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the SOCIALIST

Issue 1307 30 January - 5 February 2025

formerly Militant

STARNER'S LABOURBACKS BOSSES

Fight for jobs, homes and services for all



OSCAR PARRY

CAMDEN AND HARINGEY SOCIALIST PARTY

eir Starmer's
Labour
government is
like a broken record,
repeating the need
for "ruthless" cuts
to public services at
every opportunity.

Labour have just announced the cancellation of 18 new hospitals, in the same week as scrapping their planned taxation of the mega-rich international 'non-doms' who pay almost no tax on their millions! This shows whose interests they serve (see page 3).

It's not like there's no money around. The biggest companies are making massive profits and paying out billions to shareholders. The net worth of Britain's 20 richest individuals has more than doubled in the past decade.

There is growing rage against Starmer's government, and the profit system it defends. The capitalists, seeing that their position at the top could be threatened, turn to the tactics of divide and rule. As Malcolm X said: "You can't have capitalism without racism." For them, racism and other forms of oppression are means to scapegoat others for attacks on working-class living standards. Starmer's Labour is in lockstep with the rhetoric of the Tories and Reform.

We need an alternative that:

represents the interests of the working class. The election of five Reform MPs, who have fanned the flames of racism, is a warning of what is to come if the workers' movement does not fulfil the task of creating a political alternative.

The Socialist Party fights for the trade union movement to spearhead the fight against Starmer's attacks, fighting for jobs, homes and services for all, not racism. By uniting working-class people to struggle for what we all need, support for reactionary ideas of the populist right

can be undermined.

A new mass party for the working class with socialist policies, to answer the lies of the racist far right, would be a huge step forward. It would build confidence that we can fight back and put an end to this rotten system, and the racism and division it breeds, with a new socialist world.



30 January - 5 February 2025 **DO YOU HAVE NEWS FOR US?**

The Socialist is written, read, sold and bought by ordinary workers, trade unionists, young people and Socialist Party members. We want you to write for the Socialist.

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

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editors@socialistparty.org.uk 020 8988 8777 - ask for the editors

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Editorial

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

Gaza ceasefire holds

Fight for socialist change to end Palestinian

socialistparty.org.uk

oppression

JOE FATHALLAH

undreds of thousands of Palestinians in Gaza have walked miles, allowed to return to the site of their homes in the north of the Strip, where much of what remains is rubble. The gates were opened as part of negotiations from the ceasefire that finally took effect on 19 January, after over 15 months of devastating war, during which around 65,000 Palestinians have been killed.

The move came hours after US President Donald Trump told reporters the whole population of Gaza could be "cleaned out", and relocated to neighbouring Egypt and Jordan. The threat of a new Nakha the forced evacuation of hundreds. of thousands of Palestinians from their land in 1948 - will provoke fury among millions across the Middle

The timing of the ceasefire agreement to coincide with Trump's inauguration meant he was able to try to take some credit. It is abundantly clear his interests have nothing in common with ordinary Palestinians. Among his first executive orders was to lift sanctions on violent Israeli settlers in the West Bank, albeit token sanctions introduced by the Biden administration. In fact it appears likely that the ceasefire agreemen included the US giving Israeli President Benjamin Netanyahu the greer light to step up military operations in the West Bank.

Trump's inflammatory remarks are yet another striking example of the volatility of his presidency. If a strategic aim of his administration is to normalise relations between Israel and Saudi Arabia, that will be made harder. The Saudi regime will : capitalism



We demand an immediate end to the war and a complete withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza and other occupied territories. This means keeping up the international pressure

feel the pressure from its population, sympathetic with the Palestinian cause, not to be seen as complicit with the crimes of Israeli and US

MPs' freebies

forces have raided the refugee camp in Jenin, in the West Bank, where at least 12 Palestinians have been killed to date. In Gaza itself, at least two Palestinians have been shot and killed by Israeli tanks too. And the Israeli government has voted to block the United Nations aid programme UN-RWA from operating in Gaza, where the population remains in desperate

The Palestinians are still denied the right to their own state. Almost the whole population of Gaza is now homeless and hungry. These people cannot wait to see if the ceasefire agreement plays out as planned, and then there is the question of what future for Gaza, the West Bank and the Palestinians. We demand an immediate end to the war and a complete withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza and other occupied

Since the ceasefire began, Israeli : territories. This means keeping up the international pressure, especial ly against governments and companies supplying weapons to the Israeli forces. On the basis of capitalism, there

30 January - 5 February 2025

can be no lasting solution which guarantees peace and the national rights of the Palestinians. This will require mass struggle, and the development of independent workingclass parties in Palestine, Israel, and all countries in the region. The first intifada, a mass uprising lasting from 1987 until 1993, showed how ordinary Palestinians could organise independently of their ruling elites and effectively resist the repression of the Israeli state. These traditions can be built on in the coming period, towards achieving an independent socialist Palestine, alongside a socialis Israel, laying the ground for an end to national conflict, war and poverty.

Labour backing the bosses, consumers and workers will pay the price a car financing Supreme Court case.

Labour chancellor Rachel Reeves, after admitting to gossiping parliamentary insiders that she's "running out of ideas", has come up with some new schemes to get the economy growing. And unsurprisingly, she wants to move the dial more towards companies and the super-rich at the expense of workers and consumers.

Labour plan to go on the offensive against the powers of regulators and consumer protections. Former Amazon executive Doug Gurr has been appointed as the new head of the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) - a slap in the face to workers. How can he be expected to fairly oversee big business and mononolisation? Amazon is notorious for harbouring poor and exploitative working conditions and brutal union busting. It has built an eCommerce monopoly that has destroyed the

Riskier regulations

Attacks on workers don't stop there. Reeves recently visited Davos to speak at the World Economic Forum, an annual meeting of capitalists. She went on the offensive against both workers and consumers, advocating for the creation of a "riskier regulatory environment". Fewer regulations, like health and safety or looser planning restrictions, will mean the capitalists can make higher profits while workingclass people have to accept the consequences - unsafe products, financial products with dodgy clauses, or environmental damage.

To show big business that the new

Non-dom nonstarter?

the **Socialist**

One of the few promises Labour made during the election campaign that could hit the super-rich was abolishing the non-dom tax status Non-dom status enables people who live in the UK to avoid paving UK tax on money made abroad because their permanent home (for tax purposes) is outside the country. Promising to scrap this status, a loophole created for the ultra-wealthy, in their manifesto was one of the few poli cies workers and unions welcomed Now, rather than scrapping the status entirely, Labour are set to water this promise down after "listening to the concerns of the 'non-dom

It's been six months and the Labour government has already revealed its cards. The Labour Party no longer has the interests of the working class at heart. That is why we need a new party, built from the trade unions, 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 probig business parties. As part of this socialist alternative,

the Socialist Party fights for demands that would put working-class people Labour government is firmly on their : in the driving seat, not bosses and

world capitalist system. The editorial of the February edition of Socialism Today magazine looks at the effects and roots of Trump's economic policy - promising to "Make America great again", how far he can go, and the consequences in Britain and across the world: Trump is back in the White House. : Labour is currently sticking closely to Much of the world is gripped by fear: the traditional script of British capiabout what his second term will mean, as are millions in America -

After being inaugurated and signing a flurry of executive orders,

Donald Trump has already added to the increasing chaos of the

particularly migrants, LGBTQ+ people, and others likely to be on the sharp end of his attacks. In Britain one opinion poll reported that 54% of British people think Trump will be bad for their country, compared to only 15% who think he will be good. An even greater majority of Britons think he will be bad for world peace. Meanwhile Britain's prime min-

ister, Keir Starmer, has publicly emphasised his "constructive" relationship with Trump, expressing how grateful he was to Trump for having dinner with him in New York last year, and pleading for a US-UK trade deal. Such warm words for new US presidents are the norm for capitalist governments, as they try to get close to the leader of what is still the world's strongest power. No amount of sickening sucking up, however will make Trump prioritise a trade deal with Britain.

More fundamentally, nothing can prevent British capitalism being particularly vulnerable to the negative consequences of 'maganomics' as a result of being a weaker power. extremely reliant on foreign capital and outside any of the major trading blocs. The January bond market jitters, and the fall in sterling are a foretaste of what is ahead. Nor will the consequences of Trump for Britain be simply economic. Starmer's

talism: backing US imperialism to the hilt in all its crimes. Trump will demand the same in future conflicts, but mass domestic opposition and a multipolar fragmented world could make that much more difficult. And of course, Trump draws little or no distinction between political and economic conflicts - and has already shown how he likes to use the threat of tariffs, for example, to try and bludgeon governments into line on

all kinds of issues. Clearly Trump is an idiosyncratic character. As US president he will add a large dollop of chaos and uncertainty into world relations. That in itself will tend to increase global political but also economic turbulence. Even before taking office his • Read this article in full at

Trump's 'Maganomics' and its consequences

bubbles. In particular, he is actively fuelling crypto-mania. His actions will increase the size of the inevitable financial crash when it comes. At the same time his attempt to abolish the US debt ceiling is an indication of his reckless approach to US government finance, even from a completely capitalist viewpoint, at a time when markets are extremely nervous about the huge scale of government debt in the US and globally. And on his threat to ratchet up tariffs the IMF has weighed in to warn that Trump "could make trade tensions worse lower investment, and disrupt sup ply chains across the world".

the US stock markets, and led to the

further inflation of huge speculative

Nonetheless, it would be a mistake to see the era we have entered as being the consequence of one reckless individual. On the contrary, Trump's election both reflects and accelerates the increasingly unstable multipolar character of global capitalism today The world we are now living in has more in common with the first half of the twentieth century than anything that has been experienced since.

Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition conference

The TUSC conference will be held on Zoom on Sunday 2 February from 11am-1:30pm. It has the heading Fighting for a new party under the Starmer government. And what role for TUSC?' as the need for a working-class political alternative to the Tory-lite New Labour government becomes clearer by the day.

The event will also include a discussion on how to achieve the biggest possible socialist challenge at the first widescale electoral test of the new govern ment, the local

elections to be held in May 2025. To register scan here or go to bit.lv/TUSC25co



It must be great to be an MP. Instead of watching the exciting World Darts Championship on the telly over Christmas, MPs snagged themselves VIP tickets for the sold-out event at Ally Pally.

