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TORIES OUT!



This rotten Tory government lurches from one crisis to the next and is heading for a huge defeat in the general election later this year.

The recent budget has done nothing to revive a party that was already at rock bottom. There is open talk, and plotting, of a Tory challenge to Sunak if the local elections in May are as bad as seems likely.

A change of leader will do nothing to improve Tory chances in an election.

Whenever the election is, the defeat of the Tories seems inevitable. Former Tory chair Lee Anderson's decision to join Reform UK may not be the last defection from the sinking ship.

Polling shows that for the ninth month in a row, most of us believe things are getting worse. That belief is based on experience.

The housing, cost-of-living and public services crises roll on – and Chancellor Hunt's national insurance cut solves nothing.

Despite the inflation rate dropping to its lowest level for three years, food and fuel bills remain higher than they were pre-pandemic. Nearly one-in-three of the poorest fifth of households skipped meals in recent months.

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BUT WE NEED A PARTY TO FIGHT FOR THE WORKING CLASS

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Tories heading for defeat but Starmer won't deliver for workers



Keir Starmer. Photo: public domain. Opposite: Rachel Reeves. Photo: Flickr/CC



What we think

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This will be the first parliament in modern history that leaves living standards behind where it started. Inflation has been falling but remains a fact that prices are still rising beyond the means of the majority of working-class households.

Rocketing interest rates have meant mortgages and rents have spiralled. Energy costs have driven millions into fuel poverty.

While the defeat of this rotten gov-

ernment will be welcomed by millions, the enthusiasm for the alternative, Keir Starmer's Labour, is negligible.

And no wonder – given the neo-Blairites control of the party and its absolute commitment to capitalism, spending restraint and privatisation.

A key reason why Starmer is rowing back on even his meagre spending promises is that his room to manoeuvre will be extremely limited. The UK economy is mired in stagnation.

The recent study by Public First based on a range of data on the economy and public attitudes to the political leaders found that the economic position facing British capitalism is substantially worse than in 1997 when Blair was elected as Labour prime minister after 18 years of Tory governments. "The data shows that on almost every economic metric the country is doing worse now than it was in 1997."

The economy grew 4.9% in 1997, following nearly five years where it did not shrink in a single quarter. This year, the Office for Budget Responsibility fore-



While the defeat of this rotten government will be welcomed by millions, the enthusiasm for the alternative, Keir Starmer's Labour, is negligible.

casts it will grow just 0.6%. Wage growth had been strong for years before the 1997 election and was 2.6% in the election year. This year, the OBR thinks it will be just 0.1%. This had a knock-on effect on the government's finances. In 1997, public sector net debt was 37.5% of gross domestic product. It is now over 90%."

Since 1997 there has been the Great Recession of 2007-09, the Covid pandemic and the inflationary spiral that followed it which has devastated living standards of millions of workers. As a result class conflict has sharpened con-

siderably, illustrated by the recent strike wave which saw the highest number of strike days in three decades.

class polarisation

Class polarisation has grown enormously since Blair was elected and no wonder then that the mood in society is entirely different from 1997.

Polls show there are 60% more people today who strongly agree that there is "one law for the rich and one for the poor" than there were in 1997. Blair, who became a pariah after the 2003 Iraq war, was about 60% more popular in 1997 than Starmer is now.

These factors all points to an eruption of struggle under a Labour government at a certain stage and a searching for a political alternative under a Starmer government.

It was no accident that shadow chancellor Rachel Reeves's Thatcherite speech to the city of London, economists and financiers doubled

down on not making spending commitments unless the economy grew under Labour.

She told the BBC that "we would not be able to do things as quickly as we wanted." And in her speech she emphasised that "the solution lies in wide-ranging supply-side reform, to drive investment, remove the barriers constraining our productive capacity." It was indeed drawing on the phrase book of Thatcher and Blair.

That a Starmer-led government will be Blairism without money is becoming clearer by the day.

The SNP crisis - which we analyse in this issue of the Socialist - is also rooted in their commitment to capitalism and the rule of the market. The nationalists are heading for a loss of many of their MPs in the general election as their support in working-class communities has been significantly eroded.

workers' alternative

For that reason it is more important than ever that a workers' list of candidates are prepared to stand in the general election to offer socialist solutions to the capitalist crisis.

There is enormous anger towards Starmer over Gaza, and that will be multiplied ten-fold when he comes to power.

The Rochdale by-election showed the potential for a workers' voice to be built.

The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) is pulling together anti-war, trade unionist, student, and socialist candidates, for the general election. The TUSC basic programme offers a means to unite on a clear class basis – opposition to warmongers and austerity cutters.

After the election the drive towards the building on a new workers' party will grow significantly. The opportunity for debate in the trade unions on this issue will accelerate.

Even steps towards a new party will provide a forum for debate, independent of the defenders of capitalism and their racist, divisive rhetoric.

Within that, Socialist Party Scotland will be fighting for democratic organisation. And within that, for a socialist programme which will be necessary to take the working class forward in the fight to take power from the capitalists and transform society.

We are confident that ever-growing numbers will be won to this, in the battle for ideas that will inevitably be part of the struggles ahead.

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SOCIALIST WORLD
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Gove, Prevent and attacks on the right to protest

JUST WHO ARE THE EXTREMISTS?



Michael Gove - photo: Richard Townshend/CC

Matt Dobson

Tory levelling up secretary Micheal Gove made a brazen attack on democratic rights and civil liberties in the house of commons recently.

Groups labelled as 'extremist', according to Gove, will be barred from meeting ministers, helping to shape public policy or seeking public funds. It is not a ban on organisations, not does it have any legal standing. But it does pose the question – who are the extremists?

Gove mentioned some far-right groups like Patriotic Alternative, he also named the Muslim Association of

Britain (a UK branch of the right-wing, pro-capitalist Muslim Brotherhood) and Cage (a advocate group which has campaigned for Muslims wrongly and illegally detained during the war on terror) as well as pro-Palestinian groups.

The massive Gaza demonstrations in London, that the Tories were unable to force the Met Police to ban, cost of job of a Cabinet minister. Many on those demos would argue that Sunak's support for the Israeli government's slaughter of Palestinians in Gaza is a clear example of 'extremism'.

The Tories new definition of extremism is "the promotion or advancement of an ideology based on violence, ha-

tried or intolerance, that aims to: (1) negate or destroy the fundamental rights and freedoms of others; or (2) undermine, overturn or replace the UK's system of liberal parliamentary democracy and democratic rights; or intentionally create a permissive environment for others to achieve the results in (1) or (2)."

Is Sunak's attack on the right to strike under the anti-union minimum service legislation not aimed at 'destroying the fundamental rights and freedoms' of millions of workers to take strike action? It that not a definition of extreme

heading for defeat

This Tory nonsense will not prevent their defeat at a general election later this year. It does however come on the back of a recent document from Prevent, the official scheme to stop radicalisation, that mentions believing in socialism, communism and anti-fascism in a list of potential signs of ideologies leading to terrorism.

The document is part of online Prevent awareness training for those covered by the duty to inform if they suspect radicalisation. That includes teachers and youth workers.

Originally the Prevent strategy was the brainchild of New Labour who trailed it in 2006. The Tory government under Cameron then made a cornerstone of the Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015. Despite devolved government and powers over policing, Police Scotland and the SNP/ Green government cooperate with it, and this must end.

Prevent uses hypocritical and divisive stereotyping, particularly towards Muslims. But what is to stop say a mass strike movement or protests to demand the right to indyref 2 in the future from falling foul of the Prevent guidelines?

Growing support for socialism reflects mass anger at the horrors of capitalism. From climate disaster to racism, war and economic crisis.

Socialist Party Scotland and Young Socialists actively oppose individual terrorism and indiscriminate attacks on civilians. Marxism has always counterposed mass working-class struggle as the most effective way of fighting for self-determination and socialism

rather than the actions of armed groups or individuals carrying out attacks.

The same cannot be said of the Tories and the British ruling class who to suit their interests have used brutal violence and terror to achieve their class objectives throughout history.

Bans by the capitalist state on ideas and even organisations that socialists actively oppose, including fascist and racist and other right wing organisations, will only fuel support for their ideas.

Socialists seek democratically to win authority for our ideas and win the majority for socialist transformation of society by taking up on the streets, workplaces, communities and at the ballot box the issues that working class and young people face.

Mass action by workers and youth will defeat those reactionary ideas. Certainly not Tory politicians responsible for the horrendous conditions facing working class communities today.

fuel

The Tories and New Labour created the conditions that fuel reactionary right wing political Islam and jihadist groups by occupying Afghanistan and Iraq and backing Israel's onslaught on the Palestinians. These actions have increased the likelihood of a terror attack.

Sunak made his agenda clear when he reacted with accusations of extremism when the voters of Rochdale had the temerity to elect George Galloway as MP by standing as an anti-war candidate.

Attacks on democratic rights by the ruling class cannot be treated as a single issue but has to be linked with the struggle against austerity and the capitalist cost of living crisis.

Most of all we need a new mass workers' party based on the trade unions that can draw mass support from those disenfranchised over social conditions, Palestine, the climate and many other issues.

