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LABOUR'S BETRAYAL OPENS DOOR TO REFORM UK

BUILD A MASS TRADE UNION AND SOCIALIST ALTERNATIVE



Editorial

2025 began where 2024 ended; with collapsing support for the Labour Party in Scotland and across the UK.

The full reality of Starmer and Reeves' betrayal of their albeit threadbare promises in opposition has been writ large in the six months since the Tories were thrown out.

From the refusal to act on the two-child benefit cap, the winter fuel robbery against millions of pensioners,

to the WASPI women who have been kicked in the teeth by a Labour government determined to act in the interests of big business from day one.

Add to that the continued cuts onslaught to public services and pay offers for workers that will not match inflation and the recipe is complete.

At the same time the wealth of the pampered capitalist elite remains untouched.

The top bosses of the FTSE 100 companies currently earn 113 times the average wage of a worker in the

UK. In a recent poll, asked if their opinion of Labour had improved, worsened, or stayed the same since they took power, 56% said it was worse, 37% said there had been no change, and just 7% said they now looked more favourably on the party.

A massive 88% said they did not think Keir Starmer's government would deliver on its promise to lower energy costs.

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BUILD A MASS TRADE UNION AND SOCIALIST ALTERNATIVE



Keir Starmer amidst storms. Photo: Number 10/CC



What we think

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no enthusiasm for Labour in July 2024

For millions of working-class people who voted in July 2024 to drive out the Tories few had any enthusiasm for Starmer's reheated Blairite policies.

Labour received the lowest share of the electorate's vote for any winning party in a general election since the end of the first world war in 1918. There was no honeymoon.

Now there is anger, a justified and visceral anger. And that anger is seeking an outlet.

To an overwhelming extent, the

rise in electoral support for the millionaire Farage's corporate entity Reform UK is rooted in this mood of outrage. But Reform offer not a scintilla of a solution to an economic disaster that is rooted in the crisis of capitalism – a system Farage supports to the hilt.

With projected growth rates in the UK of just 2% for 2025 and 1.5% for 2026, there is no possibility of any recovery under any government committed to retaining the profit system. Just continued and deepening attacks on the lives and incomes of the working class throughout the term of Starmer's government.

To weaken and undercut the support for the reactionary and racist Reform UK requires the building of a genuine opposition in the shape of a mass workers' party armed with socialist policies.

In this volatile and explosive period, the rise in support of the populist right is not the only expression of working-class anger.

The strike wave of 2022/23 that wrestled pay concessions from the UK and Scottish government was a shining example of what is possible.



To weaken and undercut the support for the reactionary and racist Reform UK requires the building of a genuine opposition in the shape of a mass workers' party armed with socialist policies.

More strikes are inevitable under Starmer and the SNP at Holyrood.

independence growing despite SNP

Another example in the last few months is that support for Scottish independence has spiked significantly as the reality of Labour's inevitable betrayal became all too clear.

There is a large section of the working class who are currently moving towards independence but not necessarily seeing the SNP as any alter-

native. In fact recent polls all indicate dramatic falls in Labour support, from 35% in July 2024 general election to 20% today. But the SNP's support has only risen by 4%, from 30% to 34%.

Its the same for current polling for the next major electoral test, the elections to the Scottish parliament in 2026.

Anas Sarwar's hope of becoming first minister is sinking in the Starmerite swamp. Sarwar himself was complicit in the surgical removal of the Corbynite wing by the pro-capitalist wing of the Labour Party that Sarwar himself is part off. And he is now paying the price for his role in driving the party to the right.

However, there is little to no enthusiasm for the SNP under the leadership of John Swinney and Kate Forbes.

The current budget going through the parliament will do nothing to ease the burden on an underfunded NHS, devastated council services, education and housing.

This is reflected in the fact that while support for independence has grown to 55%, support for the SNP in

the Holyrood election is a full 20% below that figure.

The SNP are largely a busted flush, having lost their core working class support after years of passing on Tory austerity.

It's against this backdrop that urgent steps are needed to begin to create a fighting socialist and trade union election alternative.

Reform UK are currently predicted to enter the Scottish parliament and even Alba, the populist independence party created by the late Alex Salmond, could also possibly win parliamentary representation next year.

The disintegration of Labour and SNP support is therefore opening up new opportunities for a genuine working-class and socialist election alternative to be established ahead of the 2026 election.

question of questions

The question of questions is how and whether such opportunities will be taken. Since 2010, the Scottish Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition, with Socialist Party Scotland playing a leading role, has stood in elections.

This has been done to encourage the building of independent working-class political representation as a step to a new mass workers' party based on the trade unions. Without question one of the key tasks of socialists in the trade unions is to fight and argue for such a development to take place.

However, while making that case we also have a responsibility to engage in the propaganda of the deed by standing in elections, as Scottish TUSC have done consistently.

For example, in the last few months we stood candidates in Dundee and Glasgow council by elections on a platform of ending all council cuts, nationalisation of energy and for a mass council house building programme.

More council by elections are taking place in the next few months and its vital that socialist candidates stand on a similar platform.

To that end, Scottish TUSC are inviting all trade unionists and socialist organisations who support the idea of standing working-class fighters in elections to come together as a matter or urgency to discuss using the by elections to offer that alternative.

As well as preparing a conference later in 2025 to launch a bid for the Scottish parliament elections next year.

To cut across the likes of Reform UK – who are drawing support from angry and disillusioned sections of the working class disgusted by the betrayals of Labour and the SNP – requires a socialist and trade union political alternative to be built.

Join with us and help fight for such a development.

Join Socialist Party Scotland

VISIT www.socialistpartyscotland.org.uk click on JOIN or MORE INFO

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TEXT your name and postcode 078891 35533

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

Website: socialistworld.net Facebook: @SocialistWorld
Twitter: @socialistworld YouTube channel: CWI Media

Defeat Farage and crew with socialist policies



Nigel Farage. Photo: Trago Mills CC BY-SA 4.0

Brian Smith

There is a clear need to challenge the divisive right-wing policies of Reform UK at the ballot box.

The failures of both Labour and the SNP to offer any real solutions to the problems faced by working class communities, and increasingly middle class ones too, has created a political space which the millionaire Nigel Farage has sought to exploit through Reform UK and its narrow nationalist, right-wing rhetoric.

Tens of millions of people across the UK can see that the current capitalist system only really works for the billionaires and the big corporations – a tiny elite who have never had it so good.

Labour and the SNP back this obscene profit driven economic system and implement the pain on public services demanded by their stock market pals. They have done little to challenge the cost of living crisis faced by millions of workers despite the fact that there are now more billionaires than ever.

The majority of people know that the current capitalist system is rigged against them. At the ballot box this sees many “hold their nose” and vote for that particular election’s least worst option (as happened in July 2024 with Labour) or just not voting at all (40% did not vote in July 2024, the second highest since 1885).

In July 2024, others voted Reform UK, with Farage’s crew securing 14% of the UK vote (and 5 MPs) and 7% in Scotland. There is the possibility of Reform UK winning seats in Scottish Parliament in 2026 under that election’s proportional representation system.

Reform UK pose as anti-establishment by pointing out that government institutions like the civil service and criminal justice system are dominated by an elite from similar privileged backgrounds.

Yet most of Reform UK’s leadership are just that – extremely wealthy and privately educated. They claim to be for better public services yet support more privatisation of hospitals and schools, abolishing inheritance tax and cutting higher rate tax.

They claim to be on the side of workers but call for employers to have more powers to sack staff through an extension of “fire and re-hire” rules, and for cuts in workplace health and safety protections.

A central plank of Reform UK’s approach is of course to blame the genuine pressures on public services, lack of affordable social housing, cuts to community facilities and the many other horrors of free, market capitalism that working class communities face on immigrants and asylum seekers.

no to scapegoating

The answer to these economic issues is not scapegoating and racism but socialist policies that use the wealth hoarded by the billionaires and big business to invest in health, education, housing and local communities.

The money and resources are there to transform the lives of all working class families, it’s the political will that is absent. Alongside this public

investment, we need an asylum system that offers safe routes for those fleeing persecution and war, and the ending of racist immigration laws. We also require internationalist socialist policies such as the trade union rate for the job for all workers that counter rather than promote imperialism, war and ethnic / religious nationalism.

Reform UK defend the existing economic system, that is why some capitalists and media commentators support them. But they are not the answer for working class people. Indeed, Reform UK seek to undermine the common experiences of all workers by exploiting the different racial, national and religious identities that exist within the working class. Socialists and trade unionists respect these various identities, whilst at the same time pointing out that working class unity and trade union organisation are required to deliver the socialist policies needed to improve the lives of all, including ending all forms of oppression.