Labour MP James Frith, who has ironically campaigned for safer gambling, and Tory MP Caroline Nokes, deputy speaker of the House of Commons, were given 'platinum' hospitality tickets by Paddy Power worth up to £1,000 each. They apparently include Michelin-star meals, complimentary booze and table service. avoiding the big queues and even bigger prices at the bar that normal punters used.

If darts isn't your sport, you could become the leader of your party and prime minister and get a box at your football club paid for you to watch Premier League football for free while prices rise for ordinary

supporters. And if you're not into sport at all then maybe free tickets to the hottest gigs in town are of interest, how about Taylor Swift? No Cruel Summer for Starmer as it was for all the Swifties who missed out. And if you're worried about what

to wear in all these salubrious surroundings, then donors will supply designer clothes too. You could keep them in the wardrobe of your subsidised housing, nice and warm from your subsidised energy and utility bills. Wouldn't want to eat into your £91,000 pay would you? As Jim Bowen used to say, you

can't beat a bit of Bully! The rest of us are simply throwing from a different





Monthly magazine of the Socialist Party

February issue includes...

Maganomics and its global effects

 Higher education crisis - crunch time approaches When there were Marxist MPs - Pat Wall's legacy

The struggle for birth control

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Independent 'Gaza'

Socialist Students is pleased to announce that Shockat Adam,

ndependent MP for Leicester

East (where the conference is

being held), has accepted our

invitation to come and address

Socialist Students members

government's plans to hike uni

tuition fees by calling for funding

not fees and, if so, what are they

prepared to do to fight on our side

have been approaching MPs asking them to oppose the Labour

MP to speak

our conference

against Starmer?

Sainsbury's job cuts and cafe closures – how can trade unions fight back?



SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBERS IN USDAY

Sainsbury's bosses have announced plans to axe a whopping 3,000 jobs; around 2% of the company's workforce is set to go. It will mean closures of 61 cafes as well as hot food, pizza, bakery and patisserie counters so much for Sainsbury's 'food first'

Over the last few years, all the maior supermarket chains have been disposing of their in-store counters - which for some people, particularly the elderly, are an important part of their supermarket shopping experience, providing someone to talk to and getting the right portion sizes.

This is a shift for the worse, and will only embolden big supermarkets to continue going down the path of Lidl/Aldi-type stores, with much more limited range of services and facilities, not to mention jobs.

Usdaw, one of the two trade unions representing Sainsbury's workers, has simply put out a statement that refuses to challenge the proposals. It merely states it will "ensure our members are supported throughout the process and as many people as possible remain in employment with the company". Sainsbury's, like other retailers that propose to cost our members' jobs, need to be put under far greater scrutiny.

Sainsbury's reported a pre-tax profit of £277 million in its latest financial reports. While down on the previous year, underlying profit in retail is up 4.3% and the overall decline is put down to "restructuring of the Financial Services division". The confidence of the Sainsbury's bosses: than what suits our lives and needs.

in the profitability of the company is such that they have paid the same 13.1p dividend to shareholders as last year, reduced net debt by £790 million, and initiated a £200 million share-buy-back scheme.

However, in seeking 5-10% growth bosses are targeting £1 billion of cost savings over the next three years They want to further boost their profits by throwing the jobs of Sainsbury's workers on the scrap heap.

Unite the Union's comments that Sainsbury's plans mean the "lowestpaid workers are paying the price for corporate greed," get to the root of the issue. But simply stating that is not enough. An immediate campaign needs to

be launched against the proposals joint mass meetings, ideally involving both Usdaw and Unite reps, in Sainsbury's should be convened to discuss a strategy to fight back. That should include reaching out to people who shop in Sainsbury's and use the cafes, with the potential for leafleting, protests and other campaigning outside the stores. Industrial action should also be considered to hit Sainsbury's management where they will really feel it, in the bottom line. Failure to take action now will only weaken the position that both unions will be in to fight further rounds of job cuts that will come.

This once again shows why the big supermarket chains should be brought into public ownership. How workers get food is an important part of our lives and cannot simply be left to the whims of a market driven by profits for those at the top, rather





Hampshire bus strikers fight 'intransigent' bosses



SOUTHAMPTON SOCIALIST PARTY

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Bus workers, members of Unite the Union, across Portsmouth and Hampshire have been taking strike action since talks stalled in December. The company, First Group, failed to make a fair pay offer.

First Group has offered workers just a 4% pay deal, and has also refused to reinstate many of the terms and conditions that were removed during the Covid pandemic

Over 140 drivers and supervisors based at the Hoeford depot in Gosport Road, Fareham, have joined the picket line to demonstrate their: local authority control.

anger at the offer and the intransigence of management.

Services across Portsmouth, Gosport, Fareham, and into Southampton, have been affected so that only a skeleton service has run on strike days. The mood on the picket line is confident and determined to bring the company back to negotiations.

Unite general secretary Sharon Graham said: "First Group is making millions of pounds of profit across the UK on public transport, yet is treating its workers and the communities they come from in Hampshire with disdain "To pay barely above the minimum

wage for a skilled and high-pressure job is utterly unacceptable, and our members at First will have the full support of Unite in their dispute". First Group had revenues of near-

ly £5 billion in 2023 across the UK, while First Hampshire and Dorset had a turnover of nearly £37 million. The current CEO has a salary of £971,000 - about 36 times the wage of

Strikes have taken place every weekend in January and are planned for 2-9, 12-14, 16-23 and 25-27 February. The drivers welcome visits to their picket lines. We have discussed alternative ways of running the bus service and bringing it back under

Birmingham bin strike: 'Everything goes up except our wages'

BIRMINGHAM SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBERS

Three weeks into the Birmingham bin strike. Unite the Union members are still in a fighting mood. Already the three full days of strike action and work-to-rule have forced the council into talks over plans to downgrade safety-critical workers on the bin

Socialist Party members joined the mass pickets at all three bin depots.

with our calls for workers' political representation definitely popular! Workers were not happy with Unite funding the Labour Party, especially as nothing has changed with a Labour government.

Workers talked about how they would like to see council-wide coordinated strike action, drawing in other workers affected by the planned £195 million of cuts.

One worker said: "It's always a

them (the bosses)". Another said "We're paying more and getting less. Everything goes up except our

Workers are determined to see the council forced back on these cuts which will cost those affected £8,000 a year. They are prepared to escalate the number of strike days if needed The Socialist Party bulletin, raising points on how political pressure can be ramped up on the Labour councillors responsible, and Unite members put in the driving seat of the strike, was snapped up by pickets.

Sheffield bins strikers remain solid six months in

Unite members at Sheffield Veolia bin depot are now in their sixth month of indefinite strike action for

Since Veolia bosses withdrew a draft recognition agreement that they agreed to in December, solidarity pickets and Unite organisers' leverage campaign has been stepped up

ist Party members have joined the : confront the multinational companow weekly mass pickets. Unite leaflets appeal to the GMB members still working to pressure their union officials to agree to joint union recognition and not fall for Veolia's divide-and-rule tactics. Meanwhile, Unite organisers have taken the campaign to Veolia's Paris headquarters,

For the last three weeks, Social-: and even to Arizona in the US, to ny's CEO.

All the Unite strikers remain solid in their determination to gain recognition for the union of their choice and are now balloting for a third time

Southwark housing workers walk out

Unite the Union members, who perform repairs and maintenance on council-owned housing and Southwark Council's own properties walked out to demand annual leave that matches other council workers

Strikers were joined on the picket line on the first day of the strike and addressed by Unison NEC member and Southwark branch secretary April Ashley, and National Shop Stewards Network chair Rob Williams who brought news of a £100

Prepare for Socialist Students conference – developing a strategy for the student fightback

tudent activists from all over the country will gather in Leicester for the Socialist Students conference on 8 February.

It will be an opportunity to discuss and debate with fellow young activists. After an initial discussion on the 'New era of crisis and opportunities for socialists on campus under Starmer's Labour', there will be a debate and votes on motions.

So far, two motions have been subing committee. The first outlining the

Conference Agenda:

Registration opens from 9am

Opening Plenary

New era of crisis and opportunities

for socialists on campus under

Starmer's Labour

Motions discussion

Discussing and voting for how we

can build the socialist opposition to

attacks on students and young

people

Closing Rally

The struggle for socialism internationally

second: 'Funding Not Fees: Sharpening the campaigning edge of Socialist Students, a programme outlining the demands socialist students place on universities and the government alike. There are other motions too, from Socialist Students groups including one on 'kicking sexism off campus' for Those who register to attend, and existing activists in Socialist Student groups, can read the documents as

preparation. The discussions will help determine the strategy of Socialist Students for the next year. Now, more than ever, we need to

clarify our ideas and strategy. The first

plifies how volatile the world is and his reactionary rhetoric highlights the need to tackle right-wing populist ideas by offering a socialist alternative. Socialist Students wants to be a

part of the fightback - against the uni funding crisis and fees rises, and against the likes of Trump, Nigel Farage and Keir Starmer If you're a stu-



dent and wish to We are determined to build a movement to fight for free be a part of this education and funding. Politicians process, join us at the Socialist Stulike Shockat, Jeremy Corbyn and dents conference. other independents, as well as others who are prepared to stand up to the Labour leaders, could have an important role to play in building the socialist opposition to

JOIN socialist

Starmer's new cuts and austerity.

Uni 'freedom of speech' law will not protect freedom of speech

LIVERPOOL SOCIALIST STUDENTS

Labour is bringing back Tory socalled 'freedom of speech' legislation. Labour education secretary Bridget Phillipson stated: "Academic freedom of speech was much more important than the wishes of some students not to be offended". The question is - free dom of speech for who?

It seems that the idea of 'preserving freedom of speech' does not extend to demonstrations. We have seen the escalation of police force at recent protests, including Gaza demos, with stewards being arrested (see 'Labour and Met conspire to repress Gaza demonstrators' at socialistparty.org.uk).

