poverty and despair - to ensure a plentiful supply of cheap labour for the capitalist class.

The use of the 'pass laws' to restrict and control the movement of black workers coming into urban centres was another major tool of oppression, along with other measures.

Struggle against the pass laws resulted in the Sharpeville Massacre



Today, South Africa has the most unequal wealth and income distributions in the world. The gap between South Africa's richest and poorest hasn't narrowed since the end of apartheid



Marxist Workers Party helped organise workers' struggles for jobs and pay in 2020 against the capitalist ANC government

in 1960 with the killing of 69 people. Most victims were shot in the back as they tried to flee the armed police.

In June 1976 it was the turn of the youth in the 'Soweto uprising'. Youth defiantly hurled themselves at the South African state machine that was forcing them to be taught in Afrikaans (a language evolved from Dutch settlers) - a symbol of apartheid. This massacre caused outrage and deepened their bitterness against the regime.

Social conditions

Underlying the fury of the youth was the social conditions they lived under. In Soweto a million black people packed into the township with half the population unemployed, living in poverty under the pass laws - a virtual concentration camp.

This Soweto uprising ignited a wave of uprisings across the country. Over 1,000 people were killed as the regime tried to drown the revolutionary movement in blood. The international anti-apartheid movement surged. Workers were shocked at the sheer brutality of the regime slaughtering children and young people.

The uprising changed the consciousness of the black youth. It

showed that the youth alone could not defeat apartheid so they appealed to the organised workers in the trade unions for solidarity. Hundreds and thousands of workers took strike action against the regime in the first political strikes since 1961.

This was the organised workers coming onto the scene of struggle once again following from the Durban workers' strikes in 1969 and 1973. Trade union membership doubled and trebled in the 1970s and 1980s following the Durban strikes.

But it was the explosion of the organised workers' strikes in the 1980s that rocked the whole of South Africa. Mass strikes in the 1980s fired the imagination of labour movement internationally who gave solidarity to the workers in South Africa. Such as the Dunnes workers' strikers in Ireland who refused to handle South African goods (see 'How Irish strikers fought apartheid - and establishment anti-apartheid leadership' at socialistparty.org.uk).

In Britain, the Socialist Party (then the Militant) called for workers' sanctions and direct links with the trade unions to support the workers' struggles.

Many now compare the state of

Israel to an apartheid state and therefore the lessons to overthrow the state and the subsequent history is important.

It was the struggles of the workers and youth that ended apartheid, of which the organised workers in the trade unions played the central role.

The formation of Cosatu - the Congress of South African Trade Unions - in 1985 was the beginning of the end of apartheid. The two million-strong Cosatu adopted the 'Freedom Charter' (the 1955 ANC charter which demanded democratic rights and nationalisation) under the banner of "Socialism means freedom".

Cosatu began a series of general strikes, led by its largest affiliate, the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM), to overthrow apartheid by making the country ungovernable. Cyril Ramaphosa, now the multi-millionaire capitalist president of South Africa, was then the most militant NUM leader and led the strikes that threatened to cripple the economy.

Along with the general strikes, the townships were in uproar. The apartheid regime could simply not function, and the regime had to adopt a policy of 'adapt or die', said the leader of the ruling National Party, De Klerk.

and monopoly industry shall be transferred to the ownership of people as a whole"

But the ANC abandoned the Freedom Charter in negotiations with the apartheid regime and all the capitalist institutions were left in the hands of the capitalists.

The ANC betrayed the revolutionary movement and all the hopes and dreams of the workers and youth encapsulated in the Freedom Charter (see *After Nelson Mandela - continue the struggle for freedom and equality* at socialistparty.org.uk).

They were able to do this as they shifted to the right along with social democratic parties following the collapse of Stalinism and the ideological triumph of capitalism in the 1990s. The ANC has been in power since then. But apart from the first few years of the reconstruction and development programme, when housing and some infrastructure were built, they now carry out neo-liberal policies.

Many former ANC militants simply enriched themselves, like Cyril Ramaphosa.

This former miners' union leader became a multimillionaire, multiple property owner, serving on the board of Lonmin, owners of the Marikana mine site.

Subsequently he became known as 'the butcher of Marikana' for supporting mine bosses when in 2012, 47 striking platinum miners were gunned down in Marikana. Like Sharpeville, most were shot in the back as they were running away.

The same brutal methods used under apartheid are used by the ANC regime to slaughter workers fighting for a decent future. This demonstrates in action the complete capitulation of the ANC leadership to capitalism.

"What happened in reality was



It was the struggles of the workers and youth that ended apartheid of which the organised workers in the trade unions played the central role

an exchange of political captains of capitalism; the racist white government was replaced by a 'non-racist' democratically elected government based on the black majority" ('*Nelson Mandela - The lessons of his legacy*' by Weizmann Hamilton and Thamsanga Dumezwenit, *CWI South Africa - at socialistparty.org.uk*).

Today, South Africa has the most unequal wealth and income distributions in the world. The gap between South Africa's richest and poorest hasn't narrowed since the end of apartheid.

The richest 10% of the population owns more than 85% of household wealth. With the wealthiest 10% of the population taking 60% of its total income, while the bottom half of the population earns less than 8%.

At the end of June, unemployment had reached a record high of 44.4% (64.4% among 15-24 year-olds). People between the ages of 21 and 59 receive no income of any kind from the state. Almost one-quarter of South African households experience hunger daily. This means workers continue to live in crushing poverty.

