

October 2024 • Socialist Workers Party pre-conference

Bulletin 1



*This bulletin is for members of the SWP only.
It should not be distributed or forwarded to others.*

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Guide to SWP national conference 10-12 January 2025 Camden, London

THE SOCIALIST Workers Party annual conference is where we review the party's work, make decisions about future activities, elect the party's leading bodies and debate developments in British and global politics.

We hope you can be part of the discussion. Whether you have joined recently or been a member for years, you should feel able to take part and put forward your views. We want the conference to be a democratic event in which members can fully participate.

If you don't understand how something works, or have any questions, then please ask. As a member you have the right to be heard, and your input can help the party make better decisions. There are procedures and rules to make sure the discussion is fair for everyone. But don't think this is a stuffy, bureaucratic process.

Branches should make arrangements to enable all members to be part of the conference process, and to make it possible for any eligible member to put themselves forwards as a delegate.

Conference takes place in person from 10-12 January 2025 in Camden, London. The full venue will be sent out to all delegates. There is an option to join online but we encourage as many members as possible to join in person as it can lead to a fuller debate.

The pre-conference discussion period, according to the SWP constitution, begins three months before conference.

Pre-conference bulletins

The main method of discussion is through pre-conference bulletins (PCBs), where comrades can send in their views, experiences, proposals and ideas.

These bulletins are for members only and should not be shared outside the party. Any SWP member may write for the PCBs. The timetable for the PCBs is:

- PCB1 deadline Thursday 10 October 5pm
- PCB2 deadline Monday 4 November 5pm
- PCB3 deadline Monday 9 December 5pm

All contributions to the PCBs should be sent to conference@swp.org.uk. You should receive an acknowledgement within three working days that it has been received. Please contact the National Office if you do not receive acknowledgement.

The following guidelines for PCBs apply:

- In PCB1 the word count limit for comrades submitting pieces is 4,000 words. This includes contributions written by

multiple comrades. The main Central Committee (CC) piece for PCB1, which sets out the main perspectives of the party, is limited to 6,000 words. Other PCB pieces are limited to 4,000 words.

- In PCB2 and PCB3 comrades the word count limit for comrades submitting pieces is 3,000 words. CC pieces may be 4,000 words.
- The national secretary may make minor modifications to contributions, request that they be rewritten in part or in their entirety, or refuse publication where they are libelous, endanger the safety or future employment of comrades, or contain information that is likely to lead to legal problems for the party or its members.
- The national secretary may reject contributions that have appeared or are due to appear elsewhere, whether in print publications or online.

Pre-conference members' meetings

Pre-conference members' meetings take place in every geographical SWP district. They are an opportunity for every SWP member in that area – branch members, students, trade unionists – to come together and debate the political perspectives going in to conference.

They are also where every SWP district elects delegates to SWP conference. We encourage districts to organise these meetings well in advance, and to circulate the date and details

with a lot of notice. These meetings should be full of debate and an opportunity for every member to make their voice heard. Every member in the area will receive email notification of the meeting, and the dates will be circulated in Party Notes.

As in previous years, the only members who can be elected as delegates and can take part in voting at the meetings are those who pay subs and who joined before Thursday 10 October 2024.

Anyone who joins after that date is welcome to write for PCBs, attend the pre-conference meetings and to speak, but they can't vote or be a delegate.

Delegates and observers to conference

Each branch or district receives a delegate entitlement based on its subs-paying membership.

Delegates have full voting and speaking rights at conference. Delegates must be elected at the pre-conference district meetings, must be subs paying members who joined the SWP before 10 October 2024.

Observers can attend conference and speak in the discussion, but don't have voting rights. Observers must be subs paying members. If you want to apply to be an observer please contact the National Office. All requests will be decided on by the Central Committee.

Conference procedures

The main method of discussion at conference is through commissions. These are documents drawn up at the end of each session at conference, which summarise the main points of discussion and any decisions agreed upon.

A group of comrades from each session are elected to write the commission. All commissions are then voted on by delegates. If there is disagreement on the commission, comrades can:

- Propose an alternative commission
- Propose an amendment to the commission

This method is democratic, transparent, flexible and open to the input of all delegates. It means the very latest developments, insights and arguments can be reflected in the party's decisions.

Motions

Sometimes there is a need for a more specific debate. These can take the form of motions. The guidelines for motions is as follows:

- All motions must be passed in time for them to appear in one of pre-conference bulletins so that everyone is aware of them in advance. That means the final date for the submission of motions is the closing date for PCB3, which is Monday 9 December.
- Motions must be passed by at least one properly organised meeting of an SWP branch, district, trade union fraction, pre-

conference members meeting, National Committee or Central Committee.

- Motions must be circulated well in advance (at least seven days) of the above meeting to allow comrades time to consider them.
- Motions to conference can not be discussed outside the pre-conference period.
- All amendments to motions must be submitted by Friday 20 December. They must go through the same process outlined above for motions.
- All motions and amendments should be sent to conference@swp.org.uk

Elections taking place at conference

Central Committee (CC)

According to the SWP constitution, “between conferences the Central Committee is entrusted with the political leadership of the organisation and is responsible for the national direction of all political and organisational work, subject to the decision-making powers of conference.”

The CC consists of members elected by the conference according to the following procedure:

- The outgoing CC proposes a provisional group of comrades (“slate”) standing to be elected at conference. This should be circulated in PCB1. This can then be discussed at pre

conference members' meetings where comrades can propose an alternative slate.

- At conference the outgoing CC proposes a final slate, which may have changed as a result of the pre-conference discussion. Five delegates are required to propose an alternative slate at conference. Delegates then vote on the slates that have been proposed.

National Committee (NC)

Every year at SWP annual conference delegates elect a National Committee. The party's constitution says, "The National Committee consists of 50 members elected at Annual Conference. The National Committee assists the Central Committee in providing political leadership for the party and reviews the party's political and organisational work between Conferences. Its decisions are binding on the Central Committee. In the event of a major disagreement between the Central Committee and the National Committee, the NC has the right to call a Special Conference. The NC normally meets every two months between Annual conferences. Those elected to the NC also attend Party Councils and Party Conference by right."

To stand for NC you must submit a nomination. All nominations must be received by 5pm on Monday 9 December (the deadline for pre-conference bulletin 3). Please do not wait to the last minute to do this. A full list of nominations will be published in advance of conference. This will give delegates time to decide who they wish to elect. We will circulate a

nomination form with pre-conference bulletins 1 and 2. If you wish to stand, please fill it in and return it to the National Office or email the required information to conference@swp.org.uk

Each nomination has to be supported by five subs paying members, and the nominee has to agree to be nominated. All candidates have to be subs paying members of the SWP. Each candidate should submit up to 50 words explaining why they should be on the NC. Please do not submit more than 50 words.

Disputes Committee (DC)

The Disputes Committee's (DC) function is to investigate complaints and any other issues referred to it relating to disciplinary matters and unacceptable behaviour by its members or units. The terms of reference for the DC can be found here and expected behaviour for SWP members here.

At conference, the outgoing CC proposes a slate of comrades standing for re-election. Five delegates are required to propose an alternative slate for the DC.

Conference Arrangements Committee (CAC)

A Conference Arrangements Committee (CAC) is elected at the start of conference to oversee the debates, commissions, motions and voting.

Accessibility at conference

Childcare

The question of childcare is an important one for all comrades, but especially women comrades. Given we live in a society where the ruling ideas say women are expected to bear the main burden of looking after children, it is women who are hit hardest when there is no consideration of this issue.

Branches should make sure childcare is not a barrier to involvement at conference, including those attending online.

Access

The conference venue is fully accessible. If you have any access requirements, either for in person or online participation, please get in touch

If you have any questions about conference, please email [conference@ swp.org.uk](mailto:conference@swp.org.uk) or ring the National Office on 0207 840 5600.

Crisis, reaction and resistance: perspectives for the radical left

Central Committee

Capitalist society “toboggans with closed eyes towards military and economic catastrophe”. Those aren’t our words, but those of the revolutionary socialist Leon Trotsky writing in the 1930s. But he could have written them about today.

We live in an age of capitalist crises. The “military catastrophe” has defined the past 12 months with Israel’s genocide in Gaza and the threat of wider war in the Middle East—and the pitch is growing louder after the invasion of Lebanon.

The potential for “economic catastrophe” stalks global capitalism, which has suffered more than a decade of shocks and stagnation.

The United States media is full of fears that the country is heading for another recession. There are bad signs in the Eurozone too with Germany, for example, hurtling towards a back-to-back recession. China’s economy, too, is facing a

downturn with renewed signs of deflation and oversupply.

But, unlike when Trotsky was writing, we face further catastrophes. Climate chaos threatens the lives of millions of people and the planet. The devastating floods in Nepal are a reminder that people in the Global South pay the heaviest price for climate change.

But nowhere is safe: millions of people in the southern United States have been left exposed to violent storms in the name of profit. Hurricane Milton was battering Florida in the wake of Hurricane Helene as we wrote this document.

The state's governor—Donald Trump supporter Ron DeStanis—pushed through a climate denial bill in July that ripped up regulations for fossil fuel bosses. “We’re rejecting the agenda of the radical green zealots,” he said. Now millions are paying the price because of the capitalist zealots’ agenda.

The race is on—will the revolutionary left or the reactionary right shape politics in this age of catastrophe?

The mass movement for Palestine and political radicalisation shows the potential for an alternative, but there’s nothing inevitable about the left gaining from the system’s crises.

Far right and fascist forces are resurgent across Europe and the United States. In Austria, the FPÖ—a party founded by former members of the Nazi SS—won the most votes in the general election last month. In Germany, the AfD—where the fascists call the shots—won state elections in Thuringia and almost won in Saxony and Brandenburg. And in France, Marine Le Pen’s RN are the kingmakers and directors of right wing Tory Michel Barnier’s government.

That is the urgency of the political situation. And, if the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) is to meet the scale of the challenge, the organisation needs to keep turning outwards, deepening its roots and growing.

Shield and sword

The political situation demands a “shield” and “sword” strategy:

1) We need the “shield” of the anti-fascist and anti-racist united front to defend the working class movement from the far right and racist division.

Socialists face a new and dangerous situation in Britain. A far right party, Reform UK, has won seats in parliament for the first time in British history alongside Nazi Tommy Robinson trying to build a fascist street movement.

Our key priority is building and revamping Stand Up To Racism (SUTR) to take on the threat of fascism and the far right, as we outline in this document and a separate one on anti-fascist and anti-racist work in this pre-conference bulletin.

If the SWP and SUTR did not exist, anti-fascists would not have hurled back the far right pogroms and riots against Mosques and hotels housing refugees. A revamped SUTR across Britain—which brings together young and radical people who want to take action, the “social weight” of the trade unions and sections of the Labour Party—is an urgent task.

2) We need a “sword” of working class struggle and a fighting left to provide a socialist alternative.

We face a Labour government that offers austerity mark 2, ramps up state racism and backs war abroad. As disillusion and despair set in, the far right and fascists will seek to capitalise on it and put down roots. Trotsky argued that the fascists were a “party of counter-revolutionary despair”. So, alongside building a united front to beat back fascism, he said the socialists had to be a “party of revolutionary hope” that put forward an alternative to the capitalist system that gives rise to it.

This means we have to find ways to pull together those who want to fight under the Labour government, build solidarity for strikes and struggles that are taking place and look for opportunities for initiatives alongside broader forces to push for more. And we need to win those who are breaking with Labour to a revolutionary socialist politics based on the primacy of struggle.

Genocide, war and imperialism

The beginning of this month hammered home the “military catastrophe”. As we mark the one-year anniversary of 7 October, the Israeli state is spreading slaughter to Lebanon and threatens a wider war in the Middle East.

Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu senses an opportunity to turn the tables on its regional rival, Iran. He wants to punish Lebanon for humiliating Israel in its 2006 war and to push ahead with the genocide in Gaza. After Israel’s assassination of Hezbollah resistance leader Hassan Nasrallah,

Netanyahu boasted of having changed “the balance of power in the region for years”.

He has expanded the war aims in Lebanon to include the destruction of Hezbollah and regime change in Iran. Here, he knows he can count on the support of the United States and Britain, while they make mealy-mouthed calls for a “ceasefire” and “diplomatic solutions”.

Biden is caught in a contradiction. He supports Israel as the West’s watchdog state, but fears that the scale of its assaults could spur resistance across the region, triggering a repeat of the Arab Spring of 2011.

So far Biden has been unwilling or unable to rein in Netanyahu—even on the rare occasions that he has wanted to. Instead, the Israeli prime minister has been able to play him, by spreading the slaughter to Lebanon and forcing the West to back him “against terrorism”.

Contrast that to Israel’s invasion of Lebanon in 1982. The then US president, Ronald Reagan, initially supported the invasion. But when Israel began an intensified bombing campaign against west Beirut, he feared it would make the whole region unstable. He called the Israeli prime minister Menachem Begin to demand he stop the assault, describing it as a “holocaust” in a deliberate provocation. Israel ceased bombing within hours.

The difference between then and now shows how US weaknesses open spaces for regional imperialist powers—such as Israel and Iran—to further assert themselves. It underlines that we live in a dangerous world of growing inter-imperialist rivalries.

US imperialism faces a triple crisis—the challenge of China in southeast Asia, a failing proxy war in Ukraine and Palestine and the Middle East.

The greatest threat to US power is the rise of Chinese imperialism. As his days in the White House draw to a close, Biden made sure to approve the US's largest ever military aid package of \$567 million to Taiwan.

Ukraine's offensive into Russian territory was an attempt by president Volodymyr Zelensky to turn the tables in the war and, crucially, to force his Nato paymasters to give more arms and money to the war effort. While it caught Russia off guard, it hasn't shifted the situation in Ukraine's favour—quite the opposite, Russia is now making some breakthroughs in the east of the country.

The result of the US election, if Donald Trump wins, could change the situation further. Elbridge Colby, who was tipped to become Trump's national security adviser, argues that the US should focus on China, negotiate a swift end to the Ukraine war and make European states pay for their own military needs. A US pivot from Ukraine to Taiwan wouldn't mean an end to the Ukraine crisis, as German and British imperialism remain committed to supporting the Zelensky regime for now.

The West faces another crisis—one of legitimacy. For over 30 years, US imperialism has destroyed Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya and other countries under the guise of “humanitarian intervention”. At the same time, it holds up Israel as a “civilised society” and the “one democracy” in the region.

Many people have always rejected Western talk of

“humanitarian intervention”. But millions of others did buy into it. Now, for them, Israel’s daily toll of war crimes has come as a shock. Seeing the West’s premier ally in the dock for war crimes has helped shatter an entire “worldview”.

The International Court of Justice (ICJ) is usually an echo chamber of Western interests. When the South African government brought a case of genocide against Israel, many weren’t expecting much from the judges. But because of the clear, genocidal nature of Israel’s attacks, and the international movement of solidarity against them, the ICJ said Israel had a “case to answer”.

The Palestine movement

London has been a protest capital for over a year—and Israel’s genocide, its invasion of Lebanon and its warmongering in the Middle East continue to bring new people onto the streets.

Socialist Worker has carried out a regular mass survey asking people how many national demonstrations. The results from the demonstration on 5 October show many had joined their first or second demonstration:

1st demonstration: 9 percent

2nd demonstration: 7 percent

3rd demonstration: 6 percent

4th demonstration: 8 percent

5th demonstration: 7 percent

6th demonstration: 4 percent

7th demonstration: 4 percent
8th demonstration: 5 percent
9th demonstration: 4 percent
10th demonstration: 5 percent
11th demonstration: 3 percent
12th demonstration: 4 percent
13th demonstration: 3 percent
14th demonstration: 3 percent
15th demonstration: 5 percent
16th demonstration: 5 percent
17th demonstration: 4 percent
18th demonstration: 3 percent
19th demonstration: 4 percent
20th demonstration: 7 percent

This represents an unprecedented solidarity movement for Palestine, both in terms of its size and its sustained nature.