Labour's perception of 'freedom of speech' rejects protecting anything

that remotely challenges the capitalist institutions that it seeks to defend – the Israeli government, banks, weapons factories, etc.

The bill will also provide greater powers to the undemocratic misnamed Office for Students, set up by the Tories in 2018. The Office for Students will have the power to fine, and potentially ban, universities and student unions that do not comply. Unions should not have to be held in the shackles of a party or government, especially one that serves capitalism not the working class.

To help it push these anti-democratic changes. Labour is simultaneously banning uni bosses from using non-disclosure agreements to silence victims of bullying and sexual

for Students, again, will be given these powers. But it can't be trusted to safeguard the interests of students.

Facing up to the reality of the higher education funding crisis, Labour has removed the ability for people to be able to sue universities for failing to protect 'freedom of speech'. But this is obviously not enough to protect the future of higher education Labour has already increased tuition fees, putting more strain on working class students, amidst cuts to educa tion and other public services.

The only way to achieve genuine freedom of expression on campus is via elected committees, consisting of university staff, students, and the local community, under a fully public education system, shielded from the jaws

Councils apply to postpone elections and reduce local democracy

JAMES GRETTON

SOUTHAMPTON SOCIALIST PARTY

4pm - 5pn

10am - 12pm

Labour's English Devolution white paper proposes reorganising large parts of local government. Merging many district councils into larger unitary authorities will impact local democracy and public services. (See 'Labour's council merger plans are an attack on local democracy' at socialistparty.org.uk). Over half of the 21 county councils with elections this year have applied to postpone them this year as a result.

Councillors across Hampshire including in Southampton, have requested their councils be consolidated into a combined authority. Hampshire authorities' joint devolution request includes an elected mayor. Hampshire's population is almost two million. This artificial formation of combined authorities would reduce accountability and

elected representatives making de-: communities. In reality, these spe-: billion of debt. Councils across Sur cisions on vital services which effect people's livelihoods.

Council services have suffered from over a decade of cuts. Without councillors fighting for the resources needed things will continue down that path. Under the plans, services would lose specialised knowledge and it would reduce the already lim ited democratic accountability. We would have a combined authority dictating the fate of services distant from them and the communities that

Labour MPs have exalted the need for reorganisation to take advantage of new economic opportunities. But who will benefit the most? Outsourcing corporations that facilitate the privatisation of public services and make profits from what used to be public services.

Southampton's council touts the Solent Freeport as an example of investment that has benefited local

cial tax zones are most beneficial to : rev. which has faced a backlash after the private sector. When businesses move into areas like Solent due to more attractive tax arrangements. the rest of the region is deprioritised.

If the English Devolution Bill is intended to make local government more democratic, why does it enable one of the most valuable resources of es - to be kept out of public control? Larger councils will be able to sell off more services to the highest bidder and, with fewer elections, face less scrutiny for doing so. United in this process are the pro-big business Labour government, councillors who disparage, cut and privatise public services, and the corporations seeking to profit from them.

There is also the issue of local government debt. Due to councillors accepting the Tory government's austerity and unsuccessful building ventures. Woking council has £2 applying to postpone elections, have £5.5 billion of debt. These new unitary authorities will come into being weighed down by massive debts and tasked with administering services cut to the bone by austerity. We say: cancel the debt, fight for the resource es we need and take the wealth off the super-rich.

There are no plans for referendums to determine the popularity of these devolution measures, leav ing local people disenfranchised. The continuation of austerity and threats posed to local democracy is not going unnoticed. By uniting and fighting for the resources and services we need, communities' voices won't go unheard. We need working-class action for needs-based budgets, bringing our services back into public ownership and increasing democratic control of our loca

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WORKPLACE WORKPLACE 30 January - 5 February 2025 30 January - 5 February 2025 the **Socialist** socialistparty.org.uk

NO TO 'PARTNERSHIP' BETWEEN UNIONS AND EMPLOYERS

New 'Improving Education Together' agreement must be opposed

t was apt that Sir Keir Starmer staged his New Labour governnent's December 'relaunch' at Pinewood Studios, where the 'Carry On' movies were filmed. Starmer was hoping to breathe new life into his fledgling administration after finding the first period of office to be, to say the least, pretty

But it is clear that what isn't going to change is his 'partnership' agenda. aiming to bring together the unions with the employers and Starmer's government. This was the big idea that Starmer announced at September's Trades Union Congress (TUC). The 'P' word littered his speech to delegates, alongside warnings of difficult choices that he and his chancellor Rachel Reeves would have to make. These were soon outlined in Labour's first Budget at the end of October, which set the scene for the continuation of Tory austerity.

This is the context of Starmer's appeal for partnership. As The Socialist warned after the TUC: "Starmer is clear: he accepts the limitations of the sick state of British capitalism. including Tory spending plans, and is trying to neuter the workers' movement by advocating partnership between unions and rabid big-business

Strike wave

After 14 years of brutal Tory austerity and the escalation of anti-union legislation, the gap between rich and poor has soared to historic levels. This was one of the spurs of the 2022-24 strike wave, the highest level of sustained industrial action over three decades. Yet Starmer and his supporting union leaders talk about 'shared interests' with so-called 'reasonable employers'.

The first sign of this partnership agenda is the 'Improving Education Together' (IET) joint agreement between education unions and employers, which includes academy trusts. The first meeting of the IET 'board' was publicly announced on

Socialist Party members on the National Education Union (NEU) Executive and our allies were alone in voting against this proposal at: increased tuition fees from Starmer's the November meeting (see article opposite).

This wasn't because we are opposed to collective bargaining procedures and meetings. Quite the contrary, we fight for the ability of unions to bargain and negotiate with the employers, as long as they retain

The NEU leadership has hailed the IET as restoring collective bargaining to education. However, in fact it enshrines partnership, embroiling unions in the developing and recommending of proposals. A point made very clear in a statement published by the leadership of the NASUWT teaching union, welcoming the IET and describing it as "a milestone in developing an approach to improving education that is based on government, employers and trade unions working together in partnership".

Not bargaining but partnership

In the very first part, it says: "We will come together to agree policy proposals that will draw on all of our disparate perspectives to improve education for all." This principle is spelled out further in the document:

- Maintain privacy and confidentiality of what is shared under the terms of the agreement, while supporting transparency and Take collaborative, constructive
- and consensual approach to codetermine goals that all members of their IET board can support and Achieve consensus
- wherever possible in making recommendations and implementing policies that further those goals in order that all members of their IET board can support and promote the outcomes
- Take responsibility for ensuring that consensus positions have regard to empirical evidence wherever possible, and
- Agree to disagree where necessary and seek to resolve tensions without undermining the work of their IET board(s).

No shared interest

But how is it possible to have shared interests or 'resolve tensions' with employers who have a diametrically opposed view of education and how workers are treated - such as the vicious academy trusts, which sit outside of any democratic accountability and control?

Teachers and education staff have far more in common with their students, yet they aren't represented in the IET. They face the prospect of

While union leaders will argue that at least - pay, pensions and contracts. it is nonetheless designed to develop a collaborative relationship with employers, losing a big part of union independence to shared responsibility. The government wants the IET to: limitations, but they were used by

But the 1970s Social Contract also showed the limitations of partnership, as the 'incomes policy' of wage restraint at a time of high inflation couldn't maintain industrial peace. It was challenged and ultimately defeated by workers' struggle, including in the 'Winter of Discontent' of 1978the IET doesn't include - at this stage: 79. And in Wales, notwithstanding

There have already been examples of

Starmer's agenda follows on from

the social partnership model that

was brought in by the Welsh Labour

government. And the Labour gov-

ernment of 1974-79 instituted the

'Social Contract' in agreement with

Also, during the Covid pandemic.

a whole number of union leaders, in-

cluding some who claimed to be on

the left, capitulated to the idea that

there was a 'national unity' of interest

with the bosses and Boris Johnson's

Tory government. Socialist Party

members on union national execu-

tives stood out, often alone, against

attempts to form partnership agree-

ments, both historic and current.

social partnership, workers took action during the recent strike wave. In reality, both these instances employers and the government. didn't involve legally binding procedures and agreements or no-strike

set the precedent for other sectors. : the union leaders to subordinate themselves, in order to engender and : justify a partnership approach, at the

Labour try to neuter unions And the bases for these agreements

show what Starmer's objectives are now. Social partnership in Wales is an attempt to sign up unions to Labour-imposed austerity, rather than challenging the cuts of Tory and now Starmer's Labour from Westminster The 1970s Social Contract was designed to make workers pay for the first major post-war economic crisis.

Just days after the NEU exec agreed to partnership, the Labour government announced an insulting 2.8% pay increase for teachers. So much or 'shared interests'.

Starmer and Reeves have set out the spending straitjacket for their government, dutifully adhering to the limits afforded by crisis-ridden British capitalism. They want to neuter the independence of the unions and their power to take action, which has been shown so effectivity over the last three years.

Therefore, any attempt to build such partnership must be opposed and fought, defending the right of unions to act independently of the

However, as the workers have shown historically, while social unnecessary barrier for workers to overcome, it will not stop workers' struggle, particularly at a time of crisis. That is why it is vital that union members fight for the leadership of their respective unions, making the upcoming elections across a number

NEU executive elections

To help win the fighting leadership NEU members deserve, the following Socialist Party members are seeking nomination in the National Executive elections for 2025-27:

Sheila Caffrey District 12 standing for re-

Louise Cuffaro District 16 standing for re-

Sean McCauley District 8

election

Dan Warrington District 11

Why we opposed 'Improving **Education Together' at the NEU** executive

SHEILA CAFFREY

NEU EXECUTIVE MEMBER, PERSONAL CAPACITY

The NEU National Executive was given less than two weeks to consider the 'Improving Education Together' partnership deal between education unions, government and employers. while being told to not discuss with members - making the union discussions rather reminiscent of the whole

At the November exec meeting, general secretary Daniel Kebede repeatedly said it wasn't a partnership deal, and accused those who opposed it of being against negotiations.

But this is not a seat at the table for negotiations. Socialist Party members would agree with a real negotiating body. But any forum with an agenda set only once a year, that says we can disagree but if an issue is agreed by the secretary of state the union cannot then fight on it, is not 'negotiations'. It's an aim to muzzle union democracy and campaigns.

