

# the Socialist



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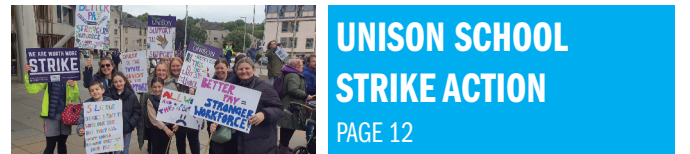
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# STOP THE WAR ON GAZA



Above: Gaza Protest. Photo: Paul Mattson Below:  
Destruction of Gaza. Photo: gloucester2gaza/CC



**☐ For mass socialist struggle  
against war, occupation and  
capitalism**

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# Mass protests erupt over Gaza conflict and the threat of regional war



Huge demonstration have been taking place in solidarity with Gaza



## What we think

Capitalism and its political representatives are totally incapable of meeting any of the needs of working-class and poor people anywhere on the globe. All that is on offer is a never-ending diet of war, poverty, oppression and repression.

This message has been amplified by the bloody events in the Middle East over the past few weeks. Now the Israeli regime is launching a brutal land offensive in Gaza, raising the possibility of war spilling over into a wider confrontation that could inflame the whole region, and adding to the multiple crises the capitalist system is already creating internationally.

The Israeli regime's indiscriminate bombing and starving of 2.3 million people in Gaza, including 1 million children, of food, water, medicines and fuel – "a death sentence" according to the United Nations – has provoked mass protests around the world.

Alarmed at the possibility of a re-

gional escalation, US President Joe Biden on his recent visit to Israel, while pledging unconditional support to the Israeli regime, pleaded with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu 'to not go too far'. The most he could achieve was the dispatch of a few aid trucks through the Rafah border with Egypt, described by the World Health Organisation as a "drop in the ocean". Before the war, 450 trucks were arriving every day.

With the same breathtaking hypocrisy Rishi Sunak, tail-ending Biden, declared he was "proud to stand" with Israel and pledged the UK's "continuous" support. This after 1 million Palestinians had been forced from their homes, more than 10,000 civilians killed in Gaza, and thousands more lives potentially placed at risk from the ground offensive.

On the huge demos against the war on Gaza, protesters readily made the link between Tory support for the repressive Israeli regime and their attacks on workers' living standards and democratic rights here in Britain, and the need to kick them out.

But it's also clear that a Starmer-led Labour government will be no alternative. Starmer has echoed Sunak and Biden's unconditional support for the Israeli regime, saying that Israel "has the right" to deny Gaza water and power. The Starmer that banned Labour MPs from visiting the picket

lines of workers fighting for a decent wage rise has now prohibited Labour MPs and councillors from attending protests showing solidarity with the ordinary people under siege in Gaza.

Several Labour councillors have torn up their party cards in disgust, joining the tens of thousands of members that have already left since Starmer – in his mission to turn Labour into a 100% capitalist party – began his coup against Jeremy Corbyn and any hint of socialist ideas or opposition.

That tickets from Labour's recently organised business conference sold out within four hours, is yet more evidence that his mission has been accomplished, and that the building of a new mass party based on the working class is urgently needed.

The anti-war movement in defence of Palestinian rights, and the recent strike wave to defend workers' living standards against the cost-of-living crisis could provide the first steps towards such a party by standing a list of trade union and working-class community candidates in the forthcoming local and general elections in opposition to the main capitalist parties.

### capitalist rulers

Internationally, trust and confidence in capitalist rulers, institutions and politicians is in freefall. In Israel, many

ordinary Israelis – who before the war had been protesting in their tens of thousands against the attacks of the right-wing coalition led by Netanyahu on the judiciary, viewed as an attack on democracy – are now furious at that same government's inability to keep them safe following Hamas's brutal slaughter and kidnapping of Israeli civilians. For now, war has cut across that movement but an unprecedented 56% want Netanyahu to resign when the war is over.

Mass protests of rage have erupted throughout the Arab and Muslim world in the face of the Israeli state's bombardment and inhumanity towards the Palestinians in Gaza.

It is these mass mobilisations, and not the firing of rockets and targeting of Israeli civilians by Hamas and Islamic Jihad, that point to how occupation, national oppression and mass suffering can be ended and a Palestinian state achieved, while also guaranteeing the right of Israelis to national self-determination.

Corrupt and authoritarian Arab leaders throughout the region are terrified that the mass rage against Israel and the oppression of the Palestinians could fuse with the enormous anger at poverty and repression at home. When King Abdullah of Jordan and Egyptian President Abdel Fatah al-Sisi warned of a conflict that "threatens to plunge the entire region into catastrophe", it's the

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## STOP THE WAR ON GAZA FOR A SOCIALIST INTIFADA

wealth and power that these capitalist elites derive from their autocratic rule that they were most concerned about.

In Ramallah and other towns in the Israeli-occupied West Bank – where hundreds of Palestinians have been killed so far this year by the Israeli state and far-right Jewish settlers – protesters didn't just call for an end to Israeli war and occupation but also demanded the overthrow of Mahmoud Abbas, the corrupt and undemocratic president of the Palestinian Authority, who has colluded with the Israeli state repression and presided over mass poverty and suffering.

The conditions are being prepared for mass uprisings with the potential to overthrow dictators and capitalist elites throughout the Middle East and beyond. But the lesson of the 'Arab spring' of 2011, when uprisings were followed by new authoritarian rulers, civil war and failed states, is that spontaneous mass movements are not enough.

The working class and poor need their own independent political organisations with a programme that points to how the capitalist system itself can be ended and a government formed that represents their interests – a socialist intifada.

In Israel, building workers' organisations that can unite Jewish, Palestinian and other workers in the fight for socialist change will not be easy given the current extremely polarised situation. But it has been through the workplaces, trade unions and strike action that solidarity and unity between workers have been forged in the past and it will be again in the future.

● **Stop the war on Gaza! For the immediate withdrawal of the Israeli military from the occupied territories**

● **For democratically organised defence committees in local communities**

● **For a mass struggle of the Palestinians, under their own democratic control, to fight for liberation**

● **For the building of independent workers' parties in Palestine and Israel and links between them**

● **For an independent, socialist Palestinian state, alongside a socialist Israel, with two capitals in Jerusalem and guaranteed democratic rights for all minorities, as part of the struggle for a socialist Middle East**

● **No trust in Sunak, Starmer or any capitalist politicians, in Scotland, Britain or internationally. Fight to build new workers' parties that stands for socialism and internationalism**

## Join Socialist Party Scotland

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**SOCIALIST WORLD**  
Committee for a Workers' International  
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Socialist Party Scotland is affiliated with the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI). The CWI is a Marxist and Trotskyist international with parties and groups in Africa, Asia, Latin America, the US and Europe. Find out more about us and our ideas:

Website: [socialistworld.net](http://socialistworld.net) Facebook: @SocialistWorld  
Twitter: @socialistworld YouTube channel: CWI Media



# Starmmer may be heading to No. 10 but Workers need a real election alternative



Keir Starmer has removed all vestiges of Corbynism from the Labour party.

A series of recent by-elections have seen previous safe Tory seats fall to Labour. Amidst a raging crisis in the Tory party, it seems most likely that Labour will win the next general election, due to take place next year. But Starmer is becoming a figure of disgust on the mass demos that have been taking place across the UK in solidarity Gaza. Even loyal right wing neo-Blairites like Scottish Labour leader Anas Sarwar and London mayor Sadiq Khan have refused to toe the line over Starmer's slavish support for the Israeli state's bombardment of Gaza. In this article, **Sarah Sachs-Eldridge** from our sister party in England and Wales calls for a workers' voice to be built for the general election.

Anger at Labour leader Sir Keir Starmer has blazed on the mass demonstrations and protests against the slaughter in Gaza.

On the BBC's Question Time, Shadow Attorney General Emily Thornberry was typical of Labour spokespeople who repeatedly refuse to condemn the cutting off of water, food, power supplies and medicines to Gaza.

Many marchers have made the comparison with Jeremy Corbyn. The Labour Party's anti-austerity manifesto at the 2019 general election, under the leadership of Corbyn, included committing an incoming government to strive for peace in the Middle East, including recognition of the state of Palestine.

Socialists go further, supporting mass workers' struggle in the Middle East to transform the situation in a socialist direction. But however limited Corbyn's 2019 policies, the comparison with Starmer is stark. Of course, the Israeli regime's attacks on the Palestinians are supported by the Tories. But Starmer, as on so many issues, just says 'me too'.

Starmer's approach means many cannot back Labour in the future. The call to build an anti-war, working-class alternative is welcomed by protesters because the difference such a voice could make is understood.

However, many marchers will be members of trade unions whose leaders, with authority from leading the strike wave, have also told them that a vote for Labour is necessary to get the Tories out. This claim, however, is coming under increasing pressure – by Starmer's war stance but also by the results of the recent by-elections.

answers to any of the problems facing the majority of people. They defend a capitalist system underlying the situation.

A poll published recently by the Observer suggested Labour would win 420 seats – equating to a landslide 190-seat majority. Election commentator John Curtice went so far as to raise the possibility of a landslide bigger than Tony Blair's 1997 win. So the idea that building a workers' election challenge risks a Tory government doesn't hold.

The by-elections also show how little enthusiasm there is for Starmer's Labour. In Tamworth, Labour's 11,719 votes represent an increase of less than a thousand since 2019 when Starmer and the Blairites sabotaged Corbyn. In Mid-Beds, the Labour vote was down on Corbyn's 2019 result. There the Labour vote almost doubled in 2017 to 17,953 when Corbyn offered an anti-austerity alternative, attracting over 4,000 more votes than Starmer's candidate has this year.