Labour and the SNP are also not the answer, as they have both demonstrated in recent times at local and national government levels. Therefore, it is vital that a socialist and trade union alternative, including working class fighters standing as candidates in elections, is built.

The Scottish Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition, in which Socialist Party Scotland plays a central role, has stood consistently in recent local and national elections. That work needs to be built on, alongside other socialists and trade unionists in Scotland.

We need a new workers’ party with a radical manifesto of wealth redistribution, investment in public services and housing, democratic public ownership of the major sectors of the economy and opposition to war, racism and oppression.

Ideally, the trade union movement in Scotland should call a conference to discuss and agree such a manifesto, and to promote a socialist alternative in any council or parliament by-elections in 2025. This could be a step towards building a bigger socialist challenge in the Scottish Parlia-

News in brief

Bosses get richer, faster

The bosses of the UK’s 100 biggest listed firms made more money by noon on Monday 6 January than their average worker does in a whole year.

FTSE 100 chief executives enjoy median pay of £4.22 million, which is 113 times the median full-time worker’s pay of £37,430, according to the High Pay Centre, a campaign group.

This means these top bosses only had to work three days to make the same sum as their employees – with noon on Monday January 6 marginally quicker than last year’s milestone of 1pm.

Workers get poorer, and hungry

As many as one in six workers in Britain are skipping meals to make ends meet as households remain under pressure from the higher cost of groceries, energy and other essentials.

Highlighting the impact of the cost of living crisis on working households, figures from the Trades Union Congress (TUC) showed 17% of full- or part-time workers had skipped a meal to reduce their spending in the past three months.

The rich and their system are destroying the planet

The “polluter elite” are disproportionately driving climate change, according to a new report – with the wealthiest 1% of people in the world putting out as much carbon pollution as the poorest two-thirds.

“It would take about 1,500 years for someone in the bottom 99% to produce as much carbon as the richest billionaires do in a year,” Chiara Liguori, Oxfam’s senior climate justice policy adviser said.

This makes the case, yet again, for taking the wealth off the billionaires and planing the economy in a socialist and sustainable way based on democratic public ownership.

Flu admissions expose NHS crisis yet again

Alan Manley
retired nurse

As 2024 came to an end sudden rise in flu admissions and respiratory illnesses triggered a crisis in the NHS.

Some had to declare critical incidents due to exceptional demand. Data from the UK Health Security Agency shows hospital admissions are higher than this time last year.

Public Health Scotland reported a record high of 1,596 flu related admissions in the last week of 2024. In England there was an average of 4,469 flu patients in hospital every day up to the new year. At the time of writing there is no sign yet that we have passed the peak.

“These figures show the pressure from flu was nowhere near letting up before we head into the New Year,

skyrocketing to over 5,000 cases a day in hospital”, according to National Clinical Director of the NHS Professor Julian Redhead.

NHS National Medical Director Stephen Powys said, “Frontline staff were under significant pressure and demand on services showed no sign of letting up.

The already beleaguered NHS is now facing yet more stress and strain. A senior Dr in emergency medicine, Ian Higginson, has said “Almost every hospital is treating patients in corridors and car parks”. This statement was in response to the advert for nurses to work 12 hour “corridor care” shifts at Whittington Hospital in north London. Corridor care is normalised in the NHS.

Vaccination is the cornerstone of protection for individuals from the

flu, unfortunately the programme began late this season, and the effectiveness of the vaccine is yet to be assessed but some clinicians are saying that this current strain is not targeted by this year’s injection.

All in all, the flu sweeping across the UK has, once more, exposed the ongoing crises in the NHS. It shows the enormous deficit between what the service needs to do, care for vulnerable patients, and what it can do after decades of underfunding and cuts in service. New Labour and the SNP are showing themselves as incapable of addressing needs with policies that continue the cuts when funds remain needed to meet need.

Massive increases in NHS funding and public ownership, including of the giant pharmaceutical companies, are essential to tackle the crisis.



Photo: Frolicsomepl/CC

Labour betray WASPI women



Liz Kendall - DWP minister announced there would be no compensation

Clare Wilkins
Nottingham Socialist Party

WASPI women have been campaigning for over a decade. Women born between April 1950 and April 1960 worked and paid National Insurance to qualify for their state pensions at age 60. They lost out when

the previous Tory government increased the state pension age from 60 to 65, without being informed adequately or with enough time.

Because of this, the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman recommended in March 2024 that the women, who lost tens of thousands of pounds in pensions, be compensated between £1,000 and £2,950. Labour politicians supported the WASPI women when they were in opposition, happy to pose with campaigners to attack the Tories.

But on 17 December, Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) minister Liz Kendall announced that not only would there be no compensation but also that there had been sufficient notice from DWP, and there was no real evidence of significant detriment to the women.

This completely contradicted the findings of the ombudsman's report. Cynically, she left it till the eve of the Christmas recess to make the announcement.

The Labour government says that compensation would be a 'detrimental cost to the taxpayer' but 9 million of 12 million pensioners are taxpayers and, with tax thresholds frozen till

2028, almost all state pensioners will be paying tax. The tax burden is concentrated on poor pensioners and low-paid workers rather than those who salt their riches away in tax havens, or the big companies who pay little to no tax.

Our state pension is the lowest in Europe and you have to have 35 years of National Insurance payments to qualify in full.

Only 2 million pensioners get the full amount. Pensioners who qualified for state pension before 2016 receive the 'basic state pension', lower than the 'new state pension'. Over 2 million pensioners live in poverty and DWP figures show that the cut to the winter fuel payment will plunge up to 100,000 more into poverty.

We need a liveable state pension at an age that enables everyone to have a decent and dignified life in older age.

And instead of the false choice between pensioners and workers, take the wealth out of the hands of the super-rich bosses to pay for it! As none of the parties will stand up for us, we need one that will - a mass workers' party armed with a socialist programme.

Royal Mail handed over to a new billionaire boss

Gary Clark
Socialist Party Scotland and retired CWU member

The government has approved the takeover of Royal Mail by EP group whose majority shareholder is Daniel Kretinsky, with a personal wealth said to be over £9 billion.

The Communication Workers Union (CWU) has said it has reached a "groundbreaking" negotiators' agreement which covers a number of issues related to the future of Royal Mail, including job security, improved terms and conditions, and a "radical" new governance and business model, with a meaningful stake in the business for employees.

Royal Mail was privatised in 2013, and since has been completely run into the ground with shareholders and company directors gaining millions while the quality of service has

been destroyed. CWU members took strike action in 2022 for better pay and conditions. But the lack of planning and leadership at the top of the union led to many members losing faith in the leadership. The union lost thousands of members and has struggled to recruit new Royal Mail workers. Another serious mistake from the leaders of the union was their retreat from demanding that Royal Mail is brought back into the public sector.

A CWU motion to Labour Party conference in 2022 changed Labour Party policy in favour of renationalising Royal Mail. Royal Mail workers will be seeing railway companies brought back into public ownership.

Meanwhile, the CWU, which is affiliated to the Labour Party, has a leadership which fails to demand this from the Labour Government. Many will be asking: why are we still affiliated? We need to be clear, the new



owners are there for one reason only: that's to make money for the shareholders and not to look after the workforce or the quality of service. The only thing that would do that is a complete renationalisation of Royal Mail - not with the same management structure but democratic worker and community control of our postal service. This is what the leadership of the CWU should be fighting the Labour government for.

MSPs £2,000 A YEAR PAY RISE - WE NEED SOCIALIST MSPs ON A WORKERS' WAGE

MSPs are to get a pay rise of more than £2,000 this year. That's an increase of 3.2% and will take the salary for an MSP to £74,506.

This decision, taken by the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body - a body made up of 5 MSPs - will anger many facing the reality of still problematic cost of living pressures.

The increase follows on from a 6.7% last year, 1.5% the year before and 3.4% in 2022-23 for Holyrood politicians.

For those that actually run the government and make decisions, including denying workers pay rises that match inflation, the remuneration is even more generous.

A Scottish government minister

takes £81,449 a year. While a cabinet secretary is currently on £96,999.

To put it in context, the median wage for a full time employee in Scotland, is £38,315 - barely half of that of an MSP.

These scandals are reasons why Socialist Party Scotland members, when standing for election, always pledge to take the average wage of a skilled worker. Donating the surplus back to trade union and socialist causes.

You can't be expected to fight for your class if your income puts you so far out of that class.

Not that many MSPs are part of the working class anyway. Studies have shown that they are drawn from pre-

dominately middle class professions and backgrounds in terms of MSPs.

For example, while the gender background of MSPs has become more equal, the class background has moved in the opposite direction - of becoming more and more middle class, reflecting the pro-capitalist policies of all the major parties.