A socialist alternative is needed. Capitalism is increasingly authoritarian and hell-bent on restricting democratic rights for the many who want to speak out against the horrors of this system.

Temperatures rising - fight for socialism



Lewis Rees

In recent months, global temperatures have surged, marking the hottest period in recorded history with an alarming average increase of 1.22°C from pre-industrial levels. February was the hottest, the same for each of the previous nine months!

The number of climate-induced refugees has surpassed those displaced by escalating conflicts and wars worldwide. A poignant example is the 2022 flood in Pakistan, displacing 8 million and affecting the lives of 33 million people.

Young people are calling out for change, angry at a system that will rob us of our future. While climate change campaign groups often call for a radical societal transformation and immediate action, there remains a gap in providing the comprehensive socialist programme needed to combat these issues.

Ed Brower, US energy editor of the Financial Times, boldly asserts that "Capitalism won't deliver the energy transition fast enough." Without a distinct and incisive critique of the roots of climate change – seeing it as a product of capitalism's production for profit based on competing nations, parties and groups simply claiming to be 'green' can't offer a clear way out.

We will need a socialist solution to the climate catastrophe and a fight for a planned socialist transition, that prioritises the needs and concerns of the majority over a select few. This would have to be democratically planned by the working class, based on nationalisation of the polluting industries, the banks and big business to prevent climate catastrophe without workers and the poor having to pay for it.

Windfall tax con: Demand socialist nationalisation of big energy

Philip Stott

The recent Tory budget saw chancellor Jeremy Hunt announce a 12-month extension to the windfall tax on energy companies. The Energy Profits Levy (EPL) currently sits at 35% on top of the 40% corporation tax the companies are supposed to pay.

All the main capitalist parties have been jockeying for position on the issue and some are split on it. The Scottish Tory leader Douglas Ross has said he cannot support the extension of the EPL until 2029. Ross has been acting as a mouthpiece for big energy by claiming more tax equals job losses. He was of course silent when in the last few years tens of thousands of workers have been made redundant as oil bosses slashed costs to boost profits.

The Tories are desperate to exploit fears over jobs in the north east as part of his efforts to cling on to Tory seats in

Scotland ahead of the general election.

The SNP opposed the tax extension as well for the same reasons as Ross; that it would hit jobs, underlining the nationalist leadership's love affair with profiteering capitalism. Starmer's Labour support the tax and have argued for an increase in the EPL from the current 35% to 38%. All parties support reducing the tax levy when and if energy prices fall.

The backdrop to the windfall tax, introduced by Rishi Sunak in 2022 when he was chancellor, was the rocketing energy prices and therefore profits of the big energy companies. It followed the inflationary spiral, the invasion of Ukraine and a rise in demand for energy following the Covid pandemic.

Bottom line is the energy companies have accumulated enormous profits. So much so that even the Tories could not pass up an opportunity to levy increased taxes on the oil and gas giants. In practice, there are so many loop-

holes in the tax regime for the energy companies that they never actually have to pay the headline rates at all.

The windfall tax was expected to raise £5 billion in the first year it was implemented in 2022/23. Barley half of that, £2.6 billion, was actually paid.

According to a BBC report: "oil and gas firms have been able to reduce the amount of tax they pay by factoring in losses or spending on things like decommissioning North Sea platforms."

negative tax

As a result BP and Shell have paid almost no UK tax in recent years. Both firms received more money back from the UK government than they paid every year from 2015 to 2020 (except Shell in 2017). Between 2015 and 2021, Shell paid a negative tax bill of -£685m. For BP it was -£107m. BP made £41 billion in global profits in the two years



Photo: Gary Bembridge/CC

2022 and 2023. Shell's were £62 billion over the same period.

It was only the introduction of the windfall tax that has seen the oil and gas multinationals have to start paying some tax in the UK. But again this can be off-set by a range of loopholes. BBC

analysis reported: "Companies are offered big tax benefits if they invest in oil and gas extraction. For every £100 they invest they can claim back £91.40 in tax relief. And if they spend £100 decarbonising the way they extract oil and gas they can claim up to £109.25 in tax benefits."

The controversial Rosebank development north west of Shetland has seen the £3.1bn investment by the Norwegian state-owned company and Ithaca qualify for £2.9bn in tax relief. In other words, it's a state funded subsidy for big business.

Amidst an ever-growing climate emergency nothing less than the full-scale nationalisation of the energy sector under workers' control and management will be able to deliver the urgent investment in renewable alternatives that are essential.

A socialist-led transition away from fossil fuels would also guarantee job security for workers. The current rigged system is designed to ensure the global energy giants continue to make billions while workers, communities and the environment pay the price.

Violence in schools is a trade union issue



Teachers and support staff have taken strike action on pay

Jim Halfpenny

EIS joint secretary
West Dunbartonshire

A major national survey of Scotland's schools published by the teachers' trade union EIS, indicated that 83% report incidents of violence and aggression every week.

72% of EIS school branches indicated that incidences of violence and aggression have grown over the past four years, compared to levels prior to the Covid pandemic.

Poor pupil behaviour, including violence and the threat of violence, is having a detrimental impact on the learning experience of all pupils in our schools.

This is against a backdrop of large class sizes, overworked teachers, rising levels of additional support needs and cuts to specialist provision."

A lack of investment in education and support for young people, coupled with societal issues such as poverty, the influence of social media, mental ill-health and the continuing aftermath of the pandemic, have created an environment where too many young people feel alienated, isolated and distressed.

For a growing minority of young people, this is increasingly manifesting itself in unruly, disruptive or violent behaviour, including during the school day and aimed at staff and other pupils."

1 in 3 school pupils has an identified additional support need.

One in ten children aged five to 16 has a clinically diagnosable mental illness.

Teachers working with children with additional support needs, including autism spectrum disorders, report that their daily work can be very rewarding, but it is also difficult and stressful, and they can experience serious violence and disruption from pupils, including being bitten, spat on, scratched, slapped and kicked. Many report that they don't feel safe at work.

Despite the fact that Councils has a legal duty to protect the health and safety of its employees and pupils in a school, staff have come to see this type of violent behaviour as the norm, leaving them exasperated and demoralised by the failure to protect them from serious harm.

This increase in violent behaviour is particularly marked among the youngest children in primary and early years.

Staff often feel unsupported when reporting these issues of violence and are made to feel as if they are to blame when things go wrong.

What we know is that figures issued

by Councils and the Scottish Government are a significant under representation of incidents of violence and aggression in our schools.

What we have now is a culture of resignation by staff to much of this violence and aggression, in particular swearing which appears to be endemic.

Undoubtedly, the violence of poverty plays a significant part in a child's response to perceived problems inside and outside of school.

That poverty visits us in the classroom every day and blights the educational chances of these children. But that poverty can overwhelm and break a family.

Domestic violence can be a daily experience for many children. Violence that is, more often than not, perpetrated upon women in a household. Many children learn to treat women with disrespect and contempt. This in turn can often be reflected in a child's violent and aggressive attitude towards female teachers.

Staff often find themselves in a state of mental and physical exhaustion caused by excessive and prolonged workload.

They feel overwhelmed, emotionally drained, unable to meet constant and unrealistic demands, leaving them demoralised and disconnected, leading to greater stress and ill health.

Working many extra hours unpaid, staff clearly feel undervalued.

The failure to tackle increasingly violent behaviour in the classroom and aggressive and threatening responses from some parents has had a significant impact on staff's feelings of well-being.

Schools and nurseries are seriously underfunded for resources to help those many children with additional support needs. Staff are left to cope in situations that cause great stress and anxiety leading to ill health and absence.

The survey found that around two thirds of EIS members exhibited poor wellbeing within their job and often used their own money to buy food, clothing, school equipment, or pay for pupils that they teach so they don't go without.

The survey also found that 90 per cent of teachers felt the unmet needs of pupils who require additional support exacerbates violent, aggressive or disruptive behaviour.

The overwhelming majority of teachers who took part in the survey say that they have considered leaving the profession.

underfunding

Mainstream education is grossly underfunded. Children's mental health issues are increasing and support is lessening. We have "Inclusion" on the cheap which can lead to aggression and violence in classrooms.

Simply, there are not enough staff in the education system, and those who are there have too little time; often too many different additional support needs to meet within large classes and too few resources to meet the array of needs before them.

There needs to be sufficient funding for additional support wherever this is required, additional staffing for in-school behaviour bases and units, provision of additional offsite behaviour facilities and a reduction in class sizes in all schools to support better behaviour in the classroom.

Implementing savage Council cuts budgets will only make this situation worse.

Violence in schools is only one aspect of the violence of poverty in society. The impoverishment of more than a quarter of children in this country must be challenged.

GMB survey reveals daily toll of violence

Support staff in Aberdeen schools have revealed a daily toll of violence and verbal abuse.

Almost every pupil support assistant (98%) has witnessed or suffered violence or verbal abuse, according to a survey by GMB Scotland.

The union has called for greater protection for staff after three out of five (64%) of members polled say they see or suffer verbal and physical abuse on a daily basis while a third (31%) say it happens every week.

Seven out of ten (73%) of the workers, who support pupils with additional needs, do not feel safe at work with 82% claiming they are not being given enough protection.