The perspective, nonetheless, is for a Starmer-led government to be in power in the next year. What that means for working-class people is clear. Starmer, shadow chancellor Rachel Reeves, and co are at pains to show that any alternative to the capitalist status quo is not on offer from them.

Foreign policy is only domestic policy abroad. This is also the party that is pledged to maintain the two-child benefit cap, supports the attacks on the right to protest and is proud to be seen in the tradition of warmonger Tony Blair.

Of a piece with this is the ban on Labour MPs and council leaders attending the demonstrations against the war on Gaza. In response, a number of councillors have resigned and Starmer has been forced to back-pedal a touch.

This is a tiny indication of the pressure even a small bloc of anti-war, anti-austerity workers' MPs could have, which could include Corbyn, who will not be standing as a Labour candidate.

And it would be entirely possible to achieve that at the next general election, if steps were taken now by even a couple of the left-led trade unions to establish a new party, or at least organise an election coalition list. That is what the Socialist Party is fighting for.

## Tory losses

"Our vote is on strike," was the conclusion drawn by one Tory MP following the Tamworth and Mid Bedfordshire by-elections on 19 October. With collapses in Tory votes of 20,000 and 26,000 respectively in the two seats, they weren't wrong.

The reasons to not vote Tory are legion. From the housing crisis, to low pay, inflation, the cost-of-living crisis, and climate change, to the support for the onslaught on Gaza. They have no

## Effective NIPSA strike action



Members of the NIPSA trade union in Northern Ireland working in some key areas across Veterinary Service Animal Health Group in the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) have taken five days of strike action from Monday 30th October to Friday 3rd November. (see photo above)

NIPSA members working in ports walked out at midnight and were joined by hundreds of members across the Veterinary Service Animal Health Group (VSAHG).

The action is in protest over the decision to impose a derisory pay award of £552 to all civil servants in Northern Ireland for 2022/23, when inflation was above 10%.

The result of this action was significant, including disruption at NI ports and in food processing.

NIPSA General Secretary, Carmel Gates said: "Our members are fed up with derisory pay awards. They see their counterparts elsewhere on these islands receive significantly better pay and are no longer prepared to suffer in silence. They have been subjected to a sanctions budget which is intended to punish politicians. Unfortunately, it is workers and public services that are being harmed.

There is a real and growing crisis across DAERA, with problems recruiting and retaining staff in VSAHG and the key reason is historically low pay. The latest paltry pay award, following decades of austerity and below inflation pay awards, is a further kick in the teeth to all hard-working civil servants.

These members play a vital role in ensuring we have a safe food supply. Political decision makers have the power to address this issue by making the funds available to end pay inequality. There must now be urgent engagement with NIPSA and a commitment to provide the funds needed to resolve the dispute."

## FBU consults on strike against cuts

The Fire Brigades Union has begun consulting firefighters across Scotland on strike action in opposition to a devastating package of cuts imposed by the Scottish government.

A projected five-year flat cash budget until 2027 has already removed 10 wholtime fire engines, whilst 150 retained fire engines are regularly unavailable due to significant recruitment and retention issues.

The Scottish Fire and Rescue service has announced that its own projections mean it will need to save a minimum of a further £14 million next year, which would result in the loss of a further 339 firefighters and 18 fire engines, with more to come. Scotland has lost 1200 frontline firefighters since 2012.

A formal strike ballot could follow.

## Another sleazy Tory scandal engulfs Sunak

**Sam Bennett**  
Oxford Socialist Party

The Conservative Party is embroiled in another sleaze scandal, they barely seem to register now. It has been reported that Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, when chancellor, did not declare a conflict of interest between his wife's investments and his own government scheme, Future Fund.

Sunak's wife, Akshata Murty, was a shareholder in several companies that received £2 million of taxpayers' money from a fund designed to support start-up businesses during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Sunak did not report this in the ministerial interest register, which makes any financial benefits from government policy publicly known.

The Future Fund scheme was one of many attempts by the government

to prop up British capitalism during the lockdowns, including the 'Eat out, to help out' scheme. The latter helped to spread the virus, according to the government's chief scientific advisor, Prof Dame Angela McLean. She later branded Sunak 'Dr Death', as the scheme may have killed thousands of people.

130 businesses that received support from the Future Fund have since gone bankrupt, three of them being part of Murty's investments.

The Socialist Party calls for MPs to receive only an average worker's wage, and to be subject to recall from constituents. We fight for candidates who stand up for the working class and for a socialist society, with democratic workers' control of production and a redistribution of wealth from the bosses to the masses. The Socialist Party is fighting to build a party made up of fighters like that today.

## SUPPORT THE SOCIALIST PARTY SCOTLAND XMAS FUNDRAISING CAMPAIGN

Tickets for the Socialist Party Scotland Xmas raffle are available now. £5 a ticket with prizes of £200, £100 and £50.

SOCIALIST PARTY SCOTLAND			
XMAS raffle			
Prizes: 1st £200, 2nd £100, 3rd £50			
Only 250 tickets available			
Draw will be made on Tuesday 19 December 2023			
All proceeds after prizes to Socialist Party Scotland			
Tickets £5			
NAME	EMAIL ADDRESS	PHONE NUMBER	



# After 10 years of PIP, end the war on disability benefits



Protesting outside parliament against the government's law change to allow more cuts to PIP disability benefits

Lynda McEwan

It's been ten years since the disastrous benefit PIP (Personal Independence Payment) was introduced in the UK by the Tory/Lib Dem coalition to replace DLA, (Disability Living Allowance). Labour first cut disability benefits by ending incapacity benefit. Brought in by former Tory work and pensions secretary Ian Duncan Smith, PIP deliberately tightened the criteria that sick and disabled people needed to meet to access benefits. Many likened the process to a traumatic experience of "jumping through hoops" so tough were the assessments they were subjected to. The assessments themselves were carried out by private companies, ATOS and later Maximus and Capita, who hire ex-health workers with no specific knowledge of complex conditions to decide whether a claimant is entitled to the benefits they need to survive.

Whistleblowers from these private companies told of targets for removing people from their benefits. After the financial crash of 2007/2008 the Tory government, elected in 2010, began their despicable war on disability benefits in order to make the working class pay for their system's crisis. They introduced the highest level of welfare cuts since the 1920s, removing tens of billions from vulnerable people and whipped up an anti-benefit culture in the right wing press, trying to divide the working class. Long, confusing and humiliating forms with arbitrary markers were brought in alongside mandatory reconsiderations to degrade and demoralise people in the hope they would give up when their claims were rejected. People quickly began to report that assessments were inaccurate and full of lies leaving them in despair, their mobility cars being taken back and often spiralling into mounting debt and worry. The DWP's own figures show

that in the five years since its introduction, 7,990 people died within 6 months of having their claim rejected. Another 3,680 died within 3 months of having their claim rejected. 11,790 terminally ill people who should have had their claims fast tracked were instead dealt with under the normal rules. What an abhorrent way to treat people at the end of their lives. Capita has recently had its contract renewed for five years worth an eye watering £560 million. This is despite the company having to pay a "substantial" amount of compensation to the family of a young mother who took her own life in 2019 after having her benefits stopped. In Scotland PIP has been replaced by ADP (adult disability payment) but the process has been delayed with many still waiting to be transferred long after the November 2022 target. Although the SNP/Green government has ditched the privatised, dehumanising assessments of the DWP, the forms are still long and can be difficult to navigate.

**dismal failure**

The SNP, in power since 2007, have dismally failed to fight back against Tory austerity. While there is ADP, benefit claimants on Universal Credit and ESA, still administered by the UK DWP, face large cuts and sanctions. A fighting socialist government would set a no cuts needs budget in Scotland, mitigating the cuts and demanding power over all benefits. The current social security and benefits system is still cruel and not fit for purpose. It should be replaced by a system that respects sick and disabled people. Benefits to the equivalent of a living wage should be paid and should rise in line with inflation each year. People should be able to live in dignity, free from financial worry, especially when they are already dealing with sickness or disability.

# GLASGOW MUSEUMS WORKERS' STRIKE ACTION

## Fighting the job cuts



70 UNISON members in the Glasgow Museums and Collections team took five days of strike action in later October in a dispute with the Glasgow Life over cuts in jobs and services. Glasgow Life, a Glasgow City Council arms-length organisation, is looking to cut 38 jobs, with the museums and collections section facing a 30% cut in posts. Brian Smith, UNISON Glasgow Secretary, said: "Our members remain in a hugely difficult position, despite some changes to the job cuts proposal by Glasgow Life at the eleventh hour. But it was too little, too late.



Striking UNISON members in Glasgow - Photo credits Glsagow UNISON

These workers are taking a stand to defend both themselves and the city's world class museums. They deserve support. UNISON calls on Glasgow City Council's political leaders to intervene and provide the funding required to resolve this dispute." It's way past time that councillors

stopped seeing themselves as a conveyor belt for cuts from Westminster by refusing to make cuts and set a 'no cuts' budget while building a mass campaign with the trade unions to demand a return of the hundreds of millions stolen from Glasgow by austerity, the cuts could end. This is the long-held policy of Glasgow City UNISON.