Which underlines why you need a class and socialist approach to fighting for genuine working-class representation in parliament.

It's just another reason why the workers' movement needs its own representatives in parliament. And why a new mass workers' party needs to be built, with a commitment to living on a workers' wage.

FIGHT FOR £15 AN HOUR - with no age exemptions



Youth Fight For Jobs protest Photo: Mary Finch

By a PCS member

Starmer's Labour government's plan to raise the minimum wage to £12.21 an hour for workers over the age of 21 in April 2025 has been met with horror by elements of the right wing press, however these measures still fall short of what is necessary to tackle the crisis of low pay.

Young workers will still be stuck on £10 an hour, and apprentices on just £7.75. With prices for food, rent, and energy soaring, these measures come anywhere near to solving the cost of living crisis.

Whilst the SNP have criticised Labour's minimum wage proposals, calling for the removal of youth rates, their proposals also fall short of what is necessary. Their own proposals are to implement the real living wage of 12.60 for all adults still massively falls short of the £15 being demanded by various trade unions. This includes Unison in Scottish local government, where the £15 demand has been opposed bitterly by the SNP government.

The rich are getting richer while workers struggle to make ends meet. The Sunday Times Rich List shows that Britain's 350 wealthiest people now own over £750 billion. Meanwhile, energy giants like Shell and BP made £22 billion in profits in 2023, while millions of us faced sky-high bills.

The capitalist class say there's no money to pay workers more—but that's a lie. Big corporations rake in billions and hand it out to shareholders, while wages stay low and public

services are cut to the bone. Studies carried out by Unions such as Unite has shown that corporate profits, and not high wages, has been the biggest contributing factor to inflation in recent years.

£15 now

Every worker, no matter their age, should be paid at least £15 an hour—now. Wages must rise with the cost of living so that no worker is left behind. Benefits and pensions should cover basic living costs.

The NHS, local councils, and public services must be fully funded to undo 15 years of cuts. We need massive investment in council housing, hospitals, and schools to create millions of good jobs.

The TUC, which supports the demand for a £15 an hour minimum wage, should organise action nationally to demand Starmer's Labour implement these measures.

take back what's ours

How can such a programme be paid for? By taking back the wealth that workers create. It's time to nationalise the banks, energy companies, and big corporations—put them under workers' control. No more fat profits for CEOs and shareholders while we struggle to make ends meet.

The money is there. The rich won't give it up willingly—we have to fight for it. Unions, workers, and communities must stand together and demand real, socialist change.

Fossil fuel bosses' profit bonanza

The effects of fossil fuel-driven climate change are writ large daily, often with deadly consequences. But while the climate plunges us further towards disaster, fossil fuel bosses' profits boom.

In just a three-hour period during Britain's cold snap at the start of January, two private gas power station operators charged £12 million for the electricity they generated - at up to 50 times the market rate. And you know who will be asked to pay more

in their bills to cover it!

With little wind, high demand, and Britain's lack of a greener alternative, gas power stations power up to fill the gap.

Bosses rub their hands with glee, the energy price system is rigged in their interests, in theory to ensure the power plants stay profitable.

We say nationalise without a penny going to the fat-cat polluting bosses, with compensation only where there is proven need.

For massive investment in council homes to end the housing crisis

Chris Sermanni

Glasgow City UNISON branch secretary (personal capacity)

Scotland – as with the rest of the UK – is currently mired in a housing crisis.

Shelter Scotland estimates that over 1.5 million people are 'living in overcrowded, dangerous, unstable or unaffordable housing'.

Figures in March 2024 showed that 16,330 households were living in temporary accommodation. There were 10,110 children amongst those households.

housing crisis declared

In May 2024, the Scottish Government declared a 'housing emergency' in the country. Five local authorities had already taken this position; Argyll & Bute, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Fife and West Dunbartonshire.

The SNP had voted against a Labour motion in November 2023 but eventually relented and it was passed with SNP amendments. They predictably blamed Westminster austerity, Brexit and rising inflation, washing their hands of any blame.

Shelter – the homeless charity – had been the driving force behind the push for these political declarations.

Their intention was for the government to then implement an action plan around three key commitments; buy and build 38,500 socially rented homes by 2026, fully fund local homelessness services and guarantee the right of a home to everyone experiencing homelessness.

What's happened since these declarations? Nothing. Homelessness services remain underfunded, 1800 'affordable homes' have been paused



Photo: CC by 2.0

indefinitely (due to a nearly £200m reduction in the Scottish government budget).

However well-intentioned the campaign might have been, it's delivered nothing more than words. Other interventions until now have been wholly ineffective; the SNP and Greens rent controls made little to no impact.

This comes as no surprise to socialists. The mainstream political parties in power do not have the answers needed to address the current crisis.

Starmer's New Labour are the latest in a long line of governments who have spoken of housebuilding targets – 1.5m by 2029 in his case – and inevitably will fail miserably.

Of course, Starmer, is not talking about 1.5m council homes, rather a bonanza for private housebuilders.

The government subsidise private homebuilders like Taylor Wimpey and Barratts, and yet the houses sold

are still totally unaffordable; the average price of a Taylor Wimpey house sold with the government's Help-to-Buy in 2020 was £286,000.

Even putting this aside, they would need to build 300,000 per year to reach their target. The UK have not built over 300,000 homes since 1977 and at this time, over half of these were built by councils.

ideological

Thatcher's ideologically driven 'Right to Buy' scheme sowed the seeds of today's housing crisis, of course.

There were 6.5m council homes in 1979. As of 2022, there are 2.2m. The total share of council housing stock then was 32% and is now less than 10%. It is estimated that 40% of privately rented tenancies on the market are former right to buy properties – this figure is as high as 70% in some

towns in England. Certain individuals profited greatly from the scheme – though not everyone as many could not afford to buy – but the cost to society has been huge and plainly evident today.

Council house waiting lists are enormous and young people today are trapped; unable to rent from councils, unable to afford private rents or a deposit for a mortgage.

Only socialist policies can solve the housing crisis.

A mass environmentally friendly council house building programme – on a scale that was seen post WW2 – is required to address the current crisis, coupled with retrofitting of existing unoccupied properties taken from the rich who stockpile them while people sleep on the street.

Nationalisation of the banks and construction companies would provide the finances and resources required to enact this.

Council by elections expose anger towards Labour and SNP

The overwhelming hatred and anger towards the main establishment parties – primarily Labour and the SNP – in working class communities was evident in the recent series of council by elections in Glasgow towards the end of 2024.

Turnout collapsed, in the case of the Glasgow North East ward it was just 12.4%, 19% in Maryhill and 15% in Drumchapel and Anniesland.

Labour – who were defending the three council seats – held on in all three but saw their vote plummet by almost 10% in the North East. The SNP continued their own dismal record in recent elections by failing to win any of the seats on offer and losing more than 10% of their vote in every ward.

Partly, the anger towards the main cuts-making parties in the North East and the grasping for an alternative was reflected in the increase in votes for Reform and to a lesser extent the Scottish Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition.

Scottish TUSC activists were not so surprised as this came up in the campaign with many who voted – bearing in mind almost 90% did not vote – seeing Reform and Scottish TUSC as the anti-establishment candidates.

Our first preference vote was up 2.5% from when Anne McAllister stood in 2022, totalling 3.7% and beating the Lib Dems. We were just a few votes behind the Greens and Tories who have higher media profile and councillors in Glasgow.

This result – and the result in Strathmartine Dundee in October where Donald McLeod, a NHS worker, got 3.4%, up by 2.7%, shows Scottish TUSC, despite limited resources, is building a credible electoral challenge with new openings in working class areas.

● It is likely that the North East ward by election will be re-run. The Labour candidate who was elected – and who was a council employee – did not notify her employer of her intention to resign to take up the council seat. A court hearing will take place in April. Scottish TUSC will stand if the by election is re-run.

End the council cuts scandal

Jim McFarlane

Dundee City UNISON secretary (personal capacity)

Councils across Scotland are currently drawing up plans to make another round of massive cuts. The Scottish government budget announced in December will mean further cuts to jobs and services.

Over the last 15 years local councils have cut services to the bone. Thousands of jobs have been lost and many services have disappeared. Other services have been outsourced or reduced to a bare minimum. The knock-on effect for local communities has been devastating. Schools, libraries, community centres, care services, youth facilities, sports centres, refuse collection and lots more have been massively cut. These are services that working class communities in particular rely on.

Councillors from all the main parties, SNP, Labour, Tory, Lib Dem and Greens have meekly rubber stamped cuts budget year on year. They have all claimed to have no choice, The reality is they have offered no resistance.

If they were to put up even a fraction of the effort into fighting the cuts – for example using their powers to set a no cuts budget – as they do with coming up with ways of making the cuts then that would be a start.