The Covid-19 pandemic and lockdowns, and the continued neoliberal cuts to the public sector, has intensified the attacks on the working class. The capitalist system lurches from one crisis to the next with no relief for working people. The organised workers will again have to take the road of mass struggle to end the desperate situation of mass unemployment and poverty.

The Marxist Workers Party (part of the Committee for a Workers' International, to which the Socialist Party is affiliated) is today urgently campaigning for a mass workers' party fighting on a socialist programme to end brutal capitalist exploitation.

He warned the white population they faced a racial civil war if they didn't grant black majority rule.

In reality, the white-dominated apartheid state was forced to carry out 'reforms from above' to prevent 'revolution from below.'

If they didn't allow black majority rule, the ruling class feared the movement could go further and overthrow capitalism as well.

The De Klerk government began negotiations with the ANC which resulted in the release from prison of Mandela in 1990 and negotiations around black majority rule.

The 'Tripartite Alliance', made up of leaders of the ANC, the South African Communist Party (SACP) and Cosatu, entered into a power sharing agreement with the De Klerk government.

Freedom Charter

The ANC had adopted the Freedom Charter in the 1950s, under pressure from the working class seeking a revolutionary change in society.

The Freedom Charter had nationalisation clauses and stated: "The national wealth of our country, the heritage of all South Africans, shall be restored to the people; the mineral wealth beneath the soil, the banks

Housing crisis: Tories and Labour are not on our side

PETE MASON
BARKING REACH RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION CHAIR

The deaths from the Grenfell Tower fire, and the fire safety issues it exposed, have shown the real face of the Conservative government and the Labour Party - tied to big business and the building industry.

Across the country, many can't pay the high costs demanded to fix their fire safety issues. This is also the case on our estate in Barking Riverside.

A statement by the End Our Cladding Scandal (EOCS) campaign correctly highlighted the difficulties of leaseholders taking giant building companies to court. It concluded that there are a "growing number of Conservative backbench MPs who recognise that homeowners are not being treated fairly." Tory MPs can recognise this, but trusting them to do something is a mistake.

Property developers gave Tories £891,000 in the first quarter of 2021. A fifth of the party's donations came from the residential property sector. Backbench MPs know who their paymaster is, whatever they may say to constituents.

In 2000, the Labour government was told by a parliamentary inquiry: "We do not believe that it should take a serious fire, in which many people are killed, before all reasonable steps are taken towards minimising the risks." And yet it effectively did nothing.

The Labour Party under Keir Starmer is also ideologically bound to capitalism, and will not act to damage the profits of big business. 40 years of deregulation by both Tory and Labour governments have led to the cladding crisis.

Homeowners hoped to avoid the housing issues faced by so many.

Those renting privately are "practically nomadic" according to Shelter.

Homelessness is an epidemic, with many sofa surfing, living with their parents, or facing eviction now that the eviction ban has been lifted. Now leaseholders are also affected, living in unsafe, defect-ridden, unsellable homes, facing five-figure bills, and are very angry.

EOCS leaders have unfortunately adopted the mistaken policy that they must take a 'cross-party' approach in order to win reforms. They argue that affected residents are either Labour or Tory supporters. But, in reality, these residents have no party that represents them.

When EOCS called off its July protest, a breakaway group bravely decided to go ahead. This new group is in danger of making the opposite mistake, declaring itself "apolitical".



MARY FINCH

Barking Reach Residents Association declares that the richest ten housebuilders have forfeited their right to profits and should be nationalised. This solution, so obvious, so necessary, never meets objections from homeowners affected by the cladding scandal. Yet this is dismissed by the capitalist parties, because it challenges the private

ownership basis of the system they defend.

A conference of all affected by the housing crisis is a pressing need - where the genuine voice of those suffering can speak, move motions and debate the way forward. And a united Saturday demonstration of all affected by the housing crisis sometime in the new year should be mobilised.



ANGIE WALLER

Doncaster: Vigil condemns violence against women

ANGIE WALLER
SOUTH YORKSHIRE SOCIALIST PARTY

I attended the vigil for victims of violence against women in Doncaster. We held a two-minute silence for Sarah Everard, Sabina Nessa, and all the women who have been murdered in lockdown by their violent partners. The vigil was supported by the local National Education Union (NEU).

Women spoke of the lack of safety they feel when out walking alone. One woman carried a safety alarm, constantly looking over her shoulder when out walking her dog.

One young woman said she had to think where she walked. She said it shouldn't have to be like that.

Louise Harrison, from Doncaster

Women's Lives Matter, said some women have committed suicide to avoid domestic abuse. The number of murders has been increasing. 70% of women who had been murdered knew the perpetrator.

Louise condemned the £20-a-week cut in Universal Credit. It hits those in low-paid jobs the hardest, and will only make it harder for working-class women to leave abusive relationships.

I spoke from Barnsley Women's Lives Matter about the horrific underfunding of domestic violence services, cut to the bone. We will carry on fighting the cuts to these services, and highlighting that not enough was being done to end the epidemic of violence towards women.

Hackney children's centres - more education cuts are devastating



CHRIS NEWBY

BRIAN DEBUS
CHAIR, UNISON HACKNEY LOCAL GOVERNMENT
(PERSONAL CAPACITY)

After years of behind-the-scenes cuts, the Labour council in Hackney, east London, is now cutting education services to the bone. Scores of support staff in schools have lost their jobs in the last two years.

Now, two children's centres, Fernbank and Hillside, within a 15-minute walk of each other, face closure - with the potential loss of over 25 jobs.

