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# the Socialist

Issue 1285

1-14 August 2024

formerly **Militant**

# THE MONEY IS THERE MAKE THE SUPER-RICH PAY



PHOTO: PAUL MATTSSON

## Fully fund public services

**GARETH BROMHALL**  
SWANSEA AND SOUTH WEST WALES  
SOCIALIST PARTY

**K**eir Starmer's Labour government has started its reign with promises of "tough decisions", also known as cuts.

14 years of austerity made the Tories universally unpopular, they were smashed in the general election. But the Labour victory was shallow, just 5% of those who voted for them did so because they supported their policies.

Labour chancellor Rachel Reeves has raised the spectre of a £22 billion black hole in the public finances. That is the excuse for cuts to new hospital builds, rail and road investment, and pensioners' winter fuel payments. She also scrapped the planned cap on the amount someone can pay for adult social care. Cuts across government departments targeting "waste" are included too. This is a new round of austerity.

Reeves's cuts come just days after the government voted against scrapping the two-child benefit cap - one of the cruellest Tory reforms. 1.6 million children live in households where benefits are restricted simply by the number of siblings they have.

The fact that, despite the 'black hole', Rachel Reeves has agreed to public sector pay rises in line with pay review body recommendations is absolutely a result of the strike wave of the last two years, and Labour's fear that its government will face more of the same. But that still can't be ruled out.

It's clear the junior doctors got more because the government judged that is what was needed to stop them striking. Labour's pay offers in the rest of the public sector don't start to address restoring pay after a decade of real-terms cuts, for instance bands 3-6 in the NHS are currently between 25-29% behind their 2010 wage in real terms, and the extra pay is not fully funded.

People just aren't prepared to accept a continuation of Tory austerity.

Our quality of life has been driven down while the rich just get richer. The richest 100 individuals in the UK increased their wealth by £40 billion in the last year alone.

The money is there! There is enough to fund our services, restore our wages and build the infrastructure needed for a 21st century society. The issue is that it's in the wrong hands, hoarded by the capitalist class whilst we are made to pay for their crisis.

The Tories are attacking Labour saying they have plans for autumn tax increases. We say tax the super-rich, not workers. But don't leave it there. Let's nationalise utilities, transport, infrastructure and the commanding heights of the economy - the top 150 companies that hold so much of the wealth. Under the democratic control and management of the working class, that wealth and resources could be put to good use to meet the needs of all - a decent pay rise, fully funded services, an end to poverty, and more.

Don't accept the money's not there. Join the Socialist Party to fight back!

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**US: BIDEN LEAVES PRESIDENTIAL RACE**  
▶▶ p8-9

**WHAT NEXT TO BUILD THE SOCIALIST OPPOSITION TO STARMER?** ▶▶ p3

**SOLIDARITY WITH BANGLADESH MASS MOVEMENT** ▶▶ p14-15

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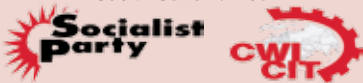
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"The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it."  
**Karl Marx**

# Just Stop Oil activists jailed Defend the right to protest

**RICHARD GINGELL**  
BLACK COUNTRY SOCIALIST PARTY

The recent jailing of five Just Stop Oil activists for conspiring to block the M25 motorway underscores a troubling trend: the increasing criminalisation of protest.

The severity of the sentences imposed on these activists, of four or five years, is disproportionate to the alleged offences. They are the most severe sentences ever for non-violent protest. This crackdown sends a chilling message to all those seeking to challenge the status quo. By targeting individuals for planning future actions, it undermines the fundamental right to protest and is aimed at creating a climate of fear.

The crackdown reflects a broader trend of increasing authoritarianism. As capitalism faces growing instability, the courts are resorting to more repressive measures. By focusing solely on the tactics of protesters, the government is avoiding addressing the root causes of the issues these groups are raising.

Labour was elected promising 'change'. But under this new government, the courts are continuing the Tories' crackdown on the right to protest.

The trade unions must demand that Labour keeps its pledge to reverse all the anti-union laws of the last Tory government, and to extend that to anti-union laws going to Thatcher. As part of that, there should be a fight against all the repressive laws designed to stop working-class people fighting back.

As the climate crisis deepens and economic inequality widens, protest is likely to increase. We have to defend our rights to protest as part of fighting for a socialist society that meets the needs of people and the environment.



JOSHUA HAYES/CC



Public sector workers in Wales striking for a pay rise

## Eluned Morgan elected new Welsh first minister

# The more things change, the more they stay the same



**DAVE REID**  
SOCIALIST PARTY WALES

Eluned Morgan has taken over as leader of Welsh Labour and will be the third First Minister of Wales in five months. She was nominated unopposed and will be 'crowned' first minister on 6 August.

But the more the personnel at the top of Welsh government changes, the more things stay the same. Under Mark Drakeford and Vaughan Gething, Welsh Labour has presided over a steady decline in public services, even steeper than in Tory England. NHS waiting lists have grown, teachers in schools are under greater pressure than ever and council services are a shadow of what they were when Labour first took over the Welsh government when it was created in 1999.

#### NHS waiting list

Under Morgan as health minister, the decline in NHS services accelerated. The week before she became Welsh Labour leader it was announced that in a population of just over three million over 600,000 people languish on NHS waiting lists - over one fifth of the population - and 155,000 are waiting longer than a year.

Morgan will attempt to calm the turmoil in Welsh Labour. The coup against Gething, following his dismissal of Hannah Blythyn as a minister, created different factions of the 30 Labour members of the Senedd (MS). These are largely personal factions, there is no discernible political difference between the warring groups, but they reflect the tension at the blind alley the Welsh government has found itself in.

#### Labour wields Tory axe

Labour in Wales has wielded the Tory axe to public spending. The Welsh government's funding is mainly determined by the UK government, which under the Tories has been cut in real terms for the last 14 years. In terms of the social needs of Wales, the government is underfunded even relative to England. Rather than fighting, the Welsh government has tailored its budget to the Tories' cuts. Earlier reforms carried out under previous Labour governments in Wales have been undermined.

Now Welsh Labour has nowhere to go, unable to carry out any significant reforms to differentiate itself from the UK government without a fight. The decision to create 36 extra

MSs in the next parliament at the same time that the NHS cannot recruit enough doctors and nurses has only deepened its unpopularity.

#### Rock solid no more

Labour's vote share dropped in Wales in the general election, in what used to be a rock-solid bastion. Turn-out was low, especially in the most working-class constituencies.

Morgan will hope to salvage something from the wreckage of the past few months, but most workers in Wales would be wide open to the prospect of change. The vote for Reform (17%) in the general election is a warning to the trade union movement - we need a new party of the working class, to give a positive alternative to the failed strategy of Welsh Labour.

Socialist Party Wales will be working with trade unionists to propose workers' lists for the Senedd elections in 2026.

**WHAT'S YOUR VIEW?**

editors@socialistparty.org.uk



# WHAT NEXT TO BUILD THE SOCIALIST OPPOSITION TO STARMER?

## Socialist Party WHAT WE THINK

**S**ir Keir Starmer's New Labour spent the election campaign endlessly repeating that they would have to make 'tough choices' in office. Now they are doubling down, claiming to be surprised at the terrible £22 billion 'black hole' the Tories have left in the public finances.

In reality, it was clear to everyone that Sunak's Tory government was acting in the interests of the super-wealthy capitalist elite when it made its spending decisions, and not the working- and middle-class majority. The new government's theatre about 'tough choices' is designed to prepare us that they intend to behave in fundamentally the same way.

"Because if we cannot afford it, we cannot do it", was chancellor Rachel Reeves's repeated refrain, announcing cuts to pensioners' winter fuel payment, rail and road infrastructure projects, hospital rebuilds and scrapping the planned adult social care funding cap.

But 'we' can afford it! There is no lack of wealth in Britain. During the Tories' time in office, the wealth of the country's ten richest people alone grew from £47 billion to £182 billion, an increase of 281%. Yet New Labour are telling us there is no money to ensure parents can feed their kids.

The refusal to reverse the Tories' 2017 two-child benefit cap, when doing so would immediately lift 330,000 children over official poverty levels, is one example of their determination to dampen the expectations of millions that 'change' will come with a new government in place. Suspending seven MPs from the Parliamentary Labour Party for daring to vote for the lifting of the cap is another.

### The suspended seven

The suspension of the seven is more draconian even than under Blair's first 'New Labour' government. Then, 47 MPs rebelled against the government's cut to lone parent benefits, but no action was taken against them. Today, after the capitalist class was shaken and alarmed by the anti-austerity mood in society finding a reflection in Jeremy Corbyn's leadership of the Labour Party, Starmer is determined to smash even the smallest left opposition within Labour.

As a result, few of even the small number of Labour MPs still affiliated to the left 'Socialist Campaign Group' found the courage to vote for



Reeves and Starmer JESSICA TAYLOR/UK PARLIAMENT/CC

the amendment. Some abstained or were not present, including Diane Abbott, who did make a public statement that she would have voted for the amendment had she been there, but shamefully some allegedly left MPs voted with the government, including Dawn Butler, Clive Lewis, Kat Smith and Tahir Ali.

The seven who had the courage of their convictions will need to draw the necessary conclusions from this week's events, as will the workers' movement as a whole. The letter from Sir Alan Campbell, Labour's chief whip, to the seven suspended them for six months and said that a judgement at the end of that period on restoring them to the Parliamentary Labour Party would be made based on their "conduct during the suspension" and "willingness to comply with the whip in the future."

The worst thing the seven could do would be to succumb to this pressure, bow down, and vote with the government when it fails to deliver for working-class people.

Unfortunately, there are going to be numerous other issues where the same principled stand that they took on the two-child benefit cap will be required: perhaps including, for example, aspects of the 2016 (anti-) Trade Union Act which Labour fails to withdraw, the failure to introduce rent controls, regressive changes to student financing, doing a rotten deal with Tata Steel instead of nationalising, or the failure to withdraw arms export licences to Israel.

Jeremy Corbyn and the other four independent MPs have written to the seven suspended Labour MPs offering to work closely with them. That

offers the possibility of a bloc of MPs in Westminster fighting to represent the interests of the trade union movement and the wider working class. Most importantly, the trade union movement should learn lessons from these first experiences of Starmer's New Labour in government.

### Public sector pay

Millions of health workers, teachers, civil servants and others have been hoping that they will be offered a pay rise which restores the 10%-plus cut in their real wages over the last decade.

Labour has made an agreement with BMA leaders for a 22% junior doctors' pay increase over two years, subject to members voting to accept. 'Striking works' will be confirmed again in many worker's minds.