# Rutherglen and Hamilton West: massive vote of no confidence in establishment parties



Chris Sermanni (centre) Scottish TUSC candidate

Matt Dobson

The Rutherglen and Hamilton West by-election was a massive vote of no confidence in the main pro-capitalist parties. Despite intense attention from the media and the political establishment, and major resources expended by Labour and the SNP in particular, there was evident and palpable anger in this predominantly working-class constituency. Anger over the cost of living crisis but, above all, towards the politicians responsible for the economic disaster, especially the Tories and the SNP. Above all else this mood was reflected in a collapse in the turnout. From 66% in the 2019 general election to just 37%. As the Guardian correspondent commented, there was "antagonism towards mainstream politics". Scottish Labour's neo-Blairite Micheal Shanks won with a 20% swing from the SNP to Labour. Yet Labour's number of votes were lower when compared to both the 2019 and 2017 general elections when Jeremy Corbyn was Labour leader. Shanks resigned his party membership in protest at Corbyn's leadership and only re-joined when Starmer took over. The result was a brutal electoral defeat for the SNP who saw their share of the vote fall from 44.2% to 27.6%. It's a product of the widespread disappointment in working-class communities who put their faith in the SNP after the 2014 indyref in particular but who have delivered little other than cuts to public services and holding down of workers' pay. Keir Starmer described the result as "seismic", putting Labour on course for a sizeable majority or even a "landslide" at the forthcoming UK general election. But there was little enthusiasm for Labour by workers for Labour's pro-big business policies other than a vehicle to hit back at the SNP and a desire to get the Tories out. Some SNP voters backed Labour, but thousands of pro-independence supporters simply refused to vote. It was the cost of living and the economic problems facing the working-class majority in the constituency that dominated, with nothing other than lip-service 'solutions' being paid by the main candidates. The anger towards the main parties was palpable. There is a colossal political vacuum in working class areas that only a mass working class party based on the organised power of the trade unions could attempt to fill. During the election campaign, the UNISON schools' strikes took place, which saw tens of thousands of low paid workers taking action for three days. It was a glimpse of the enthusiasm when a credible option to fight back is given to working class people. This was of course the main idea Scot-

tish TUSC fought for and strove to give a voice to in this election. For the Humza Yousaf SNP leadership, this result is the worst case scenario come true. They are being undermined by their record in government since 2007 of passing on austerity and attacks on the working class.

**Scottish TUSC campaign**

In a polarised election amid a collapsing turnout, Chris Sermanni and Scottish TUSC standing for the first time in the seat polled 178 votes (0.6%). This vote, while modest, does not fully reflect the very positive support we received on stalls and on the doors and for our leaflets which highlighted the idea of a local trade union fighter standing for socialist policies to fight the cost-of-living crisis. Many voters said they fully agreed with our calls for nationalisation of the energy companies, for a £15 an hour minimum wage without exemptions, no cuts budgets and for a MP who would live on a skilled workers' wage. Despite our limited resources and lack of media attention, there was also significant active support for Chris from shop stewards and trade union activists out campaigning in the seat, including from the CWU, Unison, EIS, Unite and the GMB. Understandably, the pressure to vote Labour or SNP was powerful as "you cannot win at the moment". Chris became seen as "the trade union guy involved with the strikes". The idea we fought for, very prominently, of a new workers' party based on the trade unions also gained support and marked us out from the other socialist candidate in the race. The Scottish Socialist Party (SSP) polled 271 votes, amounting to 0.9% of the vote. The SSP previously had a national profile with six MSPs at Holyrood between 1999 and 2007, polling 1164 votes, 2.7%, in Rutherglen and Hamilton West in the 2005 general election. Scottish TUSC appealed to the SSP to agree a single socialist candidate. As it was the fact that standing for the first time Scottish TUSC was able to win 40% of the modest socialist vote was important. We hope going forward its possible to avoid clashes like this in the future. Although its clear that the political differences in approach between Scottish TUSC and the SSP, mean that can be a challenging issue. The Rutherglen and Hamilton by-election underlines the burning need for a workers' and socialist list of candidates to give a voice to the strike wave and take on the SNP, Starmer's Labour and the Tories at the next general election. Scottish TUSC and Socialist Party Scotland will work with all those who want to see a new mass party for the working class to assist the fight for a socialist future.



# SNP conference sees retreat over indyref

## Build a party that fights for the working class



SNP first minister Humza Yousaf is presiding over falling support for the SNP Photo: Sottish Government / CC



Pro-independence supporters are less likely to vote SNP today. Photo Matt Dobson

The SNP conference, one of the smallest in years, took place recently in Aberdeen. The event was marked by yet another retreat by the nationalist leadership on its strategy to achieve independence.

Amidst a 10% drop in support during 2023, and the defeat to Labour in the recent Rutherglen and Hamilton West by-election, the SNP conference debated how to take forward its campaign.

The outcome was yet another lowering of the bar for what would constitute a mandate for independence at next year's likely Westminster election.

Former first minister Nicola Sturgeon's previous plan followed the UK supreme court's undemocratic ruling that the Scottish parliament could not organise a referendum.

Sturgeon had proposed making the next election a 'de-facto referendum' – with 50% plus one share of the vote for pro-independence parties being a mandate.

No one in the SNP leadership believes they can possibly achieve that level of vote and therefore that plan has been dumped.

Conference instead agreed a motion that stipulated if a majority of SNP MPs are elected from the 57 available seats

that would be enough to; "begin immediate negotiations with the UK Government to give democratic effect to Scotland becoming an independent country".

In other words asking for the permanent powers to hold a second referendum from whoever forms a UK government – most likely a Keir Starmer-led Labour government. Yet Starmer has explicitly ruled out allowing for any second indyref.

However, there will be no intention, even if the SNP win a majority of the seats, for an immediate referendum. And that is no surprise given the falling support for the SNP.

Average polling over the last couple of months puts them on 36% – down from 45% in early 2023. Labour are on 32%.

That would mean that around 20 seats could possibly be won by Labour in Scotland next year from the SNP. Labour currently have just two MPs.

It's therefore still possible that the SNP could win a majority of seats in Scotland, even while losing almost half of their MPs.

However, also possible is the eclipsing of the SNP by Labour, given the anger towards the SNP-Scottish Green

government by big sections of the working class combined with a mood to get rid of the Tories.

### consequences

The undermining of the SNP is consequence of the nationalists in power carrying out cuts and implementing other anti-working class policies generally. As well as having no idea of how to overcome the opposition of the capitalist class to the break up of the UK.

John Curtice from Strathclyde University commented: "Back in the autumn of 2021, on average as many as 80% of those who voted Yes in 2014 said they would vote for the SNP. That figure now stands at just 60%.

In contrast, Labour's tally among 2014 Yes voters has increased from 8% to 20%. The link between constitutional preference and support has now frayed.

The fact that a minority of independence-supporting voters have shifted to Labour is not an endorsement of the neo-Blairite leadership of Scottish and UK Labour either.

There is no enthusiasm for Labour – but there is a strong support to get the Tories out amid an unbearable cost of

living crisis. In reality, the current SNP leadership is fighting for its political life. Humza Yousaf would be unlikely to survive if the SNP fail to defeat Labour in Scotland at a general election.

More important, with support for independence currently polling at 49%, there is now a significant section of the working class who cannot bring themselves to vote for the SNP – and no wonder when the role of the Scottish government and SNP-led councils in implementing cuts is factored in.

For these reasons the SNP leadership will appeal to as many of that 49% as it can to use the general election to advance the cause of independence. Yousaf's pledge is that page one, line one of the manifesto will read: "vote SNP for Scotland to become an independent country".

The SNP will attempt to tie in independence with the 'Westminster-driven' cost of living crisis and also demand more powers for Holyrood over employment rights and the minimum wage, windfall taxes on energy companies, and employment visas for overseas workers.

Yet claims by the SNP to be anti-austerity are hollow when their track record of provoking strike after strike with trade unions following below inflation pay deals are the reality.

### committed to capitalism

The SNP leadership are wholly committed to capitalism, and increasingly have returned to the examples of the Republic of Ireland, Norway and Denmark as their economic models for an capitalist independent Scotland.

Stephen Flynn, SNP Westminster leader, called for action on energy and food costs which amounted only to the reinstatement of the £400 energy rebate and a cap on food prices in supermarkets for essential items like bread and milk.

But why not demand the nationalisation of energy and the big food producers and supermarkets? That would really tackle the crisis at its root.

Their support for capitalism is also a central reason why they have sought to only use elections to apply pressure on the Westminster government over the right for a second indyref.

They have strictly avoided seeking to build a mass movement on the streets, workplaces and communities for self-determination.

The SNP offer no way forward in either the struggle for self-determination or on the cost of living nightmare.

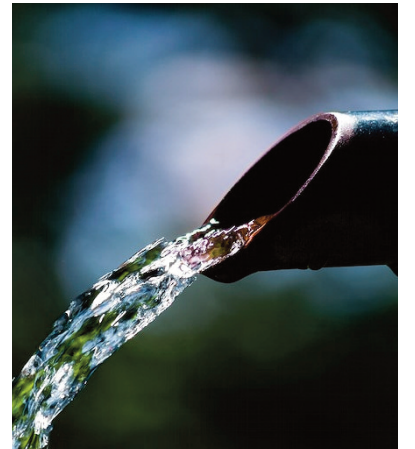
That's why Socialist Party Scotland has consistently called for the trade unions to build a new mass party for the working class based on socialist policies, including the right to a second independence referendum and an independent socialist Scotland.

For example, standing for the nationalisation of the rip-off energy companies, public ownership of transport, the major banks and big business as a whole under democratic working-class control and management.

As well as the building of a democratic and voluntary socialist confederation of states including Scotland, England, Wales and Ireland as a step to a socialist world.

At the forthcoming general election we would appeal to trade unionists to work with us to prepare an election challenge in Scotland that puts public ownership, support for workers striking for pay rises and socialism on the agenda.

## Scottish Water workers strike



More than 1,500 Scottish Water workers who are members of UNISON, Unite and the GMB are due to begin strike action in November over pay and regrading.

78% of UNISON's 1,100 members – which include strategic planners, tanker drivers, scientists, sewage operators, technical specialists, engineers, accountants, water operatives and hydraulic modellers – voted for strike action.

The industrial action is in response to Scottish Water issuing a new pay structure which offers a below-inflation pay rise for key workers. Unison said the proposed changes would increase managers' wages by up to £10,000 and reduce earnings for low-paid staff by £5,000.