Meanwhile, at Holmleigh Primary School, a stone's throw from Hillside, five of 13 support staff jobs are being cut over Christmas. All these cuts will have a devastating impact on staff, children and parents.

At a joint meeting of Fernbank and Hillside workers on 12 October, members of public service union Unison voted unanimously to call for an official ballot for strike action. They will have the full support of parents outraged by the attacks, who are also mounting a campaign.

Parents, children and workers have already demonstrated against the council's shock announcement (see socialistparty.org.uk). Hackney and Islington Socialist Party ran a joint campaign stall with parents on 16 October. A future protest is due on the steps of Hackney Town Hall at 6pm on 20 October.

Any more cuts in the education sector will have a massive impact on the learning environment for

children - in particular, young and vulnerable children of working-class families. Almost half the families served are on low incomes.

Labour councils need to stop meekly implementing Tory cuts in funding. Instead, they could use their substantial reserves to reverse austerity, and use the huge support this would receive to build a campaign for more central government funds.

Community and trade union campaigns will need to consider standing their own, anti-cuts candidates next May in council elections. They would be welcome to join the transport workers' union RMT, the Socialist Party and others in standing under the umbrella of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC).

“Are you the socialist cabby?”



A TAXI DRIVER AND LIVERPOOL SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBER

The likelihood of politics coming up on a cab journey is nearly guaranteed. I mainly see workers, dozens of times a day.

They're affected by community issues, working conditions and the political climate. I have the chance to offer a socialist perspective that people may never have had access to.

I get to endorse anti-austerity election candidates and contest stereotypes. When I challenge a lazy vote for Labour, or raise an anti-cuts alternative, the curiosities appear.

Workers, who are overworked and underpaid, appear disillusioned with the political landscape, only visiting it every other May, if they vote at all. Election turnout is a paltry 20% in lots of places.

I have managed to get socialist views out there, and counter the right-wing populism which is infesting communities. I've helped workers see a different way - rejecting

bigotry and prejudices, uniting the working class to rise up and make a difference.

I have been able to offer the Socialist newspaper and leaflets on local issues to passengers willing to know more. I am currently selling 20 copies of the Socialist every month. The hope is that we can raise the political awareness of the community.

During lockdown, I have been the link to the outside world for many older passengers. I would be the only person some had seen for weeks. People took a socialist paper as it was the only socialist analysis they could find.

The pandemic forced people to reflect on their lives and livelihoods. They were willing to talk politics in a way they'd never have dreamt. They have felt the effects of austerity, and now they are feeling the effects of a precarious future of Covid austerity.

During lockdown people would ask if I had any socialist papers. Passengers now recognise me and say: "You're that socialist cabby, aren't you?"



Liverpool arms fair: Hundreds of protesters defy police 'dispersal zone'



Biggest protest yet to save Stratford Circus

MARY FINCH
WALTHAM FOREST SOCIALIST PARTY

Over 70 trade unionists, arts workers and community campaigners turned out for the second protest in defence of Stratford Circus arts centre on 16 October. The Labour council in Newham, east London, closed Stratford Circus during the pandemic, to reopen it as a 'youth zone'.

But the council has been cutting youth services for years, and Stratford Circus already ran youth drama. This attack will mean the loss of local arts jobs, and it's already lost £300,000 a year of existing funding for Stratford Circus from Arts Council England.

The campaign is led by the union for performing arts workers, Equity. Socialist Party member James Ivens is Equity's branch secretary in north and east London.

The council is feeling the pressure. The tender document now includes some more explicit requirements for professional arts provision, but it doesn't guarantee full council funding. Paul Fleming, Equity general

secretary, spoke at the protest. Paul and other speakers said, to huge rounds of applause, that Stratford Circus doesn't belong to the council, it belongs to the community and workers in Newham. There was huge support for Equity's demand that the council use its enormous reserves to fund arts and youth services, while campaigning for the money from central government.

Local trade union councils in Newham, Waltham Forest and Hackney sent solidarity greetings to the protest. So did the rep at Oaks Park High School, where staff have been on strike against a bullying headteacher (see socialistparty.org.uk). That bullying head is backed by the Labour council in Redbridge.

Several members of Blue Sky Actors expressed their anger and sadness about being forced out of Stratford Circus. This protest was a show of strength and a warning to Newham Council - we will not go away. Equity, Blue Sky Actors, the Socialist Party and the rest of the local community are united and determined to save Stratford Circus.

ROGER BANNISTER
LIVERPOOL SOCIALIST PARTY

Just hours before the Electronic Warfare event was due to open in Liverpool, Merseyside police set up a 'dispersal zone', covering the two

days of the event. It gave the police the power to order people to leave the area, under threat of arrest. Police also have the power to seize people's property in the 'zone'.

This draconian action is not, as a police spokesperson claimed, to deal

with "behaviour supposed to pose a threat to the safety of others". Instead, it's to protect the merchants of death, the military top brass and leaders of oppressive regimes, and keep their arms fair free from protest. They pose a murderous threat to the safety of others!

Despite the police action, several hundred people gathered in the half light at 7am and marched towards Exhibition Centre. The protesters held an impromptu rally when the police would not allow us to proceed any further.

Socialist Party member Dave Walsh is chair of the Liverpool Trades Union Council. When he spoke, he pointed out that all the Labour councillors in the city had voted for the arms fair.

The arms fair has been opposed by trade unions including Unite, the National Education Union (NEU) and Unison. The Tory party conference announced further restrictive measures on the right to protest in response to Insulate Britain blocking motorways. But it is clear that such repression will be directed against working-class and left-wing organisations.