Sean Robertson, GMB Scotland organiser in Aberdeen, said the survey of more than 100 pupil support assistants only confirms the scale of the crisis and the need for urgent protection for staff.

He said: "Our members are bearing the brunt of this crisis of violence in our schools and deserve every possible protection.

"No one should be expected to go to their work in fear and arrive home relieved if they have not been verbally or

physically abused that day.

"Aberdeen City Council needs to accept the scale and urgency of this emergency and ensure our schools are safe for staff and pupils.

"There must be specialist training for staff in how to deal with dangerous incidents and better reporting procedures with workers being encouraged and given the time to detail what has happened.

"If these incidents are not even being reported, they cannot be investigated and nothing will change."

Last year, a GMB Scotland survey of almost 800 school support staff, across janitorial, catering, admin cleaning, and classrooms, revealed 68% of workers fear the crisis has worsened over the last three years.

The survey showed almost half, 47%, of the support staff taking part do not believe local authorities take the issue of violence against workers seriously while 63% have had no training in de-escalating potentially violent situations.

It suggested two thirds of incidents are never recorded while three out of four say they receive no feedback if they do report an incident.

Colleges workers take strike action over pay and cuts



UNISON and EIS-FELA protest at the Scottish parliament

The national strike of college staff involving thousands organised in Unison and EIS-FELA over jobs and pay has been well supported.

College Employers Scotland and the SNP-Green government are asking college staff to trade pay for cuts to jobs and colleges as part of a devastating programme of cuts to public services which amounts to over £100 million for colleges and universities.

As well as a cuts programme, employers are waging war on the trade unions by threatening to withhold lecturers pay. EIS General Secretary Andrea Bradley said: "The actions of Scotland's colleges are reprehensible, and are drawn straight from the anti-trade union playbook so beloved by hard right-wing regimes and enabled by the UK government's regressive anti-trade union laws.

"Colleges are public sector employers, and the Scottish Government has repeatedly pledged that the UK government's oppressive anti-trade union laws should never be deployed to bully and browbeat public sector employees in Scotland.

"The fact that Scotland's college employers are now colluding to use anti-trade union laws to further inflame this long-running dispute, rather than working collectively to reach a fair solution, is a mark of shame for Scotland's college sector employers and, by extension, the Scottish Government."

Chris Greenshields, Unison Scotland's further education branch secretary, said: "College support staff deserve a fair pay rise without the threat of compulsory redundancies.

"Nobody wants to be on strike, but staff have been left with little choice.

The union submitted a revised proposal to try and move things along back in December and it took college bosses two months to reject it."

This strike is part of the dispute that has been running for 18 months. Last December, college staff voted overwhelmingly in favour of strike action to continue their campaign for fair pay and to protect jobs.

The unions say College Employers Scotland must make an improved pay offer and guarantee there will no compulsory redundancies if they want to avoid further disruption.

In the last two years colleges have been closed by strikes by EIS-FELA and Unison. There was the long running bitter strike at Glasgow City College that stopped any more compulsory redundancies. Action short of a strike is being taken by EIS FELA.

no cuts budgets

Full funding for education and public services could be won by the Scottish government setting a fighting no cuts budget and demanding the money stolen after 15 years of austerity back from Westminster. But the SNP and Greens prefer to implement and manage cuts and decline.

Socialist Party Scotland calls for the STUC/TUC to mobilise a national campaign of coordinated strike action for above inflation pay rises and against public sector cuts and any use of anti-trade union legislation. We also need a pro-trade union, working class political alternative to the main parties of cuts the Tories, SNP, Labour and the Greens.

Vote Marion Lloyd for PCS president, and a fighting NEC

Marion Lloyd

BLN candidate for PCS president

Thank you to all the branches that have nominated me for national PCS president.

The 71 nominations for me and all Broad Left Network (BLN)-supported candidates show we have everything to play for in the elections for president, National Executive and Group Executive Committee elections.

In December 2023, the desire of members for change in our union meant that I came within 800 votes of becoming general secretary, out of 20,000 votes cast.

Since the general secretary election, the BLN has been in discussion with individual PCS activists, groups including the Independent Left, and others, to agree a joint slate of candidates.

These candidates come from across the length and breadth of the UK and from across civil service departments,



PCS picket line. Photo: Hugo Pierre

partner bodies and the commercial sector, to challenge the leadership grouping in the union.

So let's get to it. Turn out a 'yes' vote in the strike ballot, which opened on 18 March, and turn out the vote for our candidates in the national elections. This is the team who will use any mandate to fight on pay to win. Solidarity!

NEC and presidential elections open on 18 April. See the full list of candidates at: socialistparty.org.uk/PCScandidates2024

A CIVIL WAR WITHOUT GUNS: THE 1984-85 MINERS' STRIKE 40 YEARS ON

Dave Griffiths

Socialist Party West Midlands
regional secretary

'Coal not dole' was the cry across Britain as 180,000 members of the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) in 180 pits began walking out on strike in March 1984.

It became a long, bitter industrial dispute – a whole year – fought with enormous courage and élan by miners, the biggest workers' struggle for generations. Fought not only against the publicly owned National Coal Board (NCB) but, as miners increasingly realised, the whole British capitalist state that had been mobilised to attack them.

The NCB, pushed by Thatcher's Tory government, had provocatively announced a programme of pit closures. Miners, one of the strongest groups of trade union-organised workers, struck to defend their pits, their industry, their communities and whole way of life.

From the first walkouts in Yorkshire, the strike spread across the coalfields of Britain and posed a major threat to the Tory government. 80% of energy came from coal. As railworkers refused to move coal stocks, the threat arose of 'the lights going out'.

It's laughable to hear Tories today claim 'green' credentials for 'taking Britain off coal'. The truth is, this was a brutal battle by the bosses prepared to smash an industry to subdue the working class so they could let their free market rip across Britain.

'Coal not dole' was the miners' slogan because Thatcher had unleashed mass unemployment as a weapon. The Tories were destroying publicly owned industries, steel, motors etc and much of Britain's industrial base. They hoped to smash the trade unions.

Mass unemployment created fear and desperation. News bulletins reported thousands more job losses daily. Incidentally, the Tories covered the cost of unemployment by 'selling off the family silver' (public industries), a process continued under Blair. Today we are being ripped off by private firms in water, gas, electric, telecoms, post, rail, and so on.

The defeat of workers in this period cleared the way for modern bosses' Britain, where we see the widest gap in wealth and incomes seen by any living person. It was a political watershed.

A decade earlier, the miners had brought down a Tory government. In the 1972 strike – involving the 'Battle of Saltley Gate' where 15,000 mass pickets, including thousands of local engineering workers, closed a vital coke depot – the miners defeated Heath's government. When Heath, punch drunk from other defeats, called a rematch in 1974, he called an election saying: "It's me or the miners." It wasn't him! A Labour government was returned, the bosses were fuming.

As economic crisis gripped and bosses sought to attack workers' living standards, strengthened trade unions resisted with growing militancy. Labour

could only restrain them for a couple of years. Thatcher was elected as the bosses' agent in 1979 and the capitalist class set about a major assault on the working class.

The attack was well prepared. They passed anti-union laws; including enforcing postal rather than workplace voting so the Tory press could interfere in union elections. They didn't attack all industries at once, but one by one picked workers off. They would have noted the failure of the leaders of the Trades Union Congress (TUC) to coordinate any response.

The Tories longed for revenge on the miners and nearly staggered into a major strike in 1981. But, as 'wildcat' strikes raged across the coalfields, they retreated. They were not yet fully prepared to face this strong group of workers.

Miners worked in a tough environment and were tough men. Their very work brought strong comradeship and discipline (and humour!); many had served in the armed forces.

The government built up coal stocks, arranged more coal and fuel imports for power stations, did deals with right-wing union leaders, beefed up and incentivised the police (many of whom to this day question their role in the strike), organised a force of non-union lorry drivers to move stocks and slashed benefits strikers and their families were entitled to.

growing tensions

Tensions grew through 1982-83 as government plans began to emerge. Rallies in towns and villages nationwide saw NUM President Arthur Scargill and other leaders begin to rouse miners to the coming challenge. Although the initial NCB announcement targeted 20 pits for closure, it was clear it would be many more.

Late in 1983, the NUM organised an overtime ban to reduce coal stocks with winter 1984. But the Tories moved quicker.

That nearly 200,000 workers, with huge support amongst the working class, would strike for a year seemed unimaginable beforehand. At the time, many on the left argued that miners had been 'bought off' by those new inventions: lager, TV & videos and Ford Cortinas! They'd never strike. Militant, the Socialist Party's predecessor, resisted these arguments. We were one of the few organisations politically prepared for the strike.

We saw young miners in particular play a magnificent role. As one said: "They threw down the gauntlet, we picked it up." Despite repression and suffering government attempts to starve them back to work, the miners showed great determination and initiative, and raised millions of pounds in solidarity from the public.

Miners and their families were proud people. The idea of 'begging' went against the grain. But realising the dis-



Lobby of the TUC demanding a 24-hour general strike in support of the miners. Photo: Dave Sinclair

pute wouldn't be short, the younger men and women's support groups rose to the occasion, travelling the length and breadth of Britain and internationally, raising solidarity and financial support at factories and on the streets. They toured railway lines, winning support from train drivers to stop coal moving, picketed coal stocks, power stations as well as pits.