The government has put public sector pay award body recommendations to union members too. 5.5% has been offered to teachers and many NHS staff, and the pay remit for civil servants has been set at 5%, for example. Members of most local government unions have already voted to reject the offer put to them by the Tories (£1,290 a year - 5.7% for the lowest paid).

Reeves admitted the top of her reasons for considering any pay rises was "the cost of industrial action". In other words, it is the ongoing effects of the 2022/23 strike wave - the biggest in over three decades - and the threat of further action, which could still win more.

Reeves puts the cost of funding the pay awards at £9 billion. But will it be funded? Only about two-thirds of it. Government departments have been

given until the 30 October Autumn Budget to find £3 billion of cuts. Teaching unions have been told teacher pay is fully funded, but that doesn't look to be the case. Unions must demand full funding.

The workers' movement will not win anything from Starmer's Labour by quiet words in ministers' ears, but only by being prepared to fight. The National Shop Stewards Network will be lobbying the Trades Union Congress (TUC) in September, demanding that this combative approach is adopted.

### A workers' voice

That fight will be strengthened if it has its own voice in parliament, campaigning for workers' demands. Many trade unions have a parliamentary group which is meant to do this. Most are mainly made up of Labour MPs, with very varying records on campaigning or voting for trade unions' policies. How many members of those groups voted against the two-child benefit cap being lifted, despite it being TUC policy to do so?

Across the trade union movement, a discussion needs to take place on ensuring members of parliamentary groups actually campaign for trade union demands. Better a small group of MPs who fight for workers' interests than fictional 'allies' who vote for the pro-capitalist policies of Starmer's Labour government. Back in 1906, the Labour Representation Committee, precursor of the Labour Party, only had 29 MPs, but it was still an important factor in putting pressure on the Liberal government to carry out some reforms and remove anti-trade union rulings.

Already, in the first month of Starmer's Labour government, the reasons that the working class needs its own party, armed with a socialist programme, are being demonstrated very clearly. If you want to help build the socialist opposition to Starmer's Labour - join the Socialist Party today.

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# Uni funding crisis: Prepare for student struggles against Starmer's attacks

ADAM POWELL-DAVIES

SOCIALIST PARTY YOUTH AND STUDENT ORGANISER

The risk of universities going bankrupt made it onto Keir Starmer's pre-election 'shitlist' of major immediate challenges facing a Labour government.

Will Starmer's Labour government raise tuition fees? Will it be the first to let a university go bankrupt on its watch?

Following the election of the new Labour government in particular, university vice-chancellors and higher education thinktanks have wasted no time speculating on what a university bankruptcy could mean – and setting out their views on what an adequate government response would look like.

Clearly a university going under would have catastrophic consequences. In many towns and cities, universities are one of the biggest employers, often second only to the NHS. Many thousands of jobs would be lost. Potentially tens of thousands of students would be without a course. There are fears that if one university went, it would trigger a domino effect throughout the sector.

That's why Labour would be likely to intervene – for example, by providing emergency funding, with strings attached. In 1987, Thatcher's Tory government found £20 million to save the then University College Cardiff, but only while mandating its takeover by the neighbouring University of Wales Institute of Technology to create Cardiff University.

At the same time, state intervention to save a university would raise the sights of workers and young people to demand similar intervention; for pay rises, public service funding and more.

Labour would much rather take short-term measures to prevent the chaos of a university bankruptcy being posed in the first place.

A recently published review by the Office for Students (OIS) – the university regulator – concluded that financial challenges are “rapidly crystallising” with budget deficits, redundancies and course closures. Failure to manage these risks will “undoubtedly lead to a market exit, potentially in the near term, of one or more large providers”.

The government has accepted the recommendations of the review, putting out a statement that “the role of the Office for Students will be re-focused to prioritise the financial stability of the higher education sector”. Crucially, however, the government is yet to respond to the recommendation to “clarify its position on market exit”. The University and College Union immediately put out a statement calling for new funding for the OIS to be able to directly intervene to support struggling universities. Key for students and workers is not just more funding, but control of how the money is spent.



Student protests in 2010, after the Tory-Lib Dem coalition raised tuition fees PAUL MATTESSON

## How did unis get to this point?

In 2017, the Tories were forced to freeze tuition fees in England at £9,250 a year – a concession made under pressure of Jeremy Corbyn's call for free education.

The real value of tuition fees has fallen dramatically due to inflation, to the point that universities now lose roughly £4,000 on average for every UK undergraduate.

This funding shortfall has driven a trend towards universities relying on international students, in effect using these students' much higher tuition fees to subsidise the cost of teaching UK students.

However, international student applications are reportedly down by around one-third on last year. This recruitment crisis is a major reason why 40% of universities are predicted to run deficit budgets this coming year. The real value of higher education funding is at its lowest point since fees were trebled in 2012.

## What will Labour do?

With Starmer abandoning his pledge for free education last year, Labour could complete the U-turn by increasing tuition fees. New education secretary Bridget Phillipson has more than once refused to rule this out when asked. New Labour lynchpin Peter Mandelson went as far as calling for an “immediate uptick in fees” at a reception in Westminster this July.

Unfreezing the tuition fee cap would mean fees rising every year



Any attempt to make students pay higher tuition fees would be met with widespread anger

with inflation. That was how it was supposed to be, before Corbynism became a meddling factor in the plans of capitalist politicians.

Another option is to undo the visa restrictions brought in this year by the Tories, which prevent international students from bringing family members to the UK.

Labour's approach may well be a combination of these things. But whatever they decide, clearly it will not involve any substantial increase in direct public funding for higher education, let alone free education. Phillipson has previously boasted about her plans for universities that could be implemented “without adding a penny to government borrowing or general taxation”.

And Labour will also want to cut back on the indirect public funding given to universities in the form of student loans. Despite the Tories' attempts to overhaul the loan repayment system, most student loans continue to go unpaid and become government debt. The current figure for outstanding student debt is about

£250 billion, equivalent to over 10% of GDP.

Appearing on Sky News last week, the new Labour skills minister Jacqui Smith declared that “it's first of all in the hands of universities to take the action necessary in order to be as efficient as possible”. This is Labour's warning to universities: “Even if our government does something on university funding, you will still have to make cuts if you want that money to go far enough”.

## Fight Labour attacks

Overall, it looks like Labour will squeeze students for extra funds, which they hope will be enough to stave off bankruptcies in the short term, but not enough to remove the incentive on universities to make ‘difficult decisions’ over the longer term.

Any attempt to make students pay higher tuition fees would be met with widespread anger, not just among current university students but also school and college students planning to attend university.

Given that over half of under-30s in Britain now go to university, an attack on university students would be widely seen as an attack on young people's futures in general.

There is already huge discontent among millions of young people, who see little to nothing positive about society as it is currently organised. They see themselves growing up in a world that allows uncontrolled war, poverty, climate degradation – all overseen by a tiny elite at the top,

who get richer and richer while everyone else gets poorer.

In this context, the announcement of even a small fees increase could spark explosions on campus and among young people in general. Students would have to respond by calling mass meetings in every university, as well as colleges and schools, to collectively debate and discuss how to build a movement to fight Labour attacks on education, on young people and the working class as whole.

When Tony Blair introduced tuition fees in 1998, it sparked a big student movement. When the Tory-Lib Dem government trebled fees in 2010, it was the same again.

In 2024, the marketised fees model of higher education is in limbo. Labour want to keep it on life support while making students and the working class pay; socialists have to fight for a real alternative – a free and fully funded education system, run democratically by students, university staff and the local community for all to enjoy, as part of a socialist society organised to meet people's needs, not profit.

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# Leeds Harehills riot an expression of accumulated anger

IAIN DALTON

SOCIALIST PARTY YORKSHIRE REGIONAL SECRETARY

On the night of 18 July, less than a mile from my house, police cars were being overturned and a bus set on fire. Huge crowds gathered in the streets of Harehills in east Leeds.

The immediate trigger seems to have been the removal of children from a family, following injuries to a 7-month-old who had been taken to the hospital. We do not know the full details.

However, footage does show the children struggling as they are forcibly taken away by police. A large crowd gathered, seemingly to resist this, trying to stop the police van from moving, then later attacking police vehicles and riot officers.

This led to the police withdrawal from the area, and them setting up road blocks on Harehills Lane. Later in the evening, a bus trapped in the crowds after it was evacuated was set on fire.

Local people have felt ignored by the establishment. The area is dominated by back-to-back housing, with small or no gardens, overcrowding and dodgy landlords. Low waged, and insecure work predominates. Apart from the hospital, the next biggest employer in the area, a warehouse for Arcadia group, shut down when the company went under in 2021.

There is huge accumulated anger and frustration, as well as widespread distrust of the police and other authorities.

In the aftermath, local people are

expressing frustration at how the police acted, seemingly to inflame the situation, and that they later appeared to abandon the area to its fate.

Polls show trust in the police is falling, less than half of Londoners trust the Metropolitan Police for example. For a section of youth and workers in Harehills, many from migrant or Black and Asian backgrounds, the police are definitely not seen as being there to serve in their interests. Likewise, underfunded and overstretched social services are seen by some as playing a repressive role.

## Services

The Socialist Party calls for fully funded public services. Under the democratic control of working-class communities, the police and other authorities could be made accountable to elected committees composed of representatives of trade unions and community groups. Services could be planned to meet need.

However, Leeds Labour council has carried out Tory austerity cuts. A new leisure centre, promised as a sweetener when the council wanted to build on the Fearnville playing fields, which the local community resisted, has still not even commenced construction. And just last month, the council voted to press on with closing Gipton North nursery, and exploring privatisation of Shepherd's Lane, 2 of 3 council-run Little Owls Nurseries in the area.

In the local elections, after years of Labour domination, a prominent Gaza campaigner, Mothin Ali, was elected as councillor for the area, standing for the Green Party.

Far-right groups attempted to jump on the situation, distorting events to describe them as ‘the start of race riots in the UK’. They tried to inflame the situation with Islamophobic comments, including claiming Mothin was the instigator of the riots! Video footage clearly shows Mothin working with locals to stop people tipping bins and other rubbish onto the bus fires, and then helping local residents to put the fire out.

The Tommy Robinson-backed protest in nearby Gipton the following Saturday, attempting to stoke divisions in our community, only attracted a handful. The far right, like the Labour-run council, has no answers to the underlying situation facing local people.

We need a council that fights for the resources our city needs. We need free childcare, decent jobs, affordable high-quality housing and more.