Meetings aiming to reach 'consensus' with CEOs of academy chains would skew any discussions around privatisation and the need to bring all schools back under local authority control. The secrecy elements would mean that the NEU wouldn't be able to consult its own members.

In the executive sub-committee discussions, many members raised concerns, including Wales members who explained how social partnership in Wales was of no benefit to unions. But in the final vote there were only four members who voted against the proposal - the two Socialist Party exec members and two of our allies - with all others in favour.

In the January national executive meeting, Daniel Kebede reported that he understood there was little enthusiasm for the deal in the NEU.

This was a far cry from his speeches in November, where he had said that the perception of members was that education is being treated favourably by Labour. A long list of executive members had spoken about how important it was to take part.

This included the members of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP). Their report for South West NEU members said: "We were clear from the outset that we would accept nothing like the social partnership arrangement that existed under New Labour 20 years ago. That has been achieved. This is not the collective bargaining we want, but is a step forward. It is not a social partnership and has none of the terrible elements of the arrangements of 20 years ago."

bers know the reality

So, what changed between November and January? Members in local authority sixth forms haven't felt that education has been treated favourably, with pay deals that give them less than their colleagues in academies.

School teacher members haven't liked being told that any 2025 pay award would be totally unfunded The 18 schools in the Harris Federa tion currently balloting for strike action haven't felt that their CEO - who made two large donations to Rachel Reeves's election campaign - is someone they can be in partnership

Labour's new education bill, published in December, shows they will not end academisation or provide full funding for education without a fight. Yet already, under pressure from the Tories and academy bosses they have moved an amendment to water down their own plans on pay in academies.

This shows the importance of union leaders being transparent, as well as thinking about the implications of signing deals with political parties and academy leaders who clearly do not have the interests of children, education or workers at the heart of

It is the workers and the commu nities in which we live and work who should be making these decisions Socialist Party members of the NEU will continue to campaign for transparent negotiations, as well as for adquate education funding

 This is a shortened version of Sheila's full article, which can be found at socialistparty.org.uk



Academy funding scandal - return all schools to local authority control!



EAD NEU REP, PERSONAL CAPACITY

chools and colleges have faced over a decade of cuts. Next year, schools budgets will hit a 15-year low in real terms, forcing further cuts to staffing and resources.

This crisis is made even worse by the academies programme. The top 50 multi-academy trusts (MATs) spend an average of £68 million a vear on executive salaries, according to the analysis by Warwick Mansell and the Campaign for State Education (CASE) - seven times as much on salaries over £130,000 as local authority-controlled schools. Every penny spent on executive salaries is noney that isn't spent on frontline

National Education Union (NEU) members who work for schools in the University of Brighton Academy Trust (UBAT) have seen this firsthand. We have been in a dispute over the way UBAT has managed its finances, and the impact that has had on jobs and workload. On average, MATs retain between 5-7% of a school's budget to pay for their central services. UBAT has been with holding an average of 14%, with some schools losing over 25% in

This has had a devastating impact on frontline services. We've seen increasing workload, cuts to budgets and essential services, and damaging restructures and redundancies. And where has the money gone? Towards bloated central academy budget. with huge amounts spent on a large executive team, corporate marketing and outside consultants. This is public money that should be going towards the education of our students!

We held a very successful cam-

schools and have taken five days of coordinated strike action. We have won workload charters, halted redundancies, saved essential services. forced UBAT to agree to completely

in trust leadership. However, it was revealed last week that the Department for Education has decided to step in and dissolve the trust and re-broker all of the schools, handing them to other MATs. NEU members are not sur-

change its funding model, and con-

tributed to some significant changes

prised by this decision. Future employers taking over UBAT schools will have a great deal of damage to repair. They must have an open, fair and transparent funding model that gives schools the resources they need. They will need to provide cast-iron assurances on members' pay, terms and conditions, including retaining recent workload agreements, and formally recognising the NEU for collective bargaining. Any failure to honour such terms would make a further industrial action ballot likely.

However, it is deeply frustrating that after having achieved so much in our strike campaign we might just be handed to a different MAT, facing potentially similar problems. We want all UBAT schools to be returned to local authority control and for the wider school community, including all unions, to be included in the discussions about the future direction of

these schools. The long-term solution does not lie with any academy trust. The problems faced in UBAT reflect deeper problems with academisation. Academies lack local accountability, spend huge amounts of public money on their central teams and executive pay, and treat education like a business. Our members are all aign. We won strike ballots in eight : too aware that there are many more

'UBATs' out there that haven't yet

The NEU wants all schools to return to local authority control. The government must fully fund local councils to allow them to provide the kind of education services that our students deserve.

Our campaign has had an impact. The leader of Hastings Borough Council has come out in support of the NEU's demands, and the local Labour MP Helena Dollimore has been handing out leaflets on school gates criticising UBAT and seeking parental views - although not going as far as to support our call to return schools to the local authority. We will be campaigning on these issues in Sussex, including public meetings and demonstrations

Labour's education bill

Labour's new Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill proposes that new schools should not have to be academies - so why does the same logic not apply to a failed academy trust?

It is imperative that, as a minimum, amendments are made to the bill to allow a route for academies to return to local authority control and for greater oversight and regulation of academy executive pay and the amounts trusts take from school budgets to fund central services. The NEU should contact MPs - including Jeremy Corbyn, the Independents and suspended Labour MPs - to ask them to move such an amendment.

Ultimately, we need all schools to be returned to local authorities under the democratic control of the school community. To make this a reality we need more than just slogans the NEU needs to launch a bold national campaign to demand that the Labour government renationalises education. This campaign should be linked to wider issues of pay, funding and workload, as academisation

IMMIGRATION IMMIGRATION 30 January - 5 February 2025 30 January - 5 February 2025

WHAT DO SOCIALISTS SAY ABOUT IMMIGRATION?

Isai Marijerla, Socialist Party Executive Committee, responds to questions about immigration, including those that have been raised with Socialist Party members campaigning on the streets.

Is immigration as big an issue as the media portrays?

There has always been migration as long as humanity existed, but we are also in a period of multiple capitalist crises with poverty, war and destruction dominating many countries. Increasingly it is impossible to find a stable country. War and conflicts are a feature in many countries. It is estimated that at least 50 countries worldwide experiencing active conflict, an increase by 25% in a year alone. 1 in 8 people across the world have been exposed to conflicts in 2024. The UN estimates that 305 million people will require humanitarian assistance in

In such a case, we are seeing an increase in the number of people forced to flee their home country. No one chooses to be in that situation where they are forced to leave everything they have known and go and start

Most working-class and young people have an instinct of solidarity

with those being forced to flee. Most understand that ordinary people are not responsible for the wars, repression and poverty that exist. In fact, it is the capitalist system to blame, a system based on nation states and

In Britain, we have seen all the capitalist parties - Reform, Tories and Labour - trying to blame migrants for the multiple crises caused by their

We say, stop blaming migrants for the crisis in Britain - a crisis created by the ruthlessness of capitalism and what it breeds, like privatisation, low pay, housing crisis and unemployment.

We blame the system for the costof-living crisis. We know there is huge wealth in the economy that, if in public hands and under the democratic control of the working class, could be put to use as part of a plan to improve

JOBS, HOMES



Immigrants are willing to work for less pay and for longer hours, surely that just drives down my pay and conditions?

tion as a source of cheap labour that is often unorganised and seen as easy to bully and intimidate. Bosses looking to undermine workers' organising collectively try to use social and language differences to try to set sections of workers against each other as a tool for divide and rule.

And it isn't just migrant workers; agency workers and young people are also used by the bosses to drive down wages through lower pay rates and zero-hour contracts. It's not exploited workers who gain from this 'race to the bottom' it's the bosses!

It's in the interest of all workers for there to be a united struggle for rights, pay and conditions for all. That's why it is essential for the trade union movement to organise to bring in migrant workers, just as it is essential to organise agency workers and the new generation of workers too.

We, as workers of all backgrounds,

The capitalist class tries to use migra- : have more in common with each other than the bosses and the capitalist system that seeks to divide us.

We demand that every worker gets the rate for the job. An immediate increase in the minimum wage to at least £15 an hour now with no exemptions, and above-inflation pay rises for all. We also defend the right of asylum seekers to work, to stop further exploitation of labour.

There have been plenty of examples of the capitalists using immigration as a tool for divide and rule. Capitalist politicians made it a high-profile issue during the EU referendum. and anti-migrant, anti-refugee rhetoric resurfaces again and again in times of

The capitalist establishment wants cheap labour, but it doesn't want to pay to provide decent homes, services and jobs for all. We instead campaign

The Asylum Accommodation and Support Contract (AASC) is set to cost the government an estimated £4 billion over its ten-vear duration. Three companies - Serco, Mears and Clearsprings - are getting huge sums from government to cram asylum seekers

into substandard accommodation. All have recorded rising profits.

How many council homes could £4 billion build?

Meanwhile, waiting lists for asylum application assessments are huge. Tens of thousands wait for months in limbo. The Labour government threatens further cuts to civil service jobs. And the pound signs keep rolling in the bosses' eyes.

Is it fair that asylum seekers are being put up in hotels while thousands are homeless and my family are sofasurfing unable to get on the council house waiting list?

council housing waiting lists. Decades of privatisation, underfunding, and a lack of investment have left housing services at breaking point. Council housing has been systematically sold off, with the stock not

The Socialist Party says take over the empty properties, bring them into public ownership and under democratic control of working-class communities so they can be used to house all those in need. We fight for a mass building programme of high-quality, affordable council housing.

It is not only on the issue of housing that immigration is being used by establishment politicians to distract us from the consequences of their

Our public services including the

No one should be homeless, sofa- : are crumbling and in crisis. But this is surfing or forced to wait for years on : the direct result of cutbacks and privatisations by the Tories, now being carried on by Labour. Meanwhile, private energy and water companies are hiking up bills for private profits.

Faced with working-class anger about the consequences of their policies, capitalist politicians point the finger at immigration, attempting to divide the working class.