SOCIALIST PARTY FIGHTING FUND

AREA	£ RECEIVED	£ TARGET	Q4: OCTOBER-DECEMBER 2021	DEADLINE: 31 DECEMBER 2021
London	1,249	4,600	27%	
South West	406	1,800	23%	
East Midlands	199	1,850	11%	
North West	116	1,150	10%	
Yorkshire	255	2,550	10%	
Northern	67	750	9%	
Wales	171	2,300	7%	
West Midlands	137	2,600	5%	
Eastern	32	1,200	3%	
Southern & SE	56	2,350	2%	
Other	75	3,850	2%	
TOTAL	2,763	25,000	11%	

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Socialist nationalisation not bailouts for the bosses

JOSH ASKER
NORTH LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

Bosses of energy-intensive industries are clamouring for government bailouts. Soaring gas prices internationally are hiking the cost of energy and threatening the profits of industry. With the threat of some firms going under, workers' jobs could be at risk. As is increasingly the case, cracks are widening in Johnson's cabinet. Business Secretary Kwasi Kwarteng has come into conflict with Chancellor Rishi Sunak over the issue of financial help for British industry hit by rising energy prices. This reflects divisions among wider sections of the capitalist class about what way forward for British capitalism, with Sunak favouring spending restrictions. Johnson sided with Kwarteng's call for a rescue plan but details of any deals are yet to be revealed.

There can be no trust in the Tories to save jobs and act in the interests of workers. Many of these industries have been raking in profits, and their shareholders collecting lucrative dividends, and now they want a bailout. In September, ministers already agreed a bailout for CO2 supplier 'CF Fertilisers' - such are their fears of a lack of CO2 disrupting supply chains, particularly food production. Many workers will ask: where is our bailout to cover the cost of rising energy bills?

Responding to this pressure, Sunak has insisted any package will be subject to conditions - that questions will be asked about dividends and bonuses before issuing state-backed

loans. No doubt the Treasury is feeling the extra scrutiny following the Greensill scandal - where former PM David Cameron used his connections to lobby for a loan for Greensill Capital before its subsequent collapse in March.

Details of exactly what government financing went to Greensill, and the extent of the bailout for CF Fertilisers, remain secret. The only way to determine what resources these companies truly have access to is to open the books to inspection by workers and the trade unions.

Bailouts, including in the form of government-backed loans, must not simply be handed over to the bosses only for them to proceed to sack workers or resume making lucrative profits in the future. The only way to secure jobs in these industries is on the basis of nationalisation under democratic workers' control and management. Investment could then be planned to ensure a transition to green production that protects jobs, terms and conditions (see page 15).

The volatility in world markets, and further disruption to supply chains, will continue to add to capitalist instability, with rising prices hitting workers hardest and putting jobs at risk (See 'Capitalism's economic instability in the new normal' at socialistparty.org.uk). Only a democratic, socialist planned economy based on the public ownership of the banks and main levers of the economy can overcome the chaos of crisis-ridden capitalism and provide security and prosperity for workers, and a sustainable future for the planet.

TV review: Squid Game 'An unflinching critique of capitalism'



PHOTO NETFLIX

DAN SMART
BRISTOL NORTH SOCIALIST PARTY

The South Korean-produced Squid Game now has over 111 million views around the world, in record time for a series released on Netflix. In the wake of Parasite (2019), it owes its soaring popularity to its articulation of anxieties around crises of exploitation, class, and inequality.

The 456 debt-laden contestants in the games are herded by 'staff' in ominous black masks and red overalls through a jarringly pastel-coloured spiralling stairwell. This leads them into multiple oversized children's game rooms, reducing them to vulnerable subjects. Whilst the games are innocent and basic, the consequence of losing is unceremonious execution. The reward for the last person standing is 46 billion Won (£26 million), collected in a giant illuminated piggy bank hanging above their heads, which gets topped up every time someone is eliminated.

What distinguishes Squid Game from dystopian visions like Battle Royale or Hunger Games is its grounding in a very real social context. The main character, Seong Gi-hun, lives hand to mouth by gambling and hustling for any money

he can get. Living with his mother and trying in vain to provide for his young daughter, he is chased around town by violent loan sharks. With the 'Damocles' sword of debt looming over him, he is easily lured into risking it all in the life or death game - a 'choice' between that or destitution.

In South Korea, the level of personal debt has risen faster than anywhere in the world. Household debt alone is greater than the country's entire GDP. The South Korean working class also has a strong history of struggle. In 2009, the SaangYong Motor Company strike lasted 77 days when the company fired almost half its workforce.

It was ended with ruthless state oppression, the events of which are referred to in Squid Game. During an outbreak of violence between contestants, Seong Gi-hun has a flashback to this time, recounting how he worked there for ten years before being struck off. Around 1,000 workers occupied the factory before police smashed their way in and brutally beat them.

Director Hwang Dong-hyuk directly lays out his intention to create an allegory of modern capitalist society, depicting the extreme competition. The class divide is highlighted by

the 'VIPs' who, bored with their own hoards of wealth, view the deadly games as mere entertainment. Even the staff who oversee the game are exploited in the system - expendable, and subject to heavy surveillance - from who we see glimpses of humanity despite their oppressive role.

Are people fundamentally selfish or compassionate - or do people's conditions determine their behaviour? While disgraced businessman Sang-woo becomes corrupted, doing whatever it takes to win, Seong Gi-hun retains his empathy for others amidst the brutality. As the director himself states: "Even when it feels like there's only despair, fear and sorrow left for those participating in the game, there's always those who don't give up their humanity. I want to convey hope."