Green councillors have so far played a positive role in working with campaigners to save Little Owls nursery, for example. How will they use their elected positions going forward to demand that the Labour council, now with a Labour government in Westminster, funds the services we need?

Events in Harehills show the huge accumulated anger that exists. That anger needs an expression through working-class struggle for all the things we need: decent homes, a real pay rise, a future for young people. A key part of that is a new mass party of the working class fighting for socialist change.



There is huge accumulated anger and frustration, as well as widespread distrust of the police and other authorities

Aftermath in Harehills, Leeds IAIN DALTON



# Manchester police violence

## Fight for working-class democratic control of policing

SALLY GRIFFITHS

MANCHESTER AND SALFORD SOCIALIST PARTY

The recent footage of a police officer kicking and then stamping on the head of a man pinned to the floor of Manchester Airport by another officer has provoked shock and revulsion. The city is polarised, with speculation about events leading up to the act of police brutality.

That evening there were protests outside Rochdale police station late into the night and the day after there was a protest outside the offices of Manchester mayor Andy Burnham, in direct response to the video images. Approximately 500 people attended at just a day's notice.

At the protest, people were rightly angry, concerned and frightened. Speakers reminded those there that these fears are a daily reality for Black and Asian people. We've all seen the long list of inquiries and investigations into institutional racism in the police and the British state. ‘Nothing to see here’ doesn't cut it.

What many people are most shocked by is what seems to be a complete loss of control by armed police officers. It is reported that the police officers, who were armed, had been under attack before the restraining took place and footage has since revealed some of the preceding violent scenes. But there should never be a situation where a police officer can assault a member of the public, their training should remove that possibility.

People expect police officers to de-escalate situations, not exacerbate them and risk causing divisions within our city.

An investigation is under way by the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC). But how is that accountable to working-class communities in Manchester? It is made up of people with backgrounds in policing, high-level civil service and corporate governance. Instead, there should be an investigation led by democratically elected representatives of the community, including from the trade unions.

The assault came only a few days after a report on Greater Manchester Police (GMP) revealed women being treated disgracefully in GMP cells, strip searched or worse. These incidents are all too common. We won't accept the trope of “one bad apple”.

We've seen an escalation of police interventions in the anti-war movement and arrests at rallies in support of Palestine, alongside heavy-handed custodial sentences for non-violent protesters. As anger at falling standards of living, environmental destruction and war grows, policing is becoming more repressive, defending the interests of the capitalist bosses.

We need a police service that is governed and overseen by the people and communities it serves. Across the country, faith in the police to act to protect working-class communities is falling; it feels particularly so in Manchester at the moment.

The Socialist Party calls for democratic control of the police. It needs to be accountable to local working-class committees, run by elected representatives including youth, workers and trade unions, as well as community groups.

## Who runs PCS? PCS members voted for change in the NEC elections: This is being blocked

BROAD LEFT NETWORK REPORT ON THE PCS NEC  
OF 17-18 JULY

Since taking office in May 2024, the new PCS left majority on the union's National Executive Committee (NEC) has had several priorities. These are based on the issues they campaigned on in the elections, which led to them winning 19 seats on the 35-seat NEC, defeating the former majority led by the 'Left Unity' (LU) grouping. The NEC majority is a coalition, including the PCS Broad Left Network (BLN), in which the Socialist Party participates.

A strong national campaign. A political strategy that puts members' needs first. A union that is run by the elected NEC and by lay reps at all levels, instead of being run by the general secretary's team of unelected officials.

### Business vetoed

The third meeting of the NEC since it was elected was on 17-18 July. For the third time, the majority of business put forward by the NEC majority was vetoed by the president. This ranged from motions on vital issues such as the union's national campaign, to less important items such as which conference motions get assigned to which committees of the NEC. This veto meant that motions could not be moved, debated or voted on.

This approach was doubled down on by the president in a published statement on 17 July, setting "appropriate boundaries" for how NEC business was to be conducted. This complained of the amount of email correspondence from NEC members, as the newly elected left coalition tries to rein in the undemocratic behaviour of the general secretary.

Every lay rep and member, over the next ten months, is going to face the question: who runs PCS and in whose interests? Presently, it is not the elected NEC, it is the union's machine, under the direction of the general secretary, propped up by the national president. They obstruct and challenge our right to progress our union's policies.

### National campaign

At every NEC meeting, LU members have derided the vote of PCS Annual Delegate Conference to throw out the national campaign strategy of the ex-leadership, and to adopt a new approach. This NEC was no different, as the president and others attacked the new approach as a 'two-tier' campaign.

The NEC majority proposes that we should be ready and willing to call action amongst the 20,000 members with a mandate, as we lay the groundwork to reballoon the 100,000 who missed a strike mandate in the ballot up to May 2024. This reballoon would be on the basis of the demands agreed at conference, meaning that we could connect it to issues facing members every day, such as hybrid working.



G4S security guards in DWP on strike MARTIN REYNOLDS



**Members voted for a strong national campaign. A political strategy that puts members' needs first. A union that is run by the elected NEC and reps at all levels, instead of being run by the general secretary's team of unelected officials**

Pay remit talks have begun with the Cabinet Office, and by the end of July we will likely know where we are, including whether any new money is on the table or if pay awards will need to be found from within existing, already tight, departmental budgets. Additionally, the deadline we have set for a response from the prime minister will have expired.

The motion proposed by BLN and backed up by the rest of the left coalition proposed a series of steps, including engagement with lay reps across the union to discuss strategy, to ready us for a special NEC on 13 August, with the intention of firming up timetables and potentially to call the first strike action.

This was thrown off the 17-18 July agenda by the president.

The previous motion, passed on 10 July, called for joint working with the other trade unions. The Labour government is rapidly going to be faced with demands on pay from teachers, local government, the NHS and others.

Nationalisation of water, of

of these things incur a cost in terms of staffing budgets within PCS, and pension liabilities.

BLN supporters take the union's finances very seriously, as does the union's national treasurer, assistant general secretary (AGS) John Moloney, who donates tens of thousands of pounds of his wages back to the union each year.

After discussion with the finance committee chair, John attempted to put a paper to the NEC, raising concerns. The general secretary blocked the paper being issued to the NEC. Further, the national president and general secretary each asserted that the elected AGS was obliged to clear all his papers via the general secretary's office, as a "contractual requirement". This is untrue. The AGS is directly elected by PCS members and is responsible to the NEC, as is the general secretary.

The NEC majority's organising motion was discussed and agreed. The way is now open to consider all those concerns voiced by reps about the blind spots of the previous strategy.

For other financial and staffing concerns, and other important issues that were vetoed by the president, see bln.org.uk for a fuller report.

### Join us in transforming PCS

It could not be clearer that the general secretary and president are attempting to intimidate the NEC majority from putting in motions and amendments. We reject this approach. Whether the general secretary likes it or not, the NEC majority was elected on a clear programme to build a serious national campaign, and to re-establish lay democracy and accountability to the lay leadership of PCS. We intend to carry this through.

We will continue to report on events to the activist layer across the union, and call on every activist to help campaign for the policies and strategies voted for by the members. We encourage branches to invite BLN NEC members to speak. Help us build a union led by the elected leadership, and accountable to branches and groups.

BLN brings together activists from many political traditions, united in the belief that we need a fighting, democratic PCS with socialist policies. We urge every activist and lay rep in PCS to join BLN to help us rebuild PCS.

● Since this report of the NEC was written, the new Labour government has proposed a pay remit of 5%, alongside £3 billion 'savings' to be made by government departments to fund public sector pay rises

Get all the latest union news...



## London Underground workers prepare to fight on pay

### RMT ACTIVISTS ON LONDON UNDERGROUND

The new Labour government seems to be seeking to avoid being pitched into conflict with the trade unions on day one. But one person who appears determined to bring it on is Labour's London mayor, Sadiq Khan.

Khan's Transport for London (TfL) managers have proposed a pay offer to both TfL and London Underground (LUL) workers of 3.3%. This will do little to address the ongoing cost-of-living crisis and the offer is linked to a sinister attempt to effectively remove TfL/LUL trade unions from negotiating pay in the future.

Management proposes putting all wage rates into bands which the employers (TfL and LUL) would refuse to negotiate with unions. These imposed bands would form caps that pay would not be allowed to exceed.

So, if LUL negotiated a 4% pay rise but this took the wages of, for example, station staff, above the top of the 'customer service' pay band, then station staff would not receive the consolidated pay rise.

This approach is one that has been trailed in TfL for workers in jobs with banded pay. As a result, many workers have missed several consolidated pay rises in the last nine years. TfL got away with this because union

membership density is far lower in TfL than LUL. But now, TfL operational roles, mainly organised by Unite, and LUL operational roles, mainly organised by RMT, are to be put into bands with salary caps. TfL has paid increases as one-off non-consolidated payments in these circumstances, but this is not pensionable and has no compound gain.

As well as suppressing year-on-year pay rises, this strategy is an attack on pensions by the back door. Blocked by RMT strike action from direct attacks on the TfL pension, TfL can cut pensions by holding down consolidated pay, which is used to calculate a retiree's final salary.

Moreover, the effect of the so-called offer would be that whatever the unions negotiate, managers would then go away and decide who can and cannot have the pay rise. This would be used to split workers and play one group off against another. It is a real threat to the very right to negotiate pay.

RMT has told LUL that the union is in dispute over LUL's failure to make an acceptable offer that is paid as consolidated salary to all. A mass meeting of RMT members is scheduled. TfL and LUL must abandon their clumsy attack on the unions' right to negotiate pay, or face a strike ballot.



Tube workers on strike 2022. WEST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

## Amazon workers defiant after narrow recognition ballot loss

ADAM HARMSWORTH  
COVENTRY SOCIALIST PARTY

The ballot for statutory recognition of GMB union at Amazon's BHX4 Coventry site was exceptionally narrowly lost. 49.5% of the 2,600 workers voted for GMB to be recognised, short by just 28 votes!

The union has been built up for nearly two years, following spontaneous sit-in protests in 2022 after Amazon gave workers an insulting 35-50p pay rise. Then, GMB only had a few dozen members. Now it has over 1,000 members who have struck more than 30 times. GMB organisers have overcome hurdles of language barriers and a broad lack of understanding of what a trade union is and does. In the recognition campaign, information was translated into twelve languages.

The biggest hurdles, however, have come from Amazon itself. It is a notoriously anti-union corporate giant, which has used a range of repressive measures to prevent and smash workers' organisation. At BHX4, and to a lesser extent other sites, it has not been able to contain workers' anger at poverty pay, cruel conditions, and bullying management.