Huge rallies took place at NUM HQ in Sheffield. At the same time, the Broad Left Organising Committee (BLOC) organised a conference of over 2,000 shop stewards to mobilise rank-and-file support and push for solidarity action across the trade union movement, calling for a 24-hour general strike against the government.

The dispute was clearly central to the future of organised workers nationwide. A miners' victory would be in the interests of all. But from the trade union tops, little beyond words and donations came.

There was also resistance to the strike in some areas, particularly Nottinghamshire. The NUM was a federated union, made up of different areas with different numbers of pits and ease of ob-

taining coal. This had its negative aspects. A recently introduced productivity scheme reinforced the potential division between areas, some earned much more from it than others, and some areas were less threatened by closures than others.

Pithead ballots were organised on an area, not national basis. A previous ballot seeking industrial action over pit closures was won in Yorkshire, Scotland, south Wales and Kent, but not in Nottinghamshire or the Midlands, for example. In itself this was not a shock, the union had never won a ballot over this issue. But, as the threat to the industry became clearer, support for action was growing.

As the Yorkshire walkouts spread, within a week 80% of miners nationwide were on strike. But scenes in Notts were difficult. Large pickets from other areas – along with Notts strikers – sought to picket out working pits.

This physical challenge meant some still working dwell on the idea that others were trying to force them on strike, rather than facing up to the threat to their industry and union. In contrast, at

Littleton Colliery, Cannock, Militant already had members. Seeing events in Notts they decided to organise the Cannock lads to shut their own pit before outside areas arrived. They organised a shift walkout and, as they prepared to picket the next shift, pickets arrived from Wales. They were welcomed as support, but told that the local lads would do the picketing and talking to the incoming shift. Within a couple of days, only three or four were left working. Had such a left network been encouraged in the NUM, scenes across the Midlands may have been different.

national ballot

The lack of a national ballot was used as an excuse by some, including by some inexcusable trade union leaders, for not organising solidarity action.

In fact, a national ballot would have been won comfortably, removed excuses and strengthened the fight. But already 86% were on strike against the baying of media, bosses and Tory and Labour politicians for a ballot. In many eyes, the strike was already on and dramatically

affecting production. They weren't going to be dictated to by the likes of these.

Prominent football figures like Brian Clough and Jackie Charlton came out for the miners. Nottingham Forest fans took abuse as scabs at matches they attended.

Ian MacGregor, Thatcher's American puppet boss of the NCB, declared that he "wanted to hear from the women", hoping they'd push their men back to work. He received a resounding response as miner's wives groups sprang up everywhere declaring "They shall not starve", cadging food for food kitchens and attending picket lines.

Meanwhile, the police – now organised as a national militarised force – increased their aggression, making thousands of arrests to deplete picket lines. Backed by courts, they restricted picketing rights and used roadblocks across the country. They restricted movement even in workers' own towns. One Cannock lad got a week's gaol (and a criminal record) for walking to get a pint of milk for the strike centre, deemed to have crossed a quarter-mile restriction by ten yards.



A decade earlier, the miners had brought down a Tory government. In the 1972 strike – involving the 'Battle of Saltley Gate' where 15,000 mass pickets, including thousands of local engineering workers, closed a vital coke depot – the miners defeated Heath's government.

There have rarely been more phone taps! And we saw huge TV and media propaganda. If you believed their daily reports of miners going back to work, 1 million of the 180,000 miners had gone back!

Then TV outdid itself with its distorted coverage of the Orgreave mass pickets – a battle set up by government and police chiefs, with riot police and cavalry charges against workers. Truly, we were seeing a 'civil war without guns'. 55 miners were threatened with life sentences for riot, until police were found to be lying in court.

The strike moved through summer. Thatcher farcically claimed she wouldn't intervene, but we saw police and dark agencies working for government increasingly organising returns to work. As one 'superscab' later admitted: "I knew they had lots of money, political money." They organised the National Working Miners Committee, and later assisted the UDM (Union of Democratic Miners – sic) to undermine the NUM.

She outrageously declared the miners to be "the enemy within", starkly revealing the truth of class society under capitalism, and insulting many men who had served their country.

They launched a legal assault on the NUM. Declaring the strike 'illegal', they sought to 'sequestrate' (steal) all the union's funds. The TUC had a Congress decision to organise general strike action if any union faced sequestration under Tory laws, but didn't act when the NUM was attacked.

But coal stocks were still falling, and miners anticipated 'General Winter' helping their action take effect. By autumn, the Tories feared losing. Especially when pit deputies' (supervisors without whom no pit could operate) union NACOD voted by over 80% to strike in October. Thatcher's government was hanging by a thread. Electricity bosses estimated "Scargill would...win by Christmas."

But their threatened strike was shadily called off with meaningless promises. The miners entered winter feeling more isolated, especially given the lack of TUC action and the betrayal of Labour leader, Neil Kinnock, who didn't want to see militancy pay. Later rewarded with a peerage, he was to repeat this with Liverpool City Council the following year.

All 'torture' victims have their thresholds; as a miners' mum put it: "Not ev-

erybody was strong enough". Despite widening social support for the miners, such as from Pride and others, there was a drift back to work at end of 1984 and early 1985. So, in March 1985, the NUM voted 98-91 for an organised return to work.

aftermath

The strike had cost the Tories a fortune, but they had inflicted a serious defeat on a strong group of workers. Afterwards, demoralisation was exaggerated – and became an excuse for inaction by trade union leaders.

Within five years, 18 million people defied the law refusing to pay their Poll Tax and brought Thatcher crashing down. A great win, but not one that compensated for the miners' defeat.

There was devastation in villages as closure programmes rolled on, but miners also rebuilt their strength in pits. At Littleton, where a large majority were back at work by March and the UDM had a base, a walkout when '12 months' were picked on was joined by nearly every miner. The desire to reunite was strong and the NUM quickly became dominant again.

closures

The Tories denied a mass closure programme. But the reward for those fooled by their lies was to see 90% of pits closed within ten years. The UDM was exposed but had done its damage. But most decisive in the defeat of this historic strike, where workers showed their capacity to struggle to the end, was that this was not matched by Labour and TUC leaders.

For Marxists, it has many lessons for the future and in understanding how the working class 'moves'. It also revealed how reactionary ideas are washed away in struggle.

A couple of young miners in contact with the National Front were offered money to attack a pre-strike Militant meeting in Cannock. On hearing that a miner was speaking, they refused. Later, one was collecting in London and saw how many black workers were donating.

As he told them about the demonisation of miners in the media, they'd smile and say: "We know, we suffer it all the time". The scales came off his eyes and he phoned us excitedly to tell us. He joined Militant and supports us to this day.

Had the miners won, the whole free-market Tory project would have been challenged. The working class, inspired to take up struggle, would have put the end of the Tories in sight. The push to create 'New Labour' (which Thatcher described as her greatest achievement) would be reversed. British history could have been very different.

Which is why Militant fought with every sinew to help prosecute the dispute, during which 500 miners joined us as the events of the strike revealed the true character of capitalism and failure of the labour movement's leaders.



Militant newspaper cartoonist Alan Hardman produced this iconic image during the strike



A civil war
without guns
by Ken Smith

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ENDING WOMEN'S OPPRESSION

What's socialism got to do with it?



Photo: Louise Whittle

Lynda McEwan

The oppression of women, ideas of sexism and misogyny, whilst entrenched in modern society, hasn't always been the way humans existed. Under primitive communism, early hunter gatherer societies, the division of labour was more equally shared and women weren't seen as the lesser of the sexes.

Women would take part in hunting and men with child rearing duties, neither role being seen as less important than the other.

Recent anthropological studies confirm these findings.

It's important to highlight this fact because the capitalist class maintain that gender inequality is inherent and the natural order of things, alongside gender based violence and sexism.

Engels

Engels, in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, explains that it was the transition away from kinship living to working the land, agriculture and farming where eventually a surplus was created and an elite class who hoarded that surplus, that caused the development of inheritance along male lines and in turn women becoming relegated to domestic work in private homes within the family unit.

These economic class relations were based on the private ownership of the means of production which continues today as bosses accumulate vast amounts of individual wealth at the expense of the working class who create that wealth through waged labour.

Escalating war, famine, climate catastrophe and the cost of living crisis, all further the oppression of women.

All women are oppressed under capitalism but, as Lenin and the Bolsheviks explained, working class women are doubly oppressed, condemned to domestic slavery, child rearing and work-

ing in often low paid jobs alongside women's services being eroded under austerity and attacks on women's rights.

The idea that more women in power will automatically benefit working class women, which is promoted by the capitalist class, has begun to radicalise new layers of young women who want to fight against gender based violence, rape, unequal pay and the intrinsically sexist ideas of the sex and beauty industries, etc. Liberal capitalist feminists, like Sturgeon in Scotland and Arden in New Zealand, have no answers to any of these questions. They have become unpopular through implementing attacks on the working class including women.