500 members of Unite will also strike every Friday, Saturday, Sunday and Monday for 12 weeks, beginning on November 10. Unite members are waste water operatives, water treatment and burst repair operatives, maintenance engineers, electricians and sewage tanker drivers.

Stephen Deans, Unite regional coordinating officer, said: "Scottish Water has paid lip service to our major concerns over pay which is being tied to a proposed new grading structure.

"The talks which have taken place with Scottish Water management following our membership emphatically backing strike have been in effect useless. Unite has therefore been left with no option but to serve notice of 48 days strike action over three months."

UNISON Regional Organiser, Emma Phillips said: "It seems that Scottish Government's Fair Work and equality commitments don't matter in our biggest and most precious public asset."

There is a feeling amongst members that Scottish Water bosses are behaving like Victorian Mill owners – and this overwhelming vote for strike action is a reflection of how staff feel they are being treated"

### bosses' pay

Rubbing salt into the wounds, the new CEO, Alex Plant, has a reported annual salary of £295,000. This Scottish government publicly owned company is paying salaries more in line with a FTSE top 500 company.

The actions of Scottish Water bosses underline the need for the service to be under the democratic control of the workforce. Like the so-called nationalisation of ScotRail, fat cat bosses are raking in hundreds of thousands of pounds in salaries while attacking workers pay and conditions. Socialist nationalisation would mean the workforce, through democratic and accountable elected committees, taking responsibility for the running this essential public service.

And ensuring the investment needed to transform the industry.



# JOHN MACLEAN: An outstanding Marxist and fighter for the working class

John Maclean was Scotland's greatest revolutionary socialist. November 30, 2023 marks the 100th anniversary of his death. In this feature, based on a longer article written to mark the 95th anniversary in 2018, **Philip Stott** looks at the idelible mark left by Maclean on the socialist and working class movement in Scotland and internationally.

A leader of 'Red Clydeside', John MacLean was an outstanding orator, a peerless educator in Marxist ideas.

He emerged as a leader of the anti-war struggle during World War One and as an implacable fighter against capitalism and in defence of the rights of the working class.

His name and contribution is rightly mentioned among the other great Marxists of his generation; Lenin, Trotsky, James Connolly, Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht.

It was a period when the ideas of socialism and Marxism were taken up as a weapon by millions in the struggle against capitalism and blood-soaked imperialism.

Above all, it was a time when the collective experience of the working class internationally drove them towards the conclusion of the socialist revolution.

## Mass poverty

John Maclean's parents had been victims of the brutal Highland clearances and forced to migrate to Glasgow, a city that was an 'urban inferno' of explosive industrial capitalism.

One million people – 20% of the Scottish population – lived in or within eight miles of the city. Yet the conditions facing those workers and their families were utterly horrendous. Cholera, typhoid, smallpox and tuberculosis were rife.

It was upon this fertile ground that the ideas of independent working-class politics, socialism and Marxism began to take root.

The Independent Labour Party had been formed in 1892, the Scottish Labour Party was launched in 1888 by Keir Hardie and the Labour Representation Committee (LRC) Conference in 1900 led to the creation of the Labour Party.

The Marxist Social Democratic Federation (SDF) had significant roots in Glasgow, a regular newspaper and effective public spokespeople in the 1880s and 1890s The SDF later became the British Socialist Party (BSP), within which MacLean was also active.

## Teacher

John Maclean was already a Marxist when he began work as a teacher in 1900. He organised regular education classes to explain the ideas of economics and capitalist exploitation.

The main textbook was Marx's 'Capital'. Shop stewards from the engineering factories and shipyards from across Glasgow were schooled by Maclean.

In 1915, at the height of the rent strikes, the fight against conscription

and other mass movements, hundreds attended Maclean's weekly Glasgow class, including all the leading shop stewards from the major workplaces.

But he was not merely an educator. Maclean wrote and campaigned for municipal public housing, for public control of food and hygiene safety and common ownership of land and agriculture.

The sectarianism and opportunism of the leaders of the SDF led to clashes. The SDF had walked out of the LRC in 1900 because it would not accept socialism as its aim.

Maclean, who joined the SDF in 1903, wrote that he had regarded this as a mistake, while remorselessly criticising the pro-capitalist policies of Labour leaders and a majority of its MPs.

He fought for the idea that Marxists should not be apart from where the working class was but should instead fight alongside these workers looking towards the Labour Party and the Independent Labour Party.

An even bigger clash was to emerge with the leaders of the British Socialist Party on the outbreak of the war in 1914.

The Second International, including the SDP in Germany and the Labour Party in Britain, supported their 'own' capitalist class when war began.

Maclean heroically refused to go along with the leaders of his own party like H M Hyndman, who adopted a chauvinist, apologist approach towards British imperialism.

Maclean, alongside Lenin, Trotsky, Connolly, Luxemburg and Liebknecht, came out against the war with an internationalist appeal to the working class.

He threw himself into anti-war activity. In Glasgow the BSP with 500 members split, although a majority backed Maclean.

Undeterred, they organised regular street meetings, sent speakers to the engineering and munitions workplaces, not an easy task given the jingoism that existed at the start of the war. As the anti-war mood deepened thousands came to hear Maclean and others speak.

By February 1915, rumblings of discontent had broken out on Clydeside. A labour shortage gave the workers confidence that they should act and strike action began.

It was a major problem for bosses and profiteers who wanted to use the war as an opportunity to drive down wages and conditions.

This was unofficial action as the Trade Union Congress (TUC) had agreed a policy of 'industrial peace' for the war effort. Moreover, strikes were illegal under the Defence of the Realm Act.

To get round this obstacle a strike committee was elected. After the strike ended, this body became the Clyde



John Maclean

Workers' Committee (CWC), with delegates covering all the shipyards and engineering factories. The CWC would go on to play a leading role in the revolutionary events to follow.

The next four years would bring mass working class struggles on the Clyde, the 1917 Bolshevik revolution and imprisonment for Maclean.

## Militancy

Pressure on housing was immense. The landlords and their factors (landlords' agents) saw an opportunity to squeeze more money from tenants and started to raise rents.

Most immediately impacted were working-class women. Mass anger ignited into a campaign of non-payment of the rent increases.

Women, including Mary Barbour, became leaders of the 'we are not paying increased rent' campaign. This was a Glasgow-wide movement with marches across the city.

The biggest was in October 1915 when 25,000 marched. Moreover the involvement of Maclean and other BSP members meant that the campaign was taken to the shipyards and engineering factories.

Under mass pressure the government was forced to set up a Committee of En-

quiry, but it proposed rent rises, including areas unaffected by rent rises previously.

Maclean called for a mass non-payment campaign of all of the rent, not just the increased amount.

Faced with being unable to collect the rents and being unable to evict tenants, the government and factors went for wage deductions instead. 18 shipyard workers were summonsed to the court on 18 November 1915 to have their wages arrested for non-payment of rent.

A general strike had been called for across Clydeside on 22 November unless the government agreed to a rent restriction act for the duration of the war. A rent restriction act was introduced immediately!

This massive victory reflected the enormous power of the working class and a growing revolutionary socialist outlook among its most advanced layer.

The ruling class also understood the threat, hence the concessions over rents. But this was combined with brutal repression, particularly against its most prominent leader, John Maclean.

Maclean was jailed in November 1915 for five days, after being found guilty of charges under the Defence of the Realm Act for his anti-war activity.

Conscription was introduced in early 1916 and Maclean and the leaders of the CWC mobilised against it. This, of

course, was in opposition to the official policy of the TUC and the trade union leaders.

Maclean was found guilty of sedition and sentenced to three years' hard labour in Peterhead prison. In response, a huge campaign demanding Maclean's release was launched.

His imprisonment lasted 14 months, until June 1917. By then the February Russian revolution had already electrified the working class across Europe.

The 1917 May Day demonstration in Glasgow saw 80,000 marching in solidarity with the Russian workers, against war and demanding the freedom of John Maclean.

The All-Russian Congress of Workers' and Soldiers' delegates sent "greetings to the brave fighter for the International, comrade Maclean."

The British capitalist class were alarmed at the growing revolutionary upsurge and Maclean was released at the end of June.

His freedom did not last long. The rising revolutionary tide, boosted further by the Bolshevik revolution of October 1917, drove the ruling class to strike again.

In April 1918, Maclean was again found guilty and sentenced to five years imprisonment. But not before he had delivered possibly one of the most famous speeches ever.

Maclean defended himself and his 75 minute address to the jury was a master class in exposing capitalism and war while making the case for socialism.

"I am not here, then, as the accused; I am here as the accuser of capitalism dripping with blood from head to foot," he told them.

Despite a draconian sentence he was released within seven months. As his daughter Nan Milton wrote: "Demonstrations were being held all over the country."

"When the red banners with slogans 'Hands off Russia!' and 'Release Maclean', were unfurled at the huge Albert Hall rally in London, the audience went wild...."

On 3 December, after his freedom from prison Maclean was met by thousands of workers celebrating his release.

He was carried via a carriage by workers, red flag flying, down Jamaica Street and towards the Clyde.

## Russian revolution

The Bolshevik revolution set alight the Clyde as news filtered through of the victory of Lenin and Trotsky.

Lenin himself, as early as 1916, declared: "In all the countries during the war there has been observed a trend of revolutionary socialism...."



**Maclean, alongside Lenin, Trotsky, Connolly, Luxemburg and Liebknecht, came out against the war with an internationalist appeal to the working class.**

"To this trend belongs the Bolsheviks of Russia... who are persecuted for the same crimes for which Maclean and Karl Liebknecht are being persecuted."