For months before the recognition ballot process began at Coventry, Amazon had stepped up its attacks. Workers were bribed with free meals on strike days. Anti-union messages popped up across the site - from TV screens to posters in toilet cubicles. Union members reported that managers were drafted in from other sites just to lurk around the warehouse speaking to staff about the 'dangers' of the union. QR codes were placed across the canteens with a direct link to cancel GMB union membership. Workers were pushed into attending multiple anti-union seminars.

Not achieving recognition is a setback for GMB's campaign, but only to an extent. The workers have achieved a great deal without recognition and despite the attacks.

### Fight not over

GMB officials reported the news with a defiant attitude, writing on X/Twitter: "The fight has only begun - no retreat, no surrender", "The fight isn't over until we win", "When we get knocked down, we get back up again".

The activists are determined to keep the fight going. Within hours of the ballot result, GMB members at Amazon, supported by Coventry Trades Union Council, protested outside the BHX4 site, chanting "No surrender!" and "The workers united will never be defeated!"

Amazon is now facing a legal challenge over claims the company pressured workers into cancelling their union membership - an Inducement Claim.

GMB members' campaign in Amazon has received support from a swathe of the workers' movement, from local trade union branches to the Trades Union Congress (TUC) itself.

The unions should put pressure on the Labour government to support



Amazon workers have taken over 30 days of strike action since January 2023 COVENTRY SOCIALIST PARTY

the Amazon workers. For a start, Labour should immediately raise the minimum wage to £15 an hour - a key demand of Amazon workers - and scrap the anti-union laws, including the 1992 Act that prevents a new ballot for recognition for three years. The same anger at Amazon for its anti-union repression should also be put on Labour for letting the attacks go unchallenged.

The very slim defeat at Coventry Amazon has only encouraged the

reps and activists to keep up the campaign for decent pay and work conditions. In this era of more volatile politics and attacks on workers, it is vital that trade union strength, solidarity, and organisation is built up across the working class. Employers come to Amazon to learn how to fight back against their workers. The working class must learn from its battles like this at Amazon to fight back, win, and put bosses like those at Amazon in their place!

nationalshopstewardsnetwork

UNITE NUJ napo RMT 1904 UNIONS EWU

# LOBBY THE TUC

## JOIN THE FIGHT FOR A WORKERS' MANIFESTO

Sunday 8th September, 1pm at The Old Ship Hotel, 32-38 Kings Rd, Brighton, BN1 1NR

# BIDEN LEAVES PRESIDENTIAL RACE

## FIGHT FOR A WORKING-CLASS POLITICAL ALTERNATIVE

LENNY SHAIL  
SOCIALIST PARTY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

“America has passed through one of Lenin’s weeks in which decades happen”, was how the capitalist Economist magazine started one of its leaders, referencing the famous remark of the leader of the Russian Revolution. That was before US President Joe Biden announced he was withdrawing from the US presidential race!

It is the latest expression of the fractures, growing polarisation and instability that engulf US imperialism and its capitalist class.

Not since 1968, when Lyndon B Johnson withdrew from the presidential race, has a sitting president withdrawn before contesting for a second full term. However, against the backdrop of the rise and threat of a return of president Trump Mark 2, the significance is even more heightened.

For weeks, pressure has been piling on Biden to step down since the disastrous debate with Trump in June. Day after day, leading Democrats had been adding their names to those calling for him step down, and rich backers adding their names or stopping their funds. Many more called for him to go in private or went as far as calling for him to step down without actually saying it.

In many ways, this relentless pressure is an attempt by the majority of the US capitalist class who oppose Trump to get their act together, in their eyes to save US capitalism and imperialism from the chaos of another Trump presidency.

But it still doesn’t hide the fractures within the Democratic Party, part of the wider polarisation developing across the US that can lead to civil war-like situations and local clashes.

Biden’s quick endorsement of Kamala Harris was the first step in her likely coronation as Democrat candidate for November’s election. Though there is a desire for a unified candidate avoiding further divisions, it is not without problems for the US capitalist class.

The crisis of US ‘democratic credibility’ hangs over the election and within the Democratic Party itself. This is reflected by calls in the Economist, Financial Times and other capitalist media for a contest at the Democratic National Convention taking place from 19-22 August, despite the problems it could open up. If it was to become a genuine ‘open convention’, it is likely they will be satisfied with Harris as a candidate. This despite their concerns and its



PHOTOS: PUBLIC DOMAIN, TRUMP WHITE HOUSE ARCHIVE/CC, FIBONACCI BLUE/CC

limitations, including the California-elite image she portrays.

There are now hopes that this puts the Democrats back in position to beat Trump. However, only a year ago, many commented that Kamala Harris was a worse option than Biden to challenge Trump at a presidential election. Her 2020 run for the Democratic nomination rapidly collapsed. Current polls indicate that Trump is still the favourite and he’s at the same levels as before the disastrous debate between Biden and Trump in June.

### So called Lefts within Democrats

The so-called ‘lefts’ within the Democrats have been utterly embarrassed. In the lead-up to Biden’s withdrawal, the leading proponents supporting him staying were Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (AOC) and other members of ‘the squad’, including Bernie Sanders, whose left-wing challenge for the 2016 Democratic nomination enthused millions.

If any wanted to represent the working class and oppose the two big capitalist parties, they’d put themselves forward, as Sanders partly did in 2016 and 2020, and this time, not leave it there but independently organise the growing anger and disillusionment that Trump and his running mate JD Vance are opportunistically seizing. This could be part of a call to the trade unions and wider working class for the largest-possible workers’ stand in future elections, breaking from the Democrats.

It is important to also point to the significant ‘uncommitted’ votes against Biden in the early Democratic primaries and caucuses at the start of the year. These numbered hundreds of thousands state by state. Many not even registered Democrats came out using it as a voice against Biden and against the slaughter of Palestinians by the Israeli state.

Despite its limitations, that movement and mood gives a glimpse of the possibility and vacuum that exists for the development of a mass working-class political voice in the US.

Many trade unions, much of the trade union leadership, including unfortunately the firebrand leader of the UAW union Sean Fain, simply backed Biden and now Harris as candidates for the ‘pro-union’ party, with no hint of irony.

Millions will not vote. However, many millions, because of the utter failure of Sanders and the trade union leaderships, could be swayed by Trump and Vance.

Vance has styled himself as a man from poverty done good, describing himself as a fighter for the working class. Sections of the Republicans and

capitalist press have labelled him ‘the Republican Bernie’. In his own words: “The People on the left, I would say, whose politics I’m open to – It’s the Bernie Bros”.

It’s quite clear that Vance is opportunistically trying to catch the ear of the layer of workers who were inspired by Sanders with calls for a \$20-an-hour minimum wage and attacks on big corporations (as well as big unions, of course!)

Like Trump, his populist calls are combined with right-wing rhetoric and policies that pose real threats to working people, the environment and more.

It gives a warning to dangers that exist when the working class has no mass political voice. Therefore, the struggle for a mass socialist working-class alternative is urgent.

Teamsters union president Sean O’Brien spoke at the Republican National Convention 15-18 July, the first teamster to do so in 121 years.

O’Brien has, in the last few years, attempted to pose as a hardline union leader prepared to take on big business, without much follow through. The 2023 national UPS strike, that mobilised huge momentum and power behind it, was called off in the final hours on the basis of limited concessions.

Trump has zero interest in O’Brien’s pro-worker proposals. But having a Teamster president there, giving it the hard line on big business and the elite, just plays into Trump’s fake-populist brand.



**Even now, union leaders could intervene in this election to counter and stop the opportunistic and hypocritical lies and propaganda of Trump and Vance. This could lay the basis for a mass workers’ stand in future local, state and congress elections**

Many points O’Brien made in his speech were correct in terms of the plight of the working class in the USA. His comments included: “The Teamsters are not interested if you have a D, R, or I next to your name. We want to know one thing: what are you doing to help American workers?”

“Remember, elites have no party, elites have no nation. Their loyalty is to the balance sheet and the stock price at the expense of the American worker.”

According to O’Brien, the Democrats ignored his request to speak at their convention. With many teamsters angered by O’Brien’s own populist opportunism, his speech has opened up a potential debate and struggle in the Teamsters and wider union movement about the political strategy and democracy of trade unions.

However, many attacking O’Brien from within the union movement and beyond are at the same time simply regurgitating that the Democrats and Harris (and Biden previously) were

pro-worker and pro-union. This only plays into the hands of Trump and Vance.

For huge numbers of workers, this shows they are simply out of touch with the realities of life in the last five years of a Democratic president, the decades of Democratic administrations previously, and the many Democratic local and state governments.

Trump used his speech at the convention to call for the UAW to fire its president Shawn Fain. A big shift compared to Trump’s claims he always had the back of striking UAW workers during the month-long autoworkers strike last year.

Fain replied by correctly stating: “America’s autoworkers aren’t the problem, our union isn’t the problem. The working class isn’t the problem. Corporate greed and the billionaires’ hero, mascot, and lap dog Donald Trump, are the problem... Don’t get played by this scab billionaire.”

However, in no way does that let O’Brien or Fain off the hook. They lead two of the of the most powerful trade unions in the USA. They could put their money and their unions’ power where their mouth is. They could make the call for other union leaders, whose unions have been organising in union drives and strikes in the recent period, to break from the Democrats and begin to set the agenda and tone in the political debate and at the ballot box by raising what’s needed for the working class. They could be spearheading the fight for a workers’ voice at the ballot box across the US, but instead they are not prepared to challenge the system.

Such a campaign, if it had been launched last year off the back of the UPS and autoworkers contract struggles, could have laid the basis for a mass union-backed workers’ presidential campaign.

But even now, the union leaders could intervene in this election to counter and stop the opportunistic and hypocritical lies and propaganda of Trump and Vance. This could lay the basis for a mass workers’ stand in future local, state and congressional elections.

Many unions have seen the beginnings and formation of rank-and-file initiatives and organisations develop in recent years. As well as playing a key industrial role, organising on the ground, campaigning to force action and make unions democratically run combative organisations, such bodies could also coordinate industrially and raise the need for a fighting political strategy. They could play an important role in raising the call for an independent stand by workers, as the first step towards a new party of the working class.



## Help us raise £10,000 to fund the fight for socialism worldwide



CWI members in Nigeria

The Socialist Party is part of the Committee for a Workers’ International (CWI), which organises across the world, fighting for socialist change. This summer, dozens of Socialist Party activists will be attending the ‘CWI School’ in Berlin, to discuss with scores of other CWI members. The Socialist Party is campaigning to raise £10,000 to contribute to the financial appeal at that international meeting. Sean Figg, a member of the CWI International Secretariat, explains why that money is needed.