Squid Game is a gripping drama, packed with nuanced symbolism, and brilliant acting, sets and cinematography, as well as a dark sense of humour. This, in part, explains its enormous success. But it's the unflinching critique of capitalism that makes it so resonant to international audiences today, and therefore says so much about the times we live in.

● *Squid Game is currently streaming on Netflix*

I'm unemployed: For me vacancy crisis is a lie

AN UNEMPLOYED SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBER
IN LONDON

I'm writing this at 7.10am. The other night, I had an interview at a local Tesco for the night shift.

I had applied for pretty much every job going locally on their website, but only the night shift application resulted in an interview. Knowing I was writing this article for the Socialist, I asked the store manager how many applicants they'd had: "125 applications, 20 interviews, three jobs".

So this is what being one of the lucky few feels like, waiting for a bus gone midnight at the side of a motorway in an ill-fitting shirt and tie. And it's definitely progress.

I'd had months of submitting CVs and filling in forms online with no response. So I rewrote my CV from start to finish, omitting many of my skills, because employers couldn't put them to a productive use.

A month ago, I did an online course on CV writing. It is part of the privatised Restart scheme the government gave Maximus roughly £700 million to run.

This scheme is intended for people who have been unemployed longer than a year, something that doesn't apply to me.

But it is hard to argue when job centre staff pose it point-blank: "Do you want a job? Because if you refuse to go on this course, we'll have to take it as a sign you don't." That would mean my Universal Credit would be slashed, and I'd be unable to pay my bills.

On the CV course was an older man, close to retirement. He'd worked all his life, paying into a pension. A decade or two in the past, he would have been able to retire on that. But big business declared a pensions crisis, and the politicians acquiesced, raising retirement ages and forcing him to look for work alongside the rest of us.

As far as I can tell, Maximus mainly adds an extra layer of bureaucracy and blame for the unemployed.

Struggling to get interviews? "Please send us screenshots of submitted applications, so we know that you're actually looking for jobs."

Moreover, unwilling to travel for hours before dawn, and before public transport is running, spending multiple hours' wages to get there? "We have to remind you that you've got an obligation to find employment as soon as possible." So you find yourself feeling that you have to say 'yes', just out of self-preservation.

I want to work. I'm confident I can learn how to do the roles I'm applying for. I'm also sure this applies to the others looking for work I've met on online courses or in staff cafeterias, waiting to be interviewed.

The system puts the blame on us as individuals, with the threat of benefit cuts held over your head. But the reality is that it's capitalism that is failing us, not providing the opportunities to put our productive talents to use.

We're constantly told that there are lots of vacancies out there. But my experience is very different.

Obituary - Tony Davison: "I work for Militant, but Laing's pay my wages"



Tony Davison (left) supporting striking Liverpool dockworkers in the late 1990s

MICK WHALE
HULL SOCIALIST PARTY

Socialist Party member Tony Davison, from Beverley in East Yorkshire, has sadly passed away. He will leave a huge hole. Our thoughts are very much with his wife Sue and his family.

Tony was a working-class fighter and socialist all his adult life. In the 1960s, as a young man, he worked on ships and travelled widely, including Australia, where he worked on building sites.

Tony often mentioned his visit to apartheid South Africa. He was horrified at the injustice he saw. He had to be hastily bundled onto his ship, because he was about to intervene to stop a racist incident. This helped him realise that the whole system needed changing.

Back in England, working at Easington gas terminal, he met Trevor Grewar. Trevor got him to join Militant (now the Socialist Party). Tony promised to "give it his all for the next ten years". In fact, he was an active member for nearly 40 years. He attended Hull and District Trades Union Council just four days before he died.

Tony saw his working life as an opportunity to talk to other workers and encourage them to get organised in workers' struggle. In the 1980s, each week Tony and Trevor sold 60-plus copies of the Militant (now the Socialist) on building sites, raising thousands of pounds for the fighting fund.

He was once asked: "Do you actually do any work?" His response: "I work for Militant, but Laing's pay my wages".

Tony saw Marxism, or "real socialism" as he called it, as a key guide to his activism. Without a thorough 'book' education, Tony would bring his experience from the workplace and life to theoretical discussions.

He developed an encyclopaedic knowledge of the history of US workers' struggle. When he spoke about the US at meetings, it was a highlight for members in Hull Socialist Party.

When the Tories attacked workers with the poll tax in the 1980s, Tony built an anti-poll tax union in Beverley. The traditionally conservative town was extremely effective in its support for non-payers.

Tony never hid his politics. He linked the struggle against the Tories and the poll tax to the struggle for socialism. Socialist Party member Phil Culshaw recounts that so many people wanted to buy the Militant newspaper that he had to come help Tony deliver it.

Tony was a member of the GMB union. He spoke brilliantly at GMB conference about how it's the working class which runs society, telling conference: "So let's march forward and take power." To the consternation of many in the right-wing GMB bureaucracy, he was cheered to the rafters, and left the platform to a standing ovation. He particularly enjoyed that experience, as he would always point out that the trade union and Labour Party leaderships were the biggest barrier to achieving socialism.

In recent years, despite failing health, probably linked to his time working on ships' boilers, he continued to be active, supporting Socialist Party campaign stalls, and

participating in the trades union council.

He was a regular attendee at the annual Socialism events. On the journey from and back to Hull, Tony would use the time to entertain us with stories, jokes and songs. The younger comrades loved him, and hung on his every word.