In recognition of his outstanding role in the struggle against the war and his support for the Russian revolution, Maclean was elected as Honorary President of the first All-Russian Congress of Soviets in 1918.

Demands for real improvements after the war, the impact of the Russian revolution and rising industrial unrest combined to pose a real threat to British capitalism. The demands for a shorter working week resulted in a mass strike wave.

A general strike was also called for 24 January 1919. On that day all the main yards and engineering shops in Glasgow came out on strike.

The role of the official union leaders, who reflected the interests of the capitalist class as opposed to the shop stewards committees, was to limit the action.

Apart from Glasgow, Edinburgh and Belfast the strikes in other areas of Britain were not organised.

The then secretary of state for Scotland Robert Munro said: "It is a misnomer to call the situation in Glasgow a strike – this is a Bolshevik uprising."

The ruling class responded to this threat with savage repression. Thousands of police had been mobilised and when the workers assembled in George Square on 31 January they baton charged.

Huge battles took place with workers

trying to defend themselves, indeed again and again the police were driven back.

Unfortunately, there were no attempts to fraternise with the troops. Willie Gallacher, a Red Clydeside, leader admitted that: "there should have been a march to Maryhill barracks to enlist the support of the troops... we could easily have persuaded the soldiers to come out and Glasgow would have been in our hands."

Instead, an agreement was made for a reduction of the working week from a typical 54 hours to 47 hours and the strike ended.

Given the seismic events that erupted on the Clyde, why were there not attempts to form soviets – workers' councils – and a preparation for power?

A key factor was the relative isolation of the mass strike wave but, crucially, the lack of a Bolshevik-type party in Scotland and Britain at the time.

A period of preparing the ground and building the forces of a disciplined Marxist party among the working class was necessary. But this was not done.

## Revolutionary party

John Maclean represented the ideas around which such a revolutionary party could have been built.

Yet, in reality, there was not a distinct revolutionary Marxist party in Scotland or Britain at the time.

The BSP had many outstanding revolutionaries in its ranks, not least Maclean himself. But it was very far from being a disciplined and coherent revolutionary party.

No matter how outstanding an individual may be, and Maclean was an outstanding Marxist, without a revolutionary party to allow for such discussion and clarification mistakes are inevitable.

He mistakenly refused to join the Communist Party of Great Britain, which largely drew together the BSP, parts of the Socialist Labour Party and others



John Maclean was a fervent supporter of the October 1917 Russia Revolution. Pictured above are Lenin (speaking) and Trotsky (standing to the right of the podium) Picture opposite are the 1915 Glasgow Rent Strikes.

when it was founded in 1920.

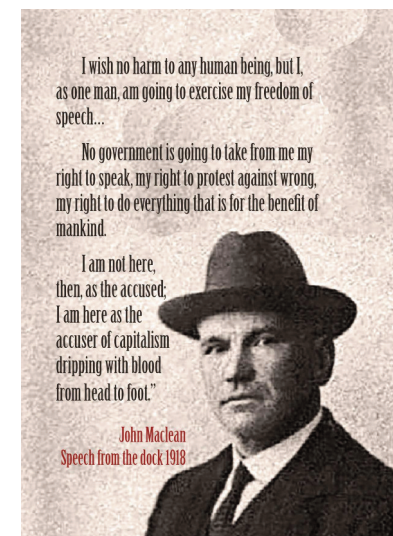
The key task was to strive to build a genuine revolutionary party in Britain at that time.

The death of Lenin, the isolation of the Russian revolution, and the coming to power of Stalin impacted decisively on the Communist International and its national sections.

From being an instrument of world revolution, within a decade or so, the International became its opposite: a tool to defend the Stalinist bureaucracy.

Tragically, John Maclean died on November 30, 1923 at the age of 44. At his funeral thousands of workers turned out to say goodbye to their "Dominie" (teacher). John Maclean's contribution rightly places him in the front rank of the greatest Marxists of all time.

Today, as capitalism staggers from one crisis to another, the ideas of revolutionary socialism are more necessary and relevant than ever.



Above: The back cover of the Socialist Party Scotland pamphlet Red Flag Over the Clyde by Jim Cameron. Email info@socialistpartyScotland.org.uk for a copy.



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## Marion Lloyd: Elect a socialist for PCS general secretary



Marion Lloyd (at front) on a PCS picket line. Photo: Rob Williams

As we go to press nominations have closed in the elections for Public and Commercial Services Union (PCS) general secretary and AGS elections.

In a stunning outcome, Socialist Party member Marion Lloyd, standing for general secretary with the support of the PCS Broad Left Network, has received a tremendous 80 branch nominations.

That is an indication of how badly let down activists and members of the union feel by the current leadership, and the appeal of a fighting programme.

Marion is running on a joint ticket with John Moloney of the Independent Left.

John is the current assistant general secretary but is not part of the leading group in the union, Left Unity. He has received 87 nominations.

Marion and John's opponents are from Left Unity. Fran Heathcote, the

current president, is standing for general secretary and Paul O'Connor for AGS. Heathcote is the candidate supported by retiring general secretary Mark Serwotka; she received 90 nominations and O'Connor 84.

There is now the very real chance that PCS members can elect a fighting, democratic socialist as general secretary.

If Marion were to be elected, it would be a big gain for PCS members. Marion opposed the premature and dishonest closing down of the national campaign on pay and pensions by the current national leaders (see 'Socialist candidates are on the ballot paper in PCS elections!').

If Marion were general secretary, there would be a serious and escalating plan of action put forward, utilising all the options for action available, with democratic and inclusive discussion throughout the union to seriously re-

build the campaign and momentum squandered by the current leaders.

### Broad Left Network

But Marion would need members to get active and involved to ensure a fighting programme was implemented at all levels of the union.

Marion is supported by the Broad Left Network, which brings together socialists and activists from across different groups, regions and nations, who are committed to building the strength of the union.

Marion is prepared to work with anyone who shares those aims. It is important that a strong left is built. The union will hold National Executive elections in the new year so, whatever the outcome of the general secretary election, it is important that members who want a fighting union get organised.

If Marion were to be elected it would send shockwaves throughout the trade union movement and the Labour Party. A bold fighting lead could give confidence to workers everywhere – look at the impact Mick Lynch had in the summer of last year! Marion would be able to appeal to other trade union leaders for serious coordination of action against the anti-trade union laws, for pay and against cuts.

And a general election is looming. A trade union leadership that will put demands in the interests of members on whoever forms the government, and that is prepared to lead a fight no matter who is in power, would pile pressure on a Starmer-led government.

A leadership that was willing to back candidates who actually support the policies of the union would also put big pressure on Starmer's Labour, and could help the process towards workers building their own political representation. The ballot runs 9 November to 14 December. Get in touch to help with the campaign: [www.bln.org.uk](http://www.bln.org.uk)

## Rosebank field green light underlines need for socialist environmental planning



Photo: NAC/cc

### Lucas Grant, Aberdeen

The Tory UK government's 'regulator' has approved Norwegian state-owned oil company Equinor's North Sea Rosebank field.

The move comes after the approval of plans for over 100 new oil and gas licences in the UK, announced back in July. These new plans have been heavily criticised by opposition parties and climate groups as directly contradicting the Tories claimed dedication to net-zero emissions by 2050 plan.

Tory MP and Minister for Energy Security Claire Coutinho said Rosebank is crucial to "underpin our energy security, grow our economy and help us deliver the transition to cheaper, cleaner energy."

Starmer's Labour party has simply stated that it would honour previous energy contracts given to the private sector despite their promises of an emphasis on clean energy.

Several groups have correctly pointed out that the benefits of the Rosebank field, due to start output in 2026/27, will be limited for Britain due to this oil being processed overseas. Equinor Energy Group, owned in majority by the Norwegian government, will invest \$3.8 billion, alongside Ithaca Energy, to develop the first phase of the field. The field is expected to cost at least \$9.8 billion over its lifetime until 2051.

Both of these companies are already reaping the rewards, with stocks increasing in value significantly since the announcement. At the expense of the climate and any policy dedicated to protecting it, the Tories have continued to benefit the private sector.

Continued policies such as these only go to demonstrate that the wellbeing of all except the international capitalist class are secondary. The Tories are perfectly aware that the continued

development of North Sea oil is disastrous for the environment but are unwilling to allow potential profit to be lost.

Labour offer no concrete solution. Starmer has made it clear that they are no friend of workers but only of business, being too fearful to speak out against capitalism.

The proposals of alternative energy proposed by Labour and other pro-capitalist parties will likely result in large numbers of layoffs for energy workers, despite possessing skills that could be transferred to renewables with some additional training.

No energy strategy proposed by capitalism will ever be sufficient. If there is a corner to cut in order to avoid losses of profit, that corner will be cut.

### socialist planning

The complete restructuring of the economy on socialist lines is essential. Decisions on energy can then be made collectively by all within society and climate change could then truly be tackled.

Socialist Party Scotland calls for a sustainable worker-led, socialist transition to renewable forms of energy that protects jobs, wages and workers livelihoods. In order to meet these ends, oil and gas assets and the entire energy sector, including renewables, must be brought into public ownership under democratic working-class control and management.

It is essential for workers within these industries and all others to unionise and work to transform these unions into true militant forces for the working class.

These unions can then work towards common goals, building a new mass workers' party to truly challenge capitalism and bring about the socialist transformation of society.

## SOCIALISM 2023 - NOVEMBER 25/26

# Capitalism in crisis - Fight for socialism

There is no better place to be on the 25 and 26 November. Socialist Party Scotland members and supporters will be joining hundreds of other working-class fighters and socialist activists in London, coming together to draw on shared experiences and hammer out how best to organise and fight for every possible gain for the working class, and struggle for socialist change worldwide.