Cuts and attacks on the working class allow an opening for the far right to exploit who want to roll back on the hard won gains in women's rights such as abortion rights.

united struggle

The steps forward women have made throughout history have been won as a result of united, working class struggle. The right to vote, the right to work, abortion rights and domestic violence services are all wonderful examples of what can be achieved.

The equal pay strike in Glasgow in 2018 won equal pay compensation against a liberal feminist SNP council by uniting in trade union and mass struggle with their male comrades who took strike action in solidarity. They won £800 million for low paid female care workers across the city.

An amazing victory for their class.

During the Russian revolution of 1917 huge gains were won for women under the socialist government, including legal divorces, communal restaurants and free childcare. That this was done in a backward society with none of the technological advances we have today, is a testament to how powerful the working class is.

As Karl Marx explained, when work-

ers can't buy back the goods they produce through their labour, a process of alienation occurs detaching them from their own lives and relationships.

Today we need to utilise those critical lessons of history and, in order to end women's oppression, fight for an international socialist revolution that would bring the working class majority to power to own the means of production collectively and plan society democratically for the benefit of all.

This would mean an end to class society and the rule of a tiny majority and their exploitation. All the social problems that occur under capitalism; sexism, misogyny, violence against women and girls etc. would begin to wither away. Social and personal relationships would be transformed.

In Russia, women's lives were completely changed under socialism. However, the counter revolution led by Stalin meant that while women could play a role in the workforce they were often still expected to take up the role of homemaker too.

The collapse of Stalinism in the early 90s showed that women's lives were badly affected by the restoration of capitalism, with lowered life expectancy and an increase in crime against them, particularly trafficking.

We must prepare now the fertile ground for such a revolution by building new mass parties of the working class with a socialist programme.

The CWI (Committee for a Worker's international) plays a key role across the world with socialists to the fore in taking up women's oppression.

In India, we are campaigning against caste brutality, slavery and for justice for rape victims. In the US we mobilised against the attack on Roe v Wade, and in France we have taken part in struggles against attacks on pensions.

Socialist Party Scotland and our predecessor Militant have a proud record from the excellent Campaign Against Domestic Violence in the 90s to the Equal Pay strike more recently.

Cuts onslaught against council jobs and services must be fought

Chris Sermanni

Glasgow City UNISON
branch secretary

There has been no let up in the continued assault on local government for more than a decade, with councils providing a fraction of the services they once did, and with the loss of thousands of jobs.

In England, several councils - including the largest in the UK, Birmingham - have been forced into effective bankruptcy, issuing Section 114 notices.

A survey by the Local Government Association revealed that almost one in five Council Leaders "think it is very or fairly likely that their chief finance officer will need to issue a Section 114 notice this year or next due to a lack of funding to keep key services running".

The Tories are only interested in politicising the issue, blaming Labour controlled councils for financial mismanagement.

Labour proposes absolutely nothing to address the crisis should they take

power at the next general election. Local authorities in Scotland are also facing financial ruin. COSLA warned that the current budget has meant councils are at "breaking point" and that essential services will "cease".

bankruptcy

The Local Government Information Unit (LGIU) Scotland reported in December that nearly one quarter of local authorities in the country face effective bankruptcy.

This should come as absolutely no surprise given that billions of pounds have been taken from budgets over the last 10 years, with £300m cut by Councils this year alone.

Yet again, the mainstream political parties are only interested in making political ground, with the Tories in the Scottish Parliament blaming SNP financial mismanagement, ignoring the fact that the austerity the working class have to endure is baked into the political ideology of their party.

The SNP pass these cuts on with little more than a whimper. SNP finance sec-

retary, Shona Robison effectively waved the white flag by saying the public sector workforce will have to shrink.

In Glasgow, the SNP administration announced a 3-year budget, with cuts of £108m over this period - with the figure being £150m if you factor in the cuts made to social work.

In year 1, nearly £30m has been cut from the education budget. This is largely made up of cuts to teacher numbers, as well as cuts to services such as MCR Pathways and Developing the Young Workforce (DYW).

It is estimated that around 450 teaching posts will be lost over the 3 year budget period.

In response to these cuts, the joint trade unions protested outside the City Chambers on 7th March. Glasgow HSCP are expected to confirm budget cuts to health and social care services of around £36m on 20th March.

Hundreds of jobs will be cut, and it's clear that homelessness services and prescribing costs are drastically underfunded.

The ramifications of last years cuts are still being acutely felt in HSCP ser-



vices; this year's cuts are likely to be catastrophic.

The trade unions have long demanded that the council set a 'no cuts budget' using various financial levers to allow time and space to build a mass movement to secure proper funding for services.

Councillors have refused to take this path, and wrongly dismiss it as illegal. The political will is missing to fight for the people of Glasgow.

A mass workers' party is needed to provide a political voice for the working class, and fight for proper funding for public services.

Working on the frontline of Glasgow's cuts-ravaged services



Services in Glasgow helping vulnerable young women have been shutdown. Photo: Public Domain

Shaw Rooney

Young Socialists and Glasgow Adult and Youth Social Service Worker

'Charity starts at home'. Whoever said that must have been from a very dysfunctional family, because working in the volunteer and third sector leads to more crisis management than managing the real crises facing society today.

A sector built upon the socialist principles of caring for one another and providing a helping hand to those in need, has now been warped into a money-driven machine that has eviscerated the core values that it stood by. Companies and services clamber over each other to beg for the scraps from the government table packaged in the yearly budget. Who does this affect the most in our society? As always, it's those who are most vulnerable that bear the weight of the cuts.

In Glasgow, the 218 Project, which helps support female offenders to rebuild their lives after drug and alcohol use, has now been closed down. This has put some of the most vulnerable women in the city out on the street or in shared accommodation that puts their recovery, stability and the lives they have built at risk.

low-paid workers

Yet, it is not only the people who use these services that have been damaged by cut after cut after cut. It is also the sector's low-paid workers, now taking on the mental load of those they work with and the ever-present guillotine of redundancy hanging above their heads.

One of the most common sayings you will hear from anyone who has worked in social care and the third and voluntary sector is: "You must love helping people, cause you're definitely not in this job for the money."

Yet even this self-deprecating throw-away comment has been weaponised against the working-class people in these roles. They use people's commitment to helping those who are marginalised in society against them by not providing a work-life balance or adequate training, and by promoting unhealthy working hours that cause burn out. All because people dare to love their job and give their all to a cause they think is worthwhile.

I, myself, have faced redundancy not once but twice in the space of a year in two different services. In my previous role I did lose my job due to redundancy and have only just managed to escape the same fate in my current role by the skin of my teeth.

While my job is secure, there are other services and safe spaces that are geared towards reducing youth violence and harm reduction that closed their doors during Covid, never to open back up.

Austerity and a cost-of-living crisis has left our youth and people in need angry and wanting to lash out, caught in a whirlwind of bitterness and rage at the world and with no safe space to channel that anger in a positive way.

So what does it say about this ailing capitalist society that, at the age of 28, I have stared into the abyss of redundancy twice and those younger than me are forgotten and left to seethe and stew with no place to turn to let it all out?

It shows that greed of those at the top of society holds no bounds, even in the sectors and services we hold dear. We see, day in day out, while holding together the tattered and frayed edges of society, that we are not safe from savage cuts by those who have never had their boots on the ground or their brow hot and sweaty at the coal face.

MP salaries soar above inflation to £91,346



Houses of Parliament. Photo: Terry Ott/CC

Adam Hamsworth

Coventry Socialist Party

The Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority (IPSA), the body that sets pay and expenses for MPs, has awarded a 5.5% increase to MPs' salaries.

That makes MPs' basic pay a staggering £91,346, with tens of thousands of pounds more for those on select committees, for various ministers, plus £75,440 extra for Rishi Sunak and £49,193 for Keir Starmer. That's all before you get to expenses, all paid for by us!

Many of those MPs currently attacking the poorest workers and those on benefits are earning well over £100,000, plus incomes from businesses and property. They live on a completely different planet to workers, and the gap between them and us is getting bigger.

These careerist parliamentarians might say they have no choice but to accept the absurdly high pay put forward by IPSA as it's supposedly an 'independent' pay body. But during the strike wave last year, the Tories ignored the teachers' pay review body without hesitation when its recommendation was higher than they wanted.

Pay review bodies don't have any real independence; they are unelected panels that broadly follow the wishes of the government, and are used to try to deceive workers into thinking what is suggested by the body is reasonable.

But very few workers will believe this pay rise is deserved. IPSA chair Richard Lloyd also appeared to be on a different planet with his comment on the 5.5% rise: "Serving as an MP should not be reserved to those wealthy enough to

fund it themselves... We are committed to supporting a Parliament that reflects our society, where people from all walks of life can decide to become MPs".

This Parliament doesn't reflect our society one bit! When workers campaigned for MPs to get a salary at the start of the 1900s, it was so the working class could be represented in Parliament with MPs who would act in their interests. A bloated salary and blank chequebook for expenses only encourages MPs to act in the interests of the wealthy and put their careers first.

That doesn't mean there is no room for a voice for the working class in Parliament. In the 1980s, Militant (forerunner to the Socialist Party that worked in the Labour Party) terrified the establishment when three Marxist MPs were elected. Dave Nellist, Terry Fields, and Pat Wall only took home an average skilled workers' wage, and no expenses. The rest of their wages went to working-class causes.