Alan Shadforth remembers when an idiot spat at his sister on a socialist paper sale, Tony picked him up and nearly threw him through a window.

Even in later years, Tony, together with Sue, were the fastest leafleteers for the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) in Hull. They delivered more leaflets than comrades half his age.

Tony had great faith in the younger generation. He was very proud of the new young activists that have joined the Socialist Party in recent years. He did everything to encourage and support them. When his own granddaughter Kirstie participated in the climate protests and Black Lives Matter, his pride knew no bounds.

There are tears in our eyes thinking of him. But it's difficult not to have a smile on our lips at the same time, as we remember an inspirational but very human representative of the working class who loved life.

We are privileged to call him a friend and comrade. Tony's fight for socialism will be continued by his comrades in Hull, and his determination will inspire us to complete the struggle to change society.



DAVID DICKSON/CC

Austria: Chancellor Kurz resigns amid allegations of corruption

LAURA RAFETSEDER

SOZIALISTISCHE OFFENSIVE (CWI AUSTRIA)

Sebastian Kurz of the right-wing People's Party (ÖVP), for five years a shooting star of the European conservatives, had to 'step aside' as Austria's chancellor on 9 October. His resignation comes amid criminal investigations against those closest to him and with allegations of fraud, and of activities that were, at best, 'deeply immoral' and at worst illegal.

This is the second corruption scandal to have rocked Austria's establishment in recent years. In 2019 a scandal wrecked Kurz's then coalition with the far-right Freedom Party (FPÖ).

This was the so-called Ibiza Scandal of the then Freedom Party leader Heinz-Christian Strache. He was filmed in Ibiza discussing helping someone he thought was a Russian oligarch's niece buy the biggest Austrian tabloid, Die Krone (The Crown), in return for favourable publicity in the run-up to the October 2017 general election.

This time, the media scandal involved the tabloid Österreich (Austria) which Kurz allegedly cooperated with to forge opinion polls and paid to get friendly media coverage when he was building his political career in 2016-17.

This is just the top of the allegations. The scandals have grown so numerous that it is hard to keep track.



PHOTO EU2018/EUROPEANPARLIAMENT/CC

The poster boy of the Austria's right has exited the chancellor's office in disgrace

While Kurz tried to cling to power in the first days after news broke of the unprecedented police raids of the Chancellery and the ÖVP headquarters, it seems that he increasingly had to face pressure from inside his own party.

In 2017 he had secured himself power in his party that made him largely independent of the powerful regional heads of the ÖVP. It seems

now that this power was only on paper and as long as Kurz won elections for them.

Conservatives in turmoil

The People's Party and Kurz have lost around ten points in recent polls. Some placed them at 27%, others at 26%, compared with nearly 37.5% in the 2019 election.

The ÖVP's coalition partner, the

Green Party, made clear that it will continue the coalition if Kurz steps back - basically an ultimatum. If the Greens had not done that they would have fallen apart as their rank and file would have rebelled.



All this comes at a time of unrest within Austrian society - last week saw big protests by kindergarten teachers

When Kurz finally announced his resignation, a sigh of relief went through the Austrian capitalist class, as an all-party coalition would have been highly unstable, especially given the anti-vaccine position of the FPÖ in a period when the Covid pandemic is not over yet.

For now, Kurz is holding onto his office as ÖVP party leader and has also taken office as head of its parliamentary fraction. It seems that as a member of parliament he will get immunity, but his party has already pledged to lift that immunity.

Kurz's place as chancellor has been taken by Alexander Schallenberg, former minister of the exterior.

Schallenberg comes from the former aristocracy who became a family of diplomats and is said to be close to Kurz but not involved in the scandals.

All this comes at a time of unrest within Austrian society - last week saw big protests by kindergarten teachers. The Tuesday after Kurz resigned 5,000 kindergarten teachers from the private sector stopped work for a demonstration, and two days later another 1,000 public sector kindergarten teachers demonstrated. They are demanding more staff, higher wages and not to be ignored in the middle of the pandemic.

Some of the many self-made banners and placards referred to the Kurz scandals, saying: "Don't put money in media ads, put it into childcare". One of the revelations implied that Kurz had, in order to further his career, manipulated a regional government to stop a reform by a previous ÖVP-SPÖ (Social Democrats) coalition that would have given more money to schools and childcare.

A demonstration of the education sector workers against cuts and for better education is planned for 19 October. The metalworkers are also heading for a confrontation with the bosses over a pay claim. Regional shop steward conferences of the metal sector have been announced for next week, to discuss further measures.

● Read this article in full on socialistworld.net

Opportunity for the left to build a socialist alternative

In September, the Austrian Communist Party (KPÖ) won city elections in Graz, Styria, shocking the ruling class. The huge contrast between the corruption of Chancellor Kurz's circle with the approach of the KPÖ in Styria, of only taking a worker's wage for political office and donating the balance to causes, has been widely noted.

A recent opinion poll showed 70% thought it would be good if politicians only took a worker's wage like the KPÖ does in Graz. This shows how the long history of corruption and disappointment with the main parties has created an opportunity for an alternative to be built. The question is, who will take the initiative?

In this situation, it is more urgent than ever to build a new mass workers' party that can point to a way out. Both the SPÖ and the Greens have proven by their government participation that they cannot be trusted, and that they firmly support the capitalist system.

The SPÖ has been part of governments that have introduced cuts, while the Greens' new 'eco' tax reform is making working-class people pay for climate change instead of big business.