As the cuts continue we are seeing the beginning of real struggles in working class communities to defend local services such as schools, libraries and community centres.

Hundreds have attended local public meetings in areas such as Douglas in the East End of Dundee to fight the closure of their community centre. There is real anger towards all the politicians responsible. They will pay a heavy price at the ballot box

after taking votes for granted for too long.

The trade union movement can play a key role of building support and helping to link the different campaigns to fight together. Demonstrations and other forms of social protest and civil disobedience are inevitable.

Council trade unions should also play a pivotal role in supporting community struggles as well as looking to organise action to defend jobs and services.

Socialists and trade unionists should be urgently discussing an electoral challenge to all the cuts politicians. The failed capitalist parties have exposed themselves again and again.

The new Labour Government at Westminster are already unpopular and the SNP have seen their support evaporate after years of cuts to council funding. Right wing forces such as



Reform UK will be looking to capitalise amongst this chaos but they have no solutions and offer more of the same as well as rampant privatisation of public services.

The rich have never been richer. Profits are at record levels in many sectors. That wealth needs to be

utilised for the benefit of all.

A mass struggle of workers and communities can help bring that about if this is linked to the building of a mass socialist organisation rooted in the trade unions and wider working class.

What will **Trump 2.0** mean for workers and the world?

Matt Dobson

The days and weeks leading up to Donald Trump's inauguration saw wildfires wreak havoc in California. This followed the devastation of the Hurricane Helene's damage in North Carolina and the South East. The US Guardian compared the storm's wreckage, which have torn down both the richest and poorest dwellings, to the landscape of Cormac McCarthy's post-apocalyptic novel, *The Road*.

Millions of working and middle-class Americans look on in despair and rage that a continent-sized state machine, where trillionaires dominate the media and the two main parties, cannot provide the infrastructure and resources, to provide basic protection for their homes and livelihoods.

Trump's opponents in the US ruling class look with trepidation at the many storms to come from his presidency. This maverick, if his rhetoric meets reality, will upset the "international order" of geopolitics. What effect will his aggressive tariff protectionist policies have on the economy?

His right populist views on immigration, health, abortion, the federal budget and the debt ceiling can inflame centrifugal tensions, including conflicts between individual states and institutions in an ever more polarised society.

Many workers were appalled and looked on in horror and bewilderment as Trump won the November 2024 presidential election by 2.5 million votes as the Republicans gained control of the three branches of government.

Howl of protest

Trumpism 2.0 is a result of a howl of legitimate protest by sections of the US working and middle class who have suffered economically for the past five decades. 80% of voters saw the economy as the key issue. Seven out of ten workers have seen their wages flatline since the 1970s.

If economic trends present in 1970s America had continued, including, critically, the power and influence of labor unions, \$50 trillion more dollars would be in the pockets of 90% of the population.

Instead neoliberalism, a war on organised labor by Democrats and Republican administrations and economic crisis have shattered any illusions in the American Dream - that each generation would be more prosperous than the last.

In reality the corporate Democrats, with their failure to deal with rampant profiteering during an inflation crisis post-pandemic fronted up by Biden and then Harris and backed by 82 billionaires lost the election.

They polled four million fewer votes than when Trump was voted out in 2020. Is it any wonder that young people, women, African Americans and Latino's struggled to "feel the joy" of the Harris campaign, with blood on its hands over Gaza and Biden's higher deportation rate than Trump. Why would many workers, despite many Labor leaders backing Harris' and Biden's attempts to pose as a pro union President, back the record of an administration who banned a national railroad strike?

It is not the case that the vote for Trump represents total support for his bigoted rhetoric. Take the issue of abortion. The state ballots to enshrine abortion rights that polled at the same time as the Presidential vote showed the majority of Americans, including in five states where the majority supported Trump, support legalised abortion.

The Trump campaigns populist promises of higher wages, protection of industrial jobs, action on affordable healthcare against big pharma and an end to support for foreign wars, are likely to come back to haunt him when his administration fails to deliver. Today's downtrodden worker voting Trump can quickly become tomorrow's class fighter. Sections of the ruling elite are terrified that the chaos of Trumpism will provoke mass movements and struggle that undermine their rule.

Currently the boiling rage in US society often gets expressed by the ready means available. The context is the lack of a mass political voice that unifies, organises and expresses the interests of the majority.

This can have extreme results. Witness the public reaction, even understandable sympathy, for Luigi Mangione, the suspected assassin of the United Healthcare CEO. This response was rooted in the catastrophic lack of affordable healthcare and ruthlessness of the private vultures who profit from the industry.

A Trump administration may struggle to deal with the political impact of the trial. This harks back to the early history of the workers' movement in the US, where Anarchist assassinations of bosses and bombings were a feature, a reaction to the brutality of US capitalism.

Once again socialists and labor ac-



Donald Trump. Photo: Gage Skidmore/CC Below. Wildfires here ripped through California causing widespread devastation Photo: timatymusic/CC 2.0



The labor unions must use their organising capacity and unifying authority to lead a fightback on wages, housing, healthcare, women's and migrant rights, alongside a mass recruitment drive into their ranks and an offensive struggle on the right to organise and strike.

tivists must skilfully explain that individual terrorism is counterproductive. Individual CEOs can be replaced and such actions can strengthen attacks on the working class by the US state machine and security services under a Trump administration.

mass action

The most effective alternative that can bring down the system of the billionaires is mass collective industrial and political action by workers. There is ready audience for these arguments among the 70% of the US public, including 40% of Republicans, who view Labor unions positively.

The majority of US capitalists and their allies internationally opposition to Trump also partly reflected their concern at the potential results of his aggressive protectionist and unorthodox foreign policy pronouncements, including that he will quickly bring the Russia - Ukraine and Gaza conflicts to an end.

In a multipolar world where a declining US is threatened by China, it is an open question as to how far his rhetoric will become reality. Even a Harris administration would have had to retain trade and tariff barriers (as Biden did) to undermine China. But Trump's aggression, even before his inauguration, demanding Greenland from Denmark and raising the prospect of tariff conflicts with Canada and Mexico, threatens to shred up what remains of post-World War two international relations.

Despite promising isolationism, Trump will be buffeted by increasing world conflicts and disorder. The US can no longer act as the world's policeman and banker, as it did from the early 1990s after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Protectionism can even bring new financial crisis and meltdowns in the world economy. Britain

and Scotland will not be unaffected. As a minor power caught between the EU and the US as trading partners, the appointment of Mandelson as Starmer's toady US ambassador in the vain hope of manoeuvring a favourable position with Trump will not save declining capitalism here.

Even before entering the White House, Trumps administration, itself a coterie of mavericks and personal friends from Tesla social media tycoon Elon Musk, to Hillbilly champion JD Vance and ex leading Democrat Tulsi Gabbard has erupted in divisions.

Over immigration, Musk's opposition to attacks on Tech workers will be echoed by sections of the capitalist class in border states. In care, hospitality and construction sectors the bosses will oppose a blunt policy of raids, deportations and detention of migrant workers. Trump may try and marry tax breaks he promises for the wealthy with continued investment in manufacturing in states who voted for him to protect jobs. While his victory will give confidence to the far right thugs and vigilantes, there will be limits to his reaction and it is not correct to term his administration as fascist.

Fascism historically mobilised the middle class and downtrodden layers to smash the organisations of the working class. Today the labor unions and workers' struggle are in a stage now of real recovery.

2024 saw massive strikes of UAW autoworkers, Boeing machinists and dockers that made real gains for workers. Amazon Teamsters, from coast to coast, and even ski resort workers are on the picket lines recently.

Trump, under pressure, even courted the Teamster leadership. Trump's administration may well concentrate power in his hands and step up state repression. A warning was seen in the 2021 Capitol Insurrection and "March on Washington" when supporters of Trumpism, some armed, attempted to overturn the election result.

The workers' movement cannot afford to be complacent. When Trump raised in 2019 about refusing to leave office sections of the unions were correct to discuss the idea of a general strike.

Of course, the "March on Washington" was dwarfed by the numbers involved in labor strikes since 2020. Also, by the numbers in the women's marches and Black Lives Matter. During the early stages of BLM, 40% of Republican voters supported the protests. Protests against Trump, unlike in 2016, have so far been muted.



Amazon workers took strike action in December 2024. Photo: ISG

The labor unions must use their organising capacity and unifying authority to lead a fightback on wages, housing, healthcare, women's and migrant rights, alongside a mass recruitment drive into their ranks and an offensive struggle on the right to organise and strike.

Where needed, they can organise defence against attacks by the state and vigilantes on demonstrations and pickets. It must never be forgotten that every major gain for American workers, whatever their background, historically came when the unions were on the offensive, including in the 1930s New Deal period.