We are fighting urgently for a mass united struggle, of all working-class people - against austerity and for fully funded public services, and decent jobs and housing for all.

We call on councillors up and down the country to use all the powers at their disposal to resist austerity from Starmer's Labour - funding services and building council homes, and rallying the support of communities and trade unions to demand money from

£400mn

Rwanda policy an expensive, dangerous flop

Had the last Tory government's Rwanda plan to deport migrants to the African country gone ahead it could have cost up to

The cheques to the Rwandan government were already written. And for every one of the first 300 refugees and asylum seekers to be deported would have cost an extra £1.8 million.

The Tories were prepared to pay hundreds of millions of pounds to posture as being 'serious' about immigration and to try to make Britain a 'hostile environment' for migrants. They were hoping to shore up votes. It didn't work. Their vote

I understand that people are fleeing for their safety, but surely the situation needs to be brought under control. Who decides who get to claim asylum and who doesn't?

The scenes on our screens of deadly crossing of the English Channel show that people will risk their lives to find safety and with the hope of a better future, feeling that they have nothing

There are those who are desperate and will risk everything, no matter how high the wall or how strong and dangerous the obstacles or fences.

Would you put yourself and your children in a small boat in the sea knowing that people have died on the iourney? The answer will be no - unless you felt you had no other choice.

The vast majority of people's natural instinct is one of solidarity with those affected by war and poverty. We have seen how people come together in unity when tragedy strikes. For example, in the aftermath of the Grenfell fire, or when thousands opened their homes for Ukrainian refugees or in the outpouring of grief when the body of small Syrian boy, Alan Kurdi, was washed up on Mediterranean shores in 2015.

We defend the rights of workers to move to and work in the country of their choice. We fight for a genuine right to asylum, which does not exist for many people who are fleeing war and dictatorship under our current racist immigration laws. Those laws are created and enforced in the interests of big business not the working class and poor, either in Britain or internationally

The trade union and workers' movement should fight against every injustice of the racist immigrations laws. Control of decisions about whether or not to grant asylum cannot be left in the hands of a capitalist government. We demand that elected committees of working-class people, including from the trade unions and migrants' organisations, have the right to review asylum cases and

What is the solution to immigration crisis?

The 'immigration crisis' is a crisis of capitalism. We live in a world full of war, poverty and inequality in which the working class and poor are made to suffer. There are no obstacles for a million-dollar migrant investor to enter the UK, for example, as a so-called 'high-value migrant'.

The richest 10% of the global population currently take home 52% of the income. The poorest half of the global population earns just 8%.

The immigration crisis cannot be dealt with on its own. It has to be part of an overall fight to deal with the cost-of-living crisis and the conditions facing all working-class people in Britain - building council homes funding services, fighting for decent pay rises, and more.

By building a united fightback for these demands, and against racist division, the workers' movement can cut across support for the antimigrant propaganda from right-wing capitalist media and politicians.

As part of that, we need a mass party of the working class and young people. One which can give an expression to the working-class anger that is bubbling below the surface, and which far-right forces are trying to tap into.

By fighting for socialist change, taking wealth and power out of the hands of the capitalist class and putting it into the hands of the working class, a democratic plan can be developed to meet the needs of all in society. The working class could have a democratic say over all aspects of life and society, including over borders and immigration control.

A socialist government acting in the interests of the working class would not be one competing with other capitalist states to maximise profits, taking part in capitalist wars, and backing up repressive regimes for strategic profit interests. Instead, it would reach out for collaborating with the working class internationally.

The only permanent way to end the immigration crisis is to fight for a democratic socialist world free from war, poverty and oppression. Join the Socialist Party and the Committee for a Workers' International to fight for it



or call **020 8988 8777**

postcode to **07761 818 206**

CAMPAIGNS COUNCIL CUTS 30 January - 5 February 2025 30 January - 5 February 2025

Fightback against Labour disability attacks

BRIGHTON AND CRAWLEY SOCIALIST PARTY

ince 2010, life has become more difficult for disabled people. Then Tory chancellor George Osborne saw us as an easy target and, in announcing £4 billion of benefit cuts, claimed: "A welfare cheat" was "no different to a mugger who robs you in the street."

Now with a Labour government in power, we are in the frontline of the quest for 'savings', again. The House of Lords Economic Affairs Committee, a committee of the rich and powerful, has identified us as poor and weak. That is a big mistake.

'Parasite'

Right-wing journalist Isabel Oakeshott. Talk TV's International Editor, believes we are parasites "who frankly can't be bothered to get out of bed and get themselves out... to... any kind of job and prefer to just sit on the sofa and order their Deliveroo and drive their Motability free vehicle and take everything the state can offer."

When capitalist establishment politicians make us a target, there is an inevitable rise in disability hate crimes.

Disabled people died in disproportionate numbers during the Covid-19 pandemic, six in ten of all deaths were disabled people. Disabled activism has reduced because of the continuing impact of the pandemic, but the cost-of-living crisis and strike wave have demonstrated that trade unions are key for defending living standards.

The RMT victory in keeping rail ticket : disabled claimants would face lower offices open also showed the role trade unions can play in defending the services we need

The Socialist Party disability caucus met on 19 January. We are campaigning for the motion below. which provides a programme for a more supportive benefits system and a call for action by unions, to be discussed at trade union conferences

Model motion: Oppose disability benefit cuts

- This conference opposes all the cuts to the welfare system and The failings and unpopularity
- of Work Capability and Personal Independence Payment assessments • The failings of the private sector
- involvement in welfare delivery • The cuts to the Disability
- **Employment Adviser role** Backlogs and inadequate
- resources to deliver Access to Work • The need to improve support for disabled claimants
- The biggest category for DWP losing tribunals is Disability discrimination

This conference notes the new Labour government's intent to continue the Tory attacks on the social security system and their threats of attacks on disability benefits in 2025. The Tory plans predicted nearly half a million

benefits or increased conditionality to save £3bn by 2028-29.

This conference recognises that trade unions are the largest democratic organisations of disabled people and instructs the National Executive Committee to-

- Work with democratic disabled people's organisations and other trade unions to promote demands for a social security system that meets the needs of disabled people
- Campaign for assessments to be taken out of the hands of fat cat providers and returned to public sector delivery in the DWP with a complete overhaul of the system to support claimants
- Oppose the Government plans to merge the PIP and working age assessments which are based on cost cutting, reducing benefits to individuals and a harsher benefit regime for disabled people
- Campaign for an end to the target driven regime within the DWP which damages the quality of services to the
- Put the emphasis on getting a quality decision right at the outset to reduce the need for claimants to go through the hardship and time consuming process of disputing and appealing decisions

Conference further instructs the National Executive Committee to call for the TUC Disabled Workers' Committee to organise a demonstration and lobby of Parliament in support of



Southampton sees off racists

OUTHAMPTON TRADES UNION COUNCIL SECRETARY ND SOCIALIST PARTY

400 anti-racist and anti-fascist activsts successfully rallied and marched n the centre of Southampton to counter a mobilisation called by the new extreme-right leader of Ukip, Nick Tenconi.

Tenconi attempted to hold a meeting and rally inside a popular venue in Southampton in December. Local trade unionists and anti-racists responded by announcing a counterdemonstration, and contacted the

'Christmas party'

The venue had no idea about the details, as the booking had been made under the title 'Christmas party'. Once the truth was known, they cancelled

Suffering a blow to his campaign, Tenconi took to social media, calling Southampton a "cesspool".

He announced his new rally and march for 25 January, to "take Southampton back from the far left". Southampton Trades Union Council and others immediately started organising the counter-protest.

Tenconi managed to gather around

crowd, shouting "Who here is from Southampton?" it was followed by silence. The anti-racist counter-protesters were from our city, showing that his call to mobilise Sotonians had

'Jobs, homes, and services for all'

Socialist Party members play a leading role in the local trades union council, and helped organise the day, with positive messages of 'jobs, homes and services for all, not racism.' We were hugely successful in keeping everyone from many different organisations together through organised and effective stewarding to maintain a safe environment for everyone.

Following this, we are pushing for a campaign to tackle racism and fascism on a more permanent basis. An effective campaign to tackle racism cannot only involve mobilising in the face of threats like this.

A meeting has been arranged to follow up, where we will push forward this demand, and take it into the trade unions. There is a void that people like Tenconi are trying to occupy.

Socialist Party members are committed to a campaign to prevent this, and to push the Trades Union Congress to organise an anti-racist 'jobs, homes, and services' national

Lambeth unions tell Labour council...

'We won't take these cuts lying down'



LAMBETH UNISON CHILDREN'S SERVICES CONVENOR (PERSONAL CAPACITY)

"Isn't this just like old times", said one of the speakers on Lambeth Town Hall steps, as a crowd of 60 protesters gathered to oppose the council's cuts.

Lambeth Council in south London has announced at least £50 million worth of 'budget savings'. The cuts will affect children's services, like youth and play and children's centres, again, and also housing, including services for the homeless. The council's 'financial strategy' includes vague plans to utilise AI to get them out of their budgetary black hole, go

Hated Tories. hated Labour

The same speaker also said this is not 'old times'. We're not fighting austerity under the hated Tories. We're now under a Labour government, so there should no excuse for Labour councils, like Lambeth, to attack local services

The old excuse from Labour councils, that there nothing they can do about underfunding and cuts passed down from central government, has gone. Labour councils should ioin with trade unions and community groups in a national campaign for proper funding of local government

Councils should use their borrowing powers, and unallocated reserves, to not make cuts, and keep services running, while such a campaign

One of the speakers at the lobby reminded the crowd of the successful campaign to save children's centres back in 2019, where staff won a ballot for strike action, and the Labour council had to make major

Socialist Party member Theo Sharieff spoke from the platform about a political programme against the cuts including the workers' movement breaking with Labour, standing independent anti-cuts candidates in local elections, and building a new mass party of the working class to fight austerity, poverty, and war. There was an enormous wave of enthusiasm, especially from younger members of the

This lobby was just a warning shot to the Labour council. Trade unions and the community won't take these cuts lying down.