The SPÖ's own corruption has been one of the reasons for its decline. In contrast, a new party would have to channel all the protests that are currently taking place and be a tool in the struggle, as well as a place where workers and youth can discuss which programme they need.

The KPÖ Styria and Links Wien (a small new left formation with 23 district councillors in Vienna) have the responsibility to take initiatives in this direction.

Links Wien is beginning to develop an ability to mobilise. On 7 October, the day after the police raids on Kurz's office, they took the initiative to call a protest, in which they, together with other organisations, mobilised up to 7,000 people.

After the elections in Graz, opinion polls were published placing the KPÖ federally at 4%. Beyond that, 42% think the KPÖ

under Graz's Elke Kahr is a party they could, in principle, vote for.

It is very likely that the now very unstable situation will lead to new elections within months. The KPÖ Graz and Links Wien, as well as the left in general, should take initiative to unite the protests that are taking place and channel them into steps towards a new party.

Such an electoral alliance would be a concrete step forward and a way to attract support from those who

have been involved in struggles and activate some of those who have voted 'left' recently.

To draw together these wider forces such an initiative needs to be open, not top-down, and have a clear set of demands as a starting point for discussion about a programme.

While such an alliance would be extremely unlikely to win the next election, its aim must be to use the election campaign to popularise its demands, encourage mobilisations

and participation so it can strengthen itself, and get a foothold in parliament, which then can be used as a platform for which to mobilise both popular opposition and support for socialist ideas.

These would be steps towards building a party and movement that can break with the rotten and corrupt capitalist system and replace it with a socialist society that can end need and make sure corruption is a thing of the past.



COP26: Trade unions must fight for a socialist transition to renewables

CHRIS BAUGH
LANCASHIRE SOCIALIST PARTY

The UK government is hosting the 26th United Nations Climate Change 'Conference of the Parties' (COP26) in Glasgow from 31 October to 12 November 2021. The 'Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change' (IPCC) was formed in 1999.

Its latest report to the UN in August of this year contains even starker warnings for the Earth's climate than previously, unless decisive action is taken to cut greenhouse emissions. Without this, there is little prospect of keeping an average global temperature increase below the 1.5 to 2 degrees Celsius target in the 2015 COP21 Paris Agreement.

This was the first time an agreement had been reached on target reductions but it excluded major polluting industries like aviation and shipping and was devoid of any mechanism for implementing the targets. This reflects the global capitalist consensus that it is market mechanisms that will make the adjustment from fossil fuels to a zero carbon economy. This is despite the warning of Lord Stern who famously described climate change as 'the biggest market failure in human history'.

Articles in the pages of the Socialist and Socialism Today have pointed out that it is capitalism's insatiable pursuit of profit that has led us to this situation. Capitalism has shown itself unwilling and an actual impediment to the action on the timescale and scope required. An article published by 'Trade Unions for Energy Democracy' gives recent evidence of how renewable energy companies are "party to a race to the bottom, capitalist dynamic."

It cites the use of forced Uyghur labour in China-based solar companies and the 'off-shoring' of manufacturing for the Scottish wind industry. The large wind and solar companies prop up a market architecture that is sucking in huge amounts of public money to guarantee profit margins. The report is quoted as saying "These companies have not just gone over to the political dark side. They helped design it."

While richer governments of US and Europe talk up their climate commitments, the solutions proposed will not fix the climate crisis. UK plans to transition to renewable energy are reliant upon an unprecedented wave of resource extraction from 'Global South' countries. Intensifying the mining of so-called transition metals and minerals used to produce green technologies such as solar panels, wind turbines and electric vehicle batteries, is devastating communities from Chile to China.

Capitalism

It is capitalism, including the giant mining companies, that expects to mine its way out of the crisis at the expense of the livelihoods and lives of workers in the world's poorest regions. At the same time, the



continued extraction of metals with the burning of fossil fuels will accelerate warming of the Earth's climate with consequences for the whole of humanity.

The failure of government at a global and nation state level to take action on climate change has produced protests the world over. Greta Thunberg's public stance inspired protests and strike action of school and college students in towns and cities across the world. There have been acts of civil disobedience against airport expansion, fracking, road developments, nuclear expansion and various threats of environmental degradation.

But the actions of Extinction Rebellion and Insulate Britain can never be an effective substitute for a mass movement of workers and unions demanding rights and job protection in a transition.

Climate change is a class and a trade union issue, and trade unions have a vital role to play in placing the interests of workers at the heart of the debate about what is meant by a 'just transition'. Trade unions and workers in energy intensive industries have a vast knowledge and skills with the industrial power that will be needed to resist the bosses attacks in these sectors.

This knowledge, skills and power can also be brought to bear in the fight for the guaranteed protection of jobs, pay and conditions in a transition. Building on the example of the Lucas Plan, we have seen shop stewards and union members involved in

the fight at Rolls Royce and GKN developing plans for alternative methods of production. Plans that begin to explore how to apply the technology under workers' control and self-management and diversify into socially useful forms of production.

The Trades Union Congress (TUC) held its congress in September and carried two motions on the question of climate change. It has been a struggle for many years of TUC affiliates to table motions and start a serious debate.

Motions are dismissed by the big industrial unions as posing a threat to jobs in the energy and energy intensive sectors. The second motion from Aslef and TSSA went through unanimously while the first motion moved and seconded by GMB and Prospect was opposed by several unions but went through with the block votes of the three largest unions.