In the next general election, many workers will vote Labour. But they won't be voting for a party that wholeheartedly fights in the interests of the working class. They will see hundreds of wealthy careerists vying to lead the next government of wealthy MPs, who will try to make workers pay for capitalism's crises.

The Socialist Party will be challenging this. We will put forward candidates as part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition, who will once again commit to only take a workers' wage if elected.

We also campaign for a real right of recall – for MPs to be able to be recalled at any time by those they represent so they are always accountable.

UCU election show members want a fighting, democratic leadership

Duncan Moore

Newly elected to UCU NEC

Last year, post-16 education workers, across universities, colleges and prison education, took historic strike action to defend pay and conditions.

University and College Union (UCU) members came out onto the picket lines determined to fight back, and in many cases won significantly more than the employers had offered. But we could have won more.

Pay is still falling in real terms, workloads continue to increase, and a crisis in funding is unfolding in all sectors the UCU represents. Members have proven their determination to fight. We need a leadership which is accountable to members, armed with a serious, fighting strategy that is properly prepared for and built.

Members have elected left candidates from various groupings to lead their National Executive Committee (NEC) and the Higher and Further Education Committees (HEC and FEC).

In the elections I campaigned on a programme which reflected the needs and concerns of UCU members: building a serious campaign of action for above-inflation pay rises; an end to marketisation, casual contracts and job insecurity; winning binding national agreements on pay and workload in Further Education; and full funding of post-16 education. To achieve these demands, our union needs a serious po-



UCU FE strike 2023. Photo: Ian Pattison

litical strategy, alongside a fighting industrial one. In the general secretary election campaign, Jo Grady has made clear she is preparing the way for a "partnership" with an incoming Labour government under Keir Starmer, with her manifesto boasting of "incredibly strong political relationships". (Grady was narrowly re-elected but with half the first-preference votes she won in 2019.)

But Starmer has shown that he is not on the side of workers, and will only bring more cuts in funding and hardship for post-16 educators.

Local council-funded adult education providers, such as my workplace, face redundancies and potential closure, as a result of cuts under Tory- and Labour-led councils. The UCU currently uses its political fund for lobbying politicians of all the capitalist parties; but nothing in our rulebook prevents members from standing as candidates in elections – we need candidates who will support our members and policies. I will stand in my local council ward under the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) banner in May, and encourage others to do so.

GAZA POPULATION ON BRINK OF FAMINE

Thomas Asher

A quarter of the Gaza population are on the brink of famine, according to the United Nations (UN).

In January, a whole swathe of rich capitalist nations suspended funding for UNRWA – the UN body responsible for distributing aid to Palestinian Refugees. The consequence: a deepening humanitarian catastrophe. Since, a trickle of countries have resumed funding. Britain, and the US continue to withhold it.

UK foreign secretary David Cameron trumpets an extra £10 million of humanitarian aid destined for the 'Palestinian occupied territories'. Compare that to the £1 million-plus spent every time a Royal Navy destroyer stationed in the Red Sea fires a missile at

Yemen. The US has delivered 100 'foreign military sales' to Israel since the war began: ammunition, bunker busters, arms – with the sinister description 'lethal aid'. The British government continues to grant arms export licences to Israel too.

Biden, as well as Sunak and others, have not so much as lifted their little fingers to stop the Israeli state's slaughter and starvation.

The thing they fear, above all, is the prospect of the war stirring up a new rising of the masses in the Middle East, like what happened during the Arab Spring in 2011.

New mass movements, with the development of independent organisations of the working class adopting a socialist political programme, would put socialist change and an end to conflict on the agenda.

THE SNP CRISIS ONE YEAR ON

Build a new workers' party



SNP leader Humza Yousaf. Photo: Scottish Government/CC

A year has passed since the SNP was thrown into a huge crisis following the resignation of Nicola Sturgeon as party leader and first minister. As we pointed out at the time: "The crisis facing the SNP is rooted in their implementation of austerity and anti-working class policies generally."

The strike wave 2022/23 strike wave also played a decisive role in exposing and undermining Sturgeon's government. The erosion of working class support for an SNP leadership that had filled part of the vacuum that existed for a new mass workers' party in Scotland over the last decade is an extremely important development.

It also completely confirms Socialist Party Scotland's perspective put forward in 2014 – alone on the left – that the SNP's pro-capitalist policies would prove to be their undoing.

The election of Humza Yousaf as first minister has done nothing to stop the rot. It is not even certain that Yousaf will lead the party into the general election. Its not ruled out that Kate Forbes or some other alternative could replace Yousaf in the run-up to the election or immediately afterwards. Current polling shows Labour poised to emerge as the biggest party in Scotland after the election.

If this was to be the case it would most likely result in another leadership contest and another crisis. The undermining of the electoral base of the SNP was underlined by an analysis by John Curtice, in January 2024, that found: "Whereas at the end of 2022 80 per cent of current yes supporters were saying that they would vote SNP in a UK general election, now that figure has fallen to a new low of just 63 per cent."

Yousaf's attempt to frame the general election in Scotland as a contest between the SNP and the Tories in Scotland is a desperate attempt to hold



From being one of the moist successful capitalist governments in Europe – in power at Holyrood for seventeen years now – the chickens have now come home to roost for the SNP.

onto seats in the traditional areas of support for the nationalists – the rural and more middle class parts of Scotland. They are likely to lose a large number of seats in the west of Scotland in particular to Labour.

From being one of the moist successful capitalist governments in Europe – in power at Holyrood for seventeen years now – the chickens have now come home to roost for the SNP. Even a defeat at the 2026 Scottish parliament election is now possible.

The one factor that can limit the decline is the use of the national question to try and put a floor under the exodus of working-class support from the nationalists.

Support for independence has remained unaffected by the SNP crisis at around 50%. With Yousaf promising that "line one of the manifesto" will be vote SNP to deliver an independent Scotland, the hope is that can persuade enough pro-independence supporters to stick with the party at the general election.

The SNP MP Tommy Sheppard summed up this strategy and appeal to pro-indy supporters when he wrote: "We need to be very clear with the electorate, this year's vote is about whether the journey continues, whether we can create circumstances to move towards our independence....If the SNP lose the election in Scotland, the debate on in-

dependence stops."

With the Westminster election likely to be seen as a chance to be rid of the Tories, Scottish Labour under its neo-Blairite leadership is hoping to pick up the support of at least one fifth of the pro-independence voters.

If they succeed, Scottish Labour could defeat the SNP. However, in no way would this signify a ringing endorsement of Starmer or Sarwar. On the contrary, there is little to no enthusiasm or expectation that Labour will deliver for the working class. That's why record levels of abstentionism, especially among independence supporting voters, is very likely to be a major feature of the election. Alongside a certain uptick in support for the Scottish Greens and Alba – this will be limited if it happens at all.

The mood of utter disregard for all the main parties was expressed in the Sunday Times poll at the end of January 2024 which found an overwhelming lack of trust for all the main party leaders. The collapse in authority towards the SNP leadership was stark. Nicola Sturgeon's trust levels stood at -19%, with Humza Yousaf on -25%. Keir Starmer was -24% and Anas Sarwar on -17%. The lack of a mass working-class political alternative is one of the main issues that can only be overcome through the building of mass workers' party with a socialist programme.

national question

The collapsing support for the SNP, which currently stands at just over 30%, is also linked to their utter failure to offer a viable fighting strategy on independence. We have dealt in detail with this question over the years; in summary that the pro-capitalist SNP leadership has never had any intention of

seeking to mobilise a mass movement to try to overcome the entrenched opposition of the capitalist class to the break-up of the UK.

This has led them into a quagmire following a series of retreats that followed the UK Supreme Court ruling that Holyrood did not have the competence to organise a referendum on independence.

Currently, the SNP leadership now say if they emerge as the biggest party in Scotland in terms of MPs, this will give them a mandate to negotiate with a Starmer government over the transfer of powers to Edinburgh to allow the Scottish government to organise indyref2 in the future. Starmer has already made clear this will not happen under a Labour government.

While support for independence has remained consistent, the movement on the streets has shrunk significantly. This fact reflects the complete lack of trust in the SNP leadership on the one hand, and the fact that no viable force has arisen to offer a fighting leadership on the other. In that sense, today, there exists largely passive support for independence.

The emergence of the class struggle over the past period and the focus on the fight against the cost of living crisis has dominated working-class consciousness. The fact that many of these strikes have pitted the workers' movement against SNP politicians has only added to the sense that the nationalist leadership 'does not fight for us'.

What are the likely perspectives for the national question under a Starmer government? As commented already, Starmer will lead a government laser-focused on delivering for the capitalist class.

With little to no honeymoon period, working-class opposition to Labour will grow quickly, given the crisis-ridden economic backdrop. While that opposition will be reflected in strikes, the growth of opposition forces in the trade unions and increasing support for the idea of a new workers' party, the re-emergence of the national question in a sharper form can also be posed.

Struggle can break out on a range of issues. In Scotland it is inevitable that the rule of the neo-Blairites will ignite further eruptions in demands for Scottish independence.