No trust can be placed in the corporate Democrats. The appeals by Bernie Sanders, and Oscar Cortez, with diminishing authority, on the Democrats to "move back to the working class" will fall on deaf ears.

Our sister organisation, the Independent Socialist Group, is pioneering the fight to transform the leaderships of the unions to fight and also raising

the need for a new mass workers' party, based on labor, capable of drawing in all those who want to fight the dictatorship of the corporations.

A step towards this means running socialist and pro-worker candidates. The potential for this was seen in the campaign of union worker Dan Osborn in Nebraska who won 46% of the vote. The class struggles in the US that are coming will be on an even higher level than the 1930s and 1960s.

The anxiety of the ruling elite intellectually has been witnessed with the proliferation of books and essays on the decline of US society and the American dream. US society can only move forward and the lives of those ordinary workers can only be transformed through socialist change.

That means the working class taking over and democratically running the world's largest, richest economy, from the banks to the insurance companies, tech servers, factories, refineries and warehouses. As part of the struggle for a socialist world.

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Unison: fighting NEC leadership needed to take on Labour government



UNISON members deserve a fighting leadership of their union.

Hugo Pierre

Unison local government service group executive (personal capacity)

On 13 January, the nomination process for electing Unison's new National Executive Council (NEC) begins. The election for Unison's national leadership will take place against a background of crisis for members in all the areas the union organises in.

According to the Local Government Association, there is a £4 billion projected deficit in funding of local councils this year, rising to £6.5 billion in 2025-26. This is after councils have lost 22.6% of their core funding since 2010.

In the NHS there are near-record waiting lists in the midst of a winter crisis. Universities face a funding crisis because of the commercialisation of the sector – which could result in some going bankrupt either this financial year or possibly the next. The social care sector is massively understaffed, with nearly a quarter of a million vacancies across all types of care.

The water industry is wracked by rampant profiteering, and the probation and justice services are unable to play the role of rehabilitating offenders because of funding crises.

Labour's Budget severely short-changed public sector workers regarding dealing with any of these long-term crises. And potentially made them worse, with increases to employers' national insurance adding to funding pressures.

The recent government announcement of a 2.8% pay envelope for public sector workers in 2025 will do nothing to repair 15 years of damage that saw most workers lose around 20% of the value of their pay, and now makes working in the sector massively unattractive.

history of right-wing leadership

Unfortunately, Unison's national leadership has not stepped up to meet the challenges members face in their workplaces. A history of right-wing leadership has left the union organisationally weak, even though it is the largest trade union in Britain with

1.3 million members. Their policy of building a 'members-services-based union' reduced the activist layer, as well as attacking the democratic structures and participation of the membership.

It is clear that the current general secretary, a large section of the paid officials, and a layer of self-serving lay officials want Unison to become a 'partner union' of the Labour government. They have never been prepared to fight alongside the membership in militant struggle, but have largely seen the role of the union as another pressure group or lobbying organisation when opposing attacks on members.

Now they have received documents from the government aimed at getting partnership in schools, and presumably the intention of a cost-cutting Labour government is for other sectors to follow.

The only real option for Unison members in the face of these attacks is to develop a fighting programme that organises the members to win on a local and national level, against a government that has set out its plans to protect the bosses' profits and reduce public services to suit their demands. Only a programme that sets its task to fight Labour in power can rebuild the strength of our union.

Left needs a fighting approach

Since 2021, the left has controlled the NEC, although with a narrow majority since 2023. The left also controls the large Local Government Service Group. An internal battle for the direction of the union has been fought out at this level, but so far it has tended to concentrate on organisational issues that have not involved the wider membership.

The decision by the left bloc Time For Real Change (TFRC) to back for union president an NEC member who was under investigation for harassing female members and staff set the left back. It mobilised a demoralised right wing to win conference decisions to sanction the NEC and force it to reverse some of its decisions.

The wider membership now has to have a say in the direction for our union. The Socialist Party stands for

a complete transformation of Unison's leadership and the biggest possible victory for the left in these crucial elections.

Although we have been critical of TFRC's approach on a number of issues, we have nevertheless proposed working together to maximise the possibility of defeating the right. We submitted a programme for a fighting Unison around which the left could organise in the NEC elections, and the election for general secretary which will take place later in the year (see 'For a fighting Unison').

The Socialist Party wants a fighting general secretary who will clearly oppose the 'partnership' model for members and is prepared to develop a fighting trade union that will face down a Labour government.

electoral agreement

Unfortunately, TFRC did not agree to adopt this programme. The discussions, whilst largely fraternal, did reveal weaknesses in TFRC's approach to candidates who may be sitting Labour councillors and who are not openly fighting the cuts in their councils.

They were also not prepared to back a Socialist Party member who supported the women who lodged a complaint of harassment against the ex-president – even though he has since been expelled under the left NEC leadership, subject to his right to appeal.

TFRC have selected Andrea Egan as their candidate in the general secretary election. Socialist Party members will clearly not be bystanders in an election that could have a significant impact on the direction of battles for Unison members in the next five years. We will continue to put forward our ideas for developing a fighting union to the TFRC candidate and during the election campaign.

Seven Socialist Party members will be standing in the NEC elections and TFRC will be standing aside for them. The candidates will stand on our programme and aim to work with TFRC candidates fighting in other constituencies. This will include calling for nomination for nearly all of them, which they have agreed to reciprocate.

Unison members will get the chance to vote for candidates that could make a major difference to the direction the union takes, if they are successfully nominated over the month-long nomination period.

Socialist Party members standing for nomination:

- Jim McFarlane
Scotland General seat
- Rae Cox
Unison South East reserved seat
- Eve Miller
West Midlands reserved seat
- Adrian O'Malley
Health general seat
- Amy Sage
Police, Probation and Cafcass female seat
- Ellie Waple
Disabled Members female Seat
- April Ashley
Black Members female seat

UNIVERSITY CASH CRISIS DEEPENS Step up the fight for full funding



Students fighting back - Photo Alex Smith

Oisin Duncan

In the last issue of the Socialist, we looked at the emerging crisis in higher education funding. While higher fees will be mitigated by increased maintenance loans in England, the Scottish budget currently being drafted in Holyrood claims to protect "the right to free tuition".

However, the complaints from university management over funding have continued, stemming from the Scottish government's 'clawback' of public funds from universities which have not met their recruitment targets.

For students at these unis, such as University of the West of Scotland (UWS) and Dundee University, this means cutbacks to services and the quality of their courses.

At the same time, the SNP minister for Education, Graeme Dey, told a Holyrood committee the Scottish government is "open to other funding models". What could this mean? Introducing fees, cutting services for students and attacking campus staff's pay and conditions?

Add to this the further education funding row, with Colleges Scotland and the Scottish Government arguing over who should finance the repair of crumbling RAAC concrete at 7 colleges across Scotland. Colleges Scotland claim that the 24 colleges they represent are now dealing with 17% real terms funding cut since the 2021-22 Scottish Budget, which ultimately fails young people in further education.

How are students anywhere in higher or further education supposed to focus on what they're learning when their uni might be at risk of closure, or their college's literal structural integrity is in doubt?

Similarly, the staff in this sector already toil under casualised conditions for substandard wages. Pushing more of the austerity burden onto them simply cannot be permitted by the trade unions on campus.

Of course, the lack of a political alternative makes it easier for Labour, the SNP and all the capitalist parties to pass the buck off to one another. A new mass workers' party could immediately change this by declaring common cause with student and

campus staff and campaigning for a fully funded education system - without fees.

Enormous profits are extracted from the products of publicly funded research, and this money should help open more spaces for working class students instead of lining the bosses' pockets.

Equally, further education will prove invaluable in dealing with pressing problems such as the housing crisis or the need for a socialist transition to reduce carbon emissions. Both of these problems require more vocational training in construction and engineering.

Ultimately, while successive SNP governments in Holyrood have mitigated the debt burden on students, they will not be able to afford this indefinitely. As Starmer continues to promise more economic pain for the working class, tuition fees for Scottish students cannot be ruled out.

tuition fees

Students and staff should be preparing now for a struggle against any introduction of tuition fees in Scotland, and consciously linking that struggle to the fight for a fully funded education system, including a living grant for all students.

Socialists have and will continue to argue that this would mean putting staff and students in charge of decision-making on campus, not profiteers or vice chancellors.

And that means a break with capitalism. We fight for a socialist education system, not underfunded and crumbling unis and colleges.



Join with Socialist Students
socialiststudents.org.uk/join

Budget sees SNP continue to play pass-the-parcel with cuts

Mick Lynch retires from RMT



SNP finance secretary Shona Robison. Photo: Scottish Government/CC

Philip Stott

As we go to press, the Scottish government budget for 2025/26 is set to be passed in the coming weeks.