We grasped last October that the SWP had to try to lead and take initiatives within the Palestine movement, alongside agitating for revolutionary politics on the mass demonstrations.

As a separate CC document on our work in Palestine movement outlines, we were central to the organising assemblies, pushing workplace days of action and bringing together the student encampments. We did this through a combination of working with the top of the movement—with the Palestine Solidarity Campaign and Stop The War—and taking independent initiatives with other forces.

After a year of genocide, many are asking, “What impact can

we have?”, and, “Where next for the movement”? When Israel launched its genocide against the Palestinians, millions around the world hoped to see struggle—both from resistance groups and from other countries in the region.

But today Iran, the Houthi fighters in Yemen and the Hezbollah resistance in Lebanon all appear to be on the back foot. There is, however, a force that can meet the challenge of Israel—and crucially, the imperialist states that stand behind it. It is a force based among the poorest and most oppressed people in the region, and its power can be expressed in the streets, in workplaces and in battle.

In 2006, a massive popular uprising in Lebanon helped beat back an Israeli invasion. Workers and the poor combined with fighters to make the occupation of their land impossible.

Israeli troops suffered significant losses battling to hold on to villages that local people and their allies were determined to recapture. Fighters from many different political traditions combined with the people and together they forced the Israelis out.

Moreover, when was Israel at its weakest strategically? It was during the Arab Spring of 2011 when revolutions toppled Western-backed dictators such as Hosni Mubarak in Egypt.

There is an important audience that we work with and want to win to the SWP. They are impressed that Socialist Worker took a principled line on 7 October, with its first front page afterwards declaring, “Victory to the Palestinians.”

But some of the most radical people are drawn to a nationalist strategy based on the primacy of armed struggle,

or stop at celebrating the Palestinian resistance. We need to win them to understand the limits of that strategy and to a revolutionary one.

The Labour government: things can only get worse?

Millions of people in Britain are angry, frustrated and disillusioned after 14 years of Tory rule. Austerity made working class people pay for a crisis caused by bankers and bosses. It decimated public services—the NHS is at breaking point, councils face collapse and universities stare down the barrel of bankruptcy.

Workers suffered more than a decade of pay stagnation and then came surging inflation in the wake of Covid. This came on top of decades of neoliberalism—free market policies pushed by politicians of all stripes from the late 1970s.

Keir Starmer and the Labour Party channelled some of that anger in the general election in July. He and chancellor Rachel Reeves know that, but they also need to dash and deflect those hopes.

Starmer has surrounded himself with acolytes of Tony Blair and the “New Labour” project, but he faces a very different economic context. Their governments came in just as a period of capitalist expansion and a financialised boom was taking off.

This enabled Labour to pour money into public services alongside pushing neoliberal measures such as marketisation and privatisation.

Starmer comes in after more than a decade of capitalist stagnation, sluggish growth and investment which limits his ability to throw crumbs to workers while being in hock to big business.

So, he declared that there is “light at the end of the tunnel” at the Labour Party conference. But the light he promised is the oncoming train of Labour’s austerity mark 2. He told people in his speech that they must join a “shared struggle” of “tough decisions”. It directly echoed former Tory prime minister David Cameron who claimed, “We’re all in it together,” as he began austerity in 2010.

Starmer and Reeves say Labour’s plan rests on boosting economic growth, but it won’t work even on its own pro-boss terms. When Labour pretends to have a strategy for boosting growth, it’s dubbed “securonomics” that claims to focus on growth and security. In a nutshell, they want to copy what Biden did but on the cheap. He’s tried to use state intervention in the economy to make US capitalism more competitive—particularly to meet the threat of China’s rise in the world.

Biden was forced to water down the plan and Starmer is in an even weaker position, fundamentally, because British capitalism has far less leverage in the global economy. Economic growth has been sluggish for the last decade in Britain. If Labour wants to boost growth, it has to increase investment through increasing taxes or borrowing.

But it doesn’t want to do that for fear of upsetting the rich and the financial markets; so, rather than boosting investment, we’re looking at a further tightening in public spending.

Take Labour's National Wealth Fund, which promised to invest £7.3 billion over the course of the next parliament. That's less than Starmer's green new deal of £28 billion which he ditched earlier this year. A recent study from LSE university and the Grantham Research Institute on Climate Change and the Environment said a rise of £26 billion a year was needed to transform infrastructure and service.

Labour's plan will actually see a fall in public investment as a share of economic output over the course of the parliament. A recent study by the Nuffield Trust, which looked at the major parties' spending plans ahead of the election, said that Labour was on course for austerity. It showed a funding shortfall of £20 billion for the NHS by 2028-29.

These warnings came before Reeves claimed that there was a £22 billion "black hole" in Britain's finances. Since then, Labour has refused to scrap the two-child benefit cap and snatched winter fuel payments from ten million pensioners.

Starmer has made both issues a test of confidence in the new Labour government. When seven Labour MPs voted to scrap the two-child benefit cap, he suspended them from the parliamentary party.

Only one Labour MP, Jon Trickett, rebelled over winter fuel payments.

Why this stand? The "savings" are minuscule. There are short term political reasons: Starmer is desperate to show there is no chance of the left coming back and that a Labour government will not pose any threat to the interests of big business and the rich. But there's a longer-term rationale

too—standing firm behind “means-testing” now will help to launch further attacks on the welfare state down the road.

This feeds a widespread sense that Starmer’s honeymoon is over—and the SWP aren’t the only ones saying it.

The Labour Party conference should have been a victory rally. Instead, Starmer began it battling scandals over the tens of thousands of pounds in luxury gifts and donations that he trousered and anger over the winter fuel allowance cuts.

Even Andrew Rawnsley—the stereotypical centrist columnist—wrote in the Guardian last month, “I hope he enjoyed it while it lasted. The surprise is that anyone is surprised that the Labour honeymoon is over.”

Tensions with the unions and prospects for resistance

Many union leaders and members were willing to give Labour the benefit of the doubt, even if they weren’t expecting that much from Starmer. But there are signs of how, under the surface appearance of class peace, the anger remains.

These were on show at the TUC union federation conference and the Labour Party conference. TUC general secretary Paul Nowak, wanted to rein in rather than raise working class people’s expectations from Labour. “No government can put 14 years of Tory chaos overnight,” Nowak said—echoing Starmer’s excuses that he has to make “tough choices” thanks to the Tory legacy.

“We won’t always agree with the new government on every issue, but we know Keir Starmer and this government have

the interests of working people at heart in a way that the Conservatives never did, and never will.”

After Starmer’s speech to the TUC congress, Unison union general secretary Christina McAnea said, “This was a serious speech from a serious prime minister.”

Gary Smith, GMB union general secretary, said, “The government has a huge job on to clean up the mess after 14 years of chaos and misrule from the Tories. We have seen some positive action from the new government, with above-inflation pay awards already in place.”

Unison and GMB, two of the biggest and most important unions, remained silent over austerity mark 2.

However, there are signs of tensions between Labour and some union leaders. Unite union general secretary Sharon Graham has positioned herself as a left wing opposition under Starmer.

Her message was rather different to that of Nowak, McAnea and Smith—“Labour has signalled some good things but the economic path it is on is simply wrong.”

The question is, how do we turn those words and discontent into action? It’s not enough for union leaders to say Starmer’s on the wrong path—there has to be continued resistance in the workplaces and streets.

What has Graham done to stop the steel jobs massacre in Port Talbot? The Unite bureaucracy called off strikes before the general election, urging workers to hold on for a better deal from the Labour government. It then accepted a deal virtually unchanged from the Tory one with the loss of up to 4,000 jobs.

However, tensions between Labour and the Unite bureaucracy this early on into a Starmer government show how little it is offering working class people. And there are further signs of how anger remains.

Labour and the union leaders had pushed for workers to accept public sector pay settlements. While above the present rate of inflation, the deals didn't address the years of pay stagnation.

But, as Reeves boasted of settling disputes in her speech to the Labour conference, news came in that RCN nurses' union members had overwhelmingly rejected a 5.5 percent pay increase.

The SWP has to relate to two audiences. There are the hundreds of thousands who've been radicalised by the Palestine movement, broke with the Labour Party and voted for left wing alternatives at the general election. They don't have illusions in a Starmer government and want to fight its complicity in Israeli genocide, its state racism and its austerity mark 2. This young, radical and militant crowd is the SWP's most important audience—and we want to win it to revolutionary socialist ideas and activism.

We need to harness that mood to build SUTR, keep fighting on Palestine and against Starmer's austerity drive.

There is a broader layer in the working class movement of millions of people who voted for Labour at the general election. They may not have expected much from Starmer, but they were willing to give a Labour government the benefit of the doubt.

But Starmer's awfulness means that more people in the unions

are open to the idea that we need to keep fighting under Labour.

A combination of factors—the Palestine movement, the independent victories in the general election, the virtual absence of the Labour left, Starmer pushing austerity and racism—means that tens of thousands of people want a left alternative to the Labour Party.

There are now discussions between a variety of left forces and individuals about the development of a left alternative. This takes place at a top level, for example, Corbyn and the other independents forming a parliamentary group. And a willingness by at least five of the seven suspended Labour MPs to keep defying Starmer fuels the possibility that they could join the ranks of the independent MPs.

There is also the Collective project. Sections of it want to launch a left party early next year. Others have a more cautious approach of focusing on local organising with, perhaps, a longer-term aim of launching a party. This latter camp includes Corbyn and Andrew Feinstein who stood against Starmer in the general election.

The SWP welcomes such discussion, seeks to have a dialogue with other forces on the left and is open to electoral work. We, for example, stood Maxine Bowler as an independent socialist in Sheffield in the general election where she received 2,537 votes at 8 percent.

But there are debates about what a left alternative should look like—an electoral alliance? A membership organisation? What does it prioritise: struggle or elections?

Another factor behind the desire for a left alternative is

Corbynism and its defeat in the Labour Party.

Our challenge is to be open to new left initiatives while remembering the lessons of the failures of left reformism whether it's Syriza in Greece, Podemos in Spain, Die Linke in Germany or Corbyn's Labour in Britain.

The common thread linking these examples was prioritising elections over insurgent campaigning and movement-building, and concessions to the right.

We would welcome a left alternative, but it shouldn't be a Labour Party mark 2. We don't just need a break with Labour, we need a break with Labourism—the idea that what happens in Parliament and elections is most important to winning change in society.

Our vision for a bigger fighting left is one that is not just based on struggles, but prioritises building struggles outside of parliament and sees elections as subordinate to that project.

The CC will produce another document on left alternatives to the Labour Party to develop the discussion.

The rise of fascism and the far right

Fascism is resurgent across Europe. We face a radicalisation of the traditional right, far right parties and fascist forces. The breakthroughs in Austria and Germany highlight some of the broader dynamics.

In Austria, the FPÖ was founded by Anton Reinthaller, a former member of the Nazi SS and a convicted war criminal. It tries to hide its fascist face and has adopted an electoral strategy. It does

not have a street-fighting wing, but it still dreams of building one and maintains strong links to organisations such as the far right Identitarian movement.

FPO leader Herbert Kickl has also sent signals to his more hardened supporters, who could form the basis of a street movement in the future. He has encouraged his followers to use the term “Volkskanzler” or people’s chancellor—a term for Adolf Hitler from Nazi times—and once mentioned wanting to “concentrate” migrants in one place.

Kickl was previously the minister in charge of policing and security in the Tory OVP-fascist FPO coalition between 2017 and 2019. His ministry set out to recruit over 4,000 cops, advertised the jobs on far right websites and equipped them with assault rifles.

Germany shows how fascists can begin to combine electoral work with street politics. The AfD began as a coalition of traditional conservatives, Ukip-style racist populists and fascists. But, from 2015 onwards, Eurosceptic leaders were replaced and it moved sharply to the right. The fascist faction Der Flügel (The Wing), with the AfD’s Thuringia leader Bjorn Hocke at the helm, is ascendent in the party.

Gabi Engelhardt, a German socialist and anti-fascist in east Germany, was interviewed by Socialist Worker in the wake of the AfD’s breakthroughs in Thuringia and Saxony. She explained the dynamics, “The AfD is the parliamentary arm of right wing terror—and encourages and empowers Nazis to attack on the streets.

“The racist and fascist demonstrations in Chemnitz in 2018

marked a turning point. For the first time, the AfD marched openly with Nazis and it has been taking part in weekly demonstrations in many towns since then. The topic is always changing—be it Covid, the energy crisis or the war on Ukraine—and the number of people taking part varies. But the core of it is the establishment of a fascist street movement.

“The AfD has focused on attacking refugees, Muslims and LGBT+ people with racist and homophobic speeches in parliaments. In Bautzen, a town in Saxony, around 700 Nazis wanted to attack an LGBT+ Christopher Street Day march of 1,000. The organisers had to cancel their after-show party because of the Nazi threat.

“In Leipzig, the Nazis tried to attack again, but were stopped by anti-fascist mobilisation. We had a lot of attacks on refugees in the first half of this year already—41 in Saxony and 35 in Thuringia.

“There are small villages and little towns where the AfD got 40 to 50 percent of the vote in the regional elections. And in these places, there is a growing movement—in particular of young people—who form Nazi gangs and attack people of colour, Muslims, queer or left wing people.”

In Britain, we face a new and dangerous situation. A far right party, Reform UK, won five MPs and four million votes in the general election—and its leaders have a plan to turn that support into a mass party.

Previously, Reform UK operated as a private company with leader Farage and deputy leader Richard Tice as owners. But it now boasts 80,000 members and Farage spoke about using

the Liberal Democrat strategy of sinking roots in communities through local campaigns and winning council elections.

“The Liberal Democrats build branches, the Liberal Democrats win seats at district, county and unitary levels,” he said. “The Liberal Democrats build on that strength, the Liberal Democrats put literature and leaflets through doors repeatedly in their target areas. And despite the fact they haven’t got any policies at all, they managed with a vote much lower than ours to win 72 seats in parliament.”

The shift in structure is a dangerous sign that Reform UK is trying to broaden and deepen its roots and build up a base of committed activists. This could be an open door to fascists to organise within its structures and radicalise it further to the right.

Tommy Robinson is seeking to build a fascist street movement and mobilised 20,000 thugs in central London on 27 July. There is an interpenetration of the two elements. When he asked people in Trafalgar Square if they’d voted for Reform UK, everyone’s hands shot up.

Shortly afterwards, far right pogroms and riots took place trying to burn down mosques and hotels housing refugees.

SUTR was the central force that mobilised people onto the streets to turn the tide on the far right on 7 and 10 August. But there was nothing preordained about the response—and we cannot rest on our success in August.

Now, Tommy Robinson wants to turn the tables again with a mass mobilisation in central London on Saturday 26 October.

As we outline in a separate document on anti-racism and anti-fascism, building the biggest response in more than a generation

is an urgent task.

There are two broad lessons the SWP should draw out from the resurgence of the far right in Europe and Britain.

First, the mainstream parties have fuelled the rise of fascism and the far right.

The far right riots came after more than a decade of Tory politicians pushing racism against Muslims, migrants and refugees. The Tory party, as we can see in the unfolding leadership election campaign, has radicalised to the right.

But there has been no dramatic break with state racism under the new Labour government. Less than two weeks before the explosion of mosque attacks and burning of hotels where migrants are housed, home secretary Yvette Cooper decided to write exclusively in *The Sun*. She declared what the newspaper called a “summer blitz of immigration raids targeting workers in dodgy car washes and nail bars”.

Cooper’s article said, “I was shocked to discover the Conservatives had 1,000 civil servants working on the Rwanda Partnership. Not anymore. We’ve moved staff instead into a new Returns and Enforcement programme to increase returns of those with no right to be here.”