The motion that passed acknowledges the threat to humanity posed by climate change. It proposes several welcome reforms such as statutory provision for workplace environmental reps and government support for the steel industry, but is largely about maintaining the status quo. It talks of maintaining a balanced energy mix, which is a code for preserving levels of gas production, and building a new generation of nuclear reactors.

It rightly condemns the reliance of the UK economy upon gas imports, the import and manufacture of renewable components and imported steel. While it talks of the need for a 'just transition' for workers in

high-carbon sectors, where nobody should be left behind, there is a gaping hole when it comes to the mechanism for making this happen. It is silent on public ownership and how this will be essential for the economic transition necessary.

The mobilisation for the COP26 protests have official support from only a handful of unions, notably excluding Unite, GMB and Unison. This does not disguise the work by trade union members, shop stewards, trade union branches and trades councils in organising local protests on the 6 November, or for the national mobilisation in Glasgow on the same day.

No compromise

For trade unionists and socialists there can be no compromise in a militant fight against the Tories' and bosses' offensive and their plans to make workers' pay the price for the pandemic.

A myth has been created that defending members' jobs and conditions is in conflict with taking action on climate change. This is a myth that needs to be exposed. It is not climate change that poses a threat to the jobs and future of workers in oil, gas, arms manufacture, ceramics, steel, car production, nuclear industry and aviation.

Driven by their need to maximise profits, the threat comes from the employers' business plans which involve massive job loss, closures, attacks on pay and conditions, threats to the viability of local communities

and off-shoring to countries with cheaper labour costs.

Trade unions have the collective power and expertise to fight these attacks and develop an industrial strategy that takes a 'just transition' beyond an empty slogan into an industrial and political strategy that workers and trade unions can unite and mobilise around. These arguments need to be taken into every workplace, community, trade union branch and environmental campaign.

COP26 strikes

Scottish railway workers and refuse collectors have voted to strike during the COP26 summit in Glasgow, in long-running pay disputes.

The RMT transport workers' union could halt all train services in Scotland from November 1-12 and planned action by refuse workers in GMB was backed by 97% of workers over the latest pay offer from Scottish local governments.

The RMT says that a ballot of more than 2,000 members had backed plans to strike, with 84% in favour of the action over a refusal by Scottish railway operator ScotRail and government agency Transport Scotland to negotiate a pay increase.

RMT members working on the Caledonian Sleeper service, which runs between London and Scottish cities, also plan to strike during part of COP26 over a pay dispute with the service operator Serco.

This is what is needed - mass working-class action, including demos, strikes, walkouts and occupations to confront capitalism.

We call for workers' collective action. We say support and build industrial action by workers during and beyond COP26 and fight for the trade union leaders to coordinate the struggles.

The Socialist Party is helping to organise the National Shop Stewards Network forum during the COP26 summit to put the issue of a workers' transition based on public ownership and workers' control on the agenda.

We say:

- Socialist transition to renewables! Plan internationally for a worker-controlled socialist transition from fossil fuel production. Fight for public investment into research and a mass programme of job creation, including in publicly owned renewable energy. Guarantee skilled jobs, decent wages and safe working conditions for workers moving out of fossil fuel industries

- We can't control what we don't own. Nationalise under democratic working-class control, the 125 biggest businesses and banks that form the main levers of the economy, as a step towards a democratic socialist plan for the economy to end capitalist climate change, exploitation and inequality

- No trust in the defenders of capitalism. Build new mass workers' parties to fight for socialist change

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the Socialist

Issue 1152

21-27 October 2021

formerly **Militant**

SAVE THE PLANET FROM CAPITALIST CLIMATE CATASTROPHE

SOCIALIST CHANGE TO END CLIMATE CHANGE

AKHALYA
BIRMINGHAM SOUTH WEST SOCIALIST PARTY

The world leaders, including Boris Johnson and Joe Biden, will arrive at the COP26 climate conference starting on 31 October in their polluting private jets, to talk about how we must do more to prevent climate change. Then they will return home, to continue to defend the mass-polluting, profiteering system that is capitalism.

Those most affected by the effects of the climate crisis, facing natural disasters, toxic air quality, rising sea-levels and flooding, are

among the world's poorest. They will not be represented at COP26.

Those responsible for 71% of the world's emissions - just 100 of the world's biggest companies - have their representatives in form of the capitalist politicians. Other big-business big-polluters have chosen to sponsor the event. These include Microsoft, Unilever, NatWest and Hitachi.

A recent report by the International Energy Agency suggests that \$4 trillion needs to be invested over the next decade to reach 'net zero'. But unable to see a profitable return, capitalists have proven that they are unprepared to invest what is needed.

That's why the Socialist Party will be protesting during COP26, raising the slogan "Socialist change to end climate change". We put forward a socialist programme to change society that uses the huge wealth that exists to put an end to, and help to reverse, the climate crisis while protecting jobs, pay and conditions, and transforming the lives of the working class.

In 2019, climate strikes erupted globally as young people took to the streets, with huge public support. The Socialist Party will be joining the protests against COP26, and mobilising support from the trade unions (see page 15). We understand that the working class, when organised, is the most powerful force in

society - by taking mass action in the form of strikes and occupations it can bring society to a standstill.

Capitalism cannot tackle the climate crisis because it puts profits before all else. It is only with a socialist programme that takes the world's resources and production into public ownership, to be run under democratic workers' control and management, that we can end climate change and save the planet.



What came out of COP26?
See p3

WHAT WE STAND FOR: THE SOCIALIST PARTY'S MAIN DEMANDS >>> see column on p3



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ISSN 1366-9621