In moving the draft budget in December 2024, SNP finance secretary Shona Robison described the backdrop as: "The UK Budget resulted in an increase in funding through the Barnett formula....After inflation, it represents growth in day-to-day spending to pay for services of only around 1% year on year."

As we said after Rachel Reeves' Westminster budget: "underfunded public services will continue to be underfunded, austerity will remain and working-class people will continue to be asked to pay the price for the crisis of British capitalism." No surprise then that the Scottish budget will do exactly the same.

Indeed, the likelihood of further savage cuts in the UK government's spending review is growing by the day. The spending review is already requiring government departments to cut 5% from budgets.

Darren Jones, the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, sent to cabinet ministers in December and detailed that "success will require ruthless prioritisation" of public spending, which Reeves and Starmer have said they will stick to.

Typically for the SNP-led government, Robison in December went on: "This Government has had to take difficult decisions to manage financial pressures." "Difficult decisions" are SNP and Labour speak for continued cuts and underfunding to local

government, housing and the NHS.

Headlines like "record funding" for the NHS and local government are meaningless in the context of more than a decade of cuts and austerity. With inflation eating into budgets and increased demands for health and social care services - the reality is waiting lists will grow and budgets will fail to cover demand.

two-child cap

Much was made of the intention to mitigate the hated two-child benefit cap, but not until April 2026. In truth, this will do little to alleviate child poverty which currently affects 240,000 children who are living in relative poverty in Scotland.

And that figure is increasing. While welcome, if it happens, it will benefit 15,000 children. The key issues of benefit cuts and low pay - working families make up the majority of those where children grow up in poverty - are decisive.

As it is, the SNP pledge is clearly designed to be timed for the next Scottish parliament election in 2026 and an attempt to outflank Labour with Starmer keeping the Tory policy in place.

This follows on from the SNP's announcement that it will introduce a universal winter fuel payment, but not until next year.

By refusing to use their powers to mitigate Starmer's cut this year they are letting down up to 800,000 pensioners in Scotland.

As important would be fighting for



As we said after Rachel Reeves' Westminster budget: "underfunded public services will continue to be underfunded, austerity will remain and working-class people will continue to be asked to pay the price for the crisis of British capitalism." No surprise then that the Scottish budget will do exactly the same.

the nationalisation of the energy companies under workers' control to slash bills to help end fuel poverty.

housing

The SNP were rightly hammered last year for cutting the funding for affordable housing at the same time as declaring a housing emergency. This budget promises a £768 million investment in affordable homes - yet that only reverses the cuts from last year.

So far behind are the Scottish government on their housing targets that an estimated investment of £9 billion is needed by 2032 to build the promised 110,000 affordable and social housing units, 70% for social rent.

The 8,000 homes to be built/started this year will see them fall even further behind the modest target they set.

Meanwhile homelessness and

housing waiting lists are at record levels. Local government is going to see further cuts made to council budgets in February/March 2025.

Bizarrely, Robison crowed that by March 2026 no one will wait longer than 12 months for a new outpatient appointment, inpatient treatment or day case treatment.

That's one year! No one believes these targets, not least after every single previous government target has failed to be delivered on.

The headline £2 billion "uplift" in NHS spending for next year was undermined when the IFS report said her own figures in the budget showed it would only be half of that figure.

The huge underfunding crisis in Scottish colleges and universities will likewise not be relieved by the paltry amounts on offer in.

What is ever clearer following the draft budget is that working-class communities and trade unionists need their own political alternative.

A mass workers' party based on the trade unions and fighting on socialist policies would stand for public ownership and an end to all cuts.

Socialist Party Scotland will be championing the need for a major trade union and socialist election challenge for the Scottish elections in 2026.

The urgency for this has been underlined a hundred times by the Starmer government's betrayal, the SNP playing pass-the-parcel with Westminster cuts and, as a result, the inroads being made by Reform UK in working-class areas in Scotland.

After five years as general secretary of transport union RMT, Mick Lynch has announced he is retiring.

The election of a new general secretary comes at a critical time, as RMT members and the wider working class face up to the reality of a pro-capitalist Labour government attempting to force through even more austerity.

Socialist Party members in the RMT discussed the way forward for the union in an article in the April 2024 edition of *Socialism Today* entitled 'Militant Mick: Drawing up a balance sheet'.

"A Starmer government acting in the interests of the capitalist class will inevitably try to launch a new offensive against us, as part of its effort to curb the demands of the wider working class. We need to be ready."

John Reid, former RMT NEC member, writes:

Mick Lynch is seen by thousands of trade unionists as someone who personified the ongoing militancy of the largest rail union the RMT. He led the RMT at the forefront of the strike wave and announced that "the working class is back". Mick Lynch also dealt adroitly with the media, launching an onslaught against the bosses and capitalists. This action gave confidence to huge swathes of workers to take action and win.

Just as with Jeremy Corbyn previously, thousands of young people were enthused and became interested in socialist ideas as a result of his comments and the combativeness of the RMT, which many workers regard as the 'praetorian guard' of the trade union movement.

However, Mick had an opportunity to build on the industrial platform by taking the fight on to the political level and building an alternative to Labour after the defeat and expulsion of Jeremy Corbyn and his anti-austerity pro-working class manifesto. The launching of *Enough is Enough* by Mick Lynch and Communication Workers Union leader Dave Ward offered that opportunity. However, this project, although sparking massive interest, never got off the ground.

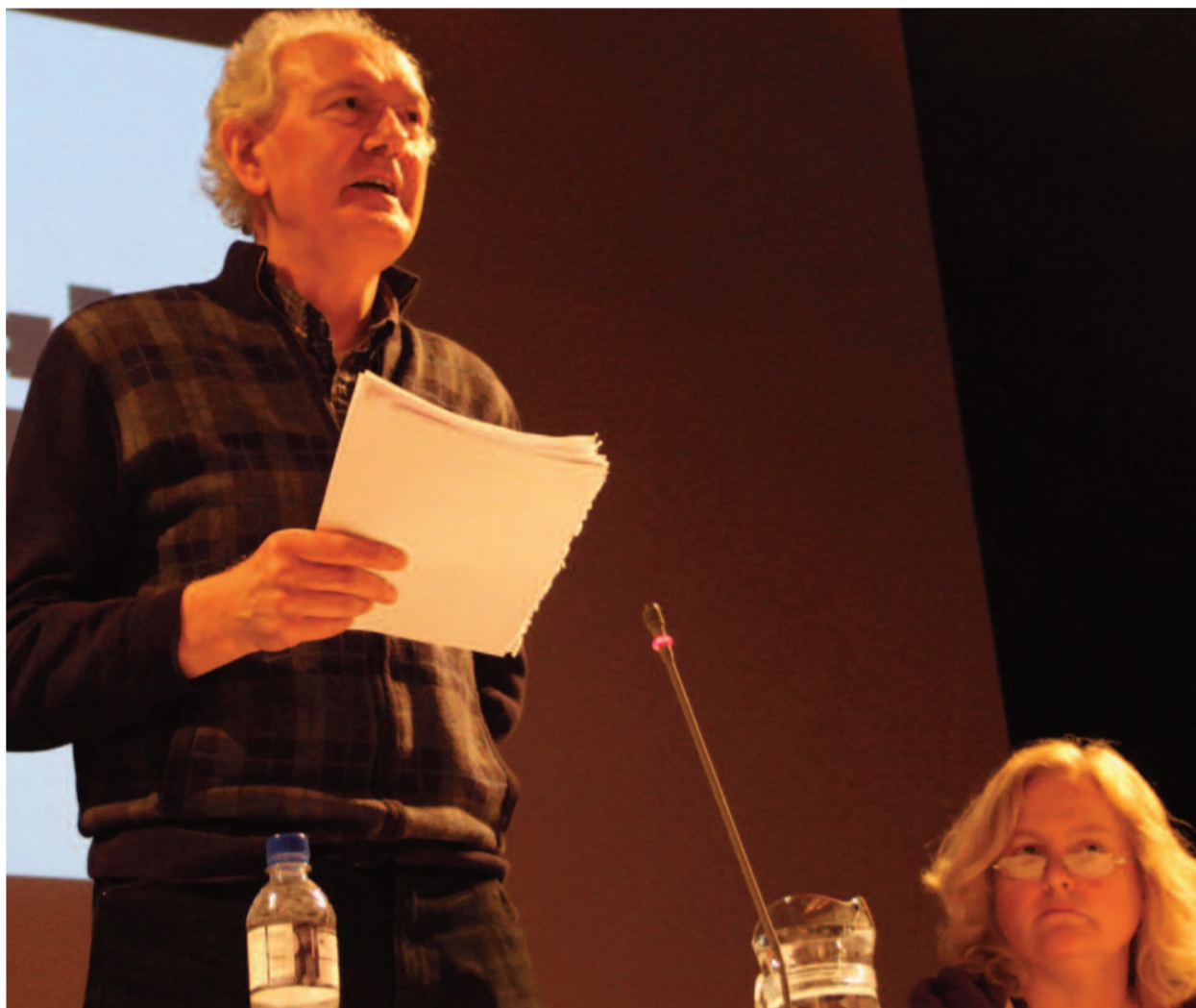
Instead, Mick put hopes in Starmer and the incoming Labour government. Socialist Party members and supporters in the RMT will call on candidates in the coming election for general secretary to pledge to maintain and develop industrial militancy but to couple this with building a new workers' party based on socialism, solidarity and internationalism, to give an alternative to working-class people to the pro-big business pro-billionaire policies of Labour, Tory, Lib Dem and Reform.