Her message was that Labour, rather than stopping Tory policies, would unleash anti-migrant repression on the streets of Britain.

Second, we must not line up behind the liberal centre to defeat the right because it will not work.

The failure of this strategy is on show in France where the New Popular Front (NPF) stood down in a slew of seats in the second

round of the parliamentary elections in July.

The NPF pulled out in favour of Elisabeth Borne. She pushed the attacks on pensions that sparked mass struggles last year. She backed the cops as they brutalised protesters after the police murder of Nahel M a year ago.

The NPF also stepped aside for interior minister Gerald Darmanin who has rammed through the most racist laws of the Emmanuel Macron regime. Darmanin once wrote for publications close to the antisemitic and royalist Action Francaise and may have attended one of its summer camps.

Many on the left said this was the right strategy even though it gave credence to the idea that Macron supporters were a dam against the RN. They hailed the NPF winning the most votes, though not a majority, in the second round as a vindication of that strategy.

But what's the result? Macron refused to appoint the NPF candidate as prime minister and instead picked the right wing Tory Barnier. The RN boasts that nothing can be done without its support in parliament.

Voting for the centre may seem like a "lesser evil" for the left. But for the neoliberal centre, the lesser evil is the far right, not the left and workers' movement. This isn't a new argument, but one that we have to keep waging.

Instead, we need what we call a "united front", which sees revolutionary socialists make an appeal to reformist forces for unity in action. It's a method that revolutionaries have developed because we face the question: how can revolutionaries who want to smash capitalism work with and relate to the majority of

reformist workers?

A united front is based on building the maximum possible unity and numbers in action. But it is also a site of struggle between revolutionary and reformist forces over ideas, strategy and tactics. We work with reformist organisations and leaders—for example, MPs, union leaders and councillors—in order to mobilise the largest number of people. But we hope to win some of the reformist workers over to revolutionary socialism by showing that our politics is superior in pointing a way to win.

Ours is the tradition of the Battle of Lewisham of 1977 and the Battle of Welling of 1993, of combining mass and militant action to drive the fascists off the streets.

This means we want SUTR in every town and city in Britain to be a vibrant, insurgent force with social weight. This means we need to revamp SUTR by deepening its roots among two audiences: first, the young and radical crowd that's been radicalised by Palestine and voted to the left in the general election, second, in the trade union movement and among sections of the Labour Party.

Making the SWP a pole of attraction

The SWP has made a turn outwards. At the last conference, we argued that the party should aim to lead in movements and take initiatives with broader forces in a way that we had not done in recent years. And we need to continue this shift.

We are modest enough to know we are not big enough to play the decisive role in all these struggles, but we can—and do—have

an impact on British politics.

We urgently need to grow as an organisation and develop a new cadre.

This means we need to make more of a shift that makes the party a pole of attraction—our meetings, our campaign stalls, Socialist Worker online and in print.

Each branch should ensure that it organises public sales of Socialist Worker, including weekend campaigning stalls and sales outside major workplaces.

As well as Socialist Worker, members should be asked to subscribe to International Socialism, our quarterly theoretical journal, and branches should sell both new and classic works in our tradition from Bookmarks publications.

Student work is the key avenue for building the SWP. We need more branches to do what has been done in Edinburgh, Leeds and elsewhere.

Here, comrades built the nucleus of student members that can develop into a SWSS group.

We need our student work to build on the best of the last year, which saw SWSS take initiatives on campus. Concretely, this means working with others on campus around anti-racism and anti-fascism and Palestine.

We need a renewed drive around educational work in the party:

We need to build an organisation of interventionist Marxist cadre—comrades with an ideological depth and critical minds who are able to initiate, shape and reflect on struggles in the world.

This is vital if we are going to retain members through the ebbs and flows of the class struggle.

Educational work allows the party to strengthen and develop its theory, helping greater numbers of comrades to take on more challenging arguments.

Comrades require an ideological depth to respond to debates, or seemingly new ideas, thrown up in movements in sophisticated and convincing ways.

A central element of this is our educational programme, which we launched in September of last year. The Education 4 Socialists course has been successful in several places, but we need much more of a drive for it in the organisation. Branches that have run it should think about other readings for those who have been through it. We are running the Lake District weekender as a cadre school again this year.

However, developing a new cadre has to be a rounded process through theory and practice. We want to develop comrades with an ideological depth because those ideas inform what we do in workplaces, campuses and the streets.

As part of building 26 October, for example, newer comrades should be involved in meeting all the key people in the movement. Our newer comrades need to feel confident in building the party and united fronts to influence broader layers in the working class.

Reading and debating ideas is vitally important to educational work, but so is building activity and being involved in strategic and tactical decisions in your area.

The past year has shown the role that the SWP can play

in leading in struggles, particularly over Palestine and anti-fascism. We need to build on these successes and grow so we can be a much bigger force in the battles to come.

Endnote

Future documents will develop these themes in more detail, including pieces on the party's growth, students, imperialism today, workplace perspectives, fighting oppression and finance.

Notes on Lebanon

Simon (Hackney)

One year on from 7 October, it has become clear that Israel's war has no end, and no boundaries.

But a two-fold strategy has come into focus. Israel's primary goal has remained consistent since the 1917 Balfour Declaration: the ethnic cleansing and colonial settlement of Palestine, and now South Lebanon. Despite this goal remaining constant, the geographical limits of Israel's expansionism remain undefined — some sections of Israeli society envision a future Greater Israel that includes parts of Lebanon, Syria, Egypt, Jordan, and in some extreme cases, Saudi Arabia. As far-fetched as this may seem, this faction of Zionism is currently in the driving seat.

The war on Palestine and Lebanon has become a total war. Israel has moved beyond the Dahieh Doctrine (targeting neighbourhoods supportive of resistance) to the Gaza Doctrine — the systematic destruction of infrastructure, civil society, and the environment, along with widespread and systematic ethnic cleansing.

The second aspect of Israel's strategy is to draw the US into a broader conflict, particularly against Iran. This must be understood against the backdrop of the disastrous Western occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan. These imperial defeats

have heightened the stakes for Israel's ambitions. Netanyahu is betting on a wider war to achieve what Western powers have failed to do.

Successive US administrations, both Republican and Democrat, have grown weary of getting entangled in another war and occupation in the Arab world. Hence, Biden's attempt to impose "red lines" on Israel's actions.

The US's greatest concern is that Israel's offensive lacks a clear endpoint. An invasion of Lebanon could trigger an open-ended conflict, with Israel hoping to exploit sectarian divisions to plunge the country into another era of bloodshed. The gist of Netanyahu's message to Lebanon is: kill each other or we will kill you all.

While there is an ever-present danger of another sectarian conflict, Lebanon has fundamentally changed in recent decades — it has become more integrated, urban and learned from the experience of both the Arab Spring and the 2019 popular uprising (the October Revolution).

The main lesson of Israel's 2006 war is that solidarity with the resistance can win. The Israelis have also learned from that defeat. The Gaza Doctrine has put all of Lebanon in Israel's crosshairs — civil infrastructure, hospitals, civilians of all sects and regions are now under attack. Netanyahu is targeting, or threatening to target, anyone who gives shelter to Shia Muslims or Palestinians fleeing the Israeli offensive. For the first time Israeli warplanes have attacked Christian and Druze Muslim areas along with large swathes of the south.

There is much at stake for Israel, the West and Lebanon's

fractious ruling class. The country remains crisis-ridden, with no functioning government and barely functioning economy.

Netanyahu is banking on his war triggering Western intervention, and the occupation of Lebanon by US troops — a goal that is finding growing support inside sections of the US establishment. Since withdrawing from Iraq, the US has positioned Lebanon as its fallback in the Arab world. The newly built US embassy overlooking Beirut is the second-largest in the world and the hub of its counterinsurgency operations for the region.

The war on Lebanon must be viewed in the broader context of imperial rivalry and the US “pivot to Asia.” Saudi Arabia and Iran are two of China’s top oil suppliers, while Chinese capital is increasingly flowing into the MENA region, including massive investments in factories along the Suez Canal. There is much at stake.

This raises the question about the resistance. The murder of Hassan Nasrallah is a big blow, there can be no doubt about this. Nasrallah represented more than just resistance to Israel among Shia Muslims. He was seen as the greatest Arab leader since Gamal Abdul Nasser. His death is a big setback, the results of which remain unknown in the longer term. In the short term, Iran has effectively taken control of Hezbollah’s leadership, centralising the resistance command under its control.

Hezbollah’s reliance on Iran and Syria has proved to be illusory. The Syrian regime, which survived the 2012 revolution thanks in part to Hezbollah’s intervention, has refused to enter

the war, preferring to mend fences with Saudi Arabia.

Iran is ribboned by an internal crisis, losing much legitimacy following the heavy suppression of the 2022 Woman, Life, Freedom protests. The Iranian regime wants to rebuild its relationship with Saudi Arabia, and is banking on reopening negotiations with the West to end sanctions.

For Iran, the resistance in Lebanon is a bargaining chip — as the Palestinians discovered in the 1970s and 1980s when the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) was abandoned by its erstwhile Arab sponsors.

The Palestinian and Lebanese resistance can only rely on a wider movement for change across the Arab world, one that will sweep away the regimes and imperialism.

The destruction of Palestine and Lebanon is on par with the 1948 Nakba. That disaster triggered the longest and most profound wave of revolutions in the Arab world. The Arab world has changed fundamentally since then. The next wave of revolutions will be more profound.

Fascism, the far right and building a movement against racism

Central Committee

We are closer to the 1930s than we have ever been. The decomposition of mainstream politics is producing new dangers and challenges—as well as opportunities for the radical left. But the acceleration of the growth of the far right means it is not business as usual. The question isn't are we building the united front in the same way we have before. The question is can we build a social force capable of stopping the wave of far right and fascist forces.

To do this requires building on the continuity of the united front tradition that the SWP has been central to. This method has played a role in breaking fascist forces in Britain, meaning they remain fragmented compared with Europe. But that continuity has to be combined with a vision of lifting the anti-racist movement to a level that meets the challenge on a new, dangerous terrain.

We face an urgent task that requires political clarity,

tactical sophistication and audacity. Revolutionaries have a crucial role to play.

We must develop a sober analysis of the threat, attempt to win an argument in the movement about how we stop it, and build the united front—and revolutionary party—required to confront it.

Anatomy of the far right

The rise of the far right and fascist Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) in Germany completes the picture of fascist or far right parties entering the mainstream, and in some cases winning elections, in large parts of Europe.

This summer, fascist Marine Le Pen and the Rassemblement National (RN) came top in round one of the national French election for the first time. The Freiheitlichen Partei Österreichs (FPÖ) fascist party, whose roots lie in the Nazi SS, came top in the general election in Austria. In Italy fascist Giorgia Meloni, whose Fratelli d'Italia (FdI) is the heir of the political tradition of Benito Mussolini, is prime minister.

The situation in Britain is more complex. But we face new dangers in the shape of Reform UK, fascist Tommy Robinson and the far right riots in August 2024. We face the potential for the reshaping of the far right to accelerate.

Understanding each of these forces, and their relationship to the classical fascist project, is key. Leon Trotsky's analysis of fascism as a counter-revolutionary movement from below, combining a parliamentary wing that courts respectability

alongside a violent street movement that can smash all working class and independent organisation, remains the most sophisticated and comprehensive guide.

But the picture of fascism today doesn't exactly mirror the fascist movements of the 1930s. Today we broadly face four dynamics on the far right.

Openly fascist organisations that focus on the street movement that are the hallmark of classical fascist projects going back to the 1930s. Examples of this include the fascist gangs that rioted in Britain in August 2024, the Proud Boys who were part of storming the US Capitol in 2021 and the Pegida street movement that played a role in shaping the AfD in Germany.

Eurofascist projects that have deep fascist roots but have focused on electoralism and attempt to mask their true project. The most influential of which is the RN, formerly Front National (FN), in France. Despite claims they are "post-fascist" and have shed their fascist roots, these organisations maintain a fascist cadre and see the electoral base as a pool in which to build a hard core ideologically committed to the fascist project.

Non-fascist organisations of the radical right that are often referred to as racist populist parties. Reform UK, and Ukip before it, fall into this category in that they use hard racism to drag mainstream politics to the right. They do this through conventional means, mainly elections, rather than the streets.

These parties aren't just pressuring the mainstream right – in some cases they entered into government, sometimes in coalition, and have displaced traditional parties as the biggest force on the right.

Mainstream conservative parties that have turned towards hard racism, particularly Islamophobia and anti refugee and migrant racism. This is their attempt to shore up votes, faced with competition from the far right. In Britain, the oldest ruling class party in Europe has seen key figures like Rishi Sunak, Suella Braverman and Robert Jenrick use the language of the far right towards migrants, Muslims and LGBT+ people, and echo fascist ideologies like the Great Replacement Theory. The same is true of Trump and the Republicans.

One feature of the current period is that these delininations are not rigid. So the AfD, launched in 2013 as a hybrid organisation that included separate Eurosceptic and fascist wings, is increasingly dominated by fascist elements. This is partly a result of the interaction with the Pegida street movement. In the US, Trump operates through a traditional mainstream party but flirts with fascist groups like the Proud Boys, giving them the confidence to act more boldly than they have in decades.

In Britain, Nigel Farage has developed from a racist, Eurosceptic ex-Tory in Ukip, into leading a rapidly growing far right party in Reform UK. This emphasises how these forces can radicalise in the current climate.

What lies behind the rise?

It is easy to fall into simplistic explanations that paint the rise of the far right as an inevitable consequence of economic crisis. But three decisive elements are central in understanding how we have got here.

The first is that faced with an economic picture of sluggish economic growth and long term financial malaise since the 2008 crash, both conservative and social democratic parties have implemented cuts to working living standards, wages and social services. This political choice, rather than making the rich pay, has created deep pools of bitterness for the far right to feed off. Look at where Reform UK are building a base—areas where poverty, deprivation and cuts to social services are at their highest.

Examples like the French general election indicate an alarming scale of working class voters choosing the fascist RN. Historically, the impetus and leadership behind fascist organisation was the impact of the severe crisis of the system on petty-bourgeois and discontented middle class layers in society. Typically fascist forces presented as an anti-establishment movement, but this is a mask. In a vacuum, and building off the toxic climate of attacks on living standards coupled with state driven racism, fascist forces—figures like millionaire small business owner and fraudster Tommy Robinson—can draw in elements of working class support behind them.

Secondly, faced with the threat from the far right, mainstream parties have been quick to embrace hard Islamophobia,

anti-migrant racism and the demonisation of refugees. So in France both Socialist Party and UMP presidents have pushed Islamophobic rhetoric and policies.

The result is the politics pushed by the RN have been vindicated in the mainstream, and the fascists themselves emboldened. Across Europe the race to the bottom from both social democratic and conservatives has legitimised the language and demands of fascist and far right policies, giving them the opportunity to set the political agenda.

The third process has been the reinvention of fascist parties to escape the cordon sanitaire and isolation they faced after the Second World War.

The most influential process has been that of the FN, now the RN, following the ideas of the *Nouvelle Droite*, which has seen them court respectability and pose as a mainstream party. The FN in France, FdI in Italy, and the FPÖ in Austria have pursued a strategy of detoxification, partly distancing themselves from the language and behaviour of their past.

But we should reject the attempts to take the fascists at their word that they are “post-fascist” or have disavowed their fascist past. The electoral growth gives them a wider pool in which to build a harder fascist cadre.

Their rising vote and way in which they set the political tempo on questions of racism and immigration can give confidence to the street gangs who dream of a violent movement. Although the level of crisis in society means they can not yet conclusively go beyond the focus on elections, the fascist project remains and we see glimpses of the street movement emerging.

New dangers in Britain

What about Britain? The last few months has seen a deepening of the political crisis and decomposition of the political centre, resulting in a dangerous mix that could quickly develop along the lines of Europe.

The rise of Reform UK is an earthquake. For the first time in British parliamentary history there is a hard right racist populist party to the right of the Tories, fast becoming a far right party, with a bloc of five MPs. Remember they came second in 98 seats. Farage's mission, as laid out at their recent conference, is to turn Reform into a mass party bigger than the 85,000 members it already claims. Farage's plan to do this is to intensify his efforts to inject fierce racism and Islamophobia into the political debate.

The first months of Starmer's government underline that Labour has neither the strategy or the base to bolster the centre ground against this threat. Starmer's response to Reform and the toxic Tory leadership race is not just to pander to it. Labour is now driving state racism by promising to deport 14,000 migrants by Christmas, refusing to engage with the demands for safe and legal routes for claiming asylum, and fawning over fascist Meloni's deportation plan. In other words they are giving credence to the anti-migrant message of Reform and the Tories.

Simultaneously Labour's introduction of a new round of austerity, captured sharply by the pensioner fuel payment cut, has led to growing bitterness and disillusionment only weeks into the new government. In September we saw the perverse

sight of Labour voting through the cut to fuel poverty payments. Only one Labour MP voted against. Meanwhile Reform voted against and posed as the voice of working people.

Insert a far right street movement into this context and you have a dangerous situation. A feature of the growth of the AfD in Germany is how both its political radicalisation to the fascist wing and its vote accelerated at a rapid rate. It involved the intersection of a parliamentary far right, a failing Labour party and flashes of a far right street movement.

The same could happen in Britain. The fascist riots in August were fuelled directly by fascist Robinson's mobilisation on 27 July. They were met by mass mobilisations led by Stand Up To Racism (SUTR) that pushed them back, and a subsequent state crackdown.

But the size, audacity and speed of the gatherings give a worrying glimpse of the audience and networks fascists can build around them in the current period. Robinson is trying to deepen that process through a series of big national mobilisations—which is why SUTR is right to pitch 26 October a crucial mobilisation for the whole movement.

Pushing back the threat

The question is can we build an anti-racist and anti-fascist movement capable of turning the tide? It is a big ask, not a matter of routine and doing what we have done before. In recent months we have talked about revamping SUTR to make it up to the task.

In the SWP we model SUTR on the theory of the united front, drawing on the experience of what we have done in the past with the Anti Nazi League (ANL) and Unite Against Fascism (UAF). The method of a small revolutionary organisation working with and pulling in much wider forces to smash the far right has been proven in practice.

One of the central reasons that there is no coherent fascist project in Britain is that the ANL and UAF applied the tactics, social weight and mobilisations necessary to confront and break the various far right iterations that have appeared over the years, from the National Front to the British National Party to the English Defence League. SUTR did so again in breaking Robinson's last attempt to rebrand - his football lads movement and attempt to win a seat as an MEP.

But this is no time for complacency or thinking we can just do what we did in the past. The threat today is greater and the political polarisation sharper. So it takes political and tactical sophistication.

Our starting point is that we are attempting to build a united front. In that sense it is based on an appeal to much bigger reformist organisations for joint activity against fascism and racism. It is a call for unity, but specifically for unity in action. The support of MPs, trade unions, faith groups, sections of the Labour Party, the SNP, Greens, independent politicians and others gives SUTR a broad appeal and the potential to engage the biggest possible numbers in the movement. The unity statement in the summer, and the broad support for 26 October, give social weight to the cause.

Getting this right at the top of the movement does not mean it automatically falls into place on the ground. There is a long way to go. We have not yet replicated at a local level the weight of support that exists at the top of the movement.

For 26 October and beyond, we need a sustained argument in every local area with every trade union, mosque, student union, councillor and so on. Out of this we can build SUTR activists in every union, community and campus who have the confidence to take initiatives. Significant delegations from every area for 26 October can be transformative in terms of establishing the nucleus and leadership of a movement locally.

The people we take with us on the day will, if we are effective, come out with a sharp experience of the role of the SWP in the shaping a decisive movement. This can convince many of the importance of revolutionary organisation as well as the strategy of the united front to stop the threat of the far right.

Unity in action is paramount, but there should also be political tension between the different forces involved. In August we showed that militant, confrontational demonstrations are the way to knock back the fascists—not parliamentary manoeuvres or relying on the police. Similarly it mattered that the slogans of August’s mobilisations were pro-refugee and anti-racist, and didn’t pander to the economic “jobs and homes not racism” type arguments you get from some sections of the movement. But every new campaign and mobilisation will throw up new questions and debates. At a local and national level we need to push for SUTR to always seek to be the militant, insurgent force it was during August, despite the pressures that the required

broadening out will bring. We want SUTR to constantly seek to be in the tradition of Cable Street 1936 or Lewisham 1977, not a safe, respectable campaign.

Four immediate issues are linked to this. Firstly, although confronting the far right is rightly SUTR's priority, it will need to continue to take up questions of state racism. That is more complex with a Labour Party in power, not least because SUTR correctly draws in support from sections of the Labour Party.

But Yvette Cooper's clampdown on migrants and refugees will require resistance which SUTR should seek to continue to give a lead to—as it should on questions of Islamophobia, institutional racism and antisemitism.

SUTR was central to the broad #StopRwanda coalition, protests and campaigning, and worked alongside the PCS, Care4Calais and other unions developing the Safe Routes Now policy.

SUTR led impressive local fights such as closing the Bibby Stockholm barge and challenged the Tories and the far right over Scampton and Wethersfield military base refugee accommodations.

All this has laid a strong existing basis for a sharp and effective campaign to counter Labour's dangerous echo of stop the boats racism.

Secondly it will need a strategy to take on Reform UK. It is right to prioritise stopping Robinson's street movement, but Reform UK is targeting council seats and by-elections. Campaigning will be needed on the ground to stop them—which is a challenge given the areas it is building a base in.

Third, SUTR should seek to relate to the growing number

of people who are disillusioned with Labour. This is most concretely articulated by the Independent Alliance of MPs, but is also reflected in the number of local independent councilors and crucially the big numbers of people who voted left of Labour at the general election.

This is not some ultra left lurch—we should always seek to involve and work with sections of the Labour Party at a local and national level. But we can attempt to balance this with making SUTR the home of the new layers of activists who have marched over Gaza, flooded the streets against the far right in August and hate Starmer's Labour.

This brings us to the fourth question, that of Palestine. Another article in this pre conference bulletin goes through the impact and consequences of a year of the Palestine movement, which has shifted British politics like nothing else. That energy and audience should be an integral part of the anti-fascist movement, and can help give it an insurgent character. The reason for this is that the racist right and fascist right have hurled Islamophobia at the Palestine movement, in an attempt to break it. That's why it is good that PSC director Ben Jamal spoke at the counter protest on 27 July, why Stop the War supports and has a speaker at most national SUTR events. And crucially it is important that pretty much every local protest in August was attended by and heard speakers from local Palestine groups and activists, and Palestine flags were rightly held aloft.

As the SWP we can, and should, push for this but also recognise that SUTR is right not to make anti-Zionism a ticket of entry into the movement.

Tommy Robinson and the fascist forces we are seeing in Europe won't be beaten as a by-product of the anti-imperialist movement. What is required is an explicit anti-fascist movement that draws in the broadest possible forces, on the unity of the sole question of anti-fascism, to mobilise the biggest numbers.

The characterisation of Tommy Robinson as a Zionist “footsoldier” or “poster boy” are not only wide of the mark, but fail to identify what is the key driver of Robinson, Le Pen, Meloni, the AfD and all the different forms of the far right. That is islamophobia and anti-migrant racism, and SUTR is right to make opposition to these the only ticket of entry.

Marxism is a science, but also an art. The united front is tricky, delicate and requires tactical nuance. But the theoretical spirit and its application today remain invaluable.

The engine of the anti-racist movement

Mapping out and delivering the united front strategy takes a lot of time building relationships, winning an argument in the movement, and creating facts. We need more of this at a local level. But we can't forget or neglect the most central component of all—a revolutionary party that has the political clarity and audacity to punch above its weight.

Last year we talked about the party aiming for hegemony to the left of Labour. August showed why that hegemony matters. The response to the riots was not a given or pre-ordained. Similar turning points have taken place across Europe, and the

radical left hasn't been able to rise to the challenge. That the SWP, as a central driver of SUTR, was able to respond is down to our political tradition and the roots our members have in the movement.

But when you consider the wave of reaction that is set to intensify as mainstream politics decays at a chastening rate, we are nowhere near big enough to do what's necessary.

This is true in the sense that in August pretty much every counter demo was called by an SWP member working with others, vividly illustrating why we need to grow. But it's also true if we want to operate the united front in an effective way.

When Leon Trotsky wrote about the united front in the 1930s, he talked of it being a necessary defensive tactic but stressed that it opens up the possibility to go on the offensive. What does that mean today? The last few months have seen big numbers of people pulled into anti-fascist and anti-racist activity in Britain, many of whom will be the same people who have marched over Gaza, hate Labour and want a political alternative. If this crowd discovers through their own actions alongside thousands of others that—as we saw in August—organising, protesting and mobilising is the way to get results, this lesson can extend beyond defensive struggles and into offensive ones against Starmer's government that are so badly needed.

In other words the united front isn't just about anti-racism. It's about pulling the biggest possible numbers into activity to build a force that can smash the fascists and beat back racism. And in the process revolutionaries have an opportunity to aim for hegemony of our politics, methods and tactics to go on the

wider offensive.

We need a battle plan to deepen SUTR at every level - in your local area, at your workplace, in your union, on your campus and so on. But in tandem we urgently need a strategy to build a bigger revolutionary engine that can be the driver of the anti-racist and anti-fascist movement.

Our meetings have to be hubs of debate and discussion, organising to smash the far right. Socialist Worker needs to be the handbook and organiser for every anti-fascist. Our website and social media have to be the place to follow the movement. And new SWP members have to be given the space, tools and support to lead and shape the movement.

The events of the summer have shown why the SWP and our politics matter. But the conclusion isn't to say "thank god we exist." The response should be, "it's a tragedy we're not bigger!". Much bigger tests are to come—and fast.

We need the sword and the shield. We urgently need to construct the strongest, biggest possible shield against the new generation of little Hitlers who want to take us back to the 1930s. But just as pressing is the need for a sharper sword that can lead the fight for a different future.

Anti-fascism, Palestine and the united front

Rob (Dorset)

We are facing two seismic political convulsions: on one hand, the mass global movement in solidarity with Palestine and against war; on the other, the accelerating rise of far right and fascist movements.

Both bring the polarisation between the forces of the insurgent left and the forces of the far right into sharp relief, and the question of which will dominate over the other.

The SWP has thrown itself into the movement over Palestine and has played an important role in building mass protest, and in providing a radical anti-imperialist pole within the movement. Stand Up To Racism (SUTR), within which the SWP are the driving force, has been the critical force that turned the tide in August after the far right pogroms.

How then does one movement relate to the other? This question is posed quite sharply by the current position held by the Palestine Solidarity Campaign (PSC), that if PSC is to call for support for SUTR mobilisations against fascists and the far-right, SUTR must first state explicitly that opposition to Zionism

and Israel is inherent to the anti-racist movement. This is a position we also encounter amongst a layer of Palestine activists.

Palestine solidarity as part of the anti-fascist movement

It is important that our response is framed in the spirit of unity we aim to forge, in a response that reflects the urgent need to mobilise the totality of anti-fascist forces, but does not place the task of defeating the far right in jeopardy.

The mass insurgent movement over Palestine is an essential component of a broad united front against Tommy Robinson. We want to mobilise that movement as part of a militant opposition to the forces of fascism and the far right.

There's good reason to be positive. In August when SUTR called for mass counter demonstrations across Britain after the riots, local PSC branches, Palestine activists and large numbers of those who had marched and protested for Gaza, turned out. PSC and other pro-Palestine speakers spoke on united platforms, Palestine flags and chants were often present. For a wide layer of those who had marched and protested against Israel's war on Gaza, the response was instinctive.

We need to see this on a wider scale on 26 October and beyond. It is good that Ben Jamal, Director of PSC, will speak again on 26 October, alongside other co-organisers of the national Palestine protests – Stop the War Coalition (STWC), Muslim Association of Britain (MAB), hopefully others such as Friends of Al-Aqsa (FOA).

In this context it would be a mistake to start from the argument over the position of SUTR and Palestine. We have to emphasise 1) the fascist/far-right threat; 2) the overwhelming common cause and need for unity on the streets; 3) the vital place of the Palestine movement in opposing the far right, regardless of disagreements. It is not a condition of participation that PSC or anyone else has to agree with SUTR on the strategy for building an anti-fascist movement. Only that we march together on the day.

Where this has been our starting point, we have met with significant success, and we can expect a very sizeable pro-Palestine contingent on 26 October. An essential part of moving still wider layers within Palestine solidarity is creating facts on the ground, and we should strain every political muscle so to do.

Fascism as existential threat

Nonetheless, essential though the role of the Palestine movement is in opposing the far right, it cannot be the determining criterion. If we are to defeat fascism and the far right, mobilising the Palestine movement, anti-imperialists, the SWP and even movements of the oppressed, will not be enough.

Part of the difficulty with the PSC position is taking Palestine as the starting point, rather than fascism itself. From Cable Street to the Anti-Nazi League, to the united fronts against the BNP, EDL and Tommy Robinson, facing the fascist threat has always been the starting point for building a successful movement.

Fascism is not simply an extreme form of racist ideology, although it is that. It has a specific character – it aims to mobilise mass violence from below to physically destroy all forms of opposition: trade unions; movements of the oppressed; social movements and importantly, right-wing social democrats (or Labour type parties), and parliamentary democracy itself. Fascism reflects the forces of darkest reaction, capable of the physical destruction of any vestige of working-class organisation and democracy.

So far, the fascists have not been able to build mass, organised street movements. But we have evidence to where fascist ideology leads. Neo-Nazi mass killers from Norway to New Zealand have chosen different targets: youngsters at a socialist youth camp, worshippers in mosques and synagogues, an LGBTQ bar, BLM protestors, and Hispanic shoppers. In Britain, victims include Jo Cox MP, and Makram Ali killed in 2017 by Darren Osborne who drove a rented van into worshippers outside Finsbury Park Muslim Welfare House, and whose first intended target was Jeremy Corbyn.

These killers are not simply “lone wolfs”. They are the violent outriders of the fascist project. The ideology that drives them is rooted in a conspiracy theory of a “Great Replacement” of white populations, orchestrated by a “globalist elite”. It is a constant drumbeat pounded in speeches and online by Tommy Robinson, Nigel Farage and far right and fascist parties across Europe and the US.

The importance of emphasising the character of the fascist project, is to single-mindedly focus our own side on the question

of unity, and to steel ourselves for the arguments we need to muster. Fascism views its targets - Muslims, trans, black, Roma, Hispanic, trade unions, Jewish financiers, revolutionaries, right-wing social democrats, feminists, LGBTQ people, not as disparate or disconnected enemies, but as malign formations acting in concert at the behest of an all-encompassing foe.

We cannot narrow the movement against the fascists and far right, nor set a precedent for doing so. We have to strive to unite all those targeted and threatened by their rise. We have to sound the alarm and rally all comers. The only condition, the only “ticket of entry” – is agreement to unite, confront and break them. No-one has to abdicate from advocating positions on any other political question. Nor is it a condition to adopt a position you disagree with.

We need to defend a vital and specific type of movement – the mass united front – necessary to defend our class against reaction in the face of deepening crisis. Fascism breeds in a world of war, crisis and racism; we cannot wholly predict the divisions that can erupt. Yet, we have too many tragic examples of the price paid of failure.

Therefore, the issue at stake is the nature of the fascist threat and the type of mass movement required as a precondition for its defeat.

The united front, anti-Zionism and Israel

It is understandable, especially in the context of the genocide in Gaza, that some we ally with on Palestine will insist anti-Zionism and explicit opposition to Israel has to be reflected in positions taken by SUTR. It is a position that has to be addressed seriously. After all, anti-Zionism and support for the Palestinian struggle has been a core element of the party's tradition since its foundation. The SWP has always advocated for a one state solution, even when the majority in the Palestine solidarity movement did not. We are open in our support of the Palestinian resistance and we are at the anti-imperialist radical edge of the movement.

The issue is not, as some critics would have it, a matter of political opportunism or surrender of principle. One essential feature of the united front is that it enables revolutionaries and anti-imperialists to be uncompromising on principles they advocate for, while uniting with those who do not hold the same political view or who may fundamentally disagree.

In the absence of the united front other political formations will take its place. Either to our right, attempting to bind the movement to reformist or liberal political agendas, or more narrowly based anti-imperialist movements. There is not space here to elaborate, but the disastrous consequences of that absence can be seen in France and elsewhere.

The failure to combat the rise of the far right in Europe through building united fronts has pulled politics to the right

on every front, not least over Palestine. We have seen vicious repression of pro-Palestinian protest and voices including bans and arrests across Europe on a far greater scale than here.

We therefore bear a huge responsibility. This is not just about Britain. It will not now be possible to build a mass united front capable of defeating the AfD in Germany, or the RN in France, if opposition to Israel is made a ticket of entry. The narrowing of the movement would be fatal. The fact that the German left itself is irrevocably split on this question is of course horrendous. But it remains a fact; and the hostility of the climate in Germany and in France is in no small measure due to the failure to build a united front against the far right from the start. This does not mean we do not fight for pro-Palestinian, notably Muslim and north African voices and their presence on antifascist mobilisations in Germany and France as we do here. The united front cuts both ways.

And here is the paradox. It is a feature of the united front, when successful, that it engages revolutionaries and anti-imperialists with a far wider constituency, including those who elsewhere disagree, or even oppose us. Far from SUTR limiting or constraining the pro-Palestine movement, it gives reach to audiences, that for a variety of reasons, it would not otherwise have. And it does so in the most powerful arena of all – unity in action against a common foe. The united front is not simply a defensive strategy; its strength lies in its potential to turn to the offensive and lay the basis for a generalising class and anti-imperialist struggle. This premise lies at the core of the united front strategy from its inception in an era of revolution and

counter-revolution, in the early 20th century. The united front has always required revolutionary socialists at its core.

Let's dispense with one red-herring. This is not about seeking unity with hard Zionist organisations, who in reality have always actively opposed SUTR, even when SUTR has mounted protests against antisemitic attacks. Far right Zionist groups have in the past held counter protests in Whitehall.

Sometimes our critics invoke South African apartheid and ask if SUTR would take the same position. But the argument is not that Israel is not an apartheid state but that in relation to building an anti-fascist movement the parallel does not hold. No anti-racist argued for a two-state solution in South Africa so that whites could have their own state. It might be a contradiction that Jeremy Corbyn, trade union leaders and others do. But it is a contradiction that exists in real life. PSC does not have a position on a two-state solution either. In fact, it is precisely one contradiction we want to draw out with those whom we stand together with against Tommy Robinson.

Support for a Jewish state is still a majority position on the wider left, let alone beyond its ranks. Almost every trade union leader supports a two-state solution, as does Jeremy Corbyn and the majority of the Labour left. Some 65 percent of the population support a two-state solution as opposed to 24 percent in favour of one state. Whatever the intention, such a settlement, even if possible – which it is not, would simply enshrine the Zionist, racist settler colonial project in different form.

The massive call-out by the trade unions and their leaders for 26 October, would not be possible on the current scale if the

core principle of opposing fascism without any pre-condition, was narrowed. So, we have a contradictory situation. On one hand the mass movement for Palestine has to be an essential component of mass opposition to the far right. On the other it cannot be a “ticket of entry” that regardless of what we might wish for, can only narrow the movement here, and serve as a dangerous precedent elsewhere.

The united front and anti-racism

One of the arguments raised for SUTR taking a position on anti-Zionism and opposition to Israel is that SUTR is no longer simply “anti-fascist”, as the name on the tin itself exemplifies.

This is true. But this reflected a recognition in the mid-2010s that the principle of the united front could no longer be restricted to opposition to organised fascists. It was not however a dilution of the united front principle. A prime example is that of SUTR campaigns over refugees. Across the country MPs and others were pulled into mounting support for campaigns in defence of refugees and migrants and opposing Islamophobic attacks; some had perhaps supported the Iraq War, many support immigration controls and indeed some may support Israel, albeit conditionally.

As a result, we were able to create a political climate of solidarity with refugees that would not have been the case on such a level otherwise. Indeed, that success was an important factor in the response to our call out for mass protests in August in defence of advice centres, hostels and hotels for refugees.

There are of course a wide range of anti-racist organisations which we support and try to work with. They have a vital role but the mobilising power and potential of SUTR as a united front is unique, and cannot be substituted for by other forms of anti-racist organisation.

Therefore, SUTR has from its founding held to the core premise of the united front. SUTR did not take positions on Kurdistan, Kashmir, Tibet, or indeed Palestine and many other important questions. In the face of the renewed threat of the far right that principle is now even more important. It is the difference between the capacity to roll back the fascists, or risk defeat.

The founding statement of SUTR in 2014, made close reference to the overlap between state racism against migrants (“Go Home” vans etc), and the rise of far right populist parties such as UKIP and Geert Wilders in the Netherlands, street movements and fascist parties such as Golden Dawn. This was not a “dilution” of the focus against fascism but the widening of the fortifications against its rise. And SUTR resolutely maintained the united front principle of not placing conditions on opposition to racism and fascism or narrowing the movement’s potential reach.

Conclusion

As revolutionaries, we are tribunes of the oppressed. As such we have a responsibility to act. We do so in the context of how imperialism and the state sow divisions against and within the ranks of the oppressed and promote reactionary ideologies upon

which the forces of fascism and the far right can rise.

Despite appearances, there is no contradiction between acting as the most radical of anti-Zionists, anti-imperialists and supporters of the Palestinian resistance, and building a united front movement that unites all those opposed to the fascists and far right with no pre-requisite beyond opposing fascism, Islamophobia, antisemitism and racist division.

We will not convince everyone in the movement immediately, although we should not exaggerate the opposition on the ground. Seen correctly, the anti-imperialist mass movement for Palestine and the broad united front against fascism do not stand in contradiction; rather they mutually reinforce each other in common battle.

We have to prove that in practice, by building a mass anti-fascist movement that can shape the course of future struggles, not only here in Britain, but one that can serve as a vital example across Europe.

Stand Up To Racism: Eyes on the Prize

Talat (Edinburgh)

This contribution is designed to elicit some debate on our political strategy in terms of the far-right and broader politics. The starting point is that our party is second to none in identifying the threat of the far-right street thugs in terms of Tommy Robinson and smaller outfits such as Turning Point UK, Patriotic Alternative, and their would-be parliamentary counterparts, notably Reform UK and outfits such as UKIP, Britain First and Scottish Family Party.

It is also supreme in its understanding of how we need to politically expose and confront the far-right through mass mobilisation that is based on building a broad united movement. The strategy of the united front is based on working with considerable social democratic forces to our right in order to win broader layers of people to political activism. This is why we focus our efforts on trade unions, Labour party representatives as well as with Greens and welfare, faith and community organisations supporting refugee and migrant communities. This is what epitomised the successful mobilisations we have

had from the magnificent national 7 August to 7 September in Glasgow counter protests. It is very good that at the top of trade union movement, particularly NEU and PCS, there has been a strong lead given under our influence to build. It was significant to have Mick Lynch at the launch of SUTR trade union network. This has had an impact and I felt very proud of the party for achieving this. So, there are many things we get right.

Our strategy of building amongst students has been and continues to be correct. Edinburgh is a branch that has benefited from this. Young students bring energy and enthusiasm into branches and this dynamism has been much appreciated in the party's activity. It is also excellent that over the last few years the party has taken the education of its new members seriously with educational programmes and weekenders. However, our membership growth is, like the Labour majority, fragile.

The fundamental truth is that we are still building and holding the party together in the absence of sustained and combatative class struggles. We have an existential crisis of the far-right on the rampage and the decomposition of not just social democracy but the mainstream/traditional parties of conservatism. The extreme centre indeed cannot hold. And this is the critical, underlying weakness of the political world we are living through. The politics that dominates social movements and activist circles is very low indeed – so much of it predicated upon a mixture of moralism, pity, tokenism and is easily pulled in a myriad of directions. There is little social weight behind these as they are movements and not a united class struggle.

This is the chief reason why, in spite of the growth we have

experienced, the party is still over-stretched and spread too thin. I know we are meant to ‘punch above our weight’ but the level of current activity is not sustainable long-term. The educational programmes for students and young workers are great but cadre cannot be produced overnight, not even in a year or two. And the lack of industrial struggle on any significant scale makes producing a new leading cadre who can hold their own in any situation difficult. In my view there is still too much of a revolving door to membership – perhaps this is inevitable but needs to be understood and talked about.

In terms of confronting the far-right – yes, we need to do the big national events and the challenge is to build and give confidence to our own members and other social forces around us that we can mobilise and hopefully push them back. But the election of 5 Reform UK MPs and recently a new councillor in Blackpool indicates we need to have a much firmer long-term strategy. Reform is doing precisely what Farage declared they would – ‘going for the Labour vote’. In Blackpool their candidate was a former soldier and the campaign was based on condemning Labour for the removal of the winter fuel allowance and promising to give his council earnings to charities. Reform activists are linked to far-right local campaigns against refugees such as that of ‘Rushmoor People First’ in Aldershot and Farnborough (supported by Nick Tenconi of UKIP). This is a coordinated attempt to go for working class votes and using material deprivation and disillusionment to direct blame at refugees, migrants as well as Black and Asian communities long settled in the UK. We need to rise to this gigantic challenge

and that means taking SUTR onto estates and working-class schemes. This will not be easy or straightforward. We will need to have many conversations and arguments with people in trade unions, community activists and students. The majority of party members will have no experience of doing this – those of us that do are much older. But it needs to be discussed seriously at the very least, as in my view we face the prospect of hundreds of Reform councillors in next year.

Using social media is good but again we need to be more circumspect and realise that we cannot beat Elon Musk on social media. We cannot win on this terrain any more than we can with print or broadcast media. The dominant ruling ideas of any era are the ideas of the ruling class – no matter which platform is being used under capitalism. The fact that Tommy Robinson's book topped the bestseller list on Amazon in October demonstrates the power that big business has over social media. The practice of using 'speaker announcements' on WhatsApp groups is fine but only to a point. For big scale events perhaps but not for regular use as it does not work efficiently. There are just too many WhatsApp groups and to be honest it is clear from the ones I am on no one is able to keep up with them, and so things get repeated, misunderstood, or plain wrong. So, a steer has to be given on this, otherwise we constantly have discussions that if we have things up on social media that in and of itself will suffice. Of course, we should make use of every platform but we have to have our eyes wide open as to their limitations.

I argued at Marxism that the threat of the far-right is the

most serious we have ever witnessed in our lifetimes and I do think we were slow off the mark until the reality of Farage's entry into the general election campaign began to hit home. We should have been prepared from the start of the calendar year for a possible far-right breakthrough and yet we did not prioritise antiracism as the critical issue until Marxism. The fact that Farage did not announce until 4 June that he would stand in Clacton is, in part testimony to the great work the party has done with UAF, stand up to UKIP and SUTR, as Farage has faced persistent antiracist opposition that has played a role in preventing him from winning previously. We should have been ready to hit Clacton with SUTR on 4 June when Farage announced his candidacy, not 22 June. I am not suggesting it would have been easy to have stalls, given the toxic general election campaign. But it would have planted an antiracist flag in Essex and might even have prevented Reform candidate James McMurdock from sneaking in by a mere 98 votes.

It was very good that the last party council debated properly how and why we do not put Palestine at the centre of the antiracist movement. But we must also recognise that every time the party has successes – in either student recruitment or fabulous anti-racist and anti-fascist mobilisations - smears and lies can create havoc on social media as this platform allows for anonymity and no accountability. It is imperative that we as members, hold our political nerve in the face of provocation and lies. Comrades who are older and more experienced should know this, and yet we have, every year on a range of WhatsApp chats, the same questions being asked: we collude with Zionists,

etc – and why? Because someone in their SUTR group or in party has heard or read some nonsense on some social media post. And the party then spends weeks and months going over this issue again. Apart from anything else, this takes up a huge amount of time that is quite frankly exhausting and wearisome. And it is irritating because it could be dealt with very quickly and easily – by older and wiser heads exercising political judgement to firstly, expose the tissue of lies that are spread on social media. And secondly, to explain why SUTR cannot take a position on Palestine. This will be important as we head towards the spring and what we do come the UN Anti-Racism Day mobilisations in March. There is already some talk in Scotland that we cannot do a demonstration again and that perhaps we plan a cultural event that LMHR hosts. That is fine but we have to do something that weekend too. If we, don't it will be taken as a sign of weakness and we will allow other forces to step in.

There is also some confusion as alas, the common sense of some sections of the Palestine movement is to see everything through the prism of Zionism as if this is chief problem in the world. The argument peddles the myth that Zionism is based on anti-Muslim hatred and that it is akin to fascism and so should be fought as such. The fact that Robinson claims to support Israel or that Israeli flags are seen on some far-right protests is taken as proof of this. This is nonsense. Robinson's book Manifesto is based on expounding the 'great replacement theory'. He believes that indigenous white people are an endangered minority in Europe and America and that a 'global elite' is overseeing this 'replacement' with mass immigration from Asia and Africa.

Not only does this peddle the same filthy antisemitic tropes of previous generations of Nazis but also underlines how Robinson and some sections of far-right have become media savvy. They push their anti-Semitism to the back and hope to use Islamophobia as basis of galvanising support. Over the summer, Robinson was seen in Israel and India claiming he supports Israel and Hindus against Muslims. It would be naïve and foolish in the extreme to draw the conclusion that Robinson is a friend to Jewish and Hindu and Sikh communities in Britain. Once they have removed Muslims the far-right would come for everyone else that does not fit their racist creed: African-Caribbean, Hindu, Sikh, and Jewish peoples.

The formulation that Zionism is the main issue we confront is wrong and dangerous. Not only is it ahistoric, it profoundly misunderstands the role and position of Zionism. The chief problem in the world is capitalism and the way the imperialism of the great powers boosts racism and how these powers will use any force going to advance their own interests. It is not the Israeli state that dominates the Western powers but the other way round. Currently, Israel is bombing the Lebanon and launching sporadic rockets at Iran. For almost a year Gaza has suffered and continues to be hell on earth for Palestinians. Israel's goal here is to deal a deadly blow to Hamas but also Hezbollah and by default Iran. The US, EU governments and Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States are desperately hoping, that Israel is successful. If it is, this will represent the biggest victory for the US and Western interests that it has been desperate for since the Iranian Revolution in 1979. This is why it is critical that we understand that the United Fronts

around SUTR and the building of solidarity around Palestine are different. There is an overlap but they are not the same thing. And in my view, we need to stop being so defensive about this. I hope the kind of debate we had at party council is one that will continue, as again in my view, we need more robust debate and less a string of good stories that seem to dominate party meetings.

Mobilising and building Stand Up To Racism in Glasgow

Alex & James (Glasgow)

Over the last several years comrades in Glasgow SUTR have been making a political argument within the anti-racist movement about the threat of the far right and the importance of mobilising anywhere the far right try to build.

Erskine was a key example of this for Glasgow comrades, who, alongside local activists from the community, drove an argument about the political importance of confronting the far right when they targeted a hotel housing asylum seekers every weekend. As a result of the year long campaign in Erskine, local residents key to the campaign were recruited to the party but in addition we were able to make a broader argument about the very real threat of the far right in Scotland and the need to take the threat of the far right seriously. Elgin, where Alek Yerbury attempted to mobilise, was another example that showed the attempts of far right forces to mobilise but also the importance of winning an argument of confronting the far

right in numbers.

That being said, the arguments have not always been won automatically and the idea of Scotland being immune to the far right or that it is a ‘English phenomenon’, which has been a long standing assumption among sections of the left, has resulted in comrades having to continue to argue the position of anti-racism, but also the real threat of the far right in our local communities, as well as to win the argument about confronting the far right in numbers on the streets.

27th July and mobilising against Tommy Robinson

Because of the experiences of SUTR in Erskine, Elgin and elsewhere in Scotland, when Tommy Robinson announced he would be mobilising a demonstration in London on 27th July, comrades within SUTR argued that it was essential for SUTR to build a delegation to send to the counter protest.

Glasgow SUTR used its experience of arguing around the the need to mobilise against the far right to bring a wider argument about the importance of opposing Tommy Robinson, not only due to the threat of the far right across the UK gaining confidence but that a large mobilisation of Tommy Robinson supporters in London would give confidence to racists, the far right and fascists in Scotland.

Glasgow SUTR took a delegation of 22 people to the demonstration on 27th July and comrades within SUTR argued that following 20,000 Tommy Robinson supporters

marching in London, that we needed to build SUTR across Glasgow and local areas around the threat of the far right.

Comrades had to continue to argue within the movement, the left and to mobilise our own comrades that it would not be long before the far right emerged in Scotland and that routing sutr within local communities was the key for the focus of the anti-racist movement.

Prior to the demonstration on the 27th July comrades had already argued within SUTR for the need for a public meeting following the demonstration to discuss mobilising against the far right.

Response to the racist riots

As people across Scotland saw the racist riots fuelled by the likes of Tommy Robinson erupt following the horrific murders in Southport, there was not only an increase in racist incidents in Glasgow - with racist graffiti appearing in a local park, a racist attack on stand up to racism members who were leafleting and shops being harassed in a well known multicultural and diverse area of Glasgow, but the level of fear and worry was palpable. Rumours began circulating of the far right mobilising every day, in different areas and with little verification by some groups on the left sharing them. The response, unfortunately, to rumours, was for those sharing the information to advise people to stay indoors, avoid areas and particularly advising visibly Muslim women to stay away from the city centre.

It was comrades in SUTR that drove through an argument

about the nature of the far right, how we respond and how to fight it. Glasgow SUTR managed to build respect within the movement by both responding to rumours but importantly identifying where and when the far right were mobilising.

On the 9th August, SUTR called a counter protest to the far right who were threatening to protest a hotel housing asylum seekers and refugees in Paisley. 500 people mobilised outside the hotel with the racists only mobilising 15 who appeared in ones and twos and were unable to assemble due to the massive numbers turning out. As a result of the success, comrades in Paisley were able to initiate SUTR Renfrewshire with the links they made from the protest alongside the links they had already routed in Erskine (also in Renfrewshire). Importantly, the reason comrades were aware of the protest (and were able to call a counter protest) was due to knowledge of the far right in the area from our experiences in Erskine.

At the same time as building the demonstration in Paisley. Glasgow SUTR called a counter protest in George Square the following day - the 10th August - against a planned mobilisation by the far right. 3,000 people joined the SUTR protest, with 3 fascists turning up on the other side.

By calling the demonstration, and being part of the UK wide day of action, SUTR Glasgow was able to mobilise such large numbers by appealing to a base of people who were angry at the scenes seen in England, concerned by the rumours, but also who didn't agree with the narrative being pushed within the media, the police, workplaces and so on - which was to avoid all areas the far right may appear.

However, at the same time as the two demonstrations mobilised, Tommy Robinson had, following the riots in Southport, backed a protest called for the 7th September advertising a 'Pro-UK rally in George Sq, Glasgow', something that was welcomed by one of the racist organisers of the "Pro-UK" protest.

Comrades within Glasgow SUTR made the argument that the key date for all antiracists and antifascists in the area - and across Scotland - was to mobilise for this date.

And there were some key arguments to be had. One of the most notable being 'All Under One Banner', a grassroots Scottish Independence movement several of our comrades have been involved with, calling a separate 'Scottish Independence/Anti-racism' demo in Edinburgh on the same day and encouraging anti-racists to attend that, which would further feed into the idea that racism is a 'England-only problem'. AUOB also failed to initially have an analysis that despite being called a "Pro-UK rally" this was in fact a mobilisation of forces of the far right and all those radicalised by anti-immigrant sentiment would be directed to it. Comrades were quick to challenge this within AOUB and win the argument that the United Front approach was needed to confront the Far Right in Glasgow and AOUB called off their demo and backed the counter-demonstration called by SUTR.

At the SUTR public meeting, Susan Aitkin, the SNP Glasgow council leader - agreed to speak. While supporting the mobilisation on the 7th September, she argued within the meeting that the racists and far right would not turn up in numbers on the 7th.

The Scottish Trade Union Congress, who also agreed to back the demonstration, also held a online meeting just before

September 7th labeled 'Tackling the Far Right' (which SUTR was not invited to speak at it) which again played down the levels of racism in Scotland with the chair only mentioning the September 7th counter-mobilisation briefly at the end followed by a 'that's if they even turn up' comment.

Glasgow SUTR led an argument, with comrades at its heart, that the 7th September far right mobilisation, not only was a threat on the day in Scotland, but was key to Strengthening the anti-racist and anti-fascist movement in Scotland. In the elections, Reform UK received 7% of the vote. In the Holyrood elections, 7% would provide Reform UK between 10-12 seats in the Scottish parliament.

After the successes of the 9th and 10th August, with low turnout's from the far right - some argued the right wing escalation would not appear in Scotland, and particularly not in Glasgow. Rather than understand that the reason for the turnout from the racists being low was due to SUTR injecting a politics of confronting them, some took the wrong lessons - believing there was no 'serious' threat of the far right in Scotland.

All of these meetings and discussions also brought up the concept of 'workerism', with speakers stating that the way to remove the threat of the far right was to intensify the fight for better working conditions and combating the Cost of Living crisis. While these are things revolutionaries should naturally support and throw themselves into, comrades had to argue the role state racism plays and the need to mobilise and confront the Far Right on the streets.

Alternatively, comrades argued that the increase in racism, the

rise of the far right across the UK and the importance of mobilising was key to ensuring the far right don't build within Glasgow and Scotland, but also key in starting to build the momentum to challenge the likes of Reform UK.

Building 7th September

Comrades within SUTR and the wider layer of SUTR activists who had already mobilised around Erskine, Elgin, Paisley and Glasgow drove the argument into the heart of the trade union movement, community campaigns, refugee rights organisations and faith organisations of the need to confront the far right.

The argument made was of mass unity on the day and that SUTR wanted to ensure that all who oppose racism, islamophobia & antisemitism, who welcome refugees would join the demonstration.

We had leafleting sessions every week in the city centre, we had local groups leafleting their local faith orgs, community centres, mass postering sessions and spread the word on social media. SUTR also gathered the support of celebrities and musicians with Kneecap taking a photo with the leaflets and retweeting the protest.

But importantly the Scottish Trade Union Council (STUC) backed the demonstration and as a result all the major trade unions officially backed the protest alongside Scottish Football Fans supporting Foodbanks, Interfaith Scotland and STW Coalition Scotland. Making it one of the broadest anti-racist coalitions that SUTR Glasgow has been fighting

for since its formation.

The backing of the trade union movement and the argument that comrades made within the trade union movement resulted in over 100 trade union flags and banners on the day, highlighting the fact that while fighting for the backing of trade union leaders, it is essential that we use that backing to get as many trade union members on the ground as possible.

But this took an approach of managing head on the arguments within the movement and winning it within the wider left and anti-racist movement. Firstly, the argument of confronting the far right, made easier by the experiences of Elgin and Erskine, but also from political shift that took place in England following successful mass counter protests against the far right. Another argument around the nature of the far right in Scotland and so on, was that of the threat and that Scotland is not immune to the growth of the far right nor racism - and it is due to the anti-fascist movement that ensured it has not managed to gain a foothold.

Comrades in SUTR also had to navigate the calls from some individuals to make Palestine a key slogan on the day. On the other side, we had to navigate the timidity of some organisations, such as Interfaith Scotland, who alternatively were not wanting Palestine to be on the agenda. Comrades within SUTR managed to navigate this by continuing to ensure solidarity with all Palestinian protesters experiencing Islamophobia and ensuring we had two speakers talking specifically about Palestine, while at the same time ensuring that the protest was open to all who oppose the far right. In doing so, while some of the leaders of the Palestine movement

in Glasgow called a protest against the far right to start an hour earlier - practically, and as expected, the demonstration/counter protest on the day was a joint protest. SUTR from the stage argued throughout the day for mass unity.

And with 5000 anti-fascists versus 500 racists it was clear that the argument was won about uniting to confront the far right on the streets.

These arguments are not new to SUTR in Glasgow, and at the UN anti-racism day demonstration in March this year, there had been significant difficulties with making the argument within the movement. However, in the face of the far right mobilising the argument was more clear than ever to those in our periphery about the need to gain the broadest movement to ensure we outnumbered the far right. It also shows that if these issues are fought for by comrades in a political way, the majority can be won to the necessity of a “united front” that does not require anti-zionism to be a ticket of entry.

Another necessity of building for September 7th was the need to clearly identify the attempts to bury anti-refugee, Islamophobic and far-right sentiments behind the title of a “Pro-UK” rally. This was a clear attempt by figures within the far right to gain support from unionists within Scotland and also to appeal to parties that did not want to be associated with the riots taking place in England. The first recorded instance of the rally being shared on social media was from a young member of Reform UK who left the Tories after openly supporting LePen in France. SUTR created both a written

expose and a video graphic showing the links of the organizer, “The Glasgow Cabbie” with fascist and far right elements such as the Homeland Party (the breakaway group of Patriotic Alternative who were the main organisers behind the Erskine protests) and known fascists in Glasgow who were previously members of the Scottish branch of the BNP’. This turned out to be crucial to driving a wedge between ‘soft racists’ and the ‘hardened far right’ as it received thousands of views and even resulted in “Glasgow Cabbie” vanishing from social media and not even showing up for his own rally, throwing his supporters into disarray.

Mobilising for the challenges ahead

While the September 7th counter demonstration can be considered an overall success, with the local fascist and far right organizers beaten back to the point the original organiser has since announced on social media his “retirement from organised activism” it cannot go unnoticed the effect the current political climate has had on Scottish politics. While a turnout of 5000 vs 500 is a fantastic ratio, a far right rally of 500 makes it one of the biggest mobilisations in Scottish history and those among them even had the confidence to openly make Nazi salutes in the crowd.

Going forward, Glasgow SUTR is again mobilising to join the counter protest on the 26th October, but this time with a much larger delegation.

Following the riots, the counter protests organised by Glasgow

SUTR and the continued arguments Glasgow SUTR has made within the movement, our whatsapp group has doubled in size. We have also created a whatsapp 'community' dividing the city by area, a trade union group, an announcements chat and social media group in order to continue to extend and deepen our networks. We have also started reaching out at Glasgow Uni, ensuring we had a freshers stall to build the contact list for SUTR.

We are also campaigning around Reform UK who are attempting to gain a foothold in Scottish council by-elections, who will see the potential of a rally of that size in the heart of Glasgow as fertile ground for them to grow. This is likely to become a key focus for Glasgow SUTR. Reform UK have already announced they will be campaigning in a local by-election and with the next Scottish Parliamentary Elections expected in 2026 - we know that Reform UK will hope to take advantage of proportional representation, to gain a foothold. It is no coincidence that following the September 7th demonstration, Nigel Farage took to social media to state that Reform UK has held "several well-attended meetings across Scotland" and that "Scotland shouldn't be surprised to be seeing him soon". It will be their first serious attempt at providing an electoral challenge, something that, if successful, could be used to springboard them into the next General Election in 2028 and one which will be key to the work of Scottish comrades.

It should be said that the work that comrades have done in SUTR Glasgow, and other SUTR branches across Scotland, did to identify the need for, and to mobilise, for this counter demonstration has left us in one of the strongest positions of credibility that we have ever had, meaning that what we call in the

future can be even bigger and bolder to tackle the threats ahead of us. One such example comrades will be arguing for is, instead of the routine “march and rally” to mark the UN Day of Anti-Racism in March, we go for a mass anti-racist ‘music festival’ type event in Glasgow to shape and build an anti-racist, anti-fascist movement and atmosphere in the city.

The successes of SUTR in Glasgow and in other areas across Scotland, however, have to be seen within the context of comrades putting an argument within SUTR and wider into the movement about the nature of the far right, the importance of unity and importantly winning the key argument of mass mobilisations are what beats back the far right. And we know that there is much work to do to continue the arguments to ensure that we continue to stop the far right gaining a foothold in Scotland.

The united front

Mike (Walthamstow)

Some comrades have argued we should change our support for the SUTR united front position - unity with all against the fascists including those we disagree with on other issues.

Given criticism from some very good Palestinian activists (in addition to sectarians), it is understandable but would be a terrible mistake.

On a bus coming back from a trades council meeting last year, I was loudly denounced by another delegate as a hypocrite - it wasn't pleasant! She is not a member of any sectarian grouping and is an active PSC member who is appreciative of our comrades' mobilisation locally in support of Palestine. Her argument is simple. Zionism is racist and zionists should be excluded from anti racist organisations. For many activists, the genocidal horror in Gaza engages their entire attention but socialists have also to grasp the immense danger of the rising fascist tide and the implications for how we can build a movement to stop them.

There was a recent attack on SUTR in the local PSC WhatsApp group. I explained that I had once lobbied my Labour MP over a trade union issue and brought up the smearing of

Jeremy Corbyn, then the Labour leader. The MP replied that there were problems with anti-semitism in the Labour Party. In practice, he took the pro zionist position. At the same time, he

said he would be happy to support and speak at Stand Up To Racism meetings. I then asked the WhatsApp group: “Should we refuse to have Labour MPs who don’t clearly break with zionism on SUTR platforms?”.

The SUTR critics didn’t respond but one prominent Jewish Voice for Labour (JVL) activist did. She argued: “I can’t go along with comrades saying we should boycott SUTR because they fail to confront their TU and MP backers who are soft on Zionism. JVL has been arguing with them about it for years. However, In the unlikely event that any flag-waving genocide supporting friends of Israel were to turn up to fight fascists, they should be ostracised, not confronted in a way that gives the media a field day. It does Palestine solidarity no good to turn the fight against racism into a media circus about Zionism with pro-Israel Jews portrayed as victims, as has happened in Glasgow.”

Zionism was just as racist in the 1970s but few had a problem with the Anti Nazi League working with zionist anti-nazis then. There are older activists in the movement who understand the importance of the united front and, as happened at a local PSC McDonalds protest, newer PSC members were happy to hand out the SUTR 26 October leaflet. For them, opposing the fascists who turn out against Palestine demonstrations makes perfect sense.

The electoral surge of the ADF in Germany, the successes of the RN in France, the growth of the far right across Europe and, of course, the recent anti-refugee riots in the UK are a warning. The united front was critical in fighting the NF, the BNP, the EDL and other groups. We cannot afford to dilute it.

Building the widest possible movement against the far right

Candy (Dorset)

I wrote a contribution in last year's pre conference bulletin raising some questions over local Stand Up To Racism (SUTR) strategy in standing up to far right attacks on refugees. This was in response to our experience of campaigning over the Bibby Stockholm refugee barge on Portland, and attacks elsewhere on refugee camps and hotels.

Since then, as the party predicted, this has become a much more general and serious attack. Arguing for the importance of opposing the far right, and why we have to confront them whenever they appear has become the key argument for revolutionary socialists in every arena and campaign we are active within.

However, I think the questions I raised are still relevant to the discussions about how we build the widest and strongest possible anti-racist and anti-fascist movement, and there is an unevenness to how these are applied in different local SUTR groups.

I argued then that while winning an argument to physically oppose and call out the far right was key, organising counter protests was not enough and we also had to try and win an alternative narrative. Practically organising to do both of these things was key to our success in Portland.

The CC and SUTR are absolutely correct that winning the argument to oppose the far right is our urgent priority, and is likely to be for some time. But being part of building a wider anti-racist network will strengthen our anti fascist work and develop a stronger Stand Up To Racism.

Our tradition

Our tradition has always been that we need the shield of fighting off the far right, and the sword of fighting for a better world. Some on the left argue to only do one of these, such as the Socialist Party in Llanelli last year, who disastrously ended up marching with the racists over “local concerns” rather than challenging them.

Whilst we are clear that building a movement to physically confront the far right is key, we do stand in a tradition going back to both Cable Street and the Anti Nazi League, of not just confronting the fascists on the street, but also building a movement to make racism unacceptable, and to pull the middle ground away from the racists by campaigning over the attacks that workers face.

Challenges we face today

Many on the left do not share our understanding of either the threat that the far-right pose or the importance of confronting them.

I'm sure we have all faced variants of the arguments even from committed anti-racists: We are just giving them more prominence by opposing them; we have to build positive multicultural and anti-racist messages; calling out the racists will upset local people who are not really racist etc. And others who will turn out to defend their local area from the far right, but do not see the importance of traveling to a central London demonstration to oppose the national threat posed by Tommy Robinson.

The Central Committee is absolutely right that building very publicly as well as systematically aiming to win these arguments in meetings, speaking to trade union branches, and one by one with individuals is the key task for us.

Building the widest possible movement

But if we are going to build the widest possible movement, we have to engage with those who are not yet convinced and may be involved in other anti-racist activity they think is an alternative.

Love Music Hate Racism events especially targeted at young people, and those pulled by racist arguments are important initiatives.

The National Education Union have done a very good job

of arguing for booking coaches and mobilising on the ground for the Tommy Robinson Demonstration. But they have also produced a framework for developing an anti-racist approach in schools. We want to be part of encouraging teachers, parents and school students to fight for assemblies, discussions and teaching materials that challenge racism and the far right, at the same time as arguing why they need to be on the streets to oppose the far right.

We should engage with Black Lives Matter, people organising multi-cultural networks or festivals, refugee support groups and decolonisation and reparations campaigns. That allows us to argue why they also have to make a stand on the streets.

And we want to invite anti-racist MPs and councillors onto our platforms, even if they do not directly call for people to join our counter protests, because that helps widen the audience for the debate we are putting forward.

Keeping the key link in the chain

It is part of the importance of political discussion in our SWP branches that we get the balance right. We had both the newly elected Labour MP and Lib Dem council leader at the Dorset Summit against Racism which was a first in a previously Tory area. The council have agreed to work with SUTR to develop an anti racist charter for local workplaces and community groups. We are planning to continue the Portland Global Friendship Group after the Bibby Stockholm barge and the refugees leave Portland, with a proposal to organise a multi-

cultural festival next summer.

We have to be clear and to argue that these are not alternatives to building a movement against the far right. If not we could be pulled away from that key task.

But nor do we want to restrict the anti-racist movement we are building in SUTR just to those we have already convinced of our strategy.

If we operate correctly, then we will win an argument, at least with some involved about why they also have to stand up to the far right on the streets. Our experience is that we have been successful in doing this. This approach has helped us to be able to mobilise decent numbers both on coaches to the London demos, but also locally to stand up against the far right last year on Portland, and this year in Weymouth, as well as sending people to support the counter protests in Bournemouth. We continue to work with those who haven't been convinced and try to win them.

Developing Stand Up To Racism organisation

If we are going to deal with the ongoing threat of the far right, then we also have to take the organisation of SUTR seriously.

Local SUTR groups have to have committees that involve others wider than the ranks of the SWP, and we have to plan a life for the group that both educates and involves the widest numbers of people.

The same is true for the national organisation. There have been

strides made with improvements to the website to publicise local activities, but there is still a way to go for people in a local group to be able to be involved or feel part of the national organisation, and this needs urgent discussion. It would also be useful to discuss how we can use the national SUTR conferences to strengthen both local groups and national organisation.

For an insurgent political party

Dave (Islington)

We face an alarming political environment with the twin evils of fascism and war pushing to the front.

The Farage riots, the possible mobilisation of more than 20,000 fascists and right wingers by Tommy Robinson on the 26 October, the war in Ukraine and the continuing genocide in Gaza and the escalation of the settler-colonialist Israeli attacks on Lebanon and possibly Iran.

Within this scenario the Socialist Workers Party has done a good job in difficult situations over the last year.

Comrades everywhere have played a vital role in building the vast movement for Palestine. The work around anti-racism has been vital too, the response of Stand Up To Racism and our comrades in mobilising people after the Farage Riots was of crucial importance. That SUTR has been able to win the support of the TUC and major unions in building the protest against Tommy Robinson that will take place on the 26 October is a testament to the work of many years in building an anti-racist movement in the trade unions and indicative of a correct united front approach - working with and against the union bureaucracy. The SWP is the only force capable of driving through this initiative

to stop Tommy Robinson. My local branch Islington played a key role in organising around Jeremy Corbyn's successful attempt to be re-elected as an MP.

In this process our branches and comrades have been integrated into local networks of activists and recognised as a vital part of the wider left.

The metaphor of the Sword and Shield is one we have used for some time. This means a defense against the right, that is the role of STUR, combined with an ability to counter attack. We are building a good shield, we need to sharpen the sword. We need an insurgent interventionist revolutionary party working across many fronts. Not one that simply counterposes revolutionary organisation to the Labour Party but one that offers real leadership in all the struggles of the left.

The SWP needs to show leadership to the whole movement. Not just on racism and Palestine but on socio/economic issues and left politics.

It is vital to maintain the militant antifascism capable of confronting the Nazis that we have built in SUTR but it is also important to remove the soil from under their feet by advancing credible left alternatives.

There is an unprecedented situation in Parliament with Corbyn and 4 independents, 4 greens and 7 Labour MP's suspended. The opportunity to build a force to the left of Labour is still there. Despite his defeat as Labour leader and the witch hunt against him and the left, Corbyn is still widely popular, this can be seen in his re-election but also in that 'Corbyn' trends on twitter every day! The campaigns to elect left and pro-Palestine alternatives show

that there is still a large body of people who would like to create something better than Labour. The SWP should be encouraging this. Although such an organisation would be fraught with many difficulties, The creation of a broad socialist alternative would bring the opportunity to build the idea in society that socialised forms of ownership of utilities and so on are a good thing and that social solidarity still exists and would start to form a wider bulwark against the atomising ideas of the right.

We may not be in a position to do much that is practical to implement this at the moment but it should certainly be raised by us as a positive process for the movement thereby showing that the SWP is not a sect but a party that thinks about the way forward for the whole movement.

This is also true on the social and economic level. The fascists and the far right are making hay whilst the sun shines around Starmers decision to chop the Winter Fuel Payments to pensioners. They are using the classic fascist tactic of appearing to care about ordinary people and funneling that discontent into blaming migrants and islamophobia.

The SWP should be calling for the TUC and the big unions to mount a major campaign against the restriction of the Winter Fuel Allowance. Unite The Union have made a start on this alongside the National Pensioners Convention. This does not preclude us building local activities around budget day etc but indicates a method of working. We work both with and against the trade union bureaucracy, calling on them to endorse action and genuinely working with them when they do but also building from below and not being afraid to go beyond what they want.

As the wave of strikes that we saw last year seem to have abated for the moment, it is vital that we are taking up the fight on related issues, the Winter Fuel allowance, the two child benefit cap and any further cuts to prescriptions, travel cards and on economic issues generally. We should be raising motions in our union branches and pushing this. Again I don't think this is yet at the level of creating new united fronts around it but certainly engaging in concrete propaganda.

We have shown around racism that we are able to do this. We should be doing it on these issues too. It's not a separate fight but a vital part of the same fight. The left needs to articulate the anger in society and pull it towards a socialist political movement.

The vital method of how to work with and against the trade union bureaucracy used by SUTR needs to be consistently elaborated within our organisation. To this end we should seek to establish a Trade Union and Workplace committee to oversee this work. Key militants from the various sectors should be coming together to lead this work. The experience that our comrades have in the trade unions is vast. It needs to be used consistently in our industrial work so that this experience is shared.

This experience should also be reflected in writing for Socialist Worker media. We need more worker and trade unionist writing but we also need to see more analysis from workers involved in disputes. Not simply reports of what happened but judgements on what worked and what did not and possible ways forward written by participants themselves or experienced comrades with an overview. Disagreements should be shared.

In deepening the education of our comrades we need to embark

on a range of discussions in our public media about what we as a party have got right and what we have got wrong. Previous tactical turns need to be examined and analysed. This should happen not simply at an anecdotal level but at a theoretical level.

We need a deep and ongoing theoretical examination of where we are, our successes and mistakes we have made and the dangers we face. How have the turns we have made positioned us? What did we do wrong? What did we miss? This will lead to raising the theoretical level of what we are doing.

There is danger though of building big things and then falling down on the other side.

The pull of the movement for Palestine, with its ever present activity and its politics of spontaneity means that instead of our ideas being a bridge into the party, the ideas hegemonic in the movement can be a bridge out. This is true in a still radicalising movement, where the arguments about a one state solution in Palestine has a real life and ‘One Solution, Revolution’ can be heard chanted by many groups on every demonstration.

There are signs of this already, a number of SWSS comrades appear to have left. In Islington although we have recruited new people there is a difficulty of retention.

We have to ‘bend the stick’ on party education. This means not only the day schools that are run but a week in week out emphasis on education. There should be a focus on reading and discussing the Marxist classics, Marx, Engels, Lenin, Trotsky, Cliff. “What are you reading?” should be heard in every branch, every week!

It may be necessary to republish some of these key works if they are not available. Branch bookstalls are pretty threadbare in some

instances, they need to be stocked not only with contemporary literature on Palestine but give new people the opportunity to read Marx! It is essential that whilst operating in a mass movement we build a cadre of people that understand Marxism fully.

Some of this is necessarily schematic at this juncture. I hope that other comrades may feel encouraged to open discussion on these points.

Palestine: six points of contested politics and assessing the party's work

Central Committee

Imperialism kills, and as we wrote this the US and Israel threatened to plunge hundreds of millions of people into an utterly devastating war. The prospect of military conflict involving Iran, Israel and their backers follows 12 months of the genocide in Gaza.

Are you for the Palestinians in their fight against the Israeli onslaught or not? This question has drawn a line through the world.

In the last month, Israel's invasion of Lebanon and Binyamin Netanyahu's readiness to douse the whole region in blood has intensified the division.

On the Palestinian side stand billions of people, including the vast numbers globally who have protested, campaigned and sometimes defied their governments in solidarity with the

people of Gaza. On the other stands the Israeli state and Western politicians and corporations who support it.

In Britain, polls show 66 percent of people back the Palestinians, and over half are for a complete arms embargo on Israel.

A tidal wave of rage ripples through the world again and again over Israel's murders of at least 42,000 people in Gaza—and probably four or five times that number according to an article in the *Lancet* medical journal.

Netanyahu and his henchmen have openly carried out mass killings in Gaza. But the Palestinian resistance is undefeated. This is an incredible Palestinian achievement in the face of one of the most ruthless and best-armed aggressors on the planet. And it was not at all what the Zionists expected.

It is one of the Israeli motivations for the assassination of Hezbollah leaders, particularly Hassan Nasrallah, and the invasion of Lebanon.

The extended war distracts from Israel's failure to deliver its pledge to "eliminate Hamas". Netanyahu has reunited Israeli domestic opinion behind him, and he has marshalled the US even closer to Israel.

The West has allowed Israel to kill without limit. But the result is widespread revulsion and the stripping away of any shred of Israeli moral high ground.

And the US, Britain and others have made Netanyahu think he can go further. He consistently said throughout his political career that Israel did not have a "Palestinian problem", it had an "Iran problem". Now he seeks regime change in Tehran.

This escalation makes Israel even more isolated, and it also sets people against the complicit Western states.

Votes at the United Nations change nothing. But it is still indicative that on 18 September the General Assembly of the UN—where all countries have a seat—overwhelmingly endorsed the findings of the International Court of Justice (ICJ). It declared that the occupation of East Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza is unlawful and must end in its entirety.

It added that Palestinians must be compensated and allowed to return home, and that Israeli-imposed racial segregation and apartheid in Palestine must cease. At the end of a long debate, 124 countries backed the motion and just 14 opposed it, including the US and Israel.

Such votes reflect the feeling in the streets. And Britain is the world capital of Palestine demonstrations. Around 4 million people have joined a national or local protest in Britain in the last 12 months. This extraordinary movement has been even more sustained than the great revolt against the Iraq war in 2003.

We must go back to the Suffragettes or perhaps Chartism to see such a resilient and large movement. It has gone deep into the working class as a whole. It is not a movement of Palestinians, Muslims, Arabs, young people or seasoned campaigners. It is all of those and beyond those.

It is an international phenomenon that brings together people in the Middle East, Asia, and Africa with campaigners in the West. The student encampments in the United States

feel united with those in Britain or Europe.¹

For a generation of young people in particular, this is as important and revealing as the movement against the US war in Vietnam. It can be the basis for a new left against imperialism but also the capitalist system that spawns imperialism. It defines what is “not in my name” but opens the chance to set out what sort of world would be “in our name”.

It has been the sharpest example of how the SWP can implement a turn, initiate, lead, and detonate resistance and organisation. That has happened in workplaces, among students and in the movement where we have tried to go beyond the conservatism of some leading forces.

We are too small to shape the whole movement but make crucial contributions.

The SWP from the start backed the Palestinian resistance, denounced Israel and called for revolution across the Middle East and wider as the way ultimately to defeat Zionism and imperialism.

We recognised that the Hamas attack was a reaction to oppression and we also insisted, along with the best people in the movement, that “it didn’t start on 7 October”. We argued that the Palestinian experience of the 1947-8 Nakba, the 1967 war and the siege and starvation of Gaza were essential to any real analysis. And the role of imperialism in shaping the Zionist state began in 1917 with Britain’s Balfour Declaration.

¹ Reflected in a global Zoom meeting we helped to coordinate in May <https://socialistworker.co.uk/palestine-2023/the-birth-of-a-global-student-movement-international-voices-from-palestine-encampments/>

The reporting, analysis and political leadership by Socialist Worker and International Socialism have been irreplaceable in directing our own comrades and wider groups of people. We took up the most militant and combative slogans such as “Victory to the Palestinian resistance” and “From the river to the sea Palestine will be free.”

We support and build broad solidarity with Palestine—working for big turnouts at the national demonstrations and local activities. We are part of Stop the War and also try to strengthen the Palestine Solidarity Campaign.

The big demonstrations have been crucial to building the movement and giving people the confidence to argue for the Palestinians.

We reject the idea that “A to B marches” are pointless. Without the huge numbers on the streets, the Tories and now Labour would have cracked down even harder on protesters. Marches matter.

But we also identify with those who want to go further, whether through railway station occupations, pickets of arms firms, direct action against Elbit, encampments, trashing banks or whatever.

We also mobilise in solidarity with all those who face the wrath of the British state, its anti-protest measures and the disgusting use of terror laws.²

Our comrades have played a central role in trying to build the workplace days of action for Palestine. Unfortunately, the support from the top of the unions has been negligible.