The full budget-setting meeting is in March. So a broad anti-cuts campaign now needs to be rebuilt in the porough. Council unions need to formulate a joint programme of industrial action to protect services and

Coventry Labour council targets disabled people for cuts

JANE NELLIST

COVENTRY TRADES UNION COUNCIL PRESIDENT

During the 14 years of austerity for ordinary working people, the number of billionaires in the UK has more than tripled. The rich are getting richer, whilst the poor are getting poorer.

This year it should have been different, with the election of a Labour government to replace the Tories. But instead of promised change, as far as austerity is concerned, we have

Labour dashes hope

Instead of our public services being given the necessary support to rebuild communities, all we are seeing is cuts and more cuts. People's hope that Labour would bring change has been dashed very quickly. Yet again, cuts to our local libraries are on the I attended the Labour council's

budget consultation meeting. The : do not qualify for council support.

presentation was met with anger from the large attendance of people. But not one councillor attended to explain and defend their position. How despicable is that?

£1.5 billion stolen

The Tories have significantly reduced local government funding since 2010. For Coventry, this was an average real-term reduction of £100 million per year - £1.5 billion in total. We want that money back!

Last year saw huge cuts to Coventry Rape and Sexual Advice Centre (Crasac), a specialist support service for adults and children who have been impacted by sexual violence or abuse at any time in their lives.

This year, 12 voluntary organisations that provide adult social care are losing £560,000, and a further £1.5 million over the next two years. This includes Grapevine, a charity that supports people with learning disabilities who that pain will be on us again, unless

Last year, over 10,000 of the city's poorest families had cuts to their -council tax support. This year, over 15,000 families face further such

Noisy and angry

The 200-strong anti-cuts lobby outside the Labour council was noisy and angry, with lots of young people. One young man in the consultation meeting made it absolutely clear what he wanted: "Stop these cuts!"

We need a new mass party that's prepared to be ruthless with the super-rich and their rigged economic system, rather than attacking the charities in Coventry that try to shield vulnerable people from cuts to their essential services. These crucial ser vices need to be funded properly

After all these cuts, the council pre dicts it will have shortfalls of £18 and £21 million for the next two years. All we mobilise and fight back!



Tower Hamlets – we will save Solace domestic-violence service

SAMANTHA FRIN AND RORRIF DAVIDSON

TOWER HAMLETS SOCIALIST PARTY

Dozens and dozens of people packed into to the basement of United Voices of the World HO to hear from Solace domestic violence advisors. They announced that they are facing 33% workforce cuts.

Many people in Tower Hamlets in east London will be left without a vital support service for survivors. This: They were elected because local: mand the money from the Labour

deprived areas of the UK, which faces the second highest rate of domestic

point their blame at each other, we know this is another step in the warpath of accepting Tory, now Labour, austerity.

Tower Hamlets council is run

brutal attack comes in one of the most : people were sick of Labour and Tory : government to fully fund services : is now working with the campaign to They have introduced popular poli-

cies - a form of Winter Fuel Allow-While the council and Solace CEO: ance, cut by Labour; EMA grants for poorer college students, cut by the Tories: and extended free school meals to all students up to age 16.

But unless the Aspire council mobilises the local community and trades by the independent Aspire party. unions - in a mass campaign to de-

then the council will be cutting vital services, like domestic violence

The workers are not taking this lying down. Crowds of people showed up from different branches of Solace, other domestic violence charities, and support workers.

All showed their solidarity, putting together a fighting plan to protect our

pressure the council to provide the fi nances that Solace needs.

Read more – 'Tower Hamlets Aspire: voters reject Labour cuts' at socialistparty.org.uk

 Tower Hamlets Socialist Party public meeting Fight back against council cuts

• 11 February, 7pm, United Voices

Southern and South East

Socialist Darty **WHAT WE STAND FOR**

in order to provide free, high-quality

For local councillors who are

services for all who need them. Expand services for all women suffering violence.

committed to opposing austerity and

For a socialist NHS to provide for

everyone's health needs, including

dental and eve care - free at the point

Nationalise the pharmaceutical industry

under democratic workers' control and

Renationalise privatised utilities -

power - under democratic workers'

control and management.

Free, publicly funded and

democratically run, good-quality

education, available to all at any age.

off student debt, end marketisation.

academisation. For all schools to be

parents and student organisations.

The right to a safe secure home for

all. For the mass building of genuinely

affordable, high-quality, carbon-neutral

be made by elected bodies of tenants.

housing workers and representatives

of trade unions. For cheap low-interest

the privately owned large building

companies, land banks and estates

mortgages for home buyers. Nationalise

council housing. For rent controls that cap

the level of rent. Fair rent decisions should

under the genuine democratic control of

local education authorities, school staff,

and introduce a living grant. No to

Abolish university tuition fees and write

including rail, mail, water, telecoms and

of use and under democratic control.

Kick out the private companies!

management.

all cuts to local services, jobs, pay and

ridden system based on the exploitation of the majority of the world's population by a small, superrich 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 workingclass 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 workingclass 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.

PUBLIC SERVICES

 A massive expansion of public services including the NHS and council services. Reverse all the cuts, kick out the privateers. Bring private social care and childcare facilities into public

processing, distribution and retail of food DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS

all workers involved in the production

socialistparty.org.uk

- end discrimination on the grounds of race, gender, disability, sexuality, age, and all other forms of prejudice and oppression Repeal the anti-trade union law
- 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
- 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 selfdetermination. 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

- Prioritising major research and investment into replacing fossil fuels and nuclear power with renewable energy, and ending the problems of early obsolescence - where products are designed to 'wear out' and be
- replaced and unrecycled waste. Nationalisation of the energy companies, under democratic workers control and management, with compensation paid only on the basis of proven need, in order to carry out a major switch to clean, green energy, without any loss of jobs, pay or conditions.
- A democratically planned, massively expanded, free to use, publicly owned transport system, as part of an overall
- plan against environmental pollution. For a major, publicly funded, insulation and energy transition plan for
- existing housing stock. Agribusiness to be taken into democratic public ownership. For a food processing and retail industry under are set by consumers, small farmers, and is socialist world.

Help fund the fightback!

DONATE TODAY

- For united working-class struggle to
- and all others that trample over civi
- whether to have children for the right

- the pro-big business parties.

SOCIALISM AND INTERNATIONALISM

- No to imperialist wars and occupations!
- 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

Do you agree? Join the fightback! JOIN THE SOCIALISTS Visit socialistparty.org.uk/joir or call **020 8988 8777** or text your name and postcode to **07761 818 206** to find out more today.

Socialists meet to discuss how to end

women's oppression

the **Socialist**

BRISTOL NORTH SOCIALIST PARTY

ocialist Party members met for a fantastic meeting of women and non-binary members. We opened with a discussion on the question -'How far can right-wing populism go?'.

Taking place less than a week after the inauguration of Donald Trump, this was understandably one of the main features of the discussion. We pointed out the real driving force : port for women going through the behind Trump's re-election - growing anger with the traditional establishment politicians, and their inability to solve the economic crisis of capitalism.

Many people have a very real fear following Trump's re-election. But that event does not reflect a general rise in misogynistic and sexist ideas globally. For example, on the same day as Trump's win, eight US states voted to enshrine abortion rights in law, including five states that voted for Trump.

Ouestions around what we can do now to fight back against reactionary ideas, and attacks on women's rights, showed the enthusiasm for putting our party's socialist ideas into practice.

The second session of the day allowed for a more in-depth discussion on the historical roots of women's : can end the oppression of women. oppression. Understanding the class: and the working class, for good.

origins of women's oppression is vital, so that we understand that the fight against it is not separate from the fight against capitalism.

Role of working class

The role of the working class, especially trade unions, in fighting for women's rights was one of the main things we discussed. Socialist Party members reported on campaigns within their own workplaces against issues such as harassment, and sup-

The meeting ended with plans for International Women's Day on 8 March, and reflecting on our participation into the series of anti-Trump women's marches on 18 January

Enthusiasm for our socialist ideas and understanding what's happening across the world really shone through during the meeting. The number of newer, younger Socialist Party members in attendance reflected people coming forward with confidence and an optimism for a

Attendees will now be going back to our Socialist Party branches and regions with reports from this excellent meeting. But also armed with a clear understanding of how we approach the opportunities for us to fight back ahead of us, and how we



Come and discuss Come to a **Socialist Party** meeting near you

The Socialist Party has regular meetings in towns and cities across the country. If you would like to

socialistparty.org.uk/events Or text 07761 818206 with our name and postcode



'Birmingham council only cares about rich people'

CLIVE WALDER

Birmingham Socialist Party has been busy campaigning in support of the city's bin workers. They are striking for one day a week to stop a regrading that will cost some workers £8,000 a year, to defend weekly refuse collections, and oppose all cuts in local services (see page 4).

People support the workers, but also air their grievances on other issues. Criticism of Keir Starmer is reaching pandemic proportions. Some of their comments are unprintable!

Workers feel betrayed, and want an alternative to never-ending austerity Our policy of campaigning for a new mass workers' party is well received We have met relatives of bin workers, who are impressed that we are campaigning in their support.

No one has mentioned migration or said that they support Reform UK, during our campaigning. This just goes to show that when workers move into action, reactionary ideas can be sidelined.

Many working-class Reform voters are looking for an alternative, one that actually represents their interests There is a lesson for the trade union

Housing is a key part of the cost-of-

living crisis. So our West London

Socialist Party meeting titled "Ur-

ban planning and privatisation: Who

The discussion was introduced by

Socialist Party member Bill Reed.

town planning. Bill outlined the cen-

tralisation of land assets into a small

number of hands. 1% of the people

Materials only contribute to 10% of

housing costs. The other 90% is the

Over £400 billion worth of land as-

few decades, which have been bought

who has experience of working in

owns all the land?" was timely.

DARA FITZGERALD

WEST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

own 50% of the land.

leaders here, the best way to stop Nigel Farage is to fight for workers.

the **Socialist**

Stop the sell-off

Birmingham Socialist Party is also campaigning against selling off 755 apartments, built as athletes' accommodation for the 2022 Commonwealth Games. They were never used, due to Covid.