Mass protests and strikes, and revolutionary opportunities, are the new normal. As is the increasing polarisation and fracturing of the capitalist world riddled with debt, stagflation and crises. The ruling class see no way out except on the backs of the working class.

That's why we have to be the best prepared and armed with ideas, programme and tactics, to stop them in their tracks.

110 years ago, the Bolshevik Party was formed, it went on to lead the working class to take power in Russia in 1917. 100 years ago, Russian revolutionary Leon Trotsky launched the fight against Stalinist degeneration of the new workers' state by forming the Left Opposition.

40 years ago, Britain's miners began their epic strike against Thatcher's attacks, and Liverpool's socialist city council took shape.

Socialism 2023 will draw on the lessons from all these events, using the tools of Marxism – Marxist economics

Hosted by the Socialist Party [socialistparty.org.uk](http://socialistparty.org.uk)

**SOCIALISM 2023**  
A WEEKEND OF DISCUSSING MARXISM!

There is no better place to be on the 25 and 26 November. Join hundreds of other working-class fighters and socialist activists in London, coming together to draw on shared experiences to discuss how best to organise and fight for every possible gain for the working class, and struggle for socialist change worldwide.

Mass protests and strikes, and revolutionary opportunities, are increasing around the world. As is the crisis of capitalism – with debt, inflation, climate change and war.

The ruling class see no way out except on the backs of the working class. That's why we have to be the best prepared and armed with ideas, programme and tactics, to stop them in their tracks.

The strikes in Britain this year have shown that when we fight back we can win victories. But as long as we have capitalism our living conditions will be under attack. We need fundamental socialist change.

Socialism 2023 will be looking at history to aid our discussions today. 120 years ago, the Bolshevik Party was formed. It went on to lead the working class to take power in Russia in 1917. 100 years ago, Russian revolutionary Leon Trotsky launched the fight against Stalinist degeneration of the new workers' state by forming the Left Opposition.

40 years ago, Britain's miners began their epic strike against Thatcher's attacks, and Liverpool's socialist city council took shape.

Socialism 2023 will draw on the lessons from all these events and more, using the tools of Marxism to prepare how to defeat the Tory anti-union laws, help save the NHS, fight climate change with socialist change, and make sure working-class people get a voice in the next general election.

As well as the annual rally for socialism on the Saturday night, this year will have two Sunday closing rallies to send everyone off back to the fight: one on the struggles of students and young people taking place today, and the other on the fight to build a revolutionary international today.

Don't miss it!

Two closing rallies  
Sunday 3-4pm

Committee for a CNP  
Workers' International  
rally for a socialist world

**Socialist Students Fightback rally**

**CHILE - DEMOCRACY RESTORED**

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**CLIMATE CHANGE**

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**Tories on the way out... Capitalism in crisis What's the alternative? FIGHT FOR A SOCIALIST WORLD!**



## SNP MSP defects to Alba, but neither offers a socialist way forward

Ash Regan, an SNP MSP who contested the SNP leadership after Nicola Sturgeon's resignation, has joined Alba, the party currently led by former first minister Alex Salmond.

Regan's announcement follows the SNP's defeat at the Rutherglen by-election, the defection of an SNP MP to the Tories, falling opinion ratings and the loss of 30,000 members since 2021.

Alba now has two MPs, an MSP and a councillor – all former SNP representatives. Up to now, Alba have not made a breakthrough in elections, although that could change in the future.

Salmond has called for an agreement for one pro-independence candidate to contest each constituency at next year's Westminster election.

Politically, Alba's policies are marginally to the left of the SNP – calling for a doubling of EMA and the Scot-

tish child payment, as well as the creation of a publicly owned Scottish energy company.

But the track record of Alba representatives in local government and Holyrood has been to implement cuts when they were members of SNP ruling administrations.

While Alba attacks the SNP leadership for taking their 'eye of the ball' on independence, they don't have a markedly different policy in overcoming the refusal of Westminster to allow a 'legal' second indyref. Their target is 'active participation from at least 3.5% of the population' to achieve independence.

Mass struggle for self-determination is not on Alba's agenda. Neither is building a movement against big business and capitalism for an independent socialist Scotland.



# LEZ's and Green taxes won't solve the climate crisis

## Public ownership and socialist planning will



David Hawgood / Sign for London ultra low emission zone / CC BY-SA 2.0

**Matt Dobson**

June 2023, saw the roll-out of a Low Emission (LEZ) in Glasgow city centre. Any vehicle entering the LEZ zone now has to meet certain emissions criteria or face a penalty.

Many workers have had to change older vehicles for newer cars – at great expense – or are now unable to travel to the city centre without facing large fines. Without question, the LEZ is penalising the working class and the poorest. Disabled blue badge holders, emergency vehicles, motorbikes and mopeds are currently exempt.

Residents living in the zone have an extra year to comply. This is a key policy of the SNP/Green government, supported by the SNP-led local council. Aberdeen, Edinburgh, and Dundee are to follow suit with their own city centre LEZ's in 2024.

There have been protests of residents, small businesses and trade union organised black cab drivers in Glasgow and the surrounding area against the LEZ. Many of them have been hit economically during a downturn and a cost of living crisis. The Scottish Government's "retrofitting fund" hasn't met the sheer demand of taxi drivers and has been quickly depleted leaving many vulnerable to job losses.

The LEZ is also subject to a judicial review. Glasgow Labour called for the LEZ to be delayed for a year. But Labour in Greater London have suffered electorally in by-elections due to their ULEZ policy.

The council's main argument for introducing the LEZ is to reduce air pollution, a critical issue in Glasgow with the city centre bordered by the M8 motorway. Its estimated that air pollution causes hundreds of deaths a year in a city blighted by social problems and high levels of respiratory illness. In

2022, four areas of the city centre were above excess pollution levels, according to the European standards.

However, Socialist Party Scotland is opposed to what is in effect a "Green Tax" on working people that – like the SNP policies on increasing parking charges, cuts to waste collections and increased cycle lane provision, will not decisively improve the city's air quality and environment.

We argue for decisive action to take place on a local and national level to reduce emissions and combat climate change. That has to be based on fully funded, publicly owned and integrated transport system under the control of the working class.

It makes no sense in Glasgow for Scotrail and the SPT subway to be under state ownership alongside a privatised bus network. All are subject to cuts and fare increases and are in effect in competition with each other while workers and communities pay the cost.

### public ownership

Through socialist public ownership under workers' control, a fully integrated free public transport system in Glasgow and across Scotland would be much more effective in tackling city centre pollution.

Rather than those who are struggling to pay the cost of the climate crisis, thousands of motorists have already been fined in Glasgow since the LEZ was introduced, the rich and big business must pay.

Those parties who have introduced these schemes are also universally silent on the multinational car and van manufacturers who have produced vehicles whose emissions add to the environmental crisis. That's why we call for the nationalisation under workers' control and management of the major producers to allow a rapid transition to

non-polluting cars and vans etc. Glasgow's infrastructure and transport network, geared towards private profit, needs to be overhauled, re-integrated and run by the working class for the city's needs.

The first emission measures were rolled out on the local bus network with a transition to electric vehicles from 2018, but Glasgow's residents have been subsidising this with year-on-year fare increases. The main franchise First Bus have also cut services and have been in dispute with their own staff. If the SNP council really want to cut emissions from road vehicles, why do they oppose calls from campaigners to renationalise the bus network? This would allow a reduction in fares rather than private profiteering?

### international examples

The SNP/ Green coalition is following the example of capitalist governments and Green parties in power across the European Union who, rather than taking on the biggest polluters, force workers to pay through carbon and green taxes.

In the Republic of Ireland, the Fine Gael, Fianna Fail, Green coalition has a range of environmental taxes. According to Social Justice Ireland, of the 4.8 billion Euros collected by the state from such taxes it was ordinary households who were the highest contributors, rather than big business.

In the midst of a cost-of-living crisis, there are forthcoming yearly increases in Ireland's Carbon Tax, fuel costs for home heating and taxes on transport fuels.

These rises outstrip cuts in public transport fares and fuel allowances. Despite a range of environmental taxes, including the hated Bin Tax, which saw a mass movement against it in the early

2000s, Ireland's carbon emissions are still increasing.

The Republic of Ireland's economy is dominated by multinationals profiteering while the social crisis, particularly in housing, continues to escalate.

Green Parties are now also in capitalist coalition governments in Austria, Belgium, Finland, Germany and Luxembourg. Often they pick up a radical youth vote and those who reject the pro-big business record of the main parties, as well as being concerned about the climate crisis.

In power, however, they quickly inflict the cost of the environmental crisis on their own voters and the working class with higher taxes and austerity rather than threatening the interests of big business.

This has been seen in Germany as youth protests have taken place against the government policy of allowing mining projects to go ahead and using the riot police against protestors. In Austria the Greens argued for the use of coal burning when Russian gas wasn't available due to the geopolitical situation.

Even the European Commission October Energy report shows that carbon emissions, even with many member state governments implementing Green Taxes, are not falling fast enough to meet the 2030 target and need to treble the rate of decrease.

The bosses EU, who oppose nationalisation and public ownership, is incapable of solving rising emissions. The SNP/ Green government, who want to rejoin the EU and the single market, merely copycat these policies.

Socialist Party Scotland fights for socialist nationalisation of the main levers of the economy, including the biggest polluters, to transition away from carbon-based production and fossil fuels, guaranteeing jobs, higher wages and better conditions for workers and communities.

## RMT national rail members renew strike mandate



By a Midlands RMT member

RMT members at 14 Train Operating Companies (TOCs) have returned a fourth consecutive 'yes' vote to continue the battle in defence of our jobs, pay and conditions.

Despite the dispute rumbling on for nearly eighteen months, including 25 days of strike action, the resolve of most members to fight on remains.