● Red Line Zoom public meeting 'Where now for the RMT after Mick Lynch?'

Sunday 9 February 5pm
 Meeting ID: 899 3454 7112
 Passcode: 077984

OBITUARY: LYNN WALSH

A major contributor to Trotskyism



Lynn Walsh speaking at Socialism 2013.. Photo: Senan

Clare Doyle

Lynn Walsh died on 15 November aged 79. Born and brought up in the south of England, he began studying at Sussex University in 1964. Lynn soon joined our small but growing group of revolutionary Marxists – inside the Brighton Labour Party, in its youth section and in the university's socialist club. Our newspaper, *Militant*, was launched in October of that year.

Lynn showed great enthusiasm for our ideas and those of the great teachers – Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky. He had considerable talent. This he had shown early on when, via Sussex University, he was voted into the national leadership of the Revolutionary Socialist Student Federation – an organisation that had mushroomed under the impact of the May 1968 revolutionary events in France.

The Revolutionary Socialist Student Federation's existence was short-lived, but it was initially sizeable and, as Bob Labi recalls, Lynn played a prominent role arguing for our views and cut his political teeth in what were sometimes fierce political debates.

After leaving Sussex, Lynn spent time based in London, developing the work of our growing organisation. In the early 1970s he moved to Manchester to work as one of the first regional full-timers for *Militant*.

When revolution broke out in Portugal in 1974, Lynn was sent by our newly founded organisation – the Committee for a Workers' Interna-

tional – to build a base there for our ideas, with almost no knowledge of the country's language!

Back in London, Lynn became an invaluable writer and editor of *Militant's* publications. He was also involved in important legal battles, working closely with friend and solicitor, Mike Fisher. This included the Labour Campaign for the Defence of Brixton, set up in response to the 1981 'riots', and later several others. Lynn lived with his partner, Vivien Seal, and son, Daniel, just at the top of Brixton Hill, in a house often used for local *Militant* meetings.

Along with the other four of us on *Militant's* editorial board – Peter Taaffe, Keith Dickinson, Ted Grant, and myself – Lynn was 'put on trial' by Labour Leader, Neil Kinnock, and the party's National Executive Committee. At the 1983 Labour Party Conference (in Brighton, as it happens), we were expelled from the Labour Party.

The following year, 1984, Lynn's son, Daniel, aged seven, was presented with a prize by Neil Kinnock for a drawing he had done about the health service. Daniel promptly asked him why he had expelled his father from the party!

In the 1980s, our organisation in Britain had grown to beyond 8,000 members and we held a major rally in Alexandra Palace. At this time, Lynn was an important contributor to the major debates we had nationally and internationally. Lynn also provided important advice and a Marxist theoretical grounding for our student members, as *Militant* grew in

strength nationally in that field of activity in the 1980s. He took a clear position during the split in the CWI in the early 1990s and was the key editor of our theoretical journal – *Militant International Review* – and then of its successor, *Socialism Today*.

Committee for a Workers' International (CWI)

Increasingly involved in the CWI's activity, Lynn visited a number of countries on its behalf, including South Africa, with Tony Saunois, as well as India, Sri Lanka, Pakistan and, many times, the US. He spoke at numerous debates and meetings on behalf of the CWI. I particularly remember when he visited the USSR in its turbulent dying days. He addressed a meeting in the capital, Moscow, and then a gathering of 50 people in Leningrad, in the very same ballerina's house that the Bolsheviks used in April 1917.

The new period that then opened, as a result of the collapse of the Soviet Union and other Stalinist states, saw wide-ranging debates amongst Marxists, in which Lynn prominently participated. Lynn also covered the work of the Southern region of the Socialist Party during this period.

Not long into the 21st century, Lynn's life moved all too rapidly from sheer delight in his partnership with Lorraine Dardis, who had moved to London from the US, into the tragedy that ensued with her terminal illness and untimely death. Lynn suffered increasing serious health problems, including failing eyesight, becoming



The *Militant* Editorial Board were expelled by the right wing of the Labour Party in 1983. Lynn Walsh pictured on the right

increasingly dependent on the unstinting help of friends and, in particular, that given by his comrade-neighbours, Roger and Elizabeth Keyse.

During Lynn's last years, when he was once more in Brighton, where Daniel was living, Lynn was no longer able to be active politically. He had visits from family and close friends, like Nick Chaffey from Southampton, and on one last occasion in 2023, Jagadish Chandra from Bangalore, India.

Those of us who knew Lynn well for many decades – who worked with him, visited the theatre and concerts with him (and very occasionally clashed with him) – will never forget Lynn or his contribution to the building of the forces of Marxism and Trotskyism nationally and internationally.

Many newer members of our party and the CWI who never met Lynn nonetheless will gain enormous benefit from his written material.

'Expert witness on Marxism and Trotskyism'

Glenn Kelly

A key part of the fight to defending the Socialist Party's four from being witch-hunted in Unison, was our legal battle. Given that it was clear we were being targeted because we were Socialist Party members, we lodged a discrimination claim based on our political beliefs, a rare legal precedent at the time.

Throughout this period, Lynn and Peter Taaffe were constant supporters and advisors. Lynn even testified as our 'expert witness on Marxism and Trotskyism'.

Despite the union barrister's attempts to undermine the ideas of socialism and show that the ideas were 'not worthy of respect in a democratic society', he could not fluster Lynn, and soon wanted him out of the witness box. Lynn's calm, insightful words always commanded attention. His passing is a great loss, but his writings will continue to strengthen Marxist ideas within our party.

Strikingly profound understanding of science and dialectics

Pete Mason

Lynn had a strikingly profound understanding of science and dialectics. Lynn was never a rigid or dogmatic thinker.

He excoriated my early naive view that science simply develops according to discovered 'facts'. No, he told me, the progress of science could only be understood through the Marxist, historical materialist method: that science is a human process of cognition bound by historically developed constructs, even while discovering results that defy our comprehension.

Once, when I mentioned in discussion Engels's three laws of dialectics, Lynn astonished me: "Lenin described 16 'laws', not three." They were not laws in the sense of fixed, scientific laws, he explained. They are a guide to understanding. Lenin also states, after enumerating his 16 "laws", that dialectics can be summed up as the 'unity of opposites' but adds: 'but it requires explanations and development'. Engels called it the "interpenetration of opposites" which is, perhaps, also rather a rather obscure sounding expression.

Lynn explained how science is just such a 'unity of opposites' – perhaps 'disunity' is a better word in English – of conflicting theories.

Eventually the old 'unity' bursts asunder in a revolution of new higher level of understanding. Quantity turns to quality.

The results of decades of discussion and investigation with Lynn formed the book, 'Science, Marxism and the Big Bang', which Lynn not only guided and edited, but even provided the opening paragraph, which, typical of his thinking, warns against dogmatism: "Marxism does not provide a ready-made key for making judgements about scientific ideas.

It cannot substitute for a detailed knowledge of the appropriate scientific material." But what the dialectics of Marxism does do is provide a framework for understanding what science is and how it operates. Daniel

Canada: Trudeau resigns amid growing working-class disillusion

Clare Hudson
CWI Canada



Justin Trudeau. Photo: Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's office/CC

Within the first days of 2025, the Canadian Liberal Party prime minister Justin Trudeau announced his resignation. In response, US president-elect Donald Trump reiterated his threats of a 25% tariff on Canadian and Mexican exports and continued to call for Canada to join the US as the '51st state.' These events reflect the chaos and instability of capitalism internationally. At a time of stagnation and crisis, the question of how to ideologically shore-up and force the continuation of the capitalist system is being 'fought out' among the billionaires and their politician friends.

Those in the camp of holding onto the status quo, such as Trudeau, are losing support from large sections of workers and youth who are desperate for an alternative to poverty and are struggling to survive in the face of the cost-of-living crisis.