The Labour council will lose over £300 million, which it expects council taxpayers to pay. People don't believe that we should pay this debt because we didn't cause the problem, and that the apartments should be used for the homeless, or people on the council waiting list.



a way to generate profits, which leads

This generated a great discussion

and some incisive questions, with

people speaking about what a so-

cialist town could look like, the col-

lapse of funding for local community

support, and the political decisions

around the creation of a housing

market, and some of its policies, like

14 people attended in-person,

and two more online. One member

showed up for her first meeting, and

another person attending for the firs

time joined the Socialist Party on the

on Trump (when is there not?), cost

Various discussions took place in-

to higher and higher rents for us.

Selling the Socialist 🔊

of the events where the Socialist newspaper was sold in the past week..

Fear of Trump

and other investors. They see land as : having a coherent programme, and

CAMDEN AND HARINGEY SOCIALIST PARTY

Trump coming into power, and his executive orders, has caused a huge stir, everywhere.

The impact of his policies, the action of the richest people in the world - Bezos, Zuckerberg, and Musk - encouraged by Trump, and encouraging the far right, is causing huge uncertainty in our towns and cities, as per the reaction of the people at our campaign stalls.

23 people bought our Socialist paper at Archway station, with the front page 'Capitalism's future?' opposing Trump.

book recommendations, rounded

out another step forward for Wes

We decided on a packed campaign

schedule for the week, including two

Socialist Party stalls on Saturday

where we raised £59 for the Socialis

Our next meeting is about 'British

capitalism and the economy. So we

are reading the Socialist Party's 'Brit-

we will discuss in full at our national

London Socialist Party.

congress in March.

SUBSCRIBE TO THE SOCIALIST

Socialist Party – grappling with a new era



RAF COX

OXFORD SOCIALIST PARTY

Trump has just re-entered office, the New Labour government is being buffeted by the bond markets, and we had shown down Ukip in Southampton the day before (see pages 10-11). With all this, the energy in the room at our Southern and South East Socialist Party conference was focused.

Much of the conference was spent grappling with what we think will nappen for the upcoming year. A theme was apparent - we are in a new

And as raised in the opening session, 'Britain's deepening crisis' this is not only Britain, but across the globe. Poor economic growth, global debts far higher than at the time of the last major economic crash in 2007-08, etc.

ish perspectives' document, which Only one in seven capitalist incumbent governments maintained their position in 2024 elections globally. Whichever way you look, the era of relative stability has ended, and the class battles that lie ahead for us are unseen in scale for decades.

> But this was not a nihilistic discussion. Despite the looming challenges. the guestion was always - how can our

class grasp the moment with socialist

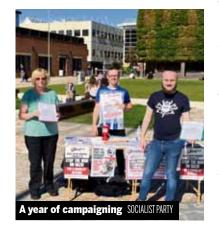
Many Socialist Party members spoke about the campaigning in their areas, their trade unions, and in upcoming county council elections (see 'Labour's council merger plans' at socialistparty.org.uk). All this was discussed further in the workshops on fighting against war, the struggle against discrimination, and the potential of socialist economic

As highlighted in the workshops on building the Socialist Party and organising in the trade unions, the Socialist Party is on the move. The coming year will present many opportunities to expand our presence in the region. The many brand new Socialist Party members in the room was a clear sign of this.

The determination to carry this forward was underscored by the £853 donated to the Socialist Party fight ing fund by those in attendance. This new era will present challeng

es. But the Southern and South East Socialist Party is ready to fight on university campuses, in trade unions, and in the elections for a new mass workers' party – all for a socialist future.

A week for Teesside **Socialist Party**



TEESSIDE SOCIALIST PARTY

West London socialists discuss 'Who owns the land?

right to buy.

sets have been sold off over the last: formally after the meeting, such as

up by large real estate developers : of living, early Labour failures in

It's January, everyone is cold, miserable, and skint. So I decided to warm your spirits with what's happening from Teesside Socialist Party. The progress we've made over the

last year puts us in position for 2025 to expand our membership, campaign stalls, and capability as a Socialist Party branch. We started the year with a bang, our first branch meeting discussion topics varying from 'state and revolution', to the ongoing crisis in Syria

We attended the anti-Trump women's protest in Middlesbrough. We were well received by protesters.

It was encouraging to see several of the young women and trade unionists on the march carrying the

Socialist paper, Contrary to wha some may believe, socialism is alive and well among working-class youth.

Days after, our Socialist Party branch held its annual general meeting. A new branch committee was elected, with two of our young members taking up positions in the

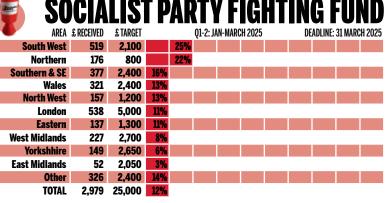
Our mixture of experienced members, youthful vigour, and fighting spirit is a winning combination. I was last year, and it will be this year too. With multiple young people wanting to become members soon. and an increasing reach and confidence of our membership, the sky is the limit. Other Socialist Party branches have the potential for rapid growth too.

Time and history marches on, we

Fund the fightback DONATE TODAY

 Visit socialistparty.org.uk/donate or call 020 8988 8777 or make cheques payable to Socialist Party.





PO Box 1398, Enfield EN1 9GT

INTERNATIONAL INTERNATIONAL socialistparty.org.uk the **Socialist** 30 January - 5 February 2025 30 January - 5 February 2025 the **Socialist** socialistparty.org.uk

Syria in tumult

Hayat Tahrir al-Sham rule and outside influence social rules and violently dispatching

COMMITTEE FOR A WORKERS' INTERNATIONAL

ibilation among big sections of the population of Syria followed the quick demise of the Basha al-Assad regime in early December 2024. After twelve years of civil war that ebbed and flowed, the regime was finally ousted after a short military operation led by Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), from its base in Idlib province. Assad's support base had dwindled to almost nothing and his impoverished army fled or refused to fight for a bankrupt

Assad's main outside backers, Iran and Russia, were not prepared to militarily try to save his collapsing regime, nor were they in a position to do so. Vladimir Putin is absorbed by war in Ukraine while the Iranian regime has been engaged in an exchange of missiles with Israel and undermined by the significant blows to its Lebanese ally, Hezbollah, which had also previously intervened in Syria to prop up Assad.

Since the mass uprising against the Assad regime in 2012, which was part of the 'Arab Spring' across the Middle East and north Africa, the Damascus government survived largely by severe state oppression. New US sanctions, which came into effect in 2020 and reportedly doubled the number of Syrians without enough to eat, worsened already appalling living conditions, and further reduced Assad's negligible support.

On assuming power, HTS quickly moved to impose a curfew and to bring in its fighters and police forces. from Idlib province to the capital HTS is mainly made up of former Al-Qaeda figures and veterans of the jihadist forces in the civil war in Syria. The leader of HTS, Ahmed Hussein al-Sharaa, also known as Abu Mohammad al-Julani, grew up in a welloff district of Damascus and turned to religious fundamentalism in his vouth. In 2003, he travelled to fight US forces occupying Iraq. Sharaa ioined Al-Oaeda and then was imprisoned by the US. He was released in 2011 and returned to Syria to create an Al-Qaeda affiliate, a forerunner to HTS.

In 2016. Sharaa announced he had broken with Al-Qaeda and was focusing on the domestic armed opposition to Assad rather than international jihad. Having conquered an area in Idlib, HTS reputedly provided basic services and collected taxes, while imposing reactionary Islamist

any rivals. HTS has been condemned for carrying out massacres in Alawite and Druze villages.

Since HTS took Damascus it has been keen to appear to accommodate other religious and sectarian groupings. Alawites living on the coast have been allowed, so far, to retain their arms. But will this toleration and relative peace, at least in parts of Syria, last? The vanquishing of Assad's regime

by HTS led to the killings of Alawite judges and also sectarian torching of Christmas trees that provoked demonstrations of thousands of Christians. Many Syrians' fear that HTS could step by step revert to hardline Sunni rule, just as the Taliban moved to reintroduce theocratic rule in Afghanistan following the departure of Western troops. "Many Syrians are keeping their bags packed in anticipation of a hurried departure. The first boatload of secular Alawites is already washed up in Cyprus, according to an observer of theirs", commented the Economist magazine.

As Al-Qaeda's representative in Syria ten years ago, Sharaa expelled thousands of Christians from Idlib. seized their property and shut the city's bars and clubs. No doubt keenly aware of the need to court the Western powers in order to economically stabilise Syria and to see off any outside threats to his fledgling regime, Sharaa now says that his rule in Idlib is "not suitable for all Syria". This did not stop his new education ministry ordering the curriculum to be brought in line with conservative Sunni Islamist teachings - although it was subsequently forced to back down after protests erupted. Sharaa has yet to appoint any known Shias to senior ranks in his government. The top military and security posts are held by followers of a puritanical brand of Sunni Islam.

Yet Sharaa is under pressure from the West to create a more inclusive regime. Given their courting of the oil-rich Gulf states, it is clear that the Western powers have no problem dealing with puritanical Sunni regimes, as such, as long as they do not pose a threat to essential Western interests. The 'optics' for Western powers are important however, given that they have spent decades decrying 'Islamist terror'

The HTS regime faces enormous economic problems. Foreign reserves are estimated to have fallen to just \$200 million; the central bank remains under Western sanctions, as does the largest commercial bank. Since the start of the civil war in 2011, the Syrian pound has lost 99% of its



The HTS regime aims to overcome sanctions and to boost remittances from its large diaspora to survive. State officials have been instructed to try to secure central bank deposits from friendly Arab states, including Saudi Arabia. Post-war reconstruction, after 14 years of conflict, will act as an impetus to parts of the economy. In the city of Aleppo alone, it is estimated by the World Bank that 137,000 of its 660,000 homes have been damaged, 35% of hospitals, and 25% of its bridges destroyed. The country's largest power plant, also in Aleppo, is not functioning.