Back in June 2022, along with the posties, we were the first out of the starting blocks on a national scale as employers up and down the country began to try and claw back long-held terms and conditions while offering below-inflation pay rises.

But while some national disputes have been settled, rail workers in the RMT along with those in ASLEF are continuing the fight.

It is clear to us all that the TOC bosses are backed up to the hilt by the Tory government. So far they have conceded a little by increasing the pay offer and removing the immediate threat of 'driver-only operation'.

The question now is what to do with our newly refreshed strike mandate. At the beginning of the dispute we took action comprising several days across a week. That has unfortunately diminished over time to only one or two days in any week, sometimes weeks or months apart.

### renewed campaign

To push the dispute back up the agenda, a renewed campaign must be launched with pressure to coordinate action with our sister unions both on and off the railway. The leadership also needs to launch a campaign inside the union to raise the sights of the members and reps, to ensure the membership is on board and ready to take the necessary action.

We cannot simply wait for Starmer's Labour to rescue us, particularly while the Labour leadership refuses to commit to taking the Tories' £2 billion railway cuts off the table.

As RMT members agreed at this year's AGM, in a motion supporting Jeremy Corbyn standing in the general election, even if that means independently of Labour: "Workers need political representation that supports their action against the cost-of-living squeeze, and stands for policies such as re-nationalisation, opposition to cuts, and for the repeal of the Tory anti-union laws."



# President Sisi weakened as Gaza war stirs Egyptian masses



Egypt-Israel border. Photo: Idobi/CC

David Johnson

Just five days after Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi had launched his election campaign for a third term of office, war erupted across the border. With 2.3million Palestinians in Gaza, this dramatically escalates the pressures he already faced – an economy in dire straits and developing opposition, within both capitalist and working classes.

Egyptian and Israeli governments have co-operated since 1979 in harsh control of the Gaza border. For many years, movement of goods and people through Egypt's Rafah crossing have been partially or completely blocked.

Sisi seized power in 2013, ousting Muslim Brotherhood (MB) President Mohammed Morsi, killing hundreds of MB members and imprisoning thousands as “terrorists”. Hamas had emerged from the MB in the 1980s, so Sisi has always feared it could become a source of opposition to his regime. According to US Middle East analyst Steven Cook, Egypt urged Israel to destroy Hamas in 2014. “They were telling the Israelis to kick down every door in Gaza — to finish them off,” he said.

Now Sisi is determined to stop Palestinians moving to Sinai to escape the bombs and siege, where they could further destabilise an area where there have previously been clashes between an Isis faction and the army. He also fears a financial drain on the weakened economy. A senior Egyptian official was reported telling a European counterpart: “You want us to take one million people? Well, I am going to send them to Europe. You care about human rights so much — well you take them.” (Financial Times (London) 17.10.23)

\$1.3billion US military aid a year helps sustain Egypt's armed forces.

Lack of democracy has never concerned the US ruling class, for whom the Egyptian government is a key stabilising factor in the region. Sisi needs senior military officers' backing and they want to continue receiving this huge subsidy.

## weak economy

The discovery of natural gas in the Eastern Mediterranean increased co-operation between Egyptian and Israeli governments. Israel exports gas to Egypt where Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) is produced, earning dollars the debt-ridden economy desperately needs.

This year's intense summer heat wave raised domestic demand for gas (used to generate electricity for cooling) leaving none for export. Even so, there were frequent power cuts.

The first LNG cargo for three months departed on 5th October. Three more ships were due to sail this month, but two days later Chevron shut down the Tamar gas platform, under 50km from Gaza, on Israeli government instruction. This is costing the Egyptian economy hundreds of millions of dollars, with companies already struggling to pay for imports due to a dollar shortage.

Life has got much harder for almost all Egyptians this year. The Egyptian pound has lost half its value after three devaluations since early 2022. Food prices were up 72% annually in August, with overall inflation a record 39.7%. Interest rates have more than doubled since early 2022 to 19.75%, but inflation means real rates are negative, so the government cannot borrow enough to pay its debts.

Two thirds of the population rely on subsidised bread, costing \$2.9billion

last year, 2.6% of government spending. Egypt only grows half its grain, with yields falling due to climate change and water shortage. The Russia-Ukraine war had already increased global prices.

Sisi is under pressure from the International Monetary Fund to reduce public spending, including subsidies on basic foods. 56% of public spending is on loan repayments and interest charges, so the banks get their money while education, health and other basic services are squeezed.

Despite poor and working class families missing meals, Sisi arrogantly told them, “Don't you Egyptians dare say you would rather eat than build and progress. If the price of the nation's progress and prosperity is hunger and thirst, then let us not eat or drink.” He also told young people they could earn “a respectable income” by donating blood every week.

The IMF is withholding the next instalment of the \$3billion bail-out agreed last December, demanding the currency floats, meaning a further devaluation adding to the cost of imports. They also want faster privatisation. \$1.9billion of companies were privatised in the first six months of this year, with another \$5billion due to be sold off by June 2024. But armed forces-owned companies have not been sold. Egyptian and foreign capitalists want to stop their tax and business advantages, but they provide high incomes to many retired senior officers.

## early election

The presidential election, due in early 2024, has been brought forward to December 10-12. Sisi hoped this will prevent credible alternative candidates emerging before another devaluation

and further public spending cuts. He got the constitution changed so he could theoretically remain president until 2030.

Sisi announced his candidature on October 2nd. Large support rallies were held in many cities, reported to include government workers instructed to attend, as well as others attracted by free entertainment. But in Marsa Matrouh, a Mediterranean city of 230,000, the rally turned into a rare protest as hundreds tore down pro-Sisi banners and placards, “The people want the fall of the regime” was chanted, as during the 2011 uprising which brought down President Hosni Mubarak.

When Sisi last stood for election in

2018 he won 97% of the sham vote by ensuring there was only one other candidate – who supported him anyway! But this year Ahmed Al-Tantawy from al-Karama (Dignity), a party from a left-wing Nasserist tradition, has quickly gained support. One supporter in Alexandria said, “We are dreaming on a grand scale, hoping for transformative change and the cessation of oppression that has systematically impoverished the Egyptian people for the benefit of a select few.”

With two million followers on Facebook Tantawy should have been well placed to get the 25,000 signatures needed to become a candidate. But, with widespread reports of intimidation, arrests and obstruction of those trying to sign the official documents, he failed to make the candidates' list.

Sisi must have thought his road to re-election was clear but now the war on Gaza has thrown everything into great instability. His past friendly meetings with Netanyahu and US presidents and antagonism to Hamas is going to increase pressure on him in coming days and weeks. There is massive public sympathy for Palestinians.

During the second Intifada there were strikes and large protests by Egyptian workers and students in 2000 and 2002 in solidarity with the Palestinians that quickly became anti-Mubarak. Troops were used to crush the protests but the movement towards the 2011 uprising had begun.

A new upsurge of mass protests and demonstrations, initiated by the Israeli state attacks on Gaza, cannot be ruled out, despite the Egyptian state repression.

Sisi will win the election in December, but the likelihood of him surviving as president to 2030 looks slim. He will be one of many leaders in the region to fall as a result of unending economic crisis and renewed horror of war.

Only Egypt's working class can clear a way forward by building its own independent organisations and arming them with a socialist programme to use its wealth and resources for the benefit of all.

Nationalisation under democratic workers' control of all big companies, planning their resources to meet the needs of all and full democratic rights would inspire a movement for a socialist federation of the Middle East and North Africa.

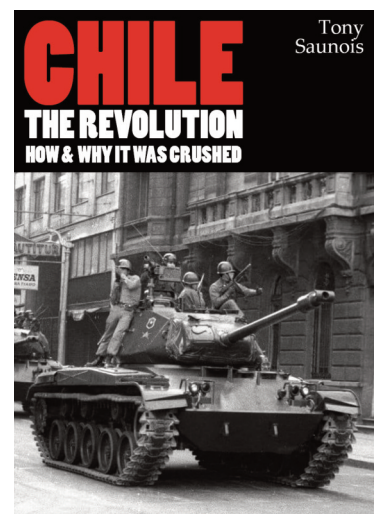
## New book on the 1970-73 Chilean revolution

Fifty years since it was crushed, the Chilean revolution of 1970-73 remains a reference point, not only in Chile, but internationally, for both the working class and its organisations and the capitalist classes.

The working class and radical youth need to be armed with an understanding of the Chilean revolution, so that in the future, when the working class is again within reaching distance of a successful socialist revolution, it succeeds in conquering power and transforming society.

The Committee for a Workers' International (CWI) is publishing a new book to bring the lessons of the Chilean revolution, and its crushing, to the new generation of working class and young activists.

Written by Tony Saunois, CWI secretary, from 1984 Tony spent a number of years working in the



underground opposition to the Pinochet dictatorship within Chile.

To order a copy of the book, get in touch with Socialist Party Scotland.

Email us at  
info@socialistpartyscotland.org.uk



# Student housing nightmare Organise with Socialist Students



**Daniel Lauchlan**, a member of University West of Scotland Socialist Students, shines a light on the increasing housing crisis for students

The issue of student accommodation across the United Kingdom is causing anger. As socialists, we fight for ensuring fair and affordable housing for all.

In recent times, there has been a notable increase in the expenses associated with student accommodation, so presenting a substantial obstacle to accessing education for a considerable number of students.

The aforementioned matter highlights the wider housing dilemma in the United Kingdom, illustrating the influence of market-oriented policies on housing accessibility which the Tories, SNP and Labour are responsible for, particularly for students hailing from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds.

The phenomenon of commercialising student accommodation has resulted in a significant increase in rental prices, hence placing students under considerable financial burden and indebtedness.

The National Union of Students (NUS) reports that there was a notable increase of 26% in the rental prices of purpose-built student accommodation in the United Kingdom during the period from 2014 to 2019. At UWS Paisley Halls are now £118 a week.