A Canadian federal election will be called this year. Trudeau was elected in 2015 with a majority Liberal parliament after ten years of a Conservative parliament. The last federal election in 2022 resulted in a minority Liberal parliament, forcing them to rely upon the support of the New Democratic Party (NDP) and Bloc Quebecois (BQ) to pass motions and bills.

The NDP, which is considered 'centre-left', withdrew support from the Liberals in parliamentary votes in September 2024, in preparation for a 2025 federal election and the need to be seen as politically separate from one another.

Trudeau's announcement to resign on 6 January came as no surprise given months of internal pressure for his resignation among Liberal Party caucuses, in addition to growing anger among many Canadians who have seen their quality of life deteriorate during the cost-of-living crisis. In spring 2024, nearly half (45%) of Canadians reported that rising prices were greatly affecting their ability to meet day-to-day expenses. Young people, people with disabilities, First Nation, Inuit and Metis communities and seniors are disproportionately represented in these numbers.

Canada is also in the midst of an opioid crisis, whereby 49,105 deaths since 2016 have been attributed to opioid toxicity. This epidemic is taking the lives of predominantly young people and is a symptom of a sick system that causes mental illness, unemployment and underemployment, and homelessness.

Canadian communities have faced devastating consequences from fire, drought and floods. Meanwhile, the gap between the rich and poor continues to widen. Due to these conditions, anger and discontent at this system is rising among workers and youth, many of whom want to see an end to inequality, discrimination, and exploitation.

The momentum against Trudeau has been somewhat channelled by the right-wing populist, Pierre Poilievre, who is leading the Conservative Party of Canada. Poilievre is being openly endorsed by billionaire Elon Musk, and Trump saying that

Poilievre "aligns with his views". Poilievre's platform is vague and often lacks specifics but has garnered attention and support with generalised soundbite slogans, such as that he is the "champion of a free market" and a "fighter for people taking ownership of and responsibility for their own futures."

However, Poilievre is no friend of workers and youth in Canada. He has voted against women's reproductive rights five times. In addition, the Conservatives have attempted to block bills pertaining to workers' rights.

The Canadian economy, which is an important factor related to Trump's tariff threats, relies heavily on natural resources, such as oil, lumber, natural gas, and hydroelectricity, in addition to vehicle production, agriculture, dairy etc. Many of these resources are exported to the USA, including over Canadian \$309.3 billion in the first three quarters of 2024 alone.

There is a rich history of trade union activism, workers' solidarity and social movements in Canada which, despite the weakening of the trade union movement in recent history, is accredited for the fact that over 30% of the population remain members of trade unions and there have been developments seeing previously un-unionised workers forming unions. Recent strikes by Canada Post workers and dock workers in Vancouver and Montreal show the potential strength of workers when fighting for better pay and conditions.

workers' party

The need for a mass workers' party is an urgent task. The trade unions, many of whom have significant resources at their disposal, have a duty to the working class in helping to fight against divisive right-wing ideas and to develop an alternative to the pro-capitalist governments both provincially and federally.

Unions with ties to these parties should cut those affiliations so that that workers and youth can be free to be part of building and organising a party to call their own.

The ramping-up of the alliance between the super-rich and politicians, which is nothing new, has taken on a new and sharper appearance with the open and public collaboration of figures such as Trump and Musk. Therefore, we need to organise and fight for a genuine democratic socialist world built by and for workers and youth internationally.

what we stand for



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

Building fighting democratic trade unions in the workplaces and a new mass workers' party is a vital part of the struggle to change society along socialist lines. Because capitalism is a world system, the struggle for socialism must also be international. Socialist Party Scotland is part of the Committee for a Workers' International which organises across the world. Our demands include:

work, pensions and benefits

- A £15 an hour minimum wage for all, without age exemptions. For automatic increases in wages, including the minimum wage, in line with price rises or average earnings, whichever is higher.
- Share out the work. A maximum 32-hour working week with no loss of pay or worsening of conditions. The right to flexible working, under the control of workers not employers. An end to insecure working, for the right to full-time work for all who want it; ban zero hour contracts.
- All workers to have trade union rates of pay, employment protection, and sickness and holiday rights from day one of employment. End bosses' bogus 'self-employment' as a means to avoid giving workers rights.
- No to austerity through inflation. For all wage rates to be automatically increased at least in line with price rises.
- Open the books of all companies cutting jobs or claiming they can't afford to pay a real living wage. State subsidies, where genuinely needed, for socially-useful small businesses.
- Replace universal credit with living benefits. For benefits and pensions that cover the cost of living and automatic increases in line with 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.

public services

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

environment

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

democratic rights

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

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

- End discrimination on the grounds of race, gender, disability, sexuality, age, and all other forms of prejudice.
- Repeal the anti-trade union laws and all others that trample over civil liberties. For the right to protest! End police harassment. For the police to be accountable to local committees, made up of democratically elected representatives of trade unions, local community organisations and local authorities.
- For a woman's right to choose when and whether to have children.
- For the right to asylum. Housing and support services to be fully resourced with democratic community control and oversight of emergency funding resources. No to racist immigration laws.
- Expand democracy. For the abolition of the monarchy and the House of Lords. For all MPs to be subject to the right of recall by their constituents at any time, and to only receive a worker's wage. For proportional representation and the right to vote at 16.
- Oppose the dictatorship of the billionaire owners of the media. For the nationalisation of newspaper printing facilities, radio, TV and social media platforms. Access to these facilities should be under democratic control, with political parties' coverage allocated in proportion to their votes at elections.
- For a new mass workers' party, based on the trade unions, and drawing together workers, young people and activists from workplace, community, environmental, anti-racist and anti-cuts campaigns, to provide a fighting, socialist political alternative to the pro-big business parties.

socialism and internationalism

- No to imperialist wars and occupations! Scrap Trident. End the colossal spending on arms. Invest in socially useful production with guaranteed jobs for workers transferring over from the arms industry.
- Take the wealth off the super-rich! For a socialist government to take into public ownership the top 150 companies and the banking system that dominate the Scottish and British economy, and run them under democratic working-class control and management. Compensation to be paid only on the basis of proven need.
- A democratic socialist plan of production based on the interests of the overwhelming majority of people, and in a way that safeguards the environment.
- No to the EU bosses' club. Organise a campaign with European socialists and workers' organisations to tear up the EU pro-capitalist rules. For a real collaboration of the peoples of Europe on a socialist basis as a step towards a socialist world.

JOIN SOCIALIST PARTY SCOTLAND



USE THEIR PROFITS TO CUT OUR BILLS

NATIONALISE THE ENERGY COMPANIES

Lynda McEwan

Happy New Year's greetings from the energy companies! UK households will feel the heat, or lack of, as their bills increase once again in 2025.

The average family will pay an extra £21 on top of their current gas and electricity bills.

Hundreds of thousands of pensioners have had their winter fuel payment snatched unceremoniously off of them by the Labour government and the SNP Scottish government, and will be faced with the despicable choice between heating or eating this winter.

People are drowning in an avalanche of debt, missing direct debit payments regularly. The payment failure rate was at 2.16% in September 2024, up from 1.73% from the previous year. 41% are using less fuel and 38% are spending less on food shopping and essentials. This is not sustainable.

We would need a mass community campaign to prevent people from being cut off or forced on to prepayment meters.

This should be taken up by the

trade unions who could help coordinate any such action. The SNP Scottish government could also legislate against these actions by the power companies..

Analysts predict that prices will fall slightly from April through October, but states that high domestic prices will likely be the "new normal". We cannot and should not accept this.

Whole sale prices of gas and oil are dropping yet consumer prices have gone up and so have the profits of the capitalists.

British Gas, which trades as Scottish Gas in Scotland, reported profits of £751 million at the end of December, a massive tenfold increase since 2022.

Sharon Graham, Unite's general secretary, has called for public ownership of the energy companies, which is a step in the right direction. Socialist Party Scotland has been calling for this since before the energy and cost of living crisis began.

However we call for the socialist nationalisation of the entire energy and chemical sector.

This would mean all the energy companies being ran under democratic workers' control and management with profits being used to keep



energy bills low and for investment into green renewable energy.

The SNP Scottish government has said they will mitigate the cut to the winter fuel allowance but they won't do this until 2026. Why not do it now?

It would cost £160 million to do so which is nothing in comparison to

the possibility of pensioners perishing in poverty. They even refuse to set up a public energy company.

Labour's promise of state owned GB energy has so far not materialised and even so this would just be another company which would compete with the private sector.

The only way to ensure that the working class do not shoulder the burden of capitalism's abject failures is through the socialist transformation of society.

Energy, like food and housing, is a basic human right that people should not have to worry about affording.