Worldwide, the capitalist profit-system means disaster for the working-class and poor masses. The result is multiple and convergent political, economic, social, environmental and health crises. Economic crises recur again and again, casting a permanent shadow of uncertainty over the lives of billions, hammering living standards and dragging them backwards. Major regional wars, civil wars and military coups are taking place as the capitalist ruling classes and their different factions vie for influence, power and wealth. Military spending has reached record levels. A second Trump presidency is a real possibility and will add further fuel to the fires of global instability.

The interconnectedness of the world is repeatedly hammered home in this era of capitalist crisis. Wars spill over borders, spark refugee crises and

drive mass migrations. The Covid-19 pandemic was a global disaster, as was the cost-of-living crisis that followed in its wake, and the ongoing environmental emergency. The idea that international solutions are needed to the problems facing the working class, young people and the poor worldwide can be quickly grasped.

On every continent and in every country, people are compelled to fight back. In recent weeks alone, Kenya and Bangladesh have erupted in major anti-government protests. They are added to the roll-call of neocolonial revolts in the recent period – Chile, Lebanon, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Iraq and Myanmar. These have taken place alongside important strike waves in Europe and North America. More mass movements and mass struggles, rebellions, revolts and uprisings lie ahead. Increasingly, groups of workers and youth, and other working-class organisations will search for the ideas that the CWI defends and develops. We need to be ready to meet this demand.

The resources of the CWI need to be built to increase our ability to intervene in the escalating class struggle the crisis of world capitalism is provoking, and win the best activists among the working class, the youth and the poor masses to revolutionary socialist internationalism. The CWI has built experience over fifty years on all continents. Our sections and members have a proud record of participating in and leading struggle. Whilst the first capitalist trillionaire is expected soon, the CWI can only rely on its members and sympathisers for

financial support.

But this is just one aspect of the crucial work done by the CWI International Centre, based in London. Alongside efforts to reach activists in new countries is the important task of political support to the existing sections of the CWI. This is crucial to maintaining the CWI as a unified revolutionary socialist international based on a common method and orientation to the working class – the only social force that can carry through the socialist revolution worldwide.

Under the pressure of the pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis – which has increased air fares substantially – vital regular political visits have not been as frequent as in the past. This year, the International Centre has strived to change this. So far, visits by members of the CWI’s International Secretariat have been funded to Chile and Malaysia. Before the end of the year, we are planning at least three more visits to support the work of CWI members in key countries.

Alongside this is the need to maintain and look towards expanding the resources of the International Centre, including full-time workers. All of this is a necessary foundation to develop and promote the CWI’s Marxist analysis of the class struggle globally.

The Socialist Party, the CWI in England and Wales, is campaigning to raise £10,000 to support the political work of the CWI over the remainder of 2024.

● If you can, donate via [www.socialistparty.org.uk/donations/cwi-appeal](http://www.socialistparty.org.uk/donations/cwi-appeal) and make it clear you are donating to the ‘CWI appeal’

## Leeds Pride – ‘One big advert’ couldn’t dampen political mood



Socialist Party members at Leeds Pride PHOTO: LEEDS SP

### CAS MIDDLEMAS

LEEDS AND WEST YORKSHIRE SOCIALIST PARTY

Socialist Party members participated in Leeds Pride, the second largest free Pride in the country. Unfortunately, like many other Pride events, Leeds has become increasingly sanitised and commodified.

One of the main sponsors was First Direct bank, whose parent company, HSBC, has millions of pounds of investments from firms that sell arms to Israel and bulldoze Palestinian homes and communities. Despite this, the political mood could not be dampened.

People that we talked to at our Socialist Party campaign stall shared the sentiment that they were glad to see the Tories gone, but felt that Labour would be much of the same. Many expressed anger over the

new government policy to continue the ban on puberty blockers for under-18s.

Support for Palestine was also strong, with a large bloc. However, they, along with the entire trade union bloc, had been relegated to the back of the march.

When talking to older LGBTQ+ people, they acknowledged that while some things had got better, queer nightlife and community was getting actively worse. Many felt that Pride had become one big advert, and that local councils were responsible for damaging community spaces.

The highlight for me was seeing the positive discussions and the hard work put in by Socialist Party supporters, selling our newspaper, raising money for our fighting fund, and most importantly, putting forward the case for socialism.

## Hillsborough: Liverpool Socialist Party forces Philharmonic Theatre to cancel Iain Dale podcast show

### NEILL DUNNE

LIVERPOOL AND DISTRICT SOCIALIST PARTY

An event was planned for mid-September for a podcast show hosted by Tory broadcaster Iain Dale at the Liverpool Royal Philharmonic Theatre.

This shocked me, as I was aware that he had published a book by Norman Bettison, who was a chief inspector of South Yorkshire Police at the time of the Hillsborough Disaster in 1989.

The Socialist Party has members and I have friends who lost loved ones, and some that survived that fateful day, 15 April 1989.

The Philharmonic has hosted events by Hillsborough justice campaigns in the past and it was assumed it was an oversight.

So, after the shock of learning Dale would be profiting from a show at the venue, while also profiting from endorsing and publishing the repeated

lies from Norman Bettison, I asked the theatre to remove Dale, as this would have been an insult to the families of victims, the survivors and the people of the city.

It is now known that Bettison was responsible for organising the altering and tampering of witness statements in the aftermath, with the sole intention of removing blame from the police service, and placing it solely onto the fans that day.

Bettison and his team conspired with media agencies, including Whites news agency, to shift the narrative in the public domain, painting an inaccurate and misleading perception that people from Liverpool are drunken, feckless and violent. This allowed the country to accept the police version of events against the accounts of thousands who had been witness to the disaster on TV and with their own eyes in the Hillsborough stadium that day.

## Save Bethnal Green Working Men’s Club



Protesting on 29 July PHOTO: HUGO PIERRE

### EMILY LYNDON

TOWER HAMLETS SOCIALIST PARTY

A vital space within the community is at risk of closure following an eviction notice.

Members of the community showed up to a rally on 29 July to oppose closing the doors on the iconic venue. Speakers ranged from performers, members of performing arts union Equity, and other activists working to save London’s queer spaces.

Speakers shared memories, highlighting the importance of spaces like this for queer people, spaces where all can be free and safe to explore their identities. At a time when LGBTQ+ people are seeing their rights under attack, it is essential to protect and maintain these spaces.

Equity general secretary Paul Fleming called for an end to the capitalist property system that constantly arts union Equity, and other activists working to save London’s queer spaces.

campaign to keep venues like this and others safe from the hands of property developers.

A campaign of performers, the local community, and local trade unions could put pressure on the local council – run by local independent party Aspire – to give the venue ‘community asset’ status to retain the building’s use as a venue. Tower Hamlets Council must resist pressure to allow property speculators to redevelop the site into more unaffordable housing.

## Why I joined the Socialist Party Earth ebbing away due to corporate greed

### ANTHONY WILLIAMS

PLYMOUTH SOCIALIST PARTY

The earth is 4.5 billion years old. Humans began to emerge 300,000 years ago. We have been around for mere minutes in relation to the life span of the Earth. Yet in humanity’s short time on the planet, there has been the destabilisation of ecosystems due to deforestation and overexploitation.

Why has the above happened? It has happened due to the greed of the capitalist system. A system that actively encourages wanton greed, production of goods with a short lifespan, and people to blame each other or minorities for the environmental crisis.

The crisis cannot be fixed by making tweaks to the capitalist system. We need a socialist system to ensure that the best decisions for the

environment are made without the influence of greed, and in a truly democratic way.

By working together democratically to remove issues such as inequality, poverty, and imperialism, we can give workers worldwide the space to push for solutions to the crisis. I want to be part of the Socialist Party to achieve this.

**Join the fightback**  
**JOIN THE SOCIALISTS**

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

## After thousands rally with Tommy Robinson How can the far right be combated?

### PAULA MITCHELL

SOCIALIST PARTY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Many people will be alarmed at the size of far-right Tommy Robinson’s national rally in Trafalgar Square on Saturday 27 July, in the name of “Uniting the Kingdom”. Racist and Islamophobic chants and speeches rang out.

Figures like Robinson feed off the anger of people driven down by poverty and the crisis in services and housing after 14 years of austerity. But at the core of the movement Robinson is trying to build are hardened racists and fascists. His rallies include football hooligans and others getting drunk and looking for a fight.

Far from benefiting white workers, the division he tries to create among working-class people would make it easier for the bosses and their pro-capitalist political parties to rule, and drive all workers’ living standards even further into the dirt. He must be opposed.

A counter-protest was organised by Stand Up to Racism (SUTR). Many anti-racist activists and trade unionists participated, but it was much smaller than the turnout at the far-right rally.

If any far-right group plans to march through local communities it is vital that they are met by counter-demonstrations, and preferably prevented from marching at all. Otherwise, there is a risk they will intimidate and threaten people in the community. Protests that mobilise the strength of the trade unions and local communities can demoralise far-right groupings and send them packing. Socialist Party members have been prominent in such local mobilisations, such as in Walthamstow, Leicester and other areas, that have successfully stopped the far right.

But when there is a big turnout at a far-right protest in central London, to lead a much smaller counter-demo

into close proximity to it, with low levels of stewarding, relying on the police for protection, can pose unnecessary risks to the safety of participants. Unfortunately, on Saturday an anti-racist protester was attacked.

On the same day, there was a London Trans Pride demonstration taking place just a mile and a half away. Trade unionists in London, supported by the Socialist Party, issued a statement which proposed a different approach to that taken by the organisers of SUTR – one that would have both enabled a counter-protest to Tommy Robinson and also offered concrete solidarity and defence of an event that could be at risk of attack.

The ‘Statement on the need for practical trade union solidarity with London Trans Pride’ can be seen at [socialistparty.org.uk](http://socialistparty.org.uk).

It argued: “We know that Tommy Robinson is reported to back protests against Drag Story Times. Even if there is no official call, it is possible individuals or groups could identify Trans Pride as a target for attack on the day.

“This statement is an appeal to Stand Up To Racism, in consultation with London Trans Pride, to change the route of their march and instead go directly from Russell Square to the London Trans Pride assembly point. This means we can provide practical solidarity in the form of an anti-fascist contingent and stewards to supplement the existing Trans Pride stewarding plans.”

Unfortunately this approach was not adopted by the SUTR organisers. When figures like Tommy Robinson are able to mobilise so many, it is vitally important that we have an open and honest debate about how best to combat the far right.

Speakers at the SUTR rally included Jeremy Corbyn and assistant general secretary of the RMT rail union Eddie Dempsey. Both rightly stated that it is not enough to just march against racists and fascists but it is necessary to fight on the issues that



PHOTO: IAN PATTISON



Socialist Party members at Trans Pride PHOTO: HUGO PIERRE

can breed support for those ideas. Eddie Dempsey said “we must fight on the class issues” of poverty, jobs, homes and services.

Keir Starmer’s Labour government is clear. It intends a continuation of austerity: an NHS crisis, a lack of affordable housing, huge cuts to council services, and poverty.

It is reported that the crowd in Trafalgar Square was asked who they voted for and overwhelming the answer was Reform. This is a warning of the danger of right-populist, racist forces stepping into the vacuum as anger with the Labour government grows.

The massive strike wave in 2022-23 showed the huge potential power of the working class to fill that vacuum with the fight for the pay, jobs, homes and services we all need. Standing up to racism is not separate from that.

Preparing a serious fight on these issues would also enable the trade unions to mobilise much bigger numbers when needed on anti-racist demonstrations, especially if the slogans of the demonstrations were clearly linked to those class issues.

Part of that should also be a serious approach to stewarding. The Socialist Party has long argued for proper stewarding, including calling on the unions to provide stewards. We welcomed the decision in 2018 of RMT members in London, including Eddie Dempsey, to start compiling a stewards list from their ranks, appealing to other unions to join it. That approach should be adopted again.

And the vote for Reform also is a warning of how vital it is to build a working-class political voice that fights for socialist policies. Eddie Dempsey was one of the instigators of Enough is Enough in 2022, along with RMT general secretary Mick Lynch and general secretary of the Communication Workers Union (CWU) Dave Ward. At the height of the rail and postal strikes, Enough is Enough attracted half a million people, many hoping this would be the beginning of a new political voice.

That was a lost opportunity then, but the challenge must be met now.

## Anger at Labour at biggest-ever Trans Pride

### JUNE ANGLUS

WEST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

Tens of thousands of LGBTQ+ people and their allies marched through central London in a record show of solidarity at Trans Pride on 27 July.

The atmosphere was mixed. On the one hand, the Tories and their crusade against transgender people suffered a historic defeat in July’s general election. So the event felt more celebratory than it has been in recent years.



**We also need fully funded provisions and public services, as an effective way of combating the ideas of the far right**

2023’s calendar was marked with vigils and remembrances of violence against the trans community, particularly following the murder of 16-year-old Brianna Ghey. Many trans people we spoke to at those events felt hopeless in the face of increasing hostility against them. This year was noticeably more optimistic.

Nonetheless, Keir Starmer’s Labour government has so far not proven that it is committed to LGBTQ+ rights, and this was also reflected in the attitude of attendees. Many placards were directed at Wes Streeting, Labour’s new health secretary, who has made the Tories’ temporary ban on puberty blockers permanent, or at Keir Starmer, who has faced criticism for his comments about trans women.

The event was also under threat from the far right, who descended on central London on the same afternoon. Although this did not interfere

with Trans Pride in the main, it still highlighted the vulnerability of trans people. One steward was attacked, which served as a reminder that there is still a lot of work to be done in ensuring trans people’s rights and safety on the streets.

Trans Pride served as a great opportunity for us to put across our ideas. We spoke to many attendees who agreed that there is a clear need for a mass political movement that will fight to enshrine the rights of trans people, and to combat hate.

The Socialist Party says that we need immediate full protection of LGBTQ+ rights, but that we also need fully funded provisions and public services, as an effective way of combating the ideas of the far right.

We must continue to fight for LGBTQ+ rights under the new Labour government. And, as part of that, we also must ensure we are fighting with the goal of achieving a socialist system, under democratic control of the working classes, that can meet everyone’s needs.

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# Vets on strike for fair pay and fair fees

JOHN WILLIAMS  
SOCIALIST PARTY WALES

Valley Vets workers are continuing their historic strike action with a second week, and many more weeks possibly on the cards. They're striking for fair pay, fair fees and smaller profits.

And there's plenty of money to get negotiating with. The whole veterinary service is worth £2 billion - £5 billion if you include other pet-related services. And Vet Partners, who own Valley Vets, made a gross profit of £553 million last year - nearly £120 million more than the year before. So it's disgraceful that the pay offer for the lowest paid puts them just above minimum wage.

## CEO

The CEO crossed a picket line and spoke to striking workers. In response to a worker saying she could get a better-paid job at Aldi, the CEO replied: "The reality is, you might have to do that". She followed it up with: "I had to take a wage increase or I wouldn't be taken seriously as a CEO". Easy for her to say, with a

gross annual wage of £450,000 plus bonuses!

But it's not just pay that they're striking over. It's care for the clients too. Since 2015, average vet costs in the UK have increased by 50%, with some clients having to take the decision to put their pets to sleep due to not being able to afford vet fees. The boss accused strikers of bringing the profession into disrepute because of the emphasis on fair fees.

## 'Open the books'

The CEO also claimed that Vet Partners is close to bankruptcy. A supporter of the strike responded: "Open the books!"

Just six firms have a monopoly over the veterinary industry in the UK. These big corporations should be nationalised, alongside major pet food companies and the pharmaceuticals.

● Strikers are appealing for support for the strike fund:  
● Unite NW 6821 British Veterinary Union, Sort Code: 60 83 01, Account: 20324944, Reference: Valley

● See full article at socialistpartywales.org.uk



MARIAM KAMISH

# East London NEU strike victory

Martin Reynolds spoke to a National Education Union (NEU) striker on the picket line at Chingford Foundation school in East London. Teachers and support staff were taking strike action against an increase in teaching time, workload, and the use of fixed-term contracts for support staff. As term ended, the strikers accepted a deal with various gains including a reduction in teaching time.

teach more hours, while reducing our planning time.

This has a huge impact on the kids as well as on our individual wellbeing. It means less planning time per student, less time marking, less time assessing. So it is a squeeze on all of us at a time when we can't really give any more.

## WHAT'S THE MOOD IN THE SCHOOL AMONGST TEACHERS?

Well, we were offered a settlement that members didn't feel met our demands. So it was unanimously rejected, which I think shows the strong solidarity that there is among teachers and support staff for challenging this.

Our colleagues at South Chingford School have joined us in the strike action, because they are facing very similar issues - increased workload, reduced planning time, and no adjustment in salary for that.

## CAN YOU TELL ME WHY YOU'RE OUT HERE ON THE PICKET LINE TODAY?

It's been a whole range of issues this year, but amongst them, we had a historic agreement between the union and the school that we wouldn't teach more than 20 hours a week, in line with many other schools in Waltham Forest. Management have decided that they can push through that and ask us to



# Sheffield bin workers fight for union recognition

ALISTAIR TICE  
SHEFFIELD SOCIALIST PARTY

40 striking Sheffield bin workers, Unite the Union members, assembled to picket the Lumley Street refuse depot at 6am on Monday 29 July. But the yard was empty and its entrance sealed off by security fencing (including an adjacent company's entrance!). Veolia, which runs the outsourced Sheffield council waste management services on a 35-year contract (yes, 35 years!), had moved all the refuse vehicles out of the depot over the weekend to escape the pickets and try to break the strike.

Unite members are striking for union recognition. The GMB, which was the major union, has a sole recognition agreement, but many workers have recently transferred to Unite after years of poor pay deals.

## 47%

Unite claims over half the workforce are now in the union, but Veolia says Unite has 47% at Lumley Street so doesn't have to recognise them.

Clearly the management is trying to play divide and rule and fears a re-united joint union workforce determined to fight for a better deal. Socialist Party members believe

that Unite and GMB should both be recognised. Striking Unite members should appeal to their GMB colleagues to support their right to union recognition and not allow the company to play off one against another. Pressure must be put on the Labour-led coalition council to force Veolia to recognise Unite.

And this dispute - following several other strikes against bullying management and below-inflation pay rises - is another reason why the contract with Veolia should be terminated and all waste management services brought back in-house and under workers' control.

# Leicester health workers up the ante



STEVE SCORE

STEVE SCORE  
LEICESTER SOCIALIST PARTY

Once again it was an extremely loud and lively picket line outside the Leicester Royal Infirmary as health care assistants (HCAs) took their 18th day of strike action in three months to get back pay they are owed.

There was constant chanting and mini speeches on the megaphone, and a cacophony of car, bus and lorry horns in support. A couple of RCN nurses' representatives also supported the picket line.

## Six years' back pay

The Unison members have won re-grading due to the extra clinical tasks they have carried out for many years, but the health trust refuses to give them the six years back pay they are demanding.

Recent strikes have been coordinated with action taken by HCAs in Northamptonshire hospitals. This is especially appropriate since the Chief Executive of University Hospitals Leicester trust is also Chief Executive of the Northamptonshire Trust.

There was discussion on the picket line about whether there were more chances of workers winning concessions under the new Labour government. Whatever Starmer's intentions, the change in government can still raise hopes and confidence.

The anger of members in Leicester was reflected in their support for escalating the action. Following a mass meeting, they voted for a 26-day continuous strike from 5-31 August.

AREA	£ RECEIVED	£ TARGET	Q3: JULY-SEPTEMBER 2024	DEADLINE: 30 SEPTEMBER 2024
South West	1,231	2,100		59%
North West	235	1,200		20%
East Midlands	277	2,050		14%
Northern	87	800		11%
Wales	252	2,400		10%
London	491	5,000		10%
Eastern	118	1,300		9%
Southern & SE	198	2,400		8%
Yorkshire	122	2,650		5%
West Midlands	60	2,700		2%
Other	5,095	2,400		212%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>8,166</b>	<b>25,000</b>		<b>33%</b>

# Kids in Glyncoch deserve to breathe

MARIAM KAMISH  
RHONDDA CYNON TAFF (RCT) SOCIALIST PARTY

"Shame on you!" roared the crowd outside the RCT council offices in Pontypridd. "Stop the quarry! Whose mountain? Our mountain!"

After a magnificent march from the quarry, 200 adults and kids had arrived with banners and placards.

The blue stone at Craig yr Hesg is 70% quartz, ie silica. Which makes its chippings used for road building highly skid resistant.

Silica dust - proven to cause cancer - falls from the sky. Yet, the council says the high rates of asthma, COPD and cancer are anecdotal.

## Greed

Kids in Glyncoch are breathing silica dust to make a nice road surface. What an indictment of capitalist greed and indifference!

The Labour council has allowed multinational Heidelberg to rip out the mountain for years. In 2014, it sold 27 acres for an extension for £4,000 - and mineral rights for £2.2 million. But when the Labour-led Senedd granted a further extension last year, people in Glyncoch organised to fight back.

The campaign demands the council makes the greatest possible use of its powers to monitor and regulate the quarry - and to be transparent - while campaigners are trying to get the



MARIAM KAMISH

quarry shut down. The council has delayed the build of a new school to protect slow worms. Why won't they use their powers to protect children?

Houses in Glyncoch shake like there's an earthquake, every time a blast comes. They shake when the massive lorries pound by.

The blasts terrify the kids. The quarry is now only 164 metres from the school. In Germany - home of Heidelberg HQ - legally, the distance would be 1,000 metres.

Houses come right to the quarry fence. Massive cracks have opened in walls and ceilings, but the

council still sends out full council tax bills.

People think of Glyncoch as 'just a council estate'. They don't know what it's like to live on the mountain with all that nature and beauty. Sunsets make you weep, rare species. Views you'd travel miles for - if you only knew.

Heidelberg is taking that mountain. Ripping down landmark trees people love. Destroying quiet places people come to just 'be'.

## Not backing down

But the heroic working-class fighters of the Save Craig yr Hesg campaign are determined to stop them. They stood in front of lorries for weeks. Dragged off the land by security. Pushed by the lorries. Young kids got up at six every morning to picket before school. Until the company got an injunction to clear the road.

The campaign has taken the fight to the council and the Senedd. They can't retrieve what's already been lost. But they're in this to win, and they won't back down.

The Socialist Party has joined the fight, and we're in it to the end. We say: unless we build a movement to challenge capitalism, profit will always come before people.

## WE DEMAND RCT COUNCIL:

- Intervenes to safeguard human health, using all its powers to stop quarry expansion and close it
- Repairs the damage to houses and the environment, at no cost to residents
- Puts in place a plan to guarantee alternative well-paid, trade-union organised, jobs for the workforce

# Tolpuddle Martyrs Festival

## Union leaders have message for Labour government

MYLES HATCHER  
DEVON SOCIALIST PARTY

The annual Tolpuddle Martyrs Festival honours the sacrifices of the six labourers sentenced to transportation to Australia 200 years ago. Mass protests forced the authorities to pardon them for the crime of being a member of a trade union.

Socialist Party members from across south west and southern England attended this year's three-day festival. We used this platform to raise our proposal for a new mass workers' party, backed by the unions.

This was met with enthusiastic support. There is a clear need for a party that can challenge Labour, one that is dedicated to workers' rights, and unafraid to confront capitalism.

## Starmer's Labour

Many were uncertain or suspicious about Keir Starmer's Labour. Others remain hopeful.

This sentiment will be tested, as Starmer attempts to manage British capitalism, during this time of deep crisis and volatility.

Our stand, displaying Socialist Party books and newspapers, attracted attention from trade union members. Many shared stories of picket lines and strike actions, such as those at Amazon in the Midlands (see page 7). Festival-goers, disenfranchised



SHEILA CAFFEY

former Labour voters, and even former MPs visited our stand, recounting their struggles, and purchasing our publications.

Socialist Party members actively

participated in panels held across the festival that focused on current issues and the fight for working-class rights. Topics included NHS health-care workers, the renationalisation

of rail, the potential threat and rise of fascism, and other pressing matters. A central question we posed to the speakers of the panels was: "Will trade unions support a new mass workers' party to challenge Labour?"

On the last day of the festival, we joined the march and distributed our materials. Over 140 people bought our Socialist paper. By the end of the festival, most attendees were familiar with our programme.

The festival concluded with the traditional march through Tolpuddle. The sky was awash with red as people proudly marched with flags and banners raised high, accompanied by chants and brass bands. Our party joined the procession, chanting for better pay, and advocating for a new mass workers' party.

## What did the union leaders say?

Trade unions leaders also spoke. Southampton Socialist Party member Sue Atkins reports what messages they had for the new Labour government.

Unite general secretary Sharon Graham explained that inequality is a political choice. "Labour must decide which side it is on... Britain is broken. It's on its knees, and tinkering around at the edges is not going to be good enough."

Trades Union Congress (TUC) general secretary Paul Nowak said that Labour must nationalise, start a massive wave of insourcing so that we fund public services, not private profit, and save the steelworks in Port

Talbot. He also called on Labour to ignore the employers' lobby, and deliver workers' rights in full.

Fire Brigades Union (FBU) general secretary Matt Wrack said that Labour must use its overwhelming majority to deliver "significant change". He noted the historically low vote for Labour, and the support for Reform in the general election. His remedy was that the new government needs to offer hope, and that the job of the trade unions is to campaign with a Labour government for our members to restore our rights and improve our wages.

## Workers' MPs

However, what was not addressed by any of the speakers was what needs to be done when Labour acts in the interests of the bosses instead of the working class. The refusal to support lifting the two-child benefit cap, and the suspension of seven MPs is a clear expression of intent.

Even a small group of MPs who fight for workers' interests is an improvement. The trade unions leaders who spoke at Tolpuddle should call on the 'suspended seven', Jeremy Corbyn, the other independent MPs, and perhaps with the Green MPs too, to form a 'workers' bloc' to campaign for the policies they raised.

A new party of the workers' movement would offer real hope - a channel through which workers, socialists, and trade unionists can start to organise and fight for our own programme for socialist change, an alternative to the continuing attacks that Labour seems to have in store, and put the nightmare of the last 14 Tory years really behind us for good.





## WHAT WE STAND FOR

Capitalism is an ailing, crisis-ridden system based on the exploitation of the majority of the world's population by a small, super-rich elite who own most of the wealth and the means of producing it. This way of organising society, in which the pursuit of profit comes before everything else, causes poverty, inequality, environmental destruction, wars and oppression across the globe.

The Socialist Party organises working-class people to fight against the attacks from this rotten system on our lives and livelihoods, and for a socialist alternative: a society which takes the wealth out of the hands of the super-rich and is democratically run by working-class people to meet the needs of all not the profits of a few.

Building fighting democratic trade unions in the workplaces and a new mass workers' party is a vital part of the struggle to change society along socialist lines.

Because capitalism is a world system, the struggle for socialism must also be international. The Socialist Party is part of the Committee for a Workers' International which organises across the world. Our demands include:

### WORK, PENSIONS AND BENEFITS

- A £15-an-hour minimum wage for all, without exemptions. For the minimum wage to automatically increase linked to average earnings or inflation, whichever is higher.

- Share out the work. A maximum 32-hour working week with no loss of pay or worsening of conditions. The right to flexible working, under the control of workers not employers. An end to insecure working, for the right to full-time work for all who want it; ban zero-hour contracts.

- All workers to have trade union rates of pay, employment protection, and sickness, parental and holiday rights from day one of employment. End bosses using bogus 'self-employment' as a means to avoid giving workers rights.

- No to austerity through inflation. For all wage rates to be automatically increased at least in line with price rises.

- Open the books of all companies cutting jobs or claiming they can't afford to pay a real living wage. State subsidies, where genuinely needed, for socially-useful small businesses.

- For trade unions independent of the capitalist state, with members having democratic control over their own policies, constitutions and democratic procedures. For all trade union officials to be regularly elected, subject to recall by their members and paid a worker's wage.

- Reduce the state retirement and pension age to 55. For decent living pensions.

- Replace universal credit and the punitive benefit system with living benefits for all who need them.

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

- For local councillors who are committed to opposing austerity and all cuts to local services, jobs, pay and conditions.

- For a socialist NHS to provide for everyone's health needs, including dental and eye care – free at the point of use and under democratic control. Kick out the private companies! Nationalise the pharmaceutical industry under democratic workers' control and management.

- Renationalise privatised utilities – including rail, mail, water, telecoms and power – under democratic workers' control and management.

- Free, publicly funded and democratically run, good-quality education, available to all at any age. Abolish university tuition fees and write off student debt, end marketisation, and introduce a living grant. No to academisation. For all schools to be under the genuine democratic control of local education authorities, school staff, parents and student organisations.

- The right to a safe secure home for all. For the mass building of genuinely affordable, high-quality, carbon-neutral council housing. For rent controls that cap the level of rent. Fair rent decisions should be made by elected bodies of tenants, housing workers and representatives of trade unions. For cheap low-interest mortgages for home buyers. Nationalise the privately owned large building companies, land banks and estates.

- Share out the work. A maximum 32-hour working week with no loss of pay or worsening of conditions. The right to flexible working, under the control of workers not employers. An end to insecure working, for the right to full-time work for all who want it; ban zero-hour contracts.

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

### DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS

- For united working-class struggle to end discrimination on the grounds of race, gender, disability, sexuality, age, and all other forms of prejudice and oppression.

- Repeal the anti-trade union laws and all others that trample over civil liberties. For the right to protest and to strike! End police harassment. For the police to be accountable to local committees, made up of democratically elected representatives of trade unions, local community organisations and local authorities.

- For the right to choose when and whether to have children – for the right to access abortion, contraception and fertility treatment for all who need it.

- For the right to asylum – with democratic community control and oversight of emergency funding resources. No to racist immigration laws.

- Expand democracy. For the abolition of the monarchy and the House of Lords. For all MPs to be subject to the right of recall by their constituents at any time, and to only receive a worker's wage.

- For proportional representation and the right to vote at 16.

- For the right of nations to self-determination. For an independent socialist Scotland and for a socialist Wales, both part of a voluntary socialist confederation of Wales, England, Scotland and Ireland.

- Oppose the dictatorship of the billionaire owners of the media. For the nationalisation of newspaper printing facilities, radio, TV and social media platforms. Access to these facilities should be under democratic control, with political parties' coverage being allocated in proportion to the popular vote at elections.

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

- Take the wealth off the super-rich! For a socialist government to take into public ownership the top 150 companies and the banking system that dominate the British economy, and run them under democratic working-class control and management. Compensation to be paid only on the basis of proven need, not to the fat cats.

- A democratic socialist plan of production based on the interests of the overwhelming majority of people, and in a way that safeguards the environment.

- No to the EU bosses' club. Organise a campaign with European socialists and workers' organisations to use the talks on post-Brexit relations to tear up the EU pro-capitalist rules. For a real collaboration of the peoples of Europe on a socialist basis as a step towards a socialist world.

- No to imperialist wars and occupations!

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Do you agree? Join the fightback!

## JOIN THE SOCIALISTS

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# London protests against Hasina

HUGO PIERRE  
TOWER HAMLETS SOCIALIST PARTY

On 18 July a mass rally of over 500 mainly young people assembled in Altab Ali Park, Aldgate, in a peaceful but angry protest. They were chanting many of the slogans of their comrades in cities like Dhaka. But they were also calling for Hasina to be removed.

Many were concerned that they could no longer contact relatives because of the state shutdown of communications, including the internet and the curfew.

One young woman said: "How can we trust a prime minister that has caused the death of so many students? She has to go and face the consequences of her actions."

Many smaller protests were organised in the following days. Sometimes by young workers or by trade union supporters. Many were wary

though of those called by opposition parties, particularly the discredited Bangladesh National Party.

On 22 July at lunchtime, a mass protest in Trafalgar Square was organised with up to 2,000 taking part in a variety of different sections, but all calling for Hasina to go. The angry demonstration marched on Parliament whilst there were reports of another demonstration outside the Bangladeshi High Commission.

More will be planned in solidarity with the mass movement in Bangladesh. But UK politicians, MPs and councillors will be under pressure to back this movement. Too many have had a very cosy relationship, often 'winning and dining' Hasina when she visits Britain.

Committee for a Workers' International  
**FIGHTING FOR A SOCIALIST WORLD**  
[socialistworld.net](http://socialistworld.net)



The protest in Trafalgar Square, London on 22 July PHOTOS: JAMES IVENS



# Solidarity with Bangladesh mass movement

## Government orders brutal crackdown against protests demanding jobs

The following is the text of a Socialist Party leaflet that is being distributed at large protests in London and other parts of Britain, involving many Bangladeshis and others, over the brutal state repression of mass protests in Bangladesh, in which over 200 have been killed.

Bangladesh's prime minister Sheikh Hasina has blood on her hands. Hundreds of students and young people have been massacred, and thousands injured by the police or Chhatra League thugs loyal to her party.

She sanctioned a brutal crackdown against students and young people, demanding jobs and an end to the discriminatory quota which protects employment for the children of 'freedom fighters'. In a shrinking job market, Hasina reintroduced this quota for university places and government jobs using the High Court. This policy widely favours supporters of Hasina's ruling party, the Awami League, forcing millions of young people either into unemployment, or abroad to seek work.

But students and young people have not put up with this. They have organised protests, especially in Dhaka, but in other towns and cities too. But following the killings, these mass protests are calling for Hasina to stand down.

Bangladesh is in turmoil as Hasina implements austerity measures on the population, fuelling political and economic instability. Desperate to keep her and all her party cronies' share of the wealth they have accumulated over the past 12 years, she has turned to the IMF for emergency loans.

But they want their pound of flesh, with more privatisation of the economy and a driving down of the living standards of the working class and poor, as well as those in the middle class who don't support the Awami League.

International big business has been eyeing up Bangladesh to siphon even more wealth out of the country. We can have no trust in these bosses or their governments to intervene in this movement in the interests of workers and young people.

Last year, Hasina ordered a brutal crackdown on garment workers striking for wages to protect them from inflation that is ravaging the country. Hasina hypocritically calls all opposition to her increasingly authoritarian rule 'Razakar', referring to the collaborationist paramilitary gangs that fought for Pakistan in the 1971 war of independence. But it is she that is using the methods of these gangs to silence opposition, maintain her power and the wealth of her elite, and that of international big business - in reality gangster capitalism!

### Can the movement beat Hasina?

Hasina's shutdown of the state broadcaster, of mobile and internet communication networks, and the



Mass student protest in Bangladesh PHOTOS: RAVHANGSO/CC

imposition of a curfew, are desperate moves to stop the protests from spreading. The potential exists now for a nationwide shutdown including a general strike, bringing workers together with students and young people to demand that Hasina goes.

But Hasina will not go quietly. Her record of imprisoning or disappearing opposition leaders and protesters makes this a life-or-death, high-stakes battle. Despite new rulings by the Supreme Court to reduce the discriminatory job quota from 30% to 5%, the movement does not look like it is dissipating. Workers and youth are demanding justice for those killed and maimed at the hands of the state.

But a determined mass movement could see Hasina removed from power just like the Rajapaksa brothers were forced from office in Sri Lanka in 2022. The protest movement has spread to the wider Bangladeshi diaspora internationally, with major protests in cities such as London.

### But who will replace her?

All opposition parties are vying to replace Hasina. But the main establishment parties, including the Bangladesh National Party (BNP) and others, would continue to rule in the interest of international big business. If they took power, they would hope to enrich themselves and their cronies. Bangladeshis workers, youth and the poor would still face high unemployment, poverty wages and unsafe working conditions. Students would still face worsening conditions in universities, and fees they would struggle to pay off.

Watching the situation are the

army generals. There is also a threat that the military could strengthen its position and even try to intervene. Like in Pakistan's recent history, a military coup is also possible in a situation like this. They would pose this as taking action to stop the country from descending into 'lawlessness'. They have already been given increasing powers under the curfew laws, and the state violence continues. But a military dictatorship, as well as a continuation of the rule of big business, would place major restrictions on the democratic rights of workers, students and youth to protest against unemployment and low pay.

### How can the movement of students and workers win?

The extraordinarily courageous movement to remove Hasina and gain justice for the families of the youth has the power to win. By forming democratic committees in the cities and towns, including workers, trade unionists and students' organisations, linked up on a regional and national basis, the movement could coordinate its actions and continue to harness the energy brought to the streets in the past days.

These committees crucially could defend workers from attack by the police and paramilitary government forces, the army, and the Chhatra League thugs. These committees could also provide forums to decide the political demands of the movement.

It is understandable if the quota system is used temporarily to help students from impoverished backgrounds. But the government

manipulates the quota system to divide the population only to strengthen their position. The lack of adequate public education and job creation are the core issues, which result directly from the government's capitalist profit-motive policies.

In addition, the movement could take up demands such as a living rate of pay to beat inflation; for the democratic right to protest; for a free education system open equally to all students, with facilities for all, including those with disabilities, and minority rights; the removal of corrupt officials, and the election of new representatives who are accountable to the movement, and paid on the average workers' salary.

### A new mass workers' party

This would be the beginnings of building a new party based on the working class, students and youth, and the oppressed and poor in rural areas. Bangladesh has seen enormous wealth flood into the country in recent times. But it has gone to a small minority at the top of society. Inequality has risen enormously, leading to a growth in poverty and uncertainty for the youth.

A new mass workers' party in Bangladesh could debate and decide how this wealth could be put into the hands of the people who created it, the working class, and how it would be democratically used to lift all out of poverty once and for all.

That should include taking the factories and banks out of the hands of the profiteers, and putting them into democratic public ownership, under workers' control. Support could be guaranteed to small farmers struggling with the consequences of the climate crisis. Bangladeshi workers could appeal to the workers, youth and poor people throughout the region to defend this movement and spread its demands.

### Join the socialists

There have been furious demonstrations in the diaspora, looking for ways to support the current struggle in Bangladesh. In UAE, which has the largest diaspora, 57 Bangladeshi nationals have outrageously been sentenced to ten-year prison sentences for supposedly "inciting violence" through their solidarity protests. In Britain, the new Labour prime minister Keir Starmer went into the recent election making racist comments against the Bangladeshi working class here. None of the capitalist institutions or their parties truly represent our interests.

The working class needs its own political voice in all countries. Steps towards a new mass party of the working class in Britain would put enormous pressure on the Labour government and pose a fundamental alternative to all the establishment parties. Working-class struggle in Britain for socialist policies - for jobs, homes and services - would have a huge effect on workers and young people all around the world.

- No trust in Awami League, BNP, Jamaat-e-Islami or any of the corrupt establishment politicians or parties

- Fight for decent, safe jobs for all with living pay

- Defend the rights of students, young people and workers to protest

- No army intervention
- For a new mass party of workers and youth to fight for power

£1/£2 solidarity price

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# the Socialist

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## WORKERS' ACTION TO

# END WAR AND OPPRESSION



PAUL MATSSON

**F**or months there has been a real risk of the Middle East tipping into region-wide war. It would extend wider the brutal horrors being inflicted on the Palestinians in Gaza, where at the time of writing nearly 40,000 Gazans have been killed, over 90,000 wounded.

A rocket landing on a football pitch in the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights in the north east, killing 12 children and teenagers, is the latest harrowing trigger of instability.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, blaming Hezbollah – a paramilitary group based in Lebanon – is calibrating a military response. He does so with world capitalist leaders urging 'restraint'. They are terrified of what a regional war will mean, not because of their concerns for the inevitable devastation of the lives of working-class and poor people in the region, but because of the social unrest that

can come with it and what it means for their profit interests.

### Complicit

For ten months, capitalist leaders have made mealy-mouthed appeals to stop the Israeli state's slaughter in Gaza. In reality, the capitalist politicians are complicit in the relentless cruelty. The new Labour government in Britain has still not stopped arms exports to Israel, something Britain has done numerous times in previous decades. And Joe Biden's US government has provided more than \$12.5 billion of military aid to Israel, with more in the pipeline.

The Socialist Party has been fighting for the trade unions - organising over 6 million workers in Britain - to take their place centre stage in the anti-war movement. It could mobilise more members to attend mass demos, and

coordinate workers' sanctions to stop arms and supplies reaching the Israeli military. What is to stop this action being linked up by further workers' action internationally, such as that of the Barcelona dockers and Belgian transport workers unions who have refused to handle military goods destined for Israel?

### Workers organise

It is the threat of workers getting organised and fighting back that terrifies the capitalist world leaders. The pro-capitalist leaders in the Middle East are terrified of mass popular movements developing, demanding an end to poverty and inequality, and with it their power. It is a mass movement of workers and poor people, democratically organised and fighting for socialist change, in Palestine and across the region, that can point the way forward to an end to war and national oppression.

### The Socialist Party is fighting for:

- End the siege – for the permanent withdrawal of the Israeli military from the occupied territories
- For a mass struggle of the Palestinians, under their own democratic control, to fight for liberation
- For the building of independent workers' parties in Palestine and Israel and links between them
- For an independent, socialist Palestinian state, alongside a socialist Israel, with guaranteed rights for all minorities, as part of the struggle for a socialist Middle East
- No trust in the capitalist politicians, internationally or in Britain. Fight to build a workers' party in Britain that fights for socialism and internationalism

WHAT WE STAND FOR: THE SOCIALIST PARTY'S MAIN DEMANDS >>> see column on p14



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