"The days of independence being umbilically linked to the SNP are over. The child has left the parent. We're in the moment of decoupling. That's a historic shift politically, leaving power wide open." Neil MacKay – Herald columnist February 1, 2024.

The character of the independence movement will not simply be a repeat of the events that marked the 2012 – 2020 period. During that time the SNP were accepted as the de-facto leadership, reinforced by the experience of the first indyref in 2014 when the SNP emerged enormously strengthened.

Even then, and especially in the run up to September 2014 and immediately after, there was a big layer of the pro-independence working class that stood to the left of the SNP and were attracted to socialist ideas. Under a Starmer government it is likely that a more combative mass movement could emerge around the national question. It would be essential that socialists, Marxists and the workers' movement generally offer a fighting leadership on the national question linked to a socialist way forward. The building of a mass working class force based on 500,000 strong trade union movement is a vital task.

Galloway's win shows potential to build workers' politics



Jim McFarlane
Dundee

George Galloway's recent by election victory in Rochdale, standing as a candidate of the Workers Party of Britain, shows there is a clear space for a new working class and left alternative to develop and make electoral advances.

The move to the right by Starmer's Labour Party was epitomised by Rachel Reeves, Shadow Chancellor, making a speech to big business claiming Margaret Thatcher had smashed the glass ceiling for women and shifted the boundaries.

Starmer had previously claimed that Thatcher had dragged Britain out of a stupor and set loose natural entrepreneurship.

These comments are presented as a reassurance to big business that Labour will be a safe pair of hands for capitalism.

Working class people need an alternative to continued austerity and cuts. Galloway's appeal in Rochdale was based on being clearly anti-war and showing solidarity with Palestinians in Gaza as a big factor.

There is also a growing resentment at the continued attack on living standards, with real inflation having an impact on working class people who see the already wealthy continuing to rake it in.

Rochdale, like every other working class community, faces challenges of poverty and the decimation of public services.

There are criticisms to make over George Galloway's views on things like Scottish Independence, abortion rights and other important issues, and we have never shied away from making those criticisms.

Nor does Galloway clearly call for the building of a genuine mass party of the working class based on the trade unions.

Despite Galloway's limitations, his election shows the potential for building a new left alternative to all the mainstream parties.

Workers and trade unionists have a clear role in helping to build and present an electoral alternative to Labour and the SNP.

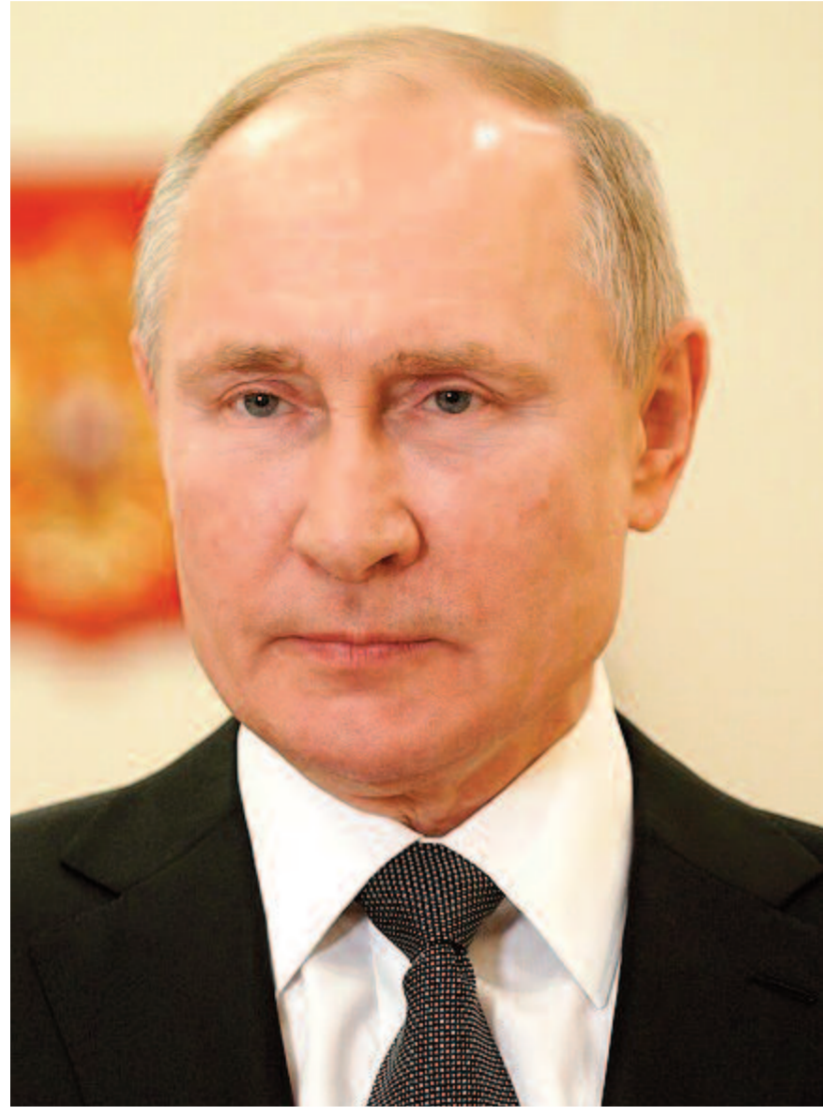
We need candidates prepared to stand on a clear anti-war programme and just as importantly a clear no cuts approach and boldly putting forward socialist solutions.

Socialist Party Scotland along with others in the Trade Union and Socialist Coalition are ready for the task.

Putin gaining upper hand in long, drawn-out and bloody Russia-Ukraine conflict



Above left: Ukrainian troops. Photo: MOD Ukraine/CC. Above right: Putin. Photo: kremlin.ru /CC



Niall Mulholland

It is now over two years since the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the start of the war between the two countries, with Ukraine receiving essential Nato backing. The battlefield has been in a relative stalemate for months, but Russia's President Vladimir Putin has gained the upper hand. It is estimated that Russia has five times the firepower advantage of the Ukrainian army.

The Ukrainian military is carrying out drone and missile attacks against oil refineries deep inside Russia, causing some damage, but the strikes are mainly intended to boost morale at home. Kyiv has also boasted of some military successes against Russia's navy in the Black Sea. Yet the war is not going well for Ukraine in the eastern part of the country, the main arena of the struggle with Moscow.

Furthermore the holding up of further financial packages from the US Congress to the Ukrainian military is having a significant negative effect on the ability of the Ukraine forces to wage a campaign against Russian forces.

Long gone are the days when the Ukrainian Prime Minister Volodymyr Zelensky could boast that he had Russian forces on the run, after they had been forced to turn back from Kyiv. In a recent speech, Zelensky admitted that up to 30,000 Ukraine soldiers have died in the conflict, with many more tens of thousands injured. Western sources believe this is an underestimation and the real figure of Ukraine troop deaths is probably more than double that given by Zelensky. In turn, Ukrainian and Western officials say that Russian forces have suffered much greater casualties. This may be the case but Russia currently is making more territorial gains than Ukraine, and has

a much larger population from which to draw on for new soldiers. Putin's position appears more secure than a few months ago when the war appeared to be going awry and he faced a short lived revolt by the Wagner group mercenaries.

military hardware

The US, France and UK, in particular, continue to send military hardware to Ukraine, including long range missiles. But as the war has ground-on without any sign of a clear, overwhelming winner, the US Congress has shown less stomach for funding Zelensky. Republican members of the Congress have held up new financial packages going to Kyiv. With the prospect of a possible Trump victory in the presidential elections, and his publicly stated pledge "not to give a single penny" to Ukraine and to aim to bring the conflict to a swift end, the Republican members of Congress are likely to keep blocking the passage of the funds.

This has helped Russia to develop a military dominance on the battlefield. According to the Royal United Services Institute (UK), Russia has increased production of its long range missiles from about 40 a month in 2022 to about 100 a month by the end of 2023. In effect, Russia has become a 'war economy', with domestic production largely tailored for the needs of the war in eastern Ukraine, while Russia has also been able to find new markets for its raw material exports.

Notwithstanding the significant ratcheting up of arms spending and militarisation by Nato and the EU in light of the 'common' Russian enemy, tensions amongst the European powers continue over the Ukraine conflict. After months of wrangling with the

Hungarian government, a package of new aid was agreed by the EU to send to Kyiv. However it is a long way from what Zelensky claims is urgently needed. The right wing populist Hungarian Prime Minister, Viktor Orban, has made it clear that he will use his veto regarding future proposed financial and military aid for Kyiv. Orban's position is echoed by some other EU states, such as Slovakia.

Although Turkey's President Erdogan eventually relinquished his opposition to Sweden joining NATO, the Western allies are far from united. In a sign of frustration with the US Congress, French President Macron called for NATO troops to be put on Ukraine soil (unofficial and 'non combatant' Nato forces are reportedly already present in Ukraine).

This was quickly rejected by other NATO powers and the EU. They fear that any openly direct NATO involvement in Ukraine could lead to a widening of the conflict across the region. German Chancellor Olaf Scholz is refusing Ukrainian pleas for stocks of the German-made Taurus missile systems, saying German troops would have to be sent to Ukraine to programme the missiles, dragging Berlin further into conflict with Russia.