The labour involved in repairing all this damage could potentially provide jobs for hundreds of thousands of Syrians. Raw materials and expertise is expected to come from Turkey, which has relatively good relations with the new HTS regime. However, Turkey alone does not have the funds to pay for reconstruction, which is estimated could cost anything between \$250 billion and \$400 billion.

regime will seek financial assistance from the Gulf states. But this will be attached to Gulf states sending monev to their favoured reconstruction projects and client sectarian factions

The pro-capitalist policies of HTS are clearly spelt out by the new Syrian foreign minister, Asaad al-Shaibani who, speaking ahead of attending the World Economic Forum in Davos, said the HTS regime plans to privatise state-owned ports and factories, and oils, cotton and furniture factories. He reassured regional states, including the United Arab Emirates and Egypt, which are fearful of the domestic growth of the Muslim Brotherhood on the back of HTS successes, that Syria was not intending to "export the revolution and start getting involved in other states'

Western powers are under pressure to remove sanctions now that they have a more amenable regime to dea

Congress passed the Caesar Act that targeted energy and construction. Syria's main mobile phone operator and its biggest airline have faced US sanctions since 2011. Reflecting the interests of big business, the Economist magazine declares. "Those measures made sense at the time. Today they may be a drag on needed

Now that the Western powers have discovered a potentially 'friendly' Islamist force, the White House and European officials said they are prepared to reconsider many of the sanctions, including a \$10 million bounty on Sharaa. However, the Western powers are nonetheless treading carefully, concerned that HTS rule could still unleash sectarian and ethnic strife throughout the country. President Biden signed a military spending bill, two weeks after Assad fled the country, that extended the Caesar Act until 2029.

Sharaa indicates that he intends to create a new national army, which

current militias. This will be a daunting task given the deep animosities involved and fears of the domination of HTS forces. Moreover, ongoing Turkish army attacks against Kurdish forces in Syria indicate the fragility of the situation.

HTS has had a complex relationship with the local regional power, Turkey. Its hardliners once referred to Turkey's "infidel army". However, since 2017, Turkey has provided protection for the HTS statelet in Idlib, regarding it as a useful, if somewhat npredictable, ally.

President Erdogan in Turkey has taken advantage of the new situation in Syria to launch military attacks against Kurdish 'Syrian Defence Forces' (SDF) that control large parts of territory in the north-east. The Turkish government has long regarded the Kurdish-controlled areas in Syria as a threat to Turkey's territorial status, given its large restive Kurdish population. The Syrian National : Army (SNA), which battles Kurdish will involve merging many of the : forces, is regarded as a Turkish proxy.

Svria's new foreign minister recently met President Erdogan and reassured him of Syria's "territorial

integrity".

have so far not bended to HTS.

Since taking power, HTS has at-Under Baathist party rule in the tempted to negotiate the SDF into 1960s the majority of the Syrian disbanding and to integrate its fighteconomy was nationalised, which ers into the state, calling for "national for a period allowed the regime unity". The HTS regime claims that to take measures that saw a rise a new constitution will guarantee in living standards. Nonetheless, Kurdish rights and ensure Kurdthis was nothing at all like ish representation in government. genuine democratic socialism, or The SDF leaders, no doubt mindful a move towards it, as the brutal. of many previous unkept promises undemocratic character of the from regional despots, notwithstand-Assad family-dominated regime ing their reliance on US imperialism, testified In November 1970, Hafez

Turkey is only one of several real-Assad seized power from gional countries taking an active rival factions of the ruling Baath interest in Syria and threatening to Party in the so-called "corrective destabilise it to the point of tearing revolution". Assad's coup d'état it apart. Following the fall of Assad, was a big blow to the Baathist Israeli armed forces crossed into 'leftist faction'. During the the demilitarised zone in the Golan 1970s, the economy tentatively Heights, destroying the greater part made steps towards the market of Syria's military infrastructure, and economy. After the collapse of the expanding its occupation of Syrian Stalinist planned economy of the Soviet Union, the Syrian regime The Israeli government viewed the speeded up the opening up of the Assad regime as a relatively predicteconomy to global capitalism. This able enemy, but now fears the unled to privatisations, welfare and predictable Islamist HTS in power in subsidy cuts, mass joblessness Damascus. An 'Iranian-Shiite axis' and big inequalities, fuelling

> Alongside the revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt, and huge protests elsewhere in the region, the mass revolt against Assad opened up the possibility of a real

mass unrest and, along with the

suppression of democratic rights

helped spark the March 2011

petween the two countries. Turkish insistence on the ending of autonomous' Kurdish-run areas and the SDF subordinating itself to the new HTS regime on pain of a Turkish military intervention, is creating friction with other NATO allies, like France and the US. Both the US and France used the Kurdish forces of the SDF as allies against Assad and have forces stationed in the region (mainly an estimated 2,000 Ameri-

has been replaced by a 'Sunni-Turk-

ish axis, in the eyes of Israel's Netan-

vahu government. In turn, Turkev is

ncensed at Israel grabbing territory

in Syria. In recent months, Erdogan

has warned of a possible war be-

The Israeli government has also

raised the prospect of a future war

tween Israel and Turkey.

can troops). While welcoming the overthrow of the Assad regime and the significant setbacks to Iranian and Russian influence, the Biden administration was also very concerned about the fallout. The ÚS military carried out dozens of air strikes on Islamic State (IS) targets in Syria in the chaotic days after the HTS swept into Damascus. In a nod to US concerns, the HTS regime claims it is ready to take over the running of SDF-controlled prisons that hold thousands of IS fighters.

Perhaps the greatest obstacle to an outright return to full civil war is the mood of the mass of people in Syria. who have suffered decades of dictatorship, poverty and bloody conflict. War-weary working people from all religious and ethnic backgrounds want peace and decent living standards. They will not achieve any of these goals under HTS or any 'unity' government of reactionary, pro-market economy forces. Outside powers' interference only results in renewed rounds of bloodshed and division.

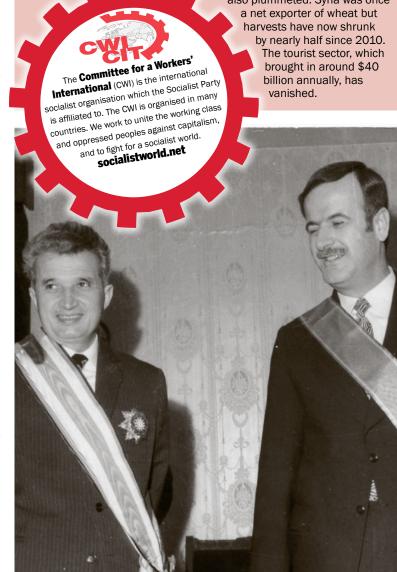
Building class organisations on an independent basis, such as trade unions and parties of the working class. and campaigning for democratic rights, is the starting point of ensuring real, lasting peace and prosperity for all. This needs to be linked up with socialist policies to contest the sectarian forces and bosses and to

alternative to imperialism and Arab despots. These events showed that it is the mass united movement of working people and youth that can remove tyrants, resist imperialism, and fight for real social and political change.

Unfortunately in the absence of a farsighted, socialist leadership of the masses in the Middle East and north Africa, the Arab Spring stalled and in many cases resulted in counter-revolution and the bloody suppression of mass movements.

The mass revolt against Assad's rule in Syria degenerated into a civil war from 2011 onwards. This involved Assad playing a divideand-rule policy, with Russian and Iranian military backing, and outside powers, like the US, backing various militias against

The years of civil war compounded the economic misery. The Economist magazine lists the grim statistics: Gross domestic product fell from \$60 billion in 2010 to less than \$9 billion today. It is estimated by the World Bank that 69% of Syrians live on less than \$3.65 a day. Oil was once the biggest economic lifeline for Syria and until 2011 Syria produced around 400,000 barrels per day, exceeding domestic demand. However since the civil war began, production has dropped below 100,000 barrels per day. Moreover, the largest oil fields are controlled by Kurdish militias. Agriculture has also plummeted. Syria was once



Issue 1307

30 January - 5 February 2025

formerly Militan

Students get organised

BUILD THE SOCIALIST SOCIALIST OF SOCIALIST SOC

ADAM GILLMAN

SOCIALIST STUDENTS

oday young people and students face massive attacks, from the raising of tuition fees affecting both returning and new university students in next academic year, but even simple things like the bus fare cap increase in England.

There have been massive cuts to our public services over the past 14 years and the new Labour government has made it clear that it won't solve the crisis, and will only be giving a fraction of what local authorities need to fund public services.

There are also the issues of climate change and devastating wars making it seem like we face a bleak future. Over a hundred thousand people have been killed in Gaza, not to mention the wars in Ukraine, Syria, Yemen, Sudan, Myanmar and elsewhere.

We now have a Labour government that has made it clear it is going to make the working class continue to pay for the crisis it faces. Labour have attacked working-class and young people since day one, from the refusal to scrap the two-child benefit cap, to the cuts to public services and to the university funding crisis, letting universities cut and close courses while simultaneously raising tuition fees.

This is all the consequence of capitalist crisis. Capitalism is a profit system driven primarily by a desire for short-term profits. This is why we are seeing our services getting cut, our tuition fees being raised, and division sowed.

This is why Socialist Students calls for students and trade unions to form a new mass workers' party that's democratic and fights for young and working-class people. A party that fights not only to reverse the fee hike but to abolish tuition fees, a party that fights for grants not loans, and a party where students, workers and young people could discuss the way forward.

But why stop there? We need to take water, energy, mail and rail

class continue to pay for the crisis it faces. Labour have attacked working-class and young people since day one, from the refusal to into full public ownership under democratic workers' control, in addition to the banks and the big monopolies.

If you agree then you should come to the Socialist Students conference where this and more is all being discussed by university and college students and young workers from across the country.

If you agree we need to fight-back against attacks on young people and fight for socialist ideas on and off campus, then you should join Socialist Students and get organised in the fightback.

Join the student fightback: join... socialist students

- Visit socialiststudents.org.uk/join
- or call **020 8988 8761**
- or text your name and school college or uni to 07749 379 010



A day of discussion on how students and young people get organised against Labour and the capitalist system it defends

SATURDAY 8TH FEBRUARY, 10AM

, LEICESTER, LE2 ODS

HIGHFIELDS CENTRE, LEICESTER, LE2 ODS (15-minute walk from Leicester Railway Station)