The aforementioned surge significantly surpasses the rate of expansion in maintenance loans, so placing students in a predicament where they encounter difficulties in meeting their fundamental living expenses.

Furthermore, the dependence on the commercial sector for student accommodation has led to varying standards and exploitative practises.

Private landlords, who are primarily motivated by financial gain, may exhibit a tendency to disregard essential maintenance tasks or offer subpar living circumstances.

These aforementioned concerns intensify disparities and have a detrimental effect on students' capacity to concentrate on their academic pursuits.

The resolution can be found in completely restructuring the approach surrounding student housing.

This entails a transition from profit-oriented approaches to a framework that places a higher emphasis on the well-being of students. This could entail a rise in public funding for university-provided housing, implementation of rent control measures, and the establishment of laws that guarantee adequate and affordable housing for all individuals.

**Socialist Students says:**

- **Every student has the right to decent affordable housing**
- **Bring accommodation back into public ownership**
- **We need rent controls set by student and campus trade unions**
- **We demand living grants and free education scrap student debt**

## Fight for the socialist change we need

**Adam Powell-Davies**  
Socialist Students organiser

Socialist Students says that higher education must be fully funded by the government, which includes universities having the necessary resources to build and maintain good-quality housing for all who want it.

This also means scrapping fees, cancelling student debt, and replacing maintenance loans with grants. Genuine living grants would mean students could afford their rent and bills, with money left over for food, transport, socialising, etc. A decent standard of living, without having to work on top of our full-time studies.

To meet the needs of students and the local community, Socialist Students calls for universities to be run under the democratic control of staff and stu-

dents. As a step in this direction, we call for rent controls in all student accommodation, to be decided by democratically elected committees, including trade unions, staff and students.

And it's not just students who need a decent home. Everyone deserves a warm and comfortable place to live. That's why Socialist Students calls for a mass building programme of eco-friendly, good-quality and affordable council homes.

All of these demands require a massive fight to be won. It would mean taking the wealth and resources out of the hands of big business, and harnessing them in the interests of the majority.

It would require a mass workers' party, armed with a socialist programme, which fights to take the banks, monopolies, and major industries into democratic public ownership, under workers' control and management.

## whatwestandfor



Capitalism is an ailing, crisis-ridden system based on the exploitation of the majority of the world's population by a small, super-rich elite who own most of the wealth and the means of producing it. This way of organising society, in which the pursuit of profit comes before everything else, causes poverty, inequality, environmental destruction, wars and oppression across the globe. Socialist Party Scotland organises working-class people to fight against the attacks from this rotten system on our lives and livelihoods, and for a socialist alternative: a society which takes the wealth out of the hands of the super-rich and is democratically run by working-class people to meet the needs of all not the profits of a few.

Building fighting democratic trade unions in the workplaces and a new mass workers' party is a vital part of the struggle to change society along socialist lines. Because capitalism is a world system, the struggle for socialism must also be international. Socialist Party Scotland 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 age exemptions. For automatic increases in wages, including the minimum wage, in line with price rises or average earnings, 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 and holiday rights from day one of employment. End bosses' 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.
- Replace universal credit with living benefits. For benefits and pensions that cover the cost of living and automatic increases in line with prices rises.
- For trade unions independent of the capitalist state, with members having democratic control over their own policies, constitutions and democratic procedures.
- Reject partnership working with the bosses and employers. 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.

### public services

- A massive expansion of public services including the NHS and council services. Reverse all the cuts, kick out the privateers. End all PFI/PPP/NPD schemes. Bring private and third sector social care into public ownership. Childcare facilities should be publicly owned under democratic control, in order to provide free, high-quality services for all who need them. Expand services for all women suffering violence.
- For local councillors who are committed to opposing austerity and all cuts to local services, jobs, pay and conditions.
- For a socialist NHS to provide for everyone's health needs – free at the point of use and under democratic control. Kick out the private companies! Nationalise the pharmaceutical industry under democratic workers' control and management.
- Nationalise privatised utilities – including rail, mail, water, telecoms and power – under democratic workers' control and management.
- Free, publicly funded and run, good-quality education, available to all at any age. Abolish university tuition fees for all and write off student debt, end marketisation, and introduce a living grant. Schools to be under the democratic control of councils, school staff and parents.
- The right to quality, affordable homes for all. For the mass building of genuinely affordable, high-quality, carbon-neutral council housing. For rent controls that cap the level of rent. Fair rent decisions should be made by elected bodies of tenants, housing workers and representatives of trade unions. For cheap low-interest mortgages for home buyers.

### environment

- Prioritising major research and investment into replacing fossil fuels and nuclear power with renewable energy and ending the problems of early obsolescence and unrecycled waste.
- For a massive programme of job creation in publicly owned renewable energy that would create tens of thousands of jobs in Scotland.
- Nationalise the energy sector, under democratic workers' control and management, with compensation paid only on the basis of proven need, in order to carry out a socialist economic plan to switch to clean, green energy. Guaranteed jobs and no loss of pay or conditions for all workers moving over from fossil fuel production.
- A democratically planned, free to use, publicly owned transport system, as part of an overall plan against environmental pollution. Reverse all cuts to transport, including Scotrail. Modernise and expand rail, bus and ferry services

### democratic rights

- For the right of nations to self-determination. Build a mass working class movement to win indyref2. For an independent socialist Scotland and for a

socialist Wales, both part of a voluntary socialist confederation of Scotland, Wales, England, and Ireland.

- End discrimination on the grounds of race, gender, disability, sexuality, age, and all other forms of prejudice.
- Repeal the anti-trade union laws and all others that trample over civil liberties. For the right to protest! 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 a woman's right to choose when and whether to have children.
- For the right to asylum. Housing and support services to be fully resourced 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.
- 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 allocated in proportion to their votes at elections.
- For a new mass workers' party, based on the trade unions, and drawing together workers, young people and activists from workplace, community, environmental, anti-racist and anti-cuts campaigns, to provide a fighting, socialist political alternative to the pro-big business parties.

### socialism and internationalism

- No to imperialist wars and occupations! Scrap Trident. End the colossal spending on arms. Invest in socially useful production with guaranteed jobs for workers transferring over from the arms industry.
- 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 Scottish and British economy, and run them under democratic working-class control and management. Compensation to be paid only on the basis of proven need.
- A democratic socialist plan of production based on the interests of the overwhelming majority of people, and in a way that safeguards the environment.
- No to the EU bosses' club. Organise a campaign with European socialists and workers' organisations to tear up the EU pro-capitalist rules. For a real collaboration of the peoples of Europe on a socialist basis as a step towards a socialist world.

**JOIN SOCIALIST  
PARTY  
SCOTLAND**





# UNISON SCHOOL STRIKES

# WE'RE STRIKING

# FOR PAY JUSTICE



**Jim McFarlane**  
Dundee City UNISON secretary

Strike action by UNISON members in schools and co-located nurseries will start on 1st November in Glasgow, East Renfrewshire, Renfrewshire and Inverclyde.

This rolling action across 24 council areas in November follows on from the widely supported 3 days of strike action in September. Legal notices have now been served on 8 councils so far with more to follow soon.

The 3-day strike action in September, along with demonstrations, protests and picket lines at schools the length and breadth of Scotland, was a mass show of anger at year on year real terms pay cuts.

It also illustrated the pent up anger of a section of the council workforce over the effects of the chronic underfunding of council services that has re-

sulted in staff shortages, lack of resources as well as low pay.

The lead taken by UNISON members gives a glimpse of what can be achieved when workers take determined strike action.

Thousands of people have joined a trade union. Just as importantly, hundreds are stepping up to become workplace representatives. This was also the first taste of strike action for many of those schools and nursery workers, including many young workers.

Their determination, imagination and enthusiasm on the picket lines and protests should be a warning to the employers and governments that they have had enough of being taken for granted and just expected to put up further cuts in the living standards.

It should also be taken as a clear signal to trade union leaders and negotiators they will not just accept any pay deal just for the sake of ending the dis-

pute. These workers are up for the fight, that means they need to be supported by all trade unionists.

The widely circulated media stories emanating from CoSLA, that they are seriously considering imposing this pay deal without agreement has to be met with escalating the planned strike action.

Taking more than one day a week in different areas should be organised as soon as possible.

Those other areas which didn't quite meet the Tory set ballot turnout threshold should be re-balloted for action immediately. All sections of the council workforce should be preparing to join the strike action if needed.

Imposing this pay deal just before Christmas would be a cynical ploy by the employers straight out of an anti-trade union playbook. Councils and the Scottish Government like to proclaim they are signed up to the Fair Work

Agenda, empty words that would be meaningless if that is the path that they take.

UNISON members in local government are tired of the argument that there is no more money for a decent pay rise. We all know that governments and employers can find money and resources when there is the political will to do so.

## **budget cuts**

Local councils of every political persuasion have meekly administered budget cuts passed down to them from both the Scottish and UK governments.

The SNP-led Scottish Government has treated local government with disdain for years. Further evidenced by announcing a freeze in Council Tax next year without even consulting with CoSLA (the Scottish Council employers).

Tens of thousands of jobs have been lost in local councils, services have not just been cut to the bone, but in many areas vital council services no longer exist. Millions have been cut from council budgets on an annual basis.

Council workers along with the wider working class need a political party that is on their side and fighting to defend jobs and services.

Time and time again, SNP, Labour and Green councillors and MSPs have failed to deliver for trade unionists.

The working class learns lessons very quickly when taking action. More will draw the conclusion that none of these existing political parties deserve their support at the ballot box.

Debates within the trade union movement on the need for a new party for socialists and trade unionists is needed. More than that, the trade unions must take the necessary steps to build one.