President Putin responded to Macron's calls with his own threats, once again stating that Russia would be prepared to use 'strategic nuclear weapons' if Russian national sovereignty was imperilled. Putin cites the encroachment of Nato countries on the borders of Russia and the possible Ukraine membership of the military alliance as a major reason for his 2022 invasion. Although Putin's nuclear threats are largely sabre-rattling rhetoric, it does indicate how the conflict could begin to spiral further out of control, with the deployment of ever more dev-

astating conventional weapons.

Initially following the Russian invasion there was widespread sympathy and support for the plight of Ukrainians, especially in the western countries. However in parts of Asia, Africa and Latin America there was often sympathy for Russia due to the legacy of the former Stalinist USSR, prior to the restoration of oligarchical capitalism, and the perception that Russia was fighting western imperialism and Nato.

Today the mood of working people across the world is increasingly sceptical and cynical about the motivations of the Western powers and the Zelensky regime.

This is especially the case since the cruel bombardment of Gaza by the Israeli state, which has led to the deaths of over 30,000 people, mass starvation and the destruction of most of the buildings and infrastructure of the Strip. Many people ask, why is it that the human rights of Ukrainians, who faced Russian invasion, must be respected but not the human rights of the occupied Palestinians?

These sentiments have been exploited by the Putin regime, which has sought to widen its authority and influence in the so-called 'global South'. As part of its new alignment with China, which is now tacitly supporting the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Moscow and Beijing project themselves as being on the side of the oppressed everywhere, including the Palestinians.

Russian elections

As Russia heads to the polls for the presidential elections, Putin's position appears more secure than for several years. The war is largely going in Putin's favour – Russian forces recently cap-

tered the town of Avdiivka (albeit reportedly at a huge cost in casualties). Any oppositional voices at home are quickly branded as traitorous. The protests following the death in prison of the anti-Kremlin figure, Alexi Navalny, were smaller in comparison to previous opposition movements.

With the commencement of the war, many opposition figures have been imprisoned or fled Russia. The anti-war movement remains relatively small and suppressed (it is estimated that almost 20,000 people have been detained for protesting against the war).

The Russian economy has managed to emerge from the Western-imposed sanctions marking some growth and with new trading arrangements with China and Gulf States and other parts of the world.

Yet below the surface, opposition to Putin's regime is developing. It remains to be seen what the response is this weekend to opposition figures' call for voters to show up and cast their ballots en masse, at the same time, as a show of rejection of Putin's foregone re-election. How and when a serious, sustained struggle to Putin's rule develops and becomes a more powerful social revolt, is unclear, at this stage.

However, as the war drags on at a huge human and material cost, demands for peace can grow in Russia and result in divisions within the regime. Currently Putin is attempting to press his advantage on the battlefield and to capture more territory and is unlikely to engage any time soon in serious negotiations with Kyiv. Should the situation on the battlefield begin to turn against Russian forces or is bogged down still further, the mood in Russia can begin to change significantly, and Putin can be forced to cease the Russian military campaign. At a certain stage, Putin can face the prospect of

being removed or overthrown. The character of the regime that would replace Putin is also uncertain and depends on how the war and events unfold.

Zelensky under pressure

Zelensky can also come under increasing pressure domestically to try and reach an agreement with Moscow. The Ukraine government is planning to put a new 'mobilisation law' to parliament in expectation of drafting an extra 500,000 to the armed forces (currently around 330,000 troops are estimated to be deployed on the battlefields). Rather desperately, Kyiv has also raised the prospect of using convicts as fighting fodder. As it is, Ukrainian troops are serving for long spells at the front with little rotation and respite. Morale is suffering. "A large proportion of the men of fighting age are unwilling to be deployed to the front", according to the Financial Times (13/03/2024).

The Kyiv government has talked about lowering the age of conscription from 27 years to two years. Exemptions will be put in place for so-called 'critical workers'. They will have to contribute to the war effort financially, either by funnelling part of their pay or through a monthly levy. But for many working class and poor Ukrainians this is interpreted as meaning the middle class and better off can avoid conscription, as those who cannot afford the fee can be drafted.

Polls show that the majority of people are opposed to the new conscription targets. In February a survey by Info Sapiens, a Ukrainian organisation, found 48% of men were "not prepared to fight while 34% were". Half of the 90% of respondents said they "now think the west is tired and will push Kyiv into a compromise with Russia".

working class of the region

As we enter the third year of mass slaughter in Ukraine it is clear more than ever that the working class of Ukraine and Russia and the region need their own independent voice. Zelensky and Putin both lead right-wing nationalist regimes dominated by oligarchs. Neither act in the interests of working class people yet the labouring masses are expected to be the endless cannon fodder for the war.

From the start, the Committee for Workers' International (CWI) has called for the immediate withdrawal of Russian military forces. We have also called

for the Ukrainian working class to organise itself to remove the corrupt, pro Western-imperialist Zelensky regime. In Russia, the working class also needs its own independent organisations and socialist programme, to successfully oppose the Putin regime and its rich backers.

While the Ukrainian masses have the right to live free from any foreign occupation it is also the case that ethnic minorities inside Ukraine have the right to be free of Ukrainian chauvinist oppression. Marxists support the right of self-determination for the Ukraine masses, but also support the right of the people of the region of Donbass and Crimea to determine their own future.

It is not clear what the mood and sentiments of the people of these areas are at the present time given the war situation and Russian military occupation. But over a decade of hostility from pro-Western governments in Kyiv towards the majority Russian speaking Donbass, which included years of military assaults by Ukrainian military and far right forces before the outbreak of the 2022 war with Russia, will have hardened opinions.

Dramatic changes on the ground have to be taken into account by Marxists when proposing a programme on the national question. The Azerbaijan regime's ruthless removal of nearly all the ethnic Armenians from Nagorno-Karabakh, last year, and the Israeli state's erasure of Palestinians from at least half of Gaza, have created new "facts on the ground" in those parts of the world. So too, ten years of conflict and discrimination and annexations have undoubtedly affected the outlook of the people in Crimea and Donbass and have to be taken into account.

A Marxist programme on the national question and minority rights has to take such events into consideration when elaborating its position on the right of self-determination for oppressed nations and how this is to be achieved.

Marxists oppose the majority ethnic Russian population in Donbass and Crimea being coerced against their will into a Ukraine state or forcibly merged into a 'greater Russia'. They must have the right to decide their own future, in a genuinely free and democratic manner.

This aspect of the CWI programme is inextricably linked to the need for the building of an independent mass socialist alternative in Ukraine, Russia and the region, uniting working class people across all national and ethnic lines against war, poverty, exploitation and capitalism.

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:

- 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.
- 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 price 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.
- 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.
- Repeat 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.

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Mass democratic socialist struggle to..

STOP GAZA SLAUGHTER



Matt Dobson

There is mounting fury internationally at the slaughter and horror inflicted by the Israeli terror state which has continued into the Muslim holy month of Ramadan.

Over 30,000 have been killed since October, with more uncounted under the rubble. Hunger spreads, deaths are recorded, including children, from

starvation and dehydration. In decimated North Gaza civilians eat animal fodder.

US President "Genocide" Joe Biden, in an election year, is feeling under pressure, hypocritically increasing aid drops and even arguing for the building of a port on the Gaza coast to enable supplies.

Tens of thousands voted uncommitted in the Democrat primaries in

protest at his continued backing of Netanyahu's war.

Millions across the world protest every week. What use is tiny amounts of aid when the bombs still fall on Gaza, while civilians are displaced further into the South, when Israel fires missiles into Lebanon and brutally raids the West Bank and there is no sign of a ceasefire. Netanyahu, desperate to cling to power threatens that the IDF

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

will storm into Rafah where the majority of Gazans are now trapped.

Understandably, Palestinians and the Arab masses in the region ask again and again where the support for Gaza is from the corrupt capitalist dictatorships including Egypt and Jordan? As much as we cannot we rely on these tyrants, we cannot rely on Sunak or a Starmer government to end the killing either.

Workers' action against arm shipments to Israel has taken place in India. Trade unions and shop stewards internationally should discuss how best to impact the military exports to Israel.

Only independent struggle of the working class, the youth and the poor in the region can transform the situation away from ceaseless wars, oppression and poverty. The recent mass strike and occupation of textile workers for higher wages, majority women at the vast Ghazl al-Mahalla plant in Egypt show a glimpse of the way forward.

Socialist Party Scotland and the Committee for a Workers' International have taken part from day one in the

mass mobilisations in support of the Palestinian cause and for an end to the slaughter in Gaza. But we also point to how can this be achieved.

Our slogans calling for a socialist intifada – a mass working-class uprising – for Palestinian liberation and for the overthrow of the Israeli blood-thirsty capitalist class is central to finding a solution.

This means the building of mass workers' parties, trade unions and neighbourhood assemblies among both the Palestinians and the Israeli working class with links between them.

A struggle for a socialist solution means taking the major industries and resources in the region under the democratic control of the working class to be planned for the needs of the majority. It means an independent socialist Palestine and a socialist Israel as part of a socialist federation of the Middle East.

● Socialist Party Scotland will be standing in the general election this year on an anti-war, socialist platform as part of the Scottish Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition.