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THE FAR RIGHT AND RACISM

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● **DOWNING STREET RESIGNATIONS** ● **CALLS FOR STARMER TO GO** ● **BY-ELECTION DISASTER LOOMS**



HE'S TOAST

Starmer fuels Reform UK, drive him out >>pages 3, 4, 5, 6 and 8&9

Don't prop up the failed 'centre', it won't stop the right

KEIR STARMER may have rallied enough Labour ministers and MPs behind him this week. But his leadership is finished—it's not a question of "if" but "when" he will be forced to go.

Starmer has faced several calls to resign after the scandal over Peter Mandelson's links to billionaire paedophile Jeffrey Epstein deepened.

The Scottish Labour leader, right winger Anas Sarwar, was the most senior Labour politician to call for Starmer's head at a press conference on Monday.

His intervention came after a spate of resignations from Starmer's top team.

Morgan McSweeney—a key architect of Starmer's leadership of Labour—was forced to resign as Downing Street chief of staff over the weekend.

He was a protege of



The Labour right wants Wes Streeting in Number 10

Mandelson, who resigned from the Labour Party after the latest release from the Epstein files.

Communication chief Tim Allan was next to resign on Monday after only five months in the role "to allow a new Number 10 team to be built".

He spent Monday at a golf course instead of at Number 10. Like McSweeney, Allan had been friends with Mandelson for years.

Some backbench MPs from the rump of the Labour left have called for Starmer to go.

But Labour cabinet ministers slowly came out in support of the prime minister on Monday.

The bosses' Financial Times newspaper said it was

>>continued on page 5



THE THINGS THEY SAY

'He's determined to carry on and has taken responsibility for the mistakes made'

Labour skills minister and peer Jacqui Smith defends Keir Starmer

'My whole life has been about trying to do the right thing and this is hung around my neck'

What Smith said when she resigned after claiming for two pornos on MPs' expenses in 2009

'The government is delivering on many areas of incremental change'

The best defence of Starmer that Labour right faction Labour First could come up with

'It's my mum's new mate Peter Mandelson on the telly. Mum, a big big lefty, loved him today'

Wes Streeting, a protege of Peter Mandelson, in a now deleted post on X. The hated health secretary is preparing a leadership bid



Pension privatisation leaves over 8,000 with no income

by FRANKIE MURDEN

KEITH WORKED at the Department for Environment for nearly 40 years and retired in December.

"But instead of enjoying my retirement, I'm here with no income at all trying to make my savings last," he says.

Keith is one of over 8,000 retired civil servants who have fallen victim to the privatisation of civil service pensions.

They have been left without their monthly pension payments.

Million

Up to 1.6 million former civil servants and public workers could be affected.

Labour has issued a £5,000 interest free loan to those who retired or accepted voluntary redundancy in the last 12 month. Keith said this is "totally inadequate" given the "scale of the crisis."

Civil service pension provision, called MyCSP, was initially privatised in 2012.

The PCS civil service workers' union said "the level of service has been below an acceptable standard", since. But, the current crisis is "unprecedented".

In December of 2025 it was transferred from outsourcer

Equiniti to Capita—from "one company with a failed record to another", as Keith described it.

"The Labour Party promised when it was elected that there would be the biggest insourcing move in a generation," he said.

"But it's continuing with the privatisation agenda."

The media has been quick to blame PCS members at MyCSP who struck against Capita bosses last year and won union recognition.

Recognition

But Keith said, "The workers have the right to trade union representation and recognition and to fight for decent conditions."

There are just 200 workers dealing with a pensions backlog that's estimated to be over 120,000 cases.

The government is set to send in 200 extra workers.

"But the backlog is only increasing," Keith said, with 3,000 civil service workers expected to retire in the next few months.

"This will take years to get through," he said. "The government says it can be sorted by June, but that doesn't seem likely."

"The government needs to bring it back in house immediately. That would be a win both for retired workers and the workforce at Capita."

PCS CIVIL service workers' union members strike last year

How the British state let refugees drown

by THOMAS FOSTER

AT LEAST 27 refugees died on 24 November 2021 in the worst mass drowning in the English Channel on record.

The Cranston Inquiry last week found that the deaths were "avoidable"—and the failings that caused it "systematic in nature".

The report sets out in detail the events of that night and morning.

At one point, water began to enter the boat.

People tried and failed to bail out the water that was flowing in.

They made phone calls, including to the British coastguard.

The coastguard was notified just after 1am on 24 November that those on board needed help.

A 16 year-old spoke to the coastguard for 20 minutes, saying they

were "in the water". Coordinates were sent to the coastguard.

More desperate calls were made and messages sent from those on the boat—some of which the coastguard missed entirely. At one point, the dinghy capsized.

The coastguard issued a "mayday" broadcast.

A nearby French navy boat, the Flamant, being used at the time by the French coastguard, failed to respond.

It was 15 minutes away from the coordinates.

The inquiry found that if it had responded, all the deaths could have been avoided.

At around 1.30am, the coastguard tasked a British Border Force boat, the Valiant, to investigate.

Small

The Valiant didn't leave the port of Dover until 2.22am. It took another hour to reach the last known location of the small boat.

By the time the Valiant arrived, the boat had drifted elsewhere.

The sun rose at around 7am. Some people were still clinging to what remained of the small boat.

Between 3.30am and 7.20am, the Valiant located three small boats—none of which matched the levels of

distress heard from the dinghy—referred to in the report as Incident Charlie. The Valiant then ended its search.

The bodies of others floated around them. One survivor, Issa, remembers a mother screaming as she searched for her child.

At around 12.30pm, on 24 November, a French fishing boat found bodies floating in the water. The coastguard was notified of this at around 1pm—nearly 12 hours after they had first received calls.

The inquiry concluded, "The practice of small boat crossings must end".

Refugees are forced to use small boats and rely on people smugglers because of racist border rules.

Every time the state ramps up repression at the border, it only forces refugees to take every more dangerous routes.

Coastguard didn't help

EDUCATION

Lack of maternity pay hits teachers

THE LACK of proper maternity pay is forcing west London school workers back to work early. They have to leave very young babies in childcare—and pump breast milk in school toilets and car parks.

These are the shocking revelations of a survey of NEU union members in Brent, west London.

Some 87 percent of those who responded said they want to take industrial action to improve maternity rights.

And some 70 percent said they felt pressured to return to work before they were ready.

Lucy Cox, NEU Brent joint district secretary, told Socialist Worker, "People are coming back and being separated from their babies."

"You have just given birth and suddenly have to leave the baby to work 12 hour days—it isn't unusual at all to do 12 hours at work."

Members describe crying in the toilet cubicles during lunch time.

Concept

Lucy argued that HR at the council "doesn't have any concept about it being emotionally draining".

And the education system is plagued by issues with recruiting and retaining workers—terrible maternity pay only makes this worse.

At least eight other London boroughs pay better occupational maternity pay to their school workers than Brent council.

But Brent council bosses have informed headteachers that they may stop workers' occupational maternity pay if they opt to take the "shared parental leave" facility.

This allow workers to split maternity leave into separate blocks.

If Brent council fails to improve maternity pay, it will only become harder to recruit new education workers.

Lucy said, "A lot of male workers are unhappy about it in relation to their colleagues and their partners. Many said they want to take action."

"If there is no movement from the council we will definitely look towards strikes."

"This issue has such a profound impact on parents and their young children."

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Starmer cannot hide he knew about Epstein links

by JUDY COX

KEIR STARMER was on the brink, as Socialist Worker went to press on Tuesday afternoon.

The prime minister faced a rocky meeting of Labour MPs on Monday night as the crisis over Peter Mandelson's links to billionaire paedophile Jeffrey Epstein deepened.

It came after Morgan McSweeney was forced to resign as Downing Street chief of staff over the weekend.

He was a protege of Mandelson, who resigned from the Labour Party after the latest release from the Epstein files last month.

There is no let-up in the visceral anger swirling around Starmer or the avalanche of Jeffrey Epstein revelations rocking the political establishment.

Starmer bleats on about how Mandelson lied to him about his relationship with the deceased billionaire paedophile.

Paying

The Labour leader's spokesperson claims Mandelson fooled Starmer by presenting Epstein as "someone he barely knew".

This is complete nonsense. Starmer has admitted he knew about Mandelson's relationship with Epstein.

He also knew that Mandelson stayed friends with Epstein after the disgraced financier's conviction for child trafficking in 2008.

This should surely have been enough to derail Mandelson's appointment as adviser to Starmer and Britain's ambassador to the United States.

Did Starmer think an association with a paedophile was a price worth paying for ingratiating himself with Donald Trump?

Starmer nominated Mandelson for the post of US ambassador in December 2024.

PETER MANDELSON, a friend of Jeffrey Epstein, with Keir Starmer

Here is what Google could have told him back then—if he had cared to look.

In 2019, an episode of the documentary series Dispatches exposed Epstein's links to "Petie" Mandelson.

The report focused on a 2009 phone call made by Epstein from his Florida prison to Mandelson.

Epstein wanted his friend Petie to arrange a meeting with the CEO of JP Morgan bank, Jamie Dimon.

Epstein and Mandelson were not just still in touch—they were still doing their sleazy business deals.

A photograph of Epstein and Mandelson in the Caribbean island of St Barts was also published in 2019.

In 2022, a photograph of the two

men celebrating Mandelson's 54th birthday at Epstein's flat in Paris was made public.

The Financial Times newspaper reported on Mandelson's continuing connections to Epstein in June 2023.

This was after Mandelson's "particularly close relationship" with Epstein was revealed in a report by JP Morgan Chase.

It stated that Mandelson stayed at Epstein's New York home in June 2009—when Epstein was serving 18 months in prison.

Even if Starmer was really unaware of all this evidence, when he proposed Mandelson for the position, the cabinet office "due diligence" vetting team sent a document to Number 10.

It outlined three questions it

wanted Mandelson to answer. Did he continue to have contact with Epstein after his conviction?

Did he stay in Epstein's homes while Epstein was in prison?

And did he associate with an Epstein-backed "charity" founded by Epstein's friend and co-conspirator, the sex-trafficker Ghislaine Maxwell?

The answers to these questions were yes, yes and yes.

A second round of Developed Vetting—the highest level of security clearance—asked questions to establish whether Mandelson was lying and could be susceptible to blackmail.

No one knows the outcome of this process. But we know Mandelson was lying—and Starmer appointed him anyway.

Parasites on a rotten system

THE LATEST revelations from the Epstein Files show Peter Mandelson shared sensitive information with Jeffrey Epstein after the financial crash of 2008.

And they show that Epstein paid £55,000 to Mandelson and his husband in 2003-04.

While Epstein was doing deals from his open prison in 2009, Mandelson was made a Lord and appointed to Gordon Brown's cabinet.

Epstein gave Mandelson the run of his luxury properties to entertain his potential clients.

By 2012, Epstein was rebuking Mandelson for his constant demands and requests.

These revelations are shocking.

But should they really have come as a surprise to Keir Starmer?

In October 2008 Mandelson's contacts with the Russian billionaire Oleg

Peter Mandelson laughing with Jeffrey Epstein

Deripaska were exposed.

His last act as European Trade Commissioner had been to advocate for new trade rules that directly benefitted Deripaska.

Photos of Mandelson on Deripaska's yacht with Tory George Osborne circulated in the press.

Mandelson's close ties with Russian conglomerate Sistema were exposed in April 2014.

He refused to resign as a director of the company which reportedly paid him £200,000 a year.

Mandelson was, like Epstein, a corrupt and consummate networker, enriched by connections, appointments and deals.

He was the architect of New Labour, adviser to Tony Blair and Brown, and appointed by Starmer to an influential position.

They should face the consequences—and be driven out of political life.

★Fight Farage ★Resist Starmer

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SWP



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Anti-racists show unity on streets as far right threat rises

by THOMAS FOSTER

OVER 1,000 people took to the streets of north London last Saturday in a show of unity and defiance against the far right and racism.

On the same day some 400 people outnumbered fewer than 100 fascists from Patriotic Alternative in Warwick.

And 200 joined a Bournemouth unity demonstration against racism.

They were the first of several unity marches called by Stand Up To Racism (SUTR), with Bristol and Sheffield set for their own on Saturday.

In north London Gary McFarlane from SUTR told the London rally, “We’re marching against the background of what’s happening in the United States. Donald Trump is trying to take us back to the 1930s.”

“We’re here today to make sure that Reform UK and Nigel Farage do not succeed in bringing a British version of Ice to our streets.”

Samuel, a Haringey NEU union member, was carrying a branch banner on the march.

“I think that trade union leaders are organising over pay”, he told Socialist Worker. “But they could use union power to build solidarity and fights against fascism, racism and many other issues.”

The protest came ahead of a unity march in central London on 28 March called by the Together alliance, which SUTR play a key role in initiating.

Alliance

Shezan, from Camden United Against Racism, told Socialist Worker, “I think we need to come together.”

“It is a diverse alliance. Sometimes the groups don’t completely agree with each other, but on some things we need to work together.”

“As a person of colour, for the first time I’m hearing people say ‘go back home’ and say ‘you don’t belong here’ or be called a p*ki.”

“People are getting more vocal, so we need to stand together.”



The defiant demonstration

Mohammed Kozbar, chair of Finsbury Park Mosque, said, “We are together here united against those who try to divide us and spread hatred and fear.”

“This is why we must defeat them on the streets of London and anywhere in the country.”

The Day-Mer Turkish and Kurdish Community Centre also mobilised for the march.

One representative said they are “not here just to march against the far right but also to name why they are growing and that is the Labour government’s lies”.

“They are creating a climate where hate is normalised.”

Alan from Haringey Justice For Palestinians told Socialist Worker, “The fight against racism in Israel is the same as the fight we have here.”

“I know people from all different organisations coming together on this demo.”

“We are members of the Palestine Solidarity Campaign, there is a definite push within PSC to join up and build for the 28 March. There is no question.”

Jeremy Corbyn, Your Party MP, told the rally, “Thank you for showing your solidarity against racism.”

“Put this date in your mind, 28 March, a national march against racism”.

He said, “Labour is aping the language of Reform UK. We won’t defeat Reform UK by copying them.”

“You have to offer something different, some alternative, some real change.”

Get involved in the Together alliance march at togetheralliance.org.uk



OVER 1,000 people joined the march in Islington, north London

PICTURE: DAVE GILCHRIST

Electric Manchester launch event for Women Against the Far Right

OVER 400 people joined the Women Against the Far Right (WAFR) launch rally in Manchester last Saturday.

Samira Ali from WAFR won huge cheers when she slammed the far right figures in the Epstein files.

She said, “Jeffrey Epstein celebrated Tommy Robinson’s release from prison in 2018.”

“Elon Musk, who made such a fuss about ‘Asian grooming gangs’, is in the Epstein Files.”

“These are the men who make us unsafe—not refugees, asylum seekers or Muslims. It is these far right figures who are sexist to the core, as well as racist.”

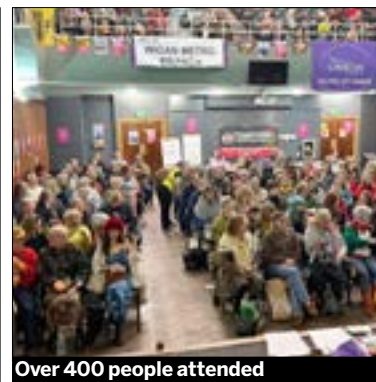
“The far right is a threat to women. Nigel Farage wants to reopen the debate on abortion rights. He wants to push back our bodily autonomy,” she said.

“If we want to know what a Reform UK government would look like, look at Trump’s United States.”

“We have to get real about the threat Reform UK poses—mass deportations in British cities.”

“Tens of thousands of people have resisted Ice—that’s the force that can beat back the far right.”

Social worker Danielle



Over 400 people attended

Alderson was one of the organisers. She told Socialist Worker, “The atmosphere was electric.”

“There were people from lots of different backgrounds and different political affiliations.”

“The WAFR message has really cut through because people are just fed up with everything the far right is trying to do.”

Cheers

“One of the biggest cheers was when we announced that we would be opposing a Britain First march in Manchester on 21 February.”

“There were big cheers for

the suggestion of a demo on International Women’s Day.”

Danielle said that Agnes Peters, from the Unison union’s migrant workers’ campaign went down “really well”. “Agnes works at Manchester hospital, she was £63 short of the money needed to get a visa,” she said.

“She said women—black women, white women, trans women—all need to stand together against the far right.”

WAFR collected over £2,000 to support the march and placards.

Clare McCrystal, secretary of Greater Manchester Stand Up To Racism, told Socialist Worker, “Everyone was really involved. People just seemed to know what was needed and did their bit.”

“Tracy Pook, from the mosque we helped to defend when it was threatened by Tommy Robinson, came along to speak. And Mary Doolin, the regional secretary of the North West PCS union.”

“We had a broad platform and that was reflected in the audience.”

“It opened up new relationships which we can build on to mobilise for Together.”

“People feel they are part of something important.”

Your Party Scotland puts forward a radical vision

by CAMILLA ROYLE in Dundee

SOME 300 members of Your Party Scotland gathered in Dundee last weekend for its founding conference.

Members pushed a radical vision. They voted that elected representatives should “never vote for cuts”. They backed Scottish independence and voted to stand candidates in the May 2026 Scottish parliament elections.

Just over 59 percent also voted to work towards becoming an organisationally independent sister party of Your Party in the rest of Britain.

Your Party MP Zarah Sultana told Socialist Worker that opposing cuts, pushing for Scottish independence and opposing genocide in Palestine are “policies that will be popular in Scotland.”

“We need to present a socialist alternative,” she urged. “There is so much talent in this room to select candidates and have a targeted approach. If you are not on the pitch, you leave a vacuum.”

At the conference, Harry told Socialist Worker he had joined Your Party due to being “basically fed up with mainstream politicians that don’t care about people”.

He added, “There is more wealth on this earth than ever before. But everybody is having a hard time.”

One key decision was the vote to stand candidates in the May elections—which passed by 69.8 percent.

Angela McCormick from Glasgow argued, “We have a clear and present danger and an urgency. No more filibustering. We have to argue to start the organising from today and take on the toxic dead-end racists of Reform UK.”

But the fact that nearly a third of voters opposed this shows there are doubts about what the campaign would look like. Some argued that the party needs more time to discuss policy before standing in elections.

Your Party councillor Dan Hutchison told Socialist Worker, “There is certainly a risk we don’t have a platform that covers every debate.”

Principles

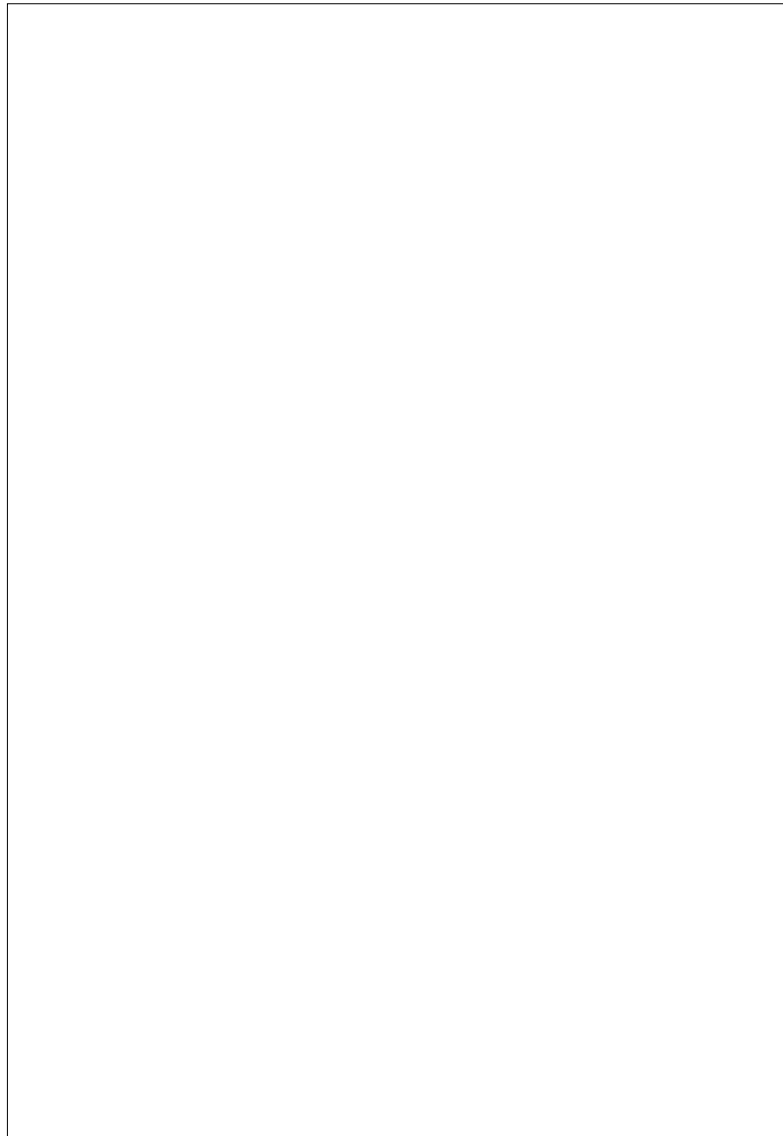
But he said it was possible to run candidates on broad principles.

“We need to give people the option of voting for a socialist,” he said. “There are people who want an alternative. And they can see through Reform UK’s bullshit.”

The conference also passed, by 63.23 percent, to take a position in support of Scottish independence.

Another important vote was the decision to allow members of other organisations to be a part of Your Party Scotland—82 percent of conference supported it.

At Your Party’s national conference in Liverpool in November, Jeremy Corbyn and his allies attempted to



THE ORGANISING group of Your Party Scotland (above)
Zarah Sultana speaking at the Scottish conference (left)

Executive Committee says there is a specific reason they should not be.

Rebecca Long-Bailey argued that Your Party “would benefit from socialists being a part”.

There was also strong support of 81.4 percent to develop a process for trade union affiliation.

During the conference, there was also a hustings for the Scottish representative on Your Party’s CEC. Niall Christie, Jim Monaghan and Ian Drummond all put their case.

Several members including the candidates expressed their frustration that there is only one Scottish seat and that this didn’t allow for gender balance as in other regions of Britain.

Now that the conference is over, the election campaign needs to start this week. Your Party could still be turned around. And in Scotland there is a prospect of running a serious campaign in the upcoming elections. Now we need to get the show on the road.

Go to socialistworker.co.uk/your-party for the full conference report and an interview with CEC candidate Niall Christie

exclude members of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) from the organisation.

At that conference, members passed a motion to allow dual membership. But any dual membership depends on whether the Central Executive Committee (CEC) allows it after it is elected.

In Scotland, members voted for a different approach. They decided to presume that people in other parties are members, unless the Scottish

Socialist Worker WHAT WE THINK

STARMER’S NUMBER 10 IS BUILT ON SAND

>> *continued from the front*

“like members of a Communist Politburo” as they “declared their enduring support for their embattled leader”.

And on Monday evening, Keir Starmer addressed a meeting of Labour MPs, where he was greeted with applause.

Why have they rallied around Starmer? Partly, it’s because the possible challengers are tainted by scandals of their own.

Angela Rayner, touted as a “soft left” candidate, resigned as housing secretary last September because of a tax dodging scandal.

Health secretary Wes Streeting is tainted by his friendship with Peter Mandelson.

It points to a much deeper problem for Labour. Starmer was swept into Downing Street on a wave of anger against the Tories, promising “change”.

But he was determined to prove that a Labour government was no threat to the super-rich, big business or the British state.

This meant picking set-piece battles—over the two-child benefit cap, winter fuel payments and benefit cuts for disabled people—which chipped away at Labour’s support.

Starmer and chancellor Rachel Reeves brought in “fiscal rules”, which require Labour to cut net government debt as a share of the national economy by 2029-30. These are wholly self-imposed and show that Labour is wedded to free market economics.

Starmer’s only strategy for delivering some reforms to Labour’s working class voters was through “growth” that never materialised. All this has much deeper roots than Starmer.

While Labour reflected working class people’s aspirations, it has always sought to rule in the “national interest” and manage the British state. When capitalism is booming, it’s able to bring in reforms with less resistance from the bosses.

But, in times of crisis, Labour governments have always opted to make working class people pay rather than confront the system.

A Labour Party under a “soft left” leader may see a bounce, but it would still be caught in the same fiscal trap that sees it push austerity mark 2.

Despite the depths of anger at Starmer, there is still a pressure to line up behind Labour in a series of electoral tests.

First will be the Gorton and Denton by-election on 26 February (see pages 8&9). And then on 7 May there are council elections in England, plus the Scottish and Welsh parliamentary elections.

One argument says you have to back Labour to stop Reform UK and the far right.

But a Labour government that adopts the language of the far right on immigration and hammers living standards is not a barrier. Starmer fuels the rise of Nigel Farage’s far right party.

Our key task is to build the movement against the far right which focuses on mass campaigning and has the radical spirit of Minneapolis.

And we have to push for a much higher level of working class resistance on the picket lines and streets.

FROM SEA TO RIVER

DEVELOPING BRITAIN’S largest untapped oil field will fuel climate disaster and bring more suffering to Palestinians.

A proposal under the Conservative government to drill at Rosebank in the North Sea was declared unlawful last year.

Environmental campaigners successfully pointed out that the plans didn’t take into account the greenhouse gas emissions from burning oil and gas from the site.

But the fossil fuel corporations have come back for more. British firm Ithaca Energy and Norwegian energy giant Equinor are still pushing to get the project approved.

The Labour government is considering a new set of proposals after a public consultation.

Burning 300 million barrels of oil would be catastrophic. And, if the government approves development at Rosebank, it risks breaking the Geneva Convention.

The majority stakeholder in Ithaca Energy is the Israeli Delek Group. It is blacklisted by the United Nations because it supports illegal settlements in the West Bank.

The same companies that are driving us to climate breakdown are profiting from a brutal system of apartheid in Palestine. The Palestine movement should get behind the campaign to stop them.

ANALYSIS

ALEX CALLINICOS



Epstein is a symptom of a sick system

THERE'S AN old book by the German historian Joachim Fest called *The Face of the Third Reich*. It's a series of portraits of Nazi leaders.

The Jeffrey Epstein files have revealed what the face of the international ruling class looks like now in the neoliberal era.

Of course, at the heart of what happened is the hideous abuse of untold numbers of children and young women by Epstein and his cronies. But this crime has spread a stain over the rich and powerful of our era.

The New York Times newspaper tried damage limitation with a story headlined "Epstein Emails Reveal a Bygone Elite".

This is nonsense. Epstein remained very active until his suspicious death in prison in 2019. His interlocutors included Big Tech moguls such as Elon Musk and Peter Thiel and fascist Steve Bannon—key contemporary power brokers.

Epstein dealt in power. Central to this was the abusive power he exercised and enabled others to exercise over the children and young women they raped.

But the power extended more broadly. Neoliberalism supercharged the tendency inherent in capitalism to reduce everything to a commodity that can be bought. Epstein's network worked on the same principle.

He dealt in the bodies of his victims, in money, in advice about making more of it, in personal relationships and in information. And he dealt in stays on Little St James, his Caribbean island, and in his numerous apartments and in personal favours like getting a child into a top university.

All were turned into commodities to be exchanged with the aim of increasing Epstein's personal wealth and power.

The Financial Times newspaper, which has some of the best coverage of the scandal, calls it a "social Ponzi scheme".

A Ponzi scheme is an investment scam where the money you put in pays the profits of earlier investors. Epstein was able to turn his "relationships into a source of money, information and further relationships".

Celebrities

Intellectual celebrities were an important part of the mix.

These included the great critic of US imperialism Noam Chomsky. Unforgivably, Chomsky expressed his solidarity with Epstein against the #MeToo movement, dismissing "the hysteria that has developed about the abuse of women".

This network impacted high politics. Peter Mandelson's correspondence with Epstein shows him leaking confidential information when he was business secretary in 2008-10, at the height of the global financial crisis.

Mandelson's motive was to ensure he could become—to borrow his own phrase—"filthy rich" after he left office.

The clearest example of what this involved came in April 2010. Mandelson met Larry Summers, then president Barack Obama's chief economic adviser.

He had been briefed by Epstein and another of his cronies, Jes Staley, then a senior executive of the giant JP Morgan investment bank.

They wanted Mandelson to lobby against the proposed Volcker Rule that sought to reduce banks' speculative activities.

JP Morgan was campaigning hard against the Volcker Rule. And Mandelson hoped to further his career when he stopped being a cabinet minister by ingratiating himself with the bank.

The incestuous nature of these dealings is shown by the fact that Summers was himself an Epstein crony.

Like Mandelson and Staley, he was disgraced when his relationship with Epstein was exposed.

The same mentality of profiting from everything, even the abuse of children, has survived their fall.

After the June 2016 Brexit referendum, Epstein emailed Thiel to say Brexit was "just the beginning" of a "return to tribalism, counter to globalisation, amazing new alliances".

Thiel is the most ideologically right wing of the Big Tech bros. He explicitly rejects democracy and regards Greta Thunberg as the "Antichrist" because her environmental activism might block technological innovation.

He founded the sinister surveillance giant Palantir, which has benefitted from Mandelson lobbying Keir Starmer.

Reading *The Face of the Third Reich* was horrifying. I could take comfort in the knowledge the Nazis were gone. But the system that allowed Epstein to flourish and fascists to return is still very much with us.

LETTERS

Email letters@socialistworker.co.uk Post Socialist Worker, PO Box 74955, London E16 9EJ

Hampstead swimmers help to turn the transphobic tide

A transphobic organisation has lost its bid to force Hampstead Heath's famous swimming ponds to ban trans women.

And a huge majority of the thousands of swimmers who use the pond voted to stand with trans+ people against bigots.

Sex Matters took legal action against the City of London Corporation, which operates the ponds.

It said that allowing trans+ people to use the facilities for the gender with which they identify was sex discrimination.

But the challenge was dismissed. Sex Matters filed for a judicial review, arguing the policy was unlawful under the April 2025 Supreme Court ruling that a woman is defined by biological sex. Their claim was rejected.

Inclusivity

The legal decision came after a public consultation run by the City of London Corporation was published. It found that nearly 90 percent of respondents backed trans-inclusivity.

Over 38,000 people took

part in the consultation. Some 90 percent rejected the need for separate changing rooms or sessions for trans+ swimmers.

Trans-led advocacy and human rights organisation TransLucent said it was unacceptable that public money "is wasted by relentless legal assaults from a powerful, well-funded minority".

This minority is "determined to exclude trans people and, as a by-product, cause havoc in feminism, when there are so many more important issues that

women face. Trans inclusion is the norm across the country—now, the government must provide decisive legal clarity, empowering service providers to act inclusively without being held hostage to costly litigation."

Trans+ people have been free to use the pool of their choice since 2017. And a massive majority of those they swim with want them to continue, in defiance of the Supreme Court and the EHRC.

Julia Ryder
Worcestershire

Funding cut for sciences

WE ARE told that Britain has a proud legacy of scientific discovery that spans four centuries.

It came as a shock then for us scientists to learn last week that the government schemes that fund fundamental research in sciences have been suspended. No clear date has been provided for their reinstatement.

If not reversed, this decision will have two main consequences.

It will mean that the approximately two thirds of British academic scientists employed on fixed-term contracts will not know if they will have a salary in a year's time.

More fundamentally, it could destroy in a matter of years the infrastructure for scientific research that has taken centuries to build.

So, what is to be done? These devastating attacks on British science can be fought, but only as part of a concerted national strike campaign led by the university unions.

Workers in the sciences, social sciences and humanities need to join together to resist this latest example of the disaster that is the marketisation of higher education. We should demand proper funding for academia.

Anon
By email



ILLUSTRATION: TIM SANDERS

Marchers are back out on Australian streets

THE AUSTRALIAN ruling class has tried to repress the Palestine movement following the Isis-inspired antisemitic shootings at Bondi Beach.

The New South Wales Labour government prohibited protest marches in central Sydney for three months.

But a defiant stand by Aboriginal activists has forced part of the city to be made exempt from the ban.

Aboriginal people and supporters counter the nationalist Australia Day celebrations on 26 January each year with mass anti-racist Invasion

Day marches. Organisers in Sydney pledged to defy the ban on marching. After first threatening mass arrests, the police commissioner caved in and allowed the march.

The following weekend saw the first pro-Palestine march in Sydney since the shooting.

In Boorloo (Perth), a Nazi threw a bomb into the Invasion Day crowd—thankfully it failed to explode.

More defiance and unity will be needed to meet the growing threat of the far right.

Paddy Gibson
Sydney, Australia

Bosses lie to justify cuts

MANAGEMENT AT the University of Edinburgh have pushed £140 million pounds of cuts.

These plans include over 1,000 redundancies and the closure of courses.

But data shows that the university had a budget surplus of £43 million pounds last year.

The cuts were never about "securing the long term financial security of the university", they were about taking neoliberal reforms to their extreme conclusion.

Edinburgh UCU must fight for every job.

Alex Thomson-Strong
Edinburgh

‘We cannot remember life in Gaza before the genocide’

Israel is still bombarding and blockading, writes **Arthur Townend**

“IT’S ABOUT erasure. Churches, mosques, markets. All erased,” says Ibtisam, who is trapped in Gaza. With the United States and Israel leading the dystopian plan to reconstruct Gaza, it is Palestinians who are suffering.

Israel’s brutal bombardment continues, despite the “ceasefire”. The Israeli military massacred 23 people last Wednesday, bombing Gaza City and Khan Younis. It murdered two people in Jabalia and Beit Lahiya last Thursday.

Israel is bringing bulldozers to the city of Deir el Balah in central Gaza to clear the rubble of Palestinian homes and demolish infrastructure.

Ibtisam, who lives in Deir el Balah, said that life is “marginally” better than before the so-called “ceasefire”, but violence hasn’t stopped.

She said that Israel’s ongoing ethnic cleansing shows that “the terrorist state is not afraid to be exposed. They have no limits.”

Israel opened the Rafah crossing—Gaza’s border with Egypt—last week, allowing barely a trickle of Palestinians in and out of their own land. Many are trying to leave to seek urgent medical attention.

But following the attacks on Wednesday, the Palestinian Red Crescent reported that Israel had shut the border that day.

Even if the crossing remains open, Israel’s restriction to 50 patients leaving a day means it would take over a year to evacuate all 18,500 who need to be evacuated.

Essential

Israel’s blockade means that Palestinians are still not receiving essential items. Ibtisam described it as “silent killing”.

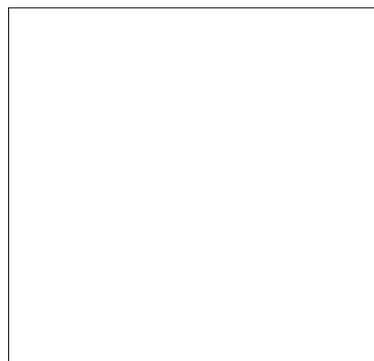
With no fuel, she described how Palestinians are forced to heat food by burning plastic.

She explained how makeshift tents “are not fully protected from the rain or flooding and cannot keep out the cold”.

“All our clothes are packed in bags and stacked in the tent,” she said. “It’s like we are passengers all the time.”

“The markets are full but very expensive—every last shekel is spent on flour.”

“There are no banks, only cash transactions. Most people are



Ambulances travelling through Gaza

completely broke after two years. People cannot have their needs satisfied. Everybody is suffocated and suffering economically.”

There is also a huge problem with water. In the north of Gaza, there is a drought. In Deir el Balah, water is more accessible.

“Our water, however, is barely drinkable,” Ibtisam explained. “It is polluted. Who knows what damage it is doing to us. Human organs are being affected. The quality of the water is disastrous.”

Leaking

“There are mountains of garbage that cannot be dealt with, which are leaking into water.”

Ibtisam, like all Palestinians, is terrified of the future. Israel’s genocide has destroyed Gaza, but the “ceasefire” offers little respite.

“We can’t remember life in Gaza before,” she said. “Our environment is unrecognisable. We cannot remember where our homes, streets, restaurants, cafes were. The map makes no sense anymore.”

US president Donald Trump is now leading the Gaza “peace” board in an effort to shore up US interests in the devastated Palestinian land.

“This new political environment with Trump, there’s no diplomacy, no respect,” Ibtisam said.

She described a wider political crisis in Gaza. She said what’s left of the Palestinian Authority, which polices the Israeli occupation, “is not representative of us”.

Neither the ceasefire nor the reconstruction of Gaza can bring justice for the Palestinians.

Their agony continues while Israel and its Western backers brazenly profit from genocide.

CIVIL DEFENCE teams search for bodies in Gaza City

Dockers walk out to stop Israeli arms

DOCKWORKERS SHUT down 21 ports around the Mediterranean in solidarity with Palestine last Friday.

In Italy, Greece, Morocco and Turkey, workers coordinated a strike to disrupt the flow of Israeli arms. The action built on previous displays of working class power, seen most strongly in Italy and Greece.

Roberto, a member of the USB trade union in Livorno, Italy, told *Socialist Worker* that “internationalism was the key word of the day”.

“I went to the Livorno demonstration in the afternoon and it was good,” he said.

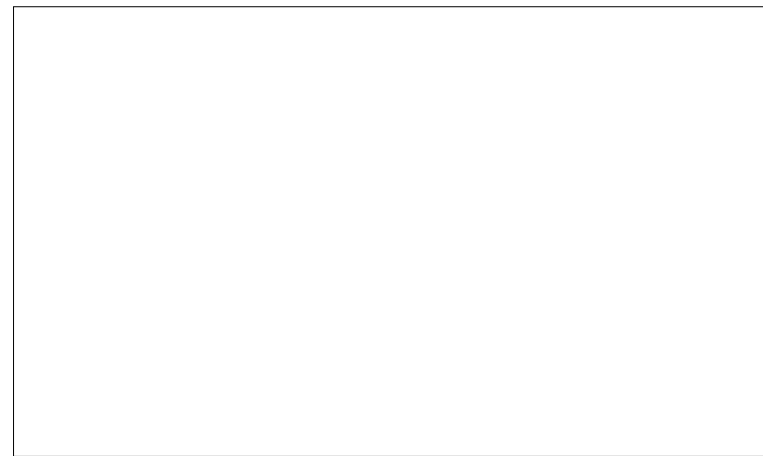
Strikers and supporters rallied across Italy, but the protests were biggest at the port of Genoa.

International

Israel is relatively independent financially. But Western imperialism still supports the terror state through the arms trade.

In Italy, workers are building independent organisations to stop the flow of Israeli goods.

One worker described how an autonomous dockworkers’ group is creating an “observatory” to watch the trade of arms to Israel and keep trade unions updated.



A strike banner in Ancona, Italy

“We won’t accept work without rights,” said Damianos Voudigaris of the Greek dockworkers’ union Enedep. “Ports are places of work, not war. They are places of sweat, not blood.”

In Italy, huge national protests and strikes have erupted, built primarily from below by smaller unions like USB and Si Cobas. Similarly in Greece, dockworkers previously refused to unload Israeli munitions.

But last Friday’s action was not just an international display of workers’ solidarity with Palestine. It took up wider political questions.

In Italy, there has been rampant privatisation of the docks—but it also affects wider public infrastructure.

It meant the railway workers walked out too.

Unions in both Greece and Italy pointed to rearmament coming alongside austerity. And austerity cuts also affect safety in the public sector.

And “there were demos against Ice at the Winter Olympics in Milan and Cortina,” Roberto explained.

Dockworkers in Europe, especially Italy, have set the standard in terms of workers’ action for Palestine.

GORTON AND DENTON BY-ELECTION WHERE WILL ANGER AT LABOUR GO?

As Labour plunges further into crisis, racist Reform UK and the Greens hope to win a key by-election on 26 February in Greater Manchester. **Thomas Foster** reports from the streets of Gorton and Denton

ONLY A few years ago, Labour would have walked a by-election in Gorton and Denton, Greater Manchester.

Today, the election there sums up the disintegration of mainstream politics, the death of the two-party system—and the battle over what comes next.

Polls put far right party Reform UK in first place at 30.6 percent, Labour second at 28 percent and the Greens not far behind at 21.7 percent.

On the streets of Gorton and Denton, there is a palpable anger at Keir Starmer's Labour.

Susan, a pensioner, blasted the Starmer government as “crap”. “He seems to not have a care in the world—all he thinks about is himself,” she told Socialist Worker.

“Pensioners who worked all of our lives are getting hit now. It makes you very angry.

“You only have a certain amount of money to live on. We still have to pay rent, council tax, TV licence.”

She added, “I thought Labour were going to do more, it used to be for the working class.”

The Labour Party won Gorton and Denton with 51 percent of the vote and a majority of over 13,400 votes as part of its landslide in the general election of 2024.

Less than two years later, Labour is in freefall and the knives are out for Starmer.

In a desperate bid to save his own skin for a few more months, he blocked Andy

Racist snake oil salesman Nigel Farage has his sights on the by-election

Burnham from standing as the Labour candidate in Gorton and Denton. As Mayor of Greater Manchester, Burnham positioned himself as a “soft left” politician promising working class voters some social democratic reforms.

For some, disillusionment has become apathy. As one man walking down a street in Gorton told Socialist Worker, “I’m not voting for any of them. They are a bunch of rich fucks.

“It never changes anything no matter who it is.”

He pointed to Liz Truss's brief time as prime minister and the £115,000 a year allowance she gets because of her short stint in the role.

“She was in for a few weeks and now lives off a massive wage. Who is paying for that? We are.”

Nigel Farage's Reform UK preys on this deep well of anger and disillusionment

and poses as an “anti-establishment” force.

Carol said that both her and her husband were planning on voting for Reform UK because it “has better policies” and “Starmer is a waste of time”. She called the prime minister “horrible”.

“Labour isn't improving anything,” she told Socialist Worker. “I used to vote Labour all of my life until Starmer.”

“Reform UK seem to be telling the truth while others just say what you want to hear.”

Dogs

Reform UK taps into the sense that Britain is broken.

But racism is the glue the binds together the political story it sells, with immigration and multiculturalism behind “national decline”.

“I’ve lived here for 30 years and it has gone to the dogs,” said Carol.

“It is all the immigrants. It used to be nice and now they throw anyone here. You have more Asians and blacks than whites. They are all just laughing at us.”

In Reform UK's election leaflets, it calls a vote for Labour a vote for “broken borders, more houses for illegal immigrants, high taxes, surging energy bills and the rest”.

It attacks a vote for the Greens as a vote “for open-border chaos, legalised drugs and more woke nonsense like men in women's changing rooms”.

Margaret, who has lived in Gorton for decades, told Socialist Worker she was

“upset about the direction of the country”. “It used to be nice around here and now we are letting all and sundry in,” she said.

“I don't know how Reform UK will manage on its own as this is a Labour area but I will be voting for Reform UK.

“We were promised that Brexit would mean sending all of these people back but that is still not happening.

“Say anything and you are called a racist. I just want my country back,” she added.

These remarks show that taking on the lies about immigration is key to stopping Reform UK's rise. It's not enough, as many on the left argue, to focus on Reform's corporate agenda.

Determined

Reform UK's victory is not inevitable—and many people in the constituency are determined to stop it.

Stand Up To Racism (SUTR) launched a mass campaign to stop Reform UK at the beginning of the month. It plans to give out tens of thousands of leaflets, put up posters and talk to people across the constituency.

Speakers at the launch rally included Green Party candidate Hannah Spencer, Labour councillor Zahid Hussain and Tony Wilson, branch secretary of Greater Manchester Transport Union.

After speeches, anti-racists went into the local streets to leaflet.

Claire, a part time carer, is one of those who volunteered to be a ward coordinator for SUTR's campaign.

“As I was growing up I thought racism was dying out and I woke up and went,



GREEN candidate Hannah Spencer and party leader Zack Polanski are winning over former Labour voters

Keir Starmer blocked the 'soft left' Andy Burnham from standing as the Labour candidate

(above left) Keir Starmer blocked the 'soft left' Andy Burnham from standing as the Labour candidate (above centre) Matthew Goodwin of the far right Reform UK party is keen to play up his tenuous links to the constituency (above right)



Fascist Steve Bannon and Reform UK candidate Matthew Goodwin

“No, it is not,” she told Socialist Worker. “All it takes is a few good people to look away.

“That kept coming into my head and so I thought I need to do something.”

Claire said that Reform UK's racist scapegoating of migrants and refugees “is the same old story” with rich people “using people who aren't rich to blame each other and fight each other”.

She tore into the lies about “small boats” and refugees coming to Britain to claim benefits.

“There is no way people fleeing wars are trying to do anything other than stay alive and keep safe, which is exactly what we would do if our lives were under threat,” she said.

Mike is also involved in the SUTR

campaign. He explained that “Gorton and east Manchester was a big industrial area in the 1970s, 80s and 90s but that has gone”.

“Gorton is not a well off area,” he told Socialist Worker.

“There are plenty of people struggling to get by. Denton is mainly white and that is where Reform UK is strongest.”

He said that “the south west of the constituency” around Levenshulme “has got a large student body”.

“There will be people who come out to stop Reform UK—that is where the bigger part of the constituency's population is.”

Many people are turning left to find answers to Labour's failures. “This area has been neglected and not looked at for



Stand Up To Racism campaigners out in force

a while,” a resident of Levenshulme in the constituency told Socialist Worker.

“The schools around here need investment, the whole place needs money injected into it. The NHS needs sorting out, we need more doctors and nurses in the hospital.”

She thought that “Starmer is a waste of time” and that “it should have been someone else in Labour to become prime minister”.

“I have always voted Labour but it isn't the party it used to be,” she said.

“I won't vote Reform UK, the Liberals are arsing around and the Greens won't do much—but I would maybe vote Green.”

The Greens are not the socialist and working class alternative that Your Party promised to become when it was launched.

But under Zack Polanski the Greens have become the main force to the left of Labour in British politics—and attracted many of those who were initially drawn to Your Party.

Waste

The Green candidate in Gorton and Denton, Hannah Spencer, is a principled anti-racist.

On the edge of Levenshulme, a Green Party supporter was busy putting up a “Vote Green” sign in her front garden.

She told Socialist Worker that the Greens have “policies that are working and the people of Gorton and Denton are seeing that”.

“They realise that what Reform UK is saying in the media is a pipe dream by millionaires supported by paedophiles. People want real change.”

The anger at the mainstream parties has led some to be torn between the Greens and Reform UK.

“It is between those two,” Bill from Gorton told Socialist Worker.

“I’ve got grandkids growing up and I hate to think about what world they

are growing up in. My opinion is that you can't trust politicians. They say this and that but when they get in it changes. Politicians don't come and see how things work. They are out of touch in so many ways.

“All they are bothered about is their own pay day.”

For decades, those very same politicians have pushed the lie that immigration is a “drain” on resources or a “problem” to be managed.

In reality, there is no evidence that immigration causes low pay, unemployment or broken public services.

For instance, migrants on average pay more in taxes than they use in public services or benefits. And it's Tory austerity—continued by Labour—that has devastated schools, the NHS and town centres.

But that's precisely why politicians go after migrants—as a scapegoat for problems caused by their rich mates and a system that puts profit before people.

Their narrative filters down into a “common sense”. But the common sense can crash against people's own experiences of working and living alongside migrants.

So Bill says, “We have a lot of foreigners around here, but we would be lost without half of them. Many of them are doctors and nurses.”

Anti-racist campaigning can give confidence to our side and pull the mood leftwards.

Mike said, “We need to get leaflets through as many doors as possible. There is now a calendar of activities over the next few weeks.”

Campaigning can expose the racism of Reform UK and encourage the many left wing and progressive voters to come out. And taking on the myths of immigration can win people who are angry at the system.

The message, “Blame the rich and bosses, not migrants,” can cut through.

Matthew Goodwin, Reform UK
Goodwin keeps the company of fascists such as Steve Bannon (see left).

He's described the idea of Islamophobia as “the flavour of the month amongst the elite class”.

He previously suggested a tax for those who don't have children.

His supposedly “strong links” to Gorton and Denton include delivering pizzas in the constituency while he was a student at the University of Salford.

Angeliki Stogia, Labour Party
After mayor Andy Burnham was banned from standing, Labour councillor Stogia won the selection.

When she was a parliamentary candidate in the general election, the New Statesman magazine revealed her as a corporate lobbyist.

She leads the “stakeholder engagement” service at multinational Arup.

Hannah Spencer, Green Party

Leader of the Green Party Group on Trafford council, Spencer is a local plumber.

She's framed the election as “hope vs hate”.

“Reform UK has chosen a candidate that will divide our community—I will bring the people of Gorton and Denton together,” she said.

Socialism from below means working class people taking over society and running it for themselves.

But what if workers aren't interested in playing that role?

What if they don't even see themselves as working class?

Karl Marx started to grapple with this issue in the 19th century.

He distinguished between a class "in itself" and a class "for itself".

People are working class if they are forced by necessity to sell their labour power to a boss in order to survive.

It's an objective category. People who work for a living are working class whether or not they describe themselves that way.

But that doesn't automatically make it a class for itself.

The working class becomes a class for itself when it starts to organise collectively in pursuing a common interest.

If you are a socialist in your workplace or you speak to people on the street you will find some people who agree with what you say. But they are a minority. There will be others with thoroughly reactionary and racist views.

But most people you meet will have some combination of ideas.

They will often believe different things that clash or are even in direct opposition to each other.

So someone might say, "my boss is useless and knows nothing about how to do the job" in one sentence.

But in the next breath they may say, "we can't tax the rich because they might leave the country, we need them to create jobs."

PEOPLE who march alongside revolutionary socialists in mass movements won't agree with everything that Socialist Worker argues.

They may be anti-racist, but not yet be convinced we can have a world without borders, or share our views about trans+ liberation, or the need to confront Zionism.

It is no wonder people believe all kinds of mixed and contradictory things.

As Chris Harman put it, these ideas "flow from the interaction between people's experiences and the prejudices of the society they live in".

We are all fed a constant diet of ideas from politicians, the education system and the media that tell us we are all competitive and individualistic.

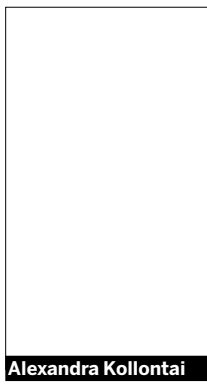
They encourage us to look up to the royal family and kick down at oppressed people rather than uniting together. Marx said, "The ideas of the



ORDINARY PEOPLE created the Egyptian Revolution of 2011

HOW WORKERS CAN BECOME REVOLUTIONARY

It can be difficult to imagine the people you work with rising up against the system. But mass struggle changes ideas at a whirlwind pace, argues Camilla Royle



ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas".

We might think those ideas are not in peoples' own best interests.

But it doesn't mean workers are simply being duped by their rulers. If that was the case, we would need only to pull the wool from their eyes to reveal the true state of affairs.

Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci returned to the issue of class consciousness in the late 1920s. He distinguished



Gramsci saw a difference between common sense and good sense

between common sense and good sense.

Common sense is the mixture of different things workers believe.

It is a kind of implicit understanding of how the world works that is fragmentary and incoherent.

Within that mixture there is what Gramsci called "a healthy nucleus of good sense" that "has gone beyond common sense and become, if only within narrow limits, a critical conception".

In other words, people can develop a more coherent and critical view of how the world around them works.

How can we win people to adopt this good sense?

There are some on the left who think the way to change things is by better education.

They aim to undermine racism by seeking out people who might vote for far right parties and trying to patiently explain to them why they have their facts wrong.

This way of thinking is rooted in the liberal view that we are all in a battle of ideas.

And the people with the best ideas can win, if only we could get our ideas out there to enough people.

This often means training sessions so anti-racists can develop the best arguments and use them to inform people.

The aim seems to be that eventually our side can win by gradually pulling people towards our views one at a time.

Education is an important aspect of what socialists do.

We often try to counter the lies of the racists with factsheets and leaflets.

We are in favour informing and persuading people to oppose racist and bigoted ideas. And we want people to understand more about how the world works and be confident in socialist ideas.

But the strategy of convincing people with individual arguments overlooks how people's ideas can change on a mass scale.

In a revolutionary situation, this can happen at a whirlwind pace. People's common sense ideas run up against their material experience.

IN 1913 Russia was celebrating 300 years of rule by the Romanov dynasty.

The Russian emperor, Tsar Nicholas II, and his family took part in a tour along the Volga River by luxury steamboat.

There were celebrations wherever they went. His oldest daughter described seeing hoards of workers falling to the ground to kiss her father's shadow.

Towns were decorated in posters, flags and copious amounts of ribbon in the Romanov colours of yellow and black.

For the first time, postage stamps were produced featuring an image of the Tsar.

But postal workers caused problems with the mail by refusing to deface Nicholas's image by franking them.

There had been a wave of revolutionary struggle in 1905. Russia's dictatorship was shaken by mass strikes involving hundreds of thousands of workers.

The Tsar had to concede to establishing a дума, or parliament, although its powers were very limited. By 1913, with the

revolution contained by brutal repression, the Tsar and his family may have felt safe to enjoy their lavish banquets.

But beneath the apparently peaceful surface, class tensions were beginning to develop.

Within the space of a few years, the old order had collapsed.

The First World War created misery, sending around 1.7 million Russian people to their deaths.

At the beginning of 1917, women textile workers led mass strikes in opposition to bread shortages.

The movement swelled to involve half of St Petersburg's 400,000 factory workers and started to demand an end to the war and dictatorship.

The Tsar, who had seemed all powerful, was forced to abdicate.

By October, there were hundreds of workers' councils or soviets throughout Russia. They were formed of delegates elected from workplaces as people started to organise democratically to take control over their lives.

The Bolsheviks were able to lead a second revolution that overthrew the provisional government that had been established in February.

The Russian Revolution swept away old ideas that had been taken for granted. For example, the revolution changed women's lives.

It offered them education, the right to vote, abortion rights and equal rights over employment and inheritance.

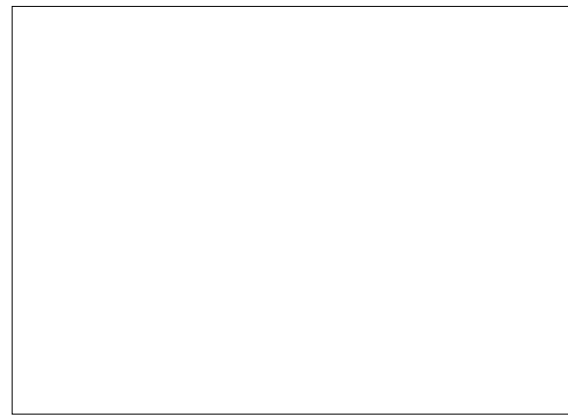
It also opened up the space for women and men to experiment with new ways of living.

Revolutionary Alexandra Kollontai's novels expressed how rapidly their expectations were changing.

In Three Generations, a young woman, Zenya, says to her mother, "As soon as I no longer have feelings for my partner, we mutually agree to separate and then I go on and maybe find someone else, or maybe I don't."

In every revolution since then, whether Portugal in 1974-5, Egypt in 2011 or Sudan in 2018-19, we can see similar examples of the dramatic shifts in people's ideas as they take part in struggles in huge numbers.

Of course we can't wait for a revolution for workers



Tsar Nicholas II was revered as a godlike figure on his trip on the Volga (top) Dancers celebrated the freedom and creativity unleashed by the Russian Revolution (above)

to develop into a class for themselves.

But the way the ideas of the ruling class come into conflict with people's lived experience creates openings that socialists can use to try to agitate for our ideas.

Right now there is an extraordinary mass movement on the streets of Minnesota.

It is far from a revolutionary situation.

But large numbers of people are being told by their president that immigrants are responsible for crime and fraud and are rejecting the lies.

The experience of living and working alongside people from all backgrounds goes against the poisonous ideas people are being fed.

Workers who might, a few months ago, have despaired at how difficult it is to organise in the workplace, now find themselves taking part in walkouts alongside their colleagues.

Or they are getting together with their neighbours to put up road blocks and stop federal agents entering the area—something many of them would never have imagined themselves doing.

Being a part of these struggles can start to erode the old ideas.

It takes organisation by revolutionaries to seize on these opportunities and organise the most class conscious workers.

READ MORE

● **Russia 1917—Workers' Revolution and the Festival of the Oppressed**
By Dave Sherry, £12.99

● **Revolution Is The Choice Of The People**
By Anne Alexander, £12.00

Available from Bookmarks, bookmarksbookshop.com



TEACH YOURSELF MARXISM
with Judy Cox

Can we find homes for everyone?

HOUSING IN Britain is at crisis point. Workers are pushed to the edges of the cities they service but can't afford to live in. In the countryside, local people are priced out.

Landlords drive up rents or leave properties empty knowing they will rise in value—while families live in bed and breakfast hostels.

In his book Against Landlords, Nick Bano says that between 2008 to 2018 the value of Britain's housing stock rose by £750 million a day. Rising rents fuel speculative building developments riddled with corruption.

At the same time, cash-strapped councils allow their housing stock to deteriorate. It makes horrors like the Grenfell fire of 2017 possible.

Access to shelter is a basic human need. But capitalism treats homes as just another commodity.

In feudal societies, the land was the basis of all economic and political power. Peasant farmers paid rent for the right to work the land.

This situation was transformed by of industrialisation and urbanisation in the early 19th century. Workers were kicked off the land and forced into towns and cities.

In the 1840s, Frederick Engels exposed the dreadful conditions workers endured in the slums of new industrial cities.

He described stinking pools of filth in the streets and families forced to share damp, unfurnished cellars.

Behind every door lay starvation, disease and vermin.

Wealthy

For Engels, the slums were part of the war the capitalist class waged against the non-possessing classes. Engels accused the wealthy of "social murder" because they knew about conditions in the slums but did nothing to alleviate them.

Karl Marx called landlords a "sybarite excrescence"—a parasitical growth. He described how landlords thrived on poverty which was "a more fruitful source

THE REALITY of housing rarely lives up to the ideal

for house-rent than the silver mines of Spain". Rent was an important source of income, but it was not the central dynamic of capitalism. That was exploitation, the way bosses profit from the labour power of workers by extracting more value than they pay in wages.

In the 1870s, Engels revealed the true nature of the slum clearance programmes in The Housing Question. He wrote, "The infamous holes and cellars in which the capitalist mode of production confines our workers night after night are not abolished—they are merely shifted elsewhere".

The houses of the poor were demolished to make way for new, wide streets and railways. "At the very time when masses of workers are streaming into the towns, workers' dwellings are pulled down on a large scale," Engels wrote.

He rejected the arguments of socialists who wanted every worker to become the owner of their own dwelling. Engels believed the solution to the housing crisis was the socialisation of land

and homes. Tenants do have power to fight back against the landlords. One of the largest rent strikes in British history began in February 1915 when Glasgow's landlords announced a rent increase of 25 percent.

Evictions

Women's tenant organisations blocked evictions and led a rent strike involving 20,000 families. The strike forced parliament to freeze rents.

The expansion in public sector housing during the long boom of the 1950s and 1960s led to the construction of some estates designed for communities.

This was thrown into reverse in the 1980s with the right to buy scheme, privatisation and the lifting of rent caps. It laid the basis for today's housing crisis.

Socialists do argue for mass council house building. But it isn't just an issue of lack of supply. Bano argues that the problem today is that homes are too expensive, not that there aren't enough.

But it will take a major confrontation to prize the keys from the grasp of the landlords.

Russian revolutionary Vladimir Lenin argued that when, and only when, the working class has conquered political power, can workers expropriate the landlords and billet the homeless in their mansions.

Then new homes can be designed to support multiple new ways of living.



The slums were part of the capitalists' war on the poor

WHAT WE STAND FOR

These are the core politics of the Socialist Workers Party.

INDEPENDENT WORKING CLASS ACTION

Under capitalism workers' labour creates all profit. A socialist society can only be constructed when the working class seizes control of the means of production and democratically plans how they are used.

REVOLUTION NOT REFORM

The present system cannot be patched up or reformed as the established Labour and trade union leaders say.

It has to be overthrown. Capitalism systematically degrades the natural world. Ending environmental crisis means creating a new society.

THERE IS NO PARLIAMENTARY ROAD

The structures of the present parliament, army, police and judiciary cannot be taken over and used by the working class.

They grew up under capitalism and are designed to protect the ruling class against the workers.

The working class needs an entirely different kind of state—a workers' state based upon councils of workers' delegates and a workers' militia.

At most parliamentary activity can be used to make propaganda against the present system.

Only the mass action of the workers themselves can destroy the system.

INTERNATIONALISM

The struggle for socialism is part of a worldwide struggle. We campaign for solidarity with workers in other countries.

We oppose everything which turns workers from one country against those from other countries.

We oppose racism and imperialism. We oppose all immigration controls.

We support the right of black people and other oppressed groups to organise their own defence.

We support all genuine national liberation movements.

The experience of Russia demonstrates that a socialist revolution cannot survive in isolation in one country.

In Russia the result was state capitalism, not socialism. In Eastern Europe and China a similar system was later established by Stalinist parties.

We support the struggle of workers in these countries against both private and state capitalism.

We are for real social, economic and political equality of women.

We are for an end to all forms of discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people.

We oppose discrimination against disabled people including those who experience mental distress.

We defend the right of believers to practise their religion without state interference.

THE REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

To achieve socialism the most militant sections of the working class have to be organised into a revolutionary socialist party.

Such a party can only be built by activity in the mass organisations of the working class.

We have to prove in practice to other workers that reformist leaders and reformist ideas are opposed to their own interests.

We have to build a rank and file movement within the unions.

To join us, go to socialistworker.co.uk/join-swp

TIRED OF THE CULTURE WARS?



WHY WE NEED REVOLUTION TO WIN LGBT+ LIBERATION

BRADFORD

Thu 19 Feb, 7pm
885-9187-7552
Cafe Liza, Ground Floor,
Grove Business Centre,
Great Horton Rd,
BD7 1AH

CARDIFF

Thu 19 Feb, 7.30pm
512-655-3689
Cardiff Meeting House,
43 Charles St, CF10 2GB

CHESTERFIELD

Thu 19 Feb, 7pm
828-532-8731
The Hub,
Low Pavement
S40 1PF

LONDON - HACKNEY

Thu 19 Feb, 7.30pm
Halkevi Centre,
31 Dalston Lane,
E8 3DF

LONDON - HARINGEY

Wed 18 Feb, 7pm
875-0394-3576
St John Vianney Church,
386 West Green Rd,
N15 3QL

LONDON - ISLINGTON

Thu 19 Feb, 7pm
Elizabeth House,
2 Hurlock St,
N5 1ED

LONDON - SOUTH

Wed 18 Feb, 7pm
896-6481-2869
Pass: 283755
Vida Walsh Centre, 2b
Saltoun Rd, SW2 1EP

LONDON - WEST & NW

Wed 18 Feb, 7.30pm
8338-542-9842
West London Trades
Union Club, 33-35
High St, W3 6ND

NEWCASTLE

Wed 18 Feb, 7pm
896-6481-2869
Pass: 112559,
Newcastle Arts Centre,
67 Westgate Rd
NE1 5SG

ABERDEEN

Minneapolis—Ice, the state and the revolt against Trump

Thu 19 Feb, 6pm
Aberdeen Trades
Union Council,
22A Adelphi,
AB11 5BL

BIRMINGHAM

Why all immigration controls are racist

Wed 18 Feb, 7pm
281-634-5938
Warehouse Cafe,
54 Allison St, B5 5TH

BOURNEMOUTH

Is fascism back? Understanding the far right in the 21st century

Thu 19 Feb, 7.30pm
462-087-4995
YMCA,
56 Westover Rd,
BH1 2BS

BRIGHTON & HOVE

Why you should be a revolutionary

Wed 18 Feb, 7pm
589-4176-7501
Friends Meeting House,
Ship St,
BN1 1AF

BRISTOL

Why you should be a revolutionary

Thu 19 Feb, 7pm
St Pauls Learning Centre,
94 Grosvenor Rd,
BS2 8XJ

CAMBRIDGE

Why you should be a revolutionary

Thu 19 Feb, 7.30pm
681-800-4408
Mill Road Community
Centre, 6 Hazell Street,
Cambridge, CB1 2GN

COVENTRY

Why is the far right obsessed with the traditional family?

Wed 18 Feb, 7.30pm
823-945-1917
Friends Meeting House,
Hill St, CV1 4AN

DERBY & NOTTINGHAM

Will the AI bubble burst? A Marxist analysis

Wed 18 Feb, 7pm
354-874-4790
West End Community Centre,
Mackworth Rd,
DE22 3BL

DEVON & EXETER

The centre cannot hold — Why is the crisis of British politics so deep?

Thu 19 Feb, 7pm
865-2972-2883
Exeter Community Centre,
17 St Davids Hill, EX3 4RG

DORSET

World in crisis—Imperialism, Marxism and resistance

Wed 18 Feb, 7pm
863-7941-3641 Centenary
Club 21 Jubilee Close,
DT4 7BG

DUDLEY

Why you should be a revolutionary

Wed 18 Feb, 7.30pm
869-514-7392
Court House,
30 New St,
DY1 1LP

DUNDEE

What is the theory of state capitalism?

Wed 18 Feb, 7pm
894-2628-7708
Dundee Volunteer and
Voluntary Action,
10 Constitution Rd,
Dundee,
DD1 1LL

EDINBURGH

What the Epstein files reveal about the sexist system

Wed 18 Feb, 6.45pm
Southside Community Centre,
117 Nicolson St,
EH8 9ER

GLASGOW NORTH

Capitalism and the politics of food

Thu 19 Feb, 7pm
Maryhill Central Halls,
292-316 Maryhill Rd,
G20 7YE

GLASGOW SOUTH

The era of the far right or a new socialist left?

Thu 19 Feb, 7pm
Roma Cultural Centre,
43 Nithsdale St,
G41 2PZ

HARLOW

Can we live in a world without borders?

Thu 19 Feb, 7.30pm
832-8746-7480
Mountstevens Room,
Moot House,
CM20 3HB

HASTINGS

Minneapolis—Ice, the state and the revolt against Trump

Thu 19 Feb, 7pm
The White Rock Hotel,
1-10 White Rock, Hastings,
TN34 1JU

HUDDERSFIELD

Will Keir Starmer survive 2026?

Wed 18 Feb, 6.30pm
428-926-9492
Pass: 142857
The Mission, Lord St,
HD1 1QA

KENT

Iran, imperialism and resistance to the regime

Wed 18 Feb, 7.30pm
434-623-8064
Sunlight Centre,
Richmond Rd,
ME7 1LX

LEEDS

What do we mean by historical materialism?

Thu 19 Feb, 7pm
Swarthmore
Education Centre,
2-7 Woodhouse Sq,
LS3 1AD

LIVERPOOL

Will Keir Starmer make it through 2026?

Wed 18 Feb, 7pm
493-925-5919
Arts Bar, 22 Hope St, L1 9BY

LONDON - NEWHAM

Trumpism versus the liberal order—Capitalism at a crossroads?

Wed 18 Feb, 7pm
597-631-7124
Ithaca House,
27 Romford Rd, E15 4LJ

LONDON - SOUTH EAST

Race and class—Are working class people more racist now?

Thu 19 Feb, 7pm
529-913-6390
Deptford Lounge,
9 Giffin St, SE8 4RJ

LONDON - TOWER HAMLETS

Disability—A very capitalist condition

Wed 18 Feb, 7pm
896-1690-8769
The Cabin, St Margaret's
House, 21 Old Ford
Rd, E2 9PL

LONDON - WALTHAM FOREST

Why is the Palestine solidarity movement such a threat to the state?

Wed 18 Feb, 7.30pm
543-023-057
William Morris Centre,
6-8 Greenleaf Rd,
E17 6QQ

Socialist Workers Party meetings

Meetings are open to non-members of the SWP.

Some meetings are hybrid—on Zoom as well as in person.

If your local meeting is a hybrid one, the meeting ID will be on this page.

The password for all meetings (unless indicated otherwise) is 967537

MANCHESTER

What the Epstein files reveal about the sexist system

Wed 18 Feb, 7pm
Friends Meeting House,
6 Mount St, M2 5NS

NORWICH & EAST ANGLIA

From Bobby Sands to the Filton 24—Imperialism, resistance and the British state

Wed 18 Feb, 7.30pm
906-652-5299

OXFORD

Will the AI bubble burst? A Marxist analysis

Wed 18 Feb, 7.15pm
861-2001-6477
Michael Young Building,
Manzil Way, OX4 1YH

PLYMOUTH

The point is to change it—Marxism and philosophy

Thu 19 Feb, 7pm
897-1685-8334
Quaker Meeting House,
74 Mutley Plain, PL4 6LF

PORTSMOUTH

Why you should be a revolutionary

Wed 18 Feb, 7.30pm
488-934-2809
Somerstown
Community Centre,
River St, PO5 4PJ

SHEFFIELD & SOUTH YORKSHIRE

Will the AI bubble burst? A Marxist analysis

Thu 19 Feb, 7pm
St Mary's Church,
Bramall Ln, S2 4QZ

SOUTHEND

Minneapolis—Ice, the state and the revolt against Trump

Thu 19 Feb, 7.30pm
886-8852-6795 Ambleside
Social Club, Ambleside
Drive, Southend, SS1 2UP

WOLVERHAMPTON, WALSALL & SOUTH STAFFS

Predators in power—Epstein, sexual violence and the system

Wed 18 Feb, 7.30pm
914-9548-131
St Peters Café, Exchange St,
Wolverhampton, WV1 1TS

YORK, SCARBOROUGH & HULL

The point is to change it—Marxism and philosophy

Wed 18 Feb, 7pm
8274-897-492
Clements Hall,
Nunthorpe Rd, York,
YO23 1BW

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Email enquiries@swp.org.uk
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YES? Then you want to be in the
Socialist Workers Party



socialistworker.co.uk/join-swp



Or scan this
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IN BRIEF

No break for bosses over pay banding

MICROBIOLOGY WORKERS at Airedale NHS Foundation Trust have escalated strikes over pay banding. The main dispute is over pay—workers are on the wrong NHS pay band for the work they do.

Trust bosses also agreed to take on extra work for another Trust. So workers at Airedale will have increased workloads, including more call outs.

Workers struck from 18-25 December last year. They walked out again for two days on Monday, and are set to walk out again for three more days next Wednesday.

Textiles strike aims for a big break

WSP TEXTILE workers in Stroud and Dursley, Gloucestershire, have escalated strikes. WSP workers manufacture felts and cloths for internationally used snooker tables and tennis balls.

They're paid less than £13 per hour—and the most recent pay offer was 2.35 percent.

Unite union members rejected the deal and struck last year, but bosses continue to ignore negotiations.

They struck for six days from Monday last week and were set to begin three more days this Wednesday.

Oil and gas workers strike a victory

UNITE UNION members at the Sullom Voe oil and gas terminal in the Shetland Islands, Scotland, have won their pay dispute after strikes.

Their employer, Sodexo, was low-balling pay offers. Workers have won a 4 percent pay rise, back dated to April 2025, and another 4 percent this April. They have also secured one-off payments of up to £2,225.

Library victory one for the books

A SIX month dispute at the British Library in London ends as workers in the PCS civil service union have won big.

After action throughout last winter, workers have won an increase of 4 percent, backdated to August. Bosses' initial offer was 1.6 percent.

They have also won an additional £2,000 for grade C workers. And security workers on irregular schedules have won an review to address working patterns. The strikes forced a reversal of a restructure and pushed the CEO to resign.

Mental health strike drives on

GREATER MANCHESTER Mental Health drivers announced new strikes dates after the trust refused to reband them to band 3. The Unison union members are set to strike from 23 February to 1 March.

TRANSPORT

DLR cleaners are sick of poor pay

by JUDE MCKECHNIE

CLEANERS ON the Docklands Light Railway (DLR) in London are keeping up their fight for sick pay.

The RMT union members, who work for subcontractor Bidvest Noonan, struck last Wednesday as part of their long-running fight.

Strikers and their supporters protested at a Transport for London (TfL) board meeting.

Ali, who's worked on London transport for nearly ten years, told Socialist Worker that Bidvest Noonan treats workers without dignity.

"We are human beings," he said. "If I'm sick, who's going to cover my bills? If I get sick, I don't have enough money."

Workers are demanding that Sadiq Khan, Labour mayor of London, honours his pledge to bring the cleaners back in-house.

Striker Sofia told Socialist Worker that she was "very angry" about how Bidvest Noonan were treating cleaners.

Thousands of people use

the DLR every day—and the cleaners play a key role in keeping the service running.

But bosses "don't give a crap," Sofia explained. "I myself have been off sick, on morphine in hospital."

Outsourcing

"I had to use my annual leave because I don't get sick pay. I'm a single mum and I can't afford to be sick."

Sofia explained that the RMT asked for talks with bosses about sick pay last spring. "They came back with a terrible offer of only one week's pay if you have a terminal illness," she said.

Outsourcing allows private firms to make astronomical profits at the expense of workers' health.

RMT UNION leader Eddie Dempsey at the rally

Health workers set for big fights over pay

HEALTH WORKERS in South Wales are set to strike for four weeks in a dispute over pay banding.

Health visitors—health workers such as nurses who have special community care training—are being severely underpaid by CTM University Health Board.

Bosses refuse to recognise the work health visitors do. They should be at band 7 on the NHS pay scale but are on band 6—which is costing workers up to £9,000 a year.

Workers across the NHS are fighting over pay

banding. The Unite union members are set to strike from 23 February to 20 March.

■ GMB UNION members at Barnsley NHS Trust in West Yorkshire have voted overwhelmingly for strikes in a consultative ballot.

Some 97 percent voted in favour of striking, on a turnout of more than 76 percent.

The trust wants to impose new contracts on thousands of staff that will remove their right to a paid break.

The GMB says it is ready to launch a full strike ballot if the trust does not back down.

GMB organiser Rachel Dix said, "On the back of this incredible result—which has seen a dramatic spike in membership growth—GMB has lodged a collective dispute with the employer."

"We await their response, but our members are clear. They are prepared to take this all the way unless the hostile act of fire and rehire is halted and their breaks remain untouched."

YOUR PARTY

London assembly success

MORE THAN 100 people attended last Sunday's third meeting of the Your Party All London Delegate Assembly.

Some 38 delegates, representing 26 of the 28 Your Party proto-branches in London, discussed motions regarding the policies so far adopted by Your Party's national leadership.

Two further resolutions backing the Together Alliance demonstration on 28 March were raised.

These committed the Assembly to sign the Together Alliance statement and build for a Your Party bloc on the march.

The meeting held hustings for eight of the candidates standing for the London seats of Your Party's Central Executive Committee (CEC), nominations for which also closed last Sunday.

The contentious issue of dual membership was debated, with the majority in favour of it.

The national requirement that members specify their gender when applying for membership was also debated.

The overwhelming majority

**The Your Party assembly**

thought there should be a third choice of either non-binary or other.

People discussed the need to make all events accessible for disabled members.

A series of motions on local government democracy, services and different struggles were also discussed.

It was agreed that the All London Your Party committee would report back on policies at the next assembly meeting. The committee would also report back on motions on free transport in London and housing nationally.

An emergency motion demanding independent oversight of the count of the CEC election was unanimously backed.

Alan Gibson

EDUCATION

EDUCATION WORKERS across Waltham Forest, east London were set to strike this week.

At Leytonstone school, NEU union members were set to walk out on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday over management practices.

There has been a loss of trust in the headteacher, who won't implement changes workers have been demanding.

This includes an application of a pay policy and the resolution of workload issues.

The initial threat of strikes led to some changes—but they didn't go far enough.

At Belmont Park, management is targeting the union, victimising union reps. They were set to strike this Wednesday, Thursday and Friday.

Management have been suspending NEU union members on trumped up charges, suspending reps during industrial action and

then reinstating them.

At Hillyfield Primary Academy, workers are fighting over pay, striking on the same days as workers at Leytonstone and Belmont Park.

At Connaught school, the NEU has suspended strikes after positive talks with management led to agreement on issues of workloads and sickness absences.

■ AT ACCESS Creative College in east London, NEU union members were set to strike on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday this week.

They are battling bosses over jobs, union recognition and workload.

Management has been ramping up the number of students at the school, but not increasing the numbers of workers to match this. It has increased workloads.

Bosses are refusing to increase pay in response to this increase.

ARCHITECTURE

ARCHITECTS IN London are fighting against mass redundancies. Bjarke Ingels Group (BIG) announced that 80 workers risk losing their job.

But BIG workers are organised architects through the Unite union.

To chants of "Union busting is disgusting", workers and supporters rallied outside the London office last Tuesday.

BIG's refusal to consult Unite—which represents over half the workforce—amounts to union-busting.

Unite union branch secretary Cameron told Socialist Worker that workers feel a "real, deep unfairness".

Another key issue is the way architecture bosses treat migrants.

"When they make redundancies, it's people losing their life in the country," he explained.

Cameron added, "We've got plans for further escalation. There's more pressure to come."

Strikes could shake bosses to their foundations.

Bus workers call off strike for negotiations

THE STRIKES at Lea Interchange Bus Garage in east London have been called off.

Hundreds of bus drivers in the Unite union have struck against the victimisation of union reps by Stagecoach managers.

Since December, the strikes have won some concessions, primarily the moving of two problematic managers.

But renewed negotiations have paused the strikes. Disciplinary sanctions on some workers remain, but Stagecoach bosses are re-entering negotiations.

Amid the strikes over repression, workers at Lea Interchange were also balloting for strikes over pay. But bosses have made concessions and are set to re-open pay negotiations this week.

The suspension of the strikes is temporary. If Stagecoach bosses back out of pay negotiations or fail to put up a decent pay offer, more strikes will be called.

If called, strikes will be coordinated action Bow bus garage. Workers there are balloting for strikes over pay, which closes on Wednesday.

Both sites should coordinate strikes and put the pressure on Stagecoach.

TEACHING ASSISTANTS

‘Without us, they won’t gain their education’

by JUDE McKECHNIE

TEACHING assistants (TAs) in Essex began seven days of strikes over pay last Thursday.

They struck this Tuesday and were set to strike from Wednesday to Friday.

The Unison union members provide support for children with special educational needs and disabilities (Send) at Pioneer School in Basildon, Columbus School and College in Chelmsford and Lift Clacton.

Workers are fighting for Lift Schools academy bosses to recognise their role in Send education and reflect it in their pay.

Linda is a Unison member at Pioneer School. “We enable our children with specialist needs, high medical needs and high behaviour needs to come into school,” she told Socialist Worker.

“Without us here, they won’t gain their education. But I don’t think that we are appreciated and the work we do isn’t reflected in the wages.”

Sarah, a learning support assistant (LSA) at Pioneer, added, “We have workers who have got second and third jobs to try and make ends meet.”

Miranda, another LSA at the school, wants bosses to

TEACHING ASSISTANTS on strike in Essex

“realise that we are teaching assistants, but also nurses”.

“A lot of our children have oxygen tanks or have epilepsy,” she told Socialist Worker.

Responsibility

“A lot of them have a physio plan which we implement. Our pay doesn’t reflect the amount of responsibility.”

Send teachers at Lift schools receive up to £5,500 extra a year for the extra skills and responsibilities

that come with their roles. Miranda said that “the teachers deserve it because our teachers are amazing”.

“But we deserve it too and a lot of our teachers do support us in that.”

Workers said that there is a high turnover of TAs at Lift Schools. Sarah explained that an allowance would help retain experienced workers and “encourage the younger generations to come into this job”.

Mel Carrington is the

Unison regional organiser. She told Socialist Worker that bosses only offered a pay rebanding scheme tied to gaining new qualifications, not an allowance recognising the work TAs already do.

But workers are determined to win and are not backing down.

They protested on Monday outside Lift’s London office.

■Workers’ names have been changed

■Find detail of the picket lines at tinyurl.com/TASend

FURTHER EDUCATION

Where should the college dispute go from here?

THE INDUSTRIAL action in English colleges is hanging in the balance. There were strikes at 17 colleges and college groups across the country last month over pay parity with school teachers, national bargaining and workloads.

At the UCU union’s yearly congress last May, union members in further education voted for a nationally coordinated campaign.

Pay and workload were central issues. There was also a campaign for an agreement that would allow further education to be levelled up through nationally binding agreements was at the heart of the dispute.

Whittled

A ballot campaign was launched that originally had around 70 colleges involved. This was soon whittled down to 54 participating in the ballot.

Some 33 of those succeeded in getting past the 50 percent turnout threshold required by anti-trade union laws. Out of these only 17 struck.

This confirmed the fears of those of us on the left of the further education committee (FEC). Despite the motion voted for at conference, the national campaign is becoming a series of local disputes essentially over pay and workload.

It comes from a combination of the right within the union failing to mobilise their own branches and regional officials pressuring branches to settle.

Some of these branches have achieved good results over pay and extra holiday entitlements. But it was

A college picket line

another missed opportunity for national action.

Members demonstrated their appetite for this kind of action when they voted for it at the national conference and on the picket lines in January.

The FEC meeting last Friday agreed to encourage those branches left in the dispute to escalate their action.

It also agreed to organise a lobby of parliament as well as prepare for an aggregated ballot—a single ballot across the sector—over nationally binding agreements and to build national action.

Sean Vernell

■UCU UNION members are holding a strike ballot over victimisation at New City College, made up of several colleges across East London and Essex. English For Speakers of Other Languages (Esol) teacher Wojciech Dmochowski is fighting to be reinstated.

He was dismissed for protesting at another campus against redundancies, for putting up posters and for his use of union email lists.

None of these are sackable offences. UCU members at two of the group’s campuses are voting in a ballot that ends on Friday.

HIGHER EDUCATION

University strikes ramp up

MEMBERS OF the UCU union at **Southampton Solent University** struck on Monday and will be out again next Tuesday as bosses try to force them onto a worse pension scheme.

UCU members at **Northumbria University** in Newcastle plan to strike for ten days starting this Thursday and Friday and continuing next Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday.

They are outraged over bosses trying to put them on a worse pension scheme and threatening to freeze their pay if they don’t comply.

At **Imperial College** in London, the three campus unions—UCU, Unison and Unite—are set to strike this Thursday, next Monday and the following Tuesday over pay.

EIS-ULA union members

at **Edinburgh Napier University** begin ten days of strikes this week to demand bosses rule out the threat of compulsory redundancies. Their strike days are this Tuesday and Thursday, 16, 20, 24-26 February and 2, 3 and 5 March.

UCU members at the **University of Sheffield International College** (Usic) are set to strike over pay and conditions 16, 18, 20, 24 and 26 February.

And at **Bristol University**, Unison union members are striking on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday this week. They are demanding better than a 1.4 percent pay “increase”, which fails even to meet the rate of inflation.

The Unison members’ lunchtime rally on Thursday takes place on the workplace day of action for Palestine.

UCU union stops discussion about Unite union strike

UCU UNION officials are trying to shut down discussion of a dispute involving the union’s employees.

Members of the Unite union who work for UCU are on strike from this Monday until next Friday in the north west of England and from this Thursday to next Friday nationwide.

The Unite members are walking out in defence of Marie Monaghan. They say she faces a disciplinary investigation after raising health and safety concerns in the workplace.

UCU denies that it is victimising Marie for her trade union activities. It says she is under investigation, but it has not yet led to disciplinary proceedings.

At the north west regional committee on Saturday

morning, UCU members proposed a motion in solidarity with the Unite strikers.

The chair of the meeting tried to rule the motion out of order. After the proposers won a vote for the motion to be heard, a regional officer of UCU stated that members had no right to discuss it. They then shut down the Teams video call.

At the UCU Scottish executive meeting, a member was also prevented from proposing a motion on the dispute. And the East Midlands regional officer threatened to shut down a meeting to prevent discussion of the issue.

The UCU should stop this undemocratic behaviour towards its members and allow them to discuss the issue.

Fight over devastating cuts at Essex university

WORKERS AT the University of Essex are fighting back against bosses’ plans to shut the Southend campus and axe hundreds of jobs.

Bosses want to axe 200 academic and 200 professional services jobs—a cull of one in ten of the workforce. UCU union members plan to strike for seven days from this Thursday.

To build for the strike, hundreds of workers and students rallied in Southend last week to build support for the action.

Speakers included the Unison’s newly-elected general secretary, left winger Andrea Egan, and UCU general secretary Jo Grady. Unison members at the university are balloting to

join their co-workers on the picket lines.

Helen is a UCU member and lecturer in social work at Southend. “I left the front line of social work so that I could come on here to teach the next generation of social workers,” she told Socialist Worker. “I never expected to have to apply for another position. We don’t even know if we’re going to be offered the opportunity to be redeployed or if we are just being made redundant.”

University management informed workers of the plan just before Christmas. It wants to issue redundancy notices by May and has since announced plans to close the Southend campus over the summer.

Jude Mckechnie

'TELEDYNE FOUR' GROUP OF PALESTINE ACTIVISTS BACK IN COURT...

REPRESSION IS A THREAT TO US ALL

by ARTHUR TOWNEND

THE BRITISH state is determined to convict the Teledyne Four group of Palestine activists. Their five-day retrial began at Bradford Crown Court on Monday.

Laura Gao, Ruby Hamill, Daniel Jones and Najam Shah were charged with criminal damage and having articles with intent to destroy or damage property.

They allegedly broke into the Teledyne arms factory in Shipley, West Yorkshire, and caused half a million pounds worth of damage to arms destined for Israel.

But in September 2024, a jury failed to reach a verdict and they have been out on bail ever since.

Confident

"We're confident that we shouldn't, or won't, get convicted by the jury," one of the four, Najam Shah told Socialist Worker.

Since their action in April 2024, Najam thought there has been a "definite shift" in the public opinion of the Palestine movement.

"I think it's partly because the mainstream media has been reporting on more of the crimes in Gaza," Najam said.

"It's still very biased, but people are more aware of the atrocities.

"We know now that the public



THE PALESTINE movement is under attack

PICTURE: GUY SMALLMAN

supports direct action more than they support Israel and the British court system."

With the prosecution service dragging Palestine activists through the courts, Najam said it showed "a British state at odds with the British people".

"The more stubborn they get, the more resilient we get, the more galvanised we become," he said.

"We had over 2,000 mainly

elderly people being arrested in support of Palestine Action.

"We've seen our comrades in the Filton 24 go through the terrorist treatment. It's scary, but it galvanises us to do more."

But repression has dampened resistance. Teledyne obtained a court injunction to stop protests outside the factory.

Teledyne was shut down five times in total before the injunction—but

now it is using the courts to try to suppress protests outside the factory.

There are important battles against the British state's repression taking place. The Palestine hunger strikers remain on remand—imprisoned without trial.

Thousands of people face charges under terror laws for taking part in the Defend Our Juries (DOJ) mass acts of defiance last summer.

Kwabena Devonish, an anti-racist

campaigner from South Wales, is due to appear in Bristol Crown Court from 16 March. She is facing trial under anti-terrorism laws for a speech at a Palestine solidarity demonstration in November 2023.

Campaign

Palestine Solidarity Campaign director Ben Jamal and Stop The War vice chair Chris Nineham will go on trial on 23 February. They stand accused of breaching the Public Order Act in relation to a national demonstration in January last year.

The British state is ramping up repression against the Palestine movement—but there are frictions within it over how best to proceed.

But millions of people support Palestine and hate Keir Starmer—tapping into that broad base is key to pushing back state repression.

If one of the Palestine prisoners is from your area, get an activist from a defence campaign to speak in your union branch or campaign meeting.

If you're a university worker, find out if a prisoner is a student or graduate.

Get the union branch to support any campaigning on campus, pass a motion in support and call on the national union to take up the cause.

The authoritarianism of the British state isn't just a threat to those who take direct action—it is a threat to us all.

Stand with Filton 24 as British state demands new trial

THE BRITISH state is demanding retrial of Palestine activists.

A jury acquitted or refused to convict six people, who are part of the Filton 24 group of activists, on Wednesday of last week.

But the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) announced last Saturday that it will seek a retrial with a hearing scheduled for 18 February.

It said, "Prosecutors are now considering the

precise basis on which that retrial would proceed, including the form of the indictment, in accordance with CPS legal guidance."

Defendants cannot be retried on charges for which they were acquitted—found not guilty.

A retrial is possible under British law if a jury doesn't reach a majority verdict on a charge, meaning a defendant is not convicted.

The six were charged over breaking into an Elbit



Six of the Filton 24 who face a retrial

Systems arms factory in Filton, near Bristol, in August 2024.

Charlotte Head, Samuel Corner, Ellie Kamio, Fatema Zainab Rajwani, Zoe Rogers and Jordan Devlin were all acquitted of "aggravated burglary"—the most serious charge.

Fatema, Zoe and Jordan were acquitted of "violent disorder"—and the jury didn't reach a verdict on the same charge for Charlotte, Samuel and Ellie. The jury did not

convict any defendants of "criminal damage".

Samuel was also charged with "Grievous Bodily Harm (GBH) with intent" for allegedly striking a police officer.

But he was blinded by PAVA spray and was acting in defence of Ellie, who the police had tasered twice and was "screaming in pain". He was not convicted for GBH.

All the activists, except Samuel, were released on bail last week.