² Please, for example, support the justice 4 Kwabena campaign <https://justice4kwabena.substack.com/> and donate at <https://www.gofundme.com/f/justice-for-kwabena-stop-political-trails>

We are part of a united solidarity campaign. But there are points of contention where we have patiently to take up arguments within the wider movement. That's because we want the movement to be as effective as possible.

Often we have to contest a scepticism about the potential for the working class to act, and a retreat into individual moralism and the reliance on small-group actions.

These arguments include:

1) Watchdog or master?

Watchdog or master? All the Western governments have backed the continuation of Israel's oppression of the Palestinian people. Although there has been tension, for example, between Joe Biden and Netanyahu over moves towards a ceasefire in Gaza and Lebanon, the US has never threatened to cease all weapons sales.

Instead, for example, the US announced another £6.5 billion of military aid to Israel just as Netanyahu spurned Western calls for a ceasefire in Lebanon at the end of September—and then delivered a blood-curdling speech at the United Nations in New York followed by ordering the murder of Nasrallah. Biden cheered the killing of the Hezbollah leader. Overall, the US chafes at Netanyahu's actions but is also the enabler of such actions.

The British government—both under Sunak and Starmer—wrings its hands about the scale of the slaughter but won't halt

all arms supplies, diplomatic support and ideological backing to Israel. The West allows and facilitates Israel's blockade of food, water and power to Gaza's 2.3 million inhabitants.

After Iran, provoked beyond all limits and risking total humiliation, fired missiles at Israel, Starmer declared, "We stand with Israel, and recognise her right to self-defence in the face of this aggression."

He did not back Lebanon's right to wipe out Israeli invaders. Still less does he support Palestinians' right to stand up against those obliterating Gaza or seizing vast areas of the occupied West Bank.

This is widely understood in the pro-Palestine movement. It provides one of the sharpest elements of confrontation with Labour now and was central to the revolt against Labour at the general election.

However, the nature of the Israel-West relationship remains contested. We see Israel as the West's watchdog in the region. It has its own interests and does not always follow the West's line in detail. The growth of Israel as a regional economic power and its capacities in hi-tech and military sectors enhances Zionism's confidence to depart from the West's wishes at some points.

Anne Alexander has pointed in *International Socialism* to the "regional imperialist competition, in which the main players are currently Israel, Saudi Arabia, Iran, the United Arab Emirates and Turkey".

She adds, "To avoid an account based simply on the 'puppet mastery' of the global powers, we need to look at how regional

players are striving to become independent centres of capital accumulation.”³

But Israel was born with the backing of imperialism and continues to act as imperialism’s instrument in a crucial part of the world. Its efficiency in eliminating its opponents will have impressed its masters as imperialism faces multiple challenges.

The US is involved in backing Ukraine, which is slowly losing its war with Russia, and also pouring arms into the Middle East. And the major contest—with China—sees constant tensions about Taiwan. Facing these three theatres of war and possible war., the US is not going to abandon such a useful attack force as Israel.

As Biden put it last year, “I have long said that If Israel didn’t exist, we would have to invent it.” And in 1986, Biden told the US Senate, “Were there not an Israel, the United States of America would have to invent an Israel to protect her interests in the region.”

But a minority of the Palestine movement (David Miller is a prime example) think the process is the other way round—that the West is Israel’s puppet. This can lead to wrong-headed and sometimes antisemitic claims about the influence of the “Jewish lobby”. It has been crucial for us to explain the history of Israel and the nature of imperialist support.

Nasrallah put this well. “There is a misconception in the Arab world regarding the US-Israel relationship,” he said.

3 <https://isj.org.uk/revisiting-imperialism-middle-east/>

“We keep repeating the lie about the Zionist lobby. that the Jews rule America and so on. No, America itself is the decision-maker. In America. You have the major corporations. You have a trinity of the oil industry, the weapons companies and the so-called ‘Christian-Zionism’.

“Israel used to be a tool at the hands of the British, and now it is a tool in the hands of America.”

2) A settler colonial state

The nature of Israel as a settler-colonial state has been confirmed in the eyes of many millions of people. This is a major step forward in understanding. Settler-colonial states of the Israeli type involve the transfer of a big block of people from the imperialist heartlands to establish a new colonial society on conquered lands stripped violently from the Indigenous population.

This is inherently expansionary and eliminatory. Parts of the Indigenous population that remain must be denied rights, marginalised and, if possible, removed. Settler-colonialism also creates a divided working class and, in the Zionist case, an Israeli working class which benefits from the booty from Palestinian dispossession.

Individuals may break from identification with the state, but we have never seen the Israeli working class as part of the battle for Palestinian freedom.

This has been confirmed by the nature of the large and furious protests against Netanyahu over the fate of those

captured by Hamas on 7 October. These demonstrations and even strikes have shaken Israeli politics but not questioned its fundamentally Zionist nature. And the Israeli political opposition has questioned Netanyahu's effectiveness at crushing Palestinian resistance rather than lining-up with that resistance. The invasion of Lebanon was not met with any protests in Israel.

3) The two state solution

The death of the two-state solution—or its revival? Great historical events can lead people to shift beliefs they have held for decades. Amid the crisis of the 1930s and the rise of fascism, a swathe of reformists abandoned their belief in gradual change. The moderate socialist R H Tawney, for example, was moved to write, “Onions can be eaten leaf by leaf, but you cannot skin a live tiger paw by paw; vivisection is its trade and it does the skinning first.”⁴

Many people have gone through a similar process about the possibility of a two-state solution. The reality of the two-state plan that came out of the Oslo Accords of 1993 is now even clearer.

The historian and author Edwards Said insisted at the time that we should “call the agreement by its real name: an instrument of Palestinian surrender”. It has been followed by mass settler invasions of territories that were supposedly to be

⁴ The shift is not always permanent. After a decade of militant rhetoric, Tawney ended up as a supporter of the Labour Party right wing

the bedrock of a Palestinian state.

The Palestinian Authority is a collaborationist force assisting Israel's repression.

In July this year the Israeli parliament, the Knesset, voted by 68 to nine to reject the establishment of a Palestinian state, even as part of a negotiated settlement with Israel.

The two-state solution is a sham, an obstruction that prevents attention on the real issue—how to achieve a single, democratic secular state from the river Jordan to the Mediterranean Sea and the right of return for all those Palestinians driven out by Israel.

Many people now embrace the idea of a single state in Palestine.

4) The fight against Zionism and imperialism

Throughout the last year we have stressed three interrelated elements in the revolutionary fight against Zionism and imperialism:

- i) The resistance by Palestinians themselves.
- ii) The revolts by workers and the poor (“The Arab Street”) across the Middle East and Iran.
- iii) The solidarity movement in Britain, the United States and Europe with the Palestinians and the resistance against Israel's Western backers.

How have these turned out?

i) The people of Gaza have shown extraordinary courage in resisting Israeli assaults. Few would have predicted that a year after Netanyahu unleashed horrors on Gaza his military still has not eliminated resistance. When Israeli troops move on from a “pacified” area, the resistance returns. That’s because it is generated by the Israeli genocidal acts. Every murder creates those who seek revenge.

However, the barbarism of Israeli military power, and the vast armouries shipped to it by the US, underline that armed struggle cannot crush Zionism and win true freedom.

And there has not been the same coordinated revolt by Palestinians in Israel as in the 2021 strikes.

We stand 100 percent with the Palestinian resistance to Zionism and imperialism. From this basis, we can raise our distinct revolutionary politics and our differences with Hamas and Hezbollah.

ii) The Arab rulers have acted in their own ruling class interests and tried to keep in with US imperialism. They maintained trade with Israel through devious routes, refused to raise oil prices and even defend Israel from attack.

The Jordanian regime provided military support for Israel in April and this month when Iran launched drones and missiles.

Arab countries are “willing to guarantee the security of Israel”, Jordan’s foreign minister Ayman Safadi said recently. This has created deep anger in many parts of the Middle East.,

Tens of millions of people see their rulers spout platitudes

about supporting the Palestinians but then do nothing effective in solidarity against Israel. Egypt is a country of 110 million people that borders Gaza and Israel. If its workers and poor led an uprising uniting the support for Palestine and also hurling down their own ruling class it would transform the prospects for liberation.

If Egypt's workers and poor were in command and unleashed as a real solidarity force alongside the Palestinians, they would tear down the wall with Gaza. They could inspire insurrection in other countries such as Jordan, Lebanon and Syria. They would give new hope to the repressed Sudanese revolution.

The power of such a risen people could, as part of their own freedom, make it impossible for imperialism to sustain its Israeli watchdog.

Winning such revolutions requires applying the insights of permanent revolution, blending economic and political issues. It means fighting over the price of bread, democratic freedoms, workers' rights and against the slaughter of the Palestinians—together.

Fighting for revolution in the Arab regimes not only pits socialists against their own governments but against sections of the Palestinian leadership.⁵

That's because they have generally learned the wrong lessons from the experience of Palestinian struggles. One of the sharpest examples is from Jordan in the 1960s. Israel drove well over a

⁵ For debates on the Palestinian left see Ramsis Kilani's article "Strategies for liberation: old and new arguments in the Palestinian left". <https://isj.org.uk/strategies-for-liberation-old-and-new-arguments-in-the-palestinian-left/>

million Palestinians from their homes when it was created in 1948 and when it invaded the West Bank, East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip in 1967.

By the late 1960s some two million were in Jordan. Here they developed resistance groups, principally the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO).

In March 1968 Israel attacked the Jordanian town of Karameh, where the PLO had a base. The Jordanian government of the pro-Western King Hussein wanted the PLO to withdraw before the attack. The PLO refused.

Instead a few hundred guerrillas stayed and fought, drawing the Jordanian army into the battle and forcing Israel to retreat. The battle turned the PLO into heroes. Hussein feared it would undermine his own rule.

Armed and supported by Israel and the US, Hussein launched a civil war against the PLO in 1970. His forces killed over 10,000 Palestinians in what became known as “Black September”, and the PLO was driven out of Jordan, relocating to Lebanon.

The PLO’s leaders, who always had a vision of a cross-class and nationalist movement, resolved to back away from challenges to Arab rulers. That meant turning away from workers’ and peasants’ resistance.

The correct lesson was to combine the struggle against Zionism and imperialism with the fight against the system’s local rulers.

But today Hamas has friendly relations with the Iranian government that has crushed protests over women’s rights. It is backed by the Turkish regime that suppresses the national

struggle of the Kurds and uses repression against its opponents.

The need for such allies is the price of seeing military means, not class struggle, as central in the fight for liberation. Such movements need arms, safe bases and if possible diplomatic support.

Some 25 years ago, Tony Cliff—who founded the forerunner of the Socialist Workers Party—wrote, “The key to the fate of the Palestinians and everyone else in the Middle East is in the hands of the Arab working class whose main centres of power are in Egypt, and less so in Syria, Iraq, Lebanon and other countries.”

This is still the hope. But in the last year the popular revolts have been constrained by state repression and the nationalist politics that dominate in the Middle East.

At some point the revolts from below will burst out powerfully. As the Egyptian Revolutionary Socialists wrote recently, “At the heart of the project of overcoming Zionism is the defeat of the regimes of collusion, tyranny, and impoverishment”.

5) Dominant and subordinate races

Settler-colonialism creates a dominant race and a subordinate race. Zionism has always been racist towards Palestinians. It is central to imperialism and colonialism that the lives of colonists are worth far more than the lives of those they oppress and eliminate.

That murderous arrogance says the white invader is more human and more advanced than the black and brown people he rules. That disgusting calculus is not some ancient prejudice.

It is as modern as the latest news of Israel's massacres in Gaza.

Israel's rulers have repeatedly described the Palestinians in racist terms, describing them as animals and non-humans. Such foul statements make possible genocide.

How can you tell your soldiers to storm hospitals, bomb schools and kill babies without assuring them that the enemy is not like you?

They are not just barbaric and cunning but also a different type—almost a different species—to decent people.

There is a direct ideological line from the mass “elimination of the natives” in Australia, Canada and the Americas to imperialist-backed murder in Israel today.

This is how imperialism and colonialism have always behaved, and this won't stop until revolution destroys the system that spawned such vile actions.

We oppose attempts to restrict the wider anti-racist movement to those who are anti-Zionists. We do not demand people adopt pro-Palestine politics in order to fight the far right, fascism and state racism. But as the SWP we insist on the inevitably racist nature of Zionism.

6) Zionism and the far right

We disagree that Tommy Robinson, the far right and the fascists can be understood principally as puppets of Zionism or as a Zionist street army. The far right assaults are centrally about refugees, migrants and Islamophobia rather than being a pro-Zionist militia.

But it was no accident that Robinson opened the speeches at his 27 July demonstration in London with, “Not a Palestinian flag in sight—this is what our capital city should look like.”

People who hate Muslims are particularly enraged—and frightened—by the Palestine protests. Large numbers of Muslims, alongside others, have poured onto the streets against Israel’s genocidal assaults and their backers in Britain.

What could be more horrifying to the Islamophobes than Muslims—particularly Muslim women—taking a political lead?

Attacking the Palestine movement is absorbed into the Islamophobia of the far right.

Islamophobia is a central element of modern fascism and far right parties. That means trumpeting Israel’s role as a “fighter against Muslims”.

But the people trying to incinerate refugees in Rotherham and Tamworth in August weren’t waving Israeli flags.

And fascists across Europe haven’t dropped antisemitism. The “globalist” forces they frequently criticise are usually a code for “Jewish finance”.

We continue to argue that Palestine campaigners should be part of every anti-racist demonstration with their flags and banners. And speakers from organisations such as the Stop The War Coalition and the Palestine Solidarity Campaign should be part of anti-racist meetings and mobilisations.

The party's role

The SWP has sought to give a lead to the movement for Palestine throughout the last year. The party meeting in London of over 600 people on 26 October with Refaat Alareer live from Gaza, Ilan Pappé, Richard Boyd Barrett and Sophia Beach is still the largest meeting over Palestine in the last 12 months.

This bold initiative was followed-up with a series of local assemblies bringing together both Stop the War speakers and the more radical elements of the movement. These discussed Palestinian solidarity but also allowed us to showcase our wider politics.

And branch meetings in every area have argued for these key elements.

Where we had students we took part in or set up university encampments. This was important work, although often these were dominated by autonomist groups that are a long way from us. Their hostility, where it existed, was primarily a political disagreement about the road to liberation and the role of the working class.

In the unions, we are one of the main forces that have consistently built the workplace days of action and the trade union sections on the demonstrations. This is a concrete application of our wider approach.

At local level we have backed wider initiatives but also taken our own initiatives and strengthened or rebuilt relationships in many areas with Muslim organisations.

We hope comrades will feed on their own experiences of working in the movement, and debate how we can win more activists to the SWP.

The combination of initiatives, building the wider movement and political clarity remains essential.

From irrelevancy to vibrancy – how Cardiff branch transformed

Hussein (Cardiff)

Cardiff branch has gone through considerable change over the last year or so, coinciding with the biggest mass movement on the streets of the UK in decades. I believe there are some lessons that we can take as a party from our success, about the demographic that we have managed to attract, and the strategy we adopted.

I am certainly not trying to take all the credit for this, as the reality is that I benefited from the guidance of older branch members, and from Ruth's endless political guidance, which helped me understand the various complexities of how to organize within a movement whilst also being a member of a revolutionary party.

The decisions that I took with one or two other members, to attempt to build the branch, might be considered unorthodox, or even ill advised, by some, and I definitely can't talk about the successful transformation of our branch without speaking about

the past and our previous failed attempts to build.

I joined the party in 2018, and in my introduction to the Cardiff branch, I found a group of very dedicated revolutionaries, who have spent their lives fighting for change. But, I would be lying if I didn't acknowledge that the size and makeup of the branch were vastly different to now.

The branch was made up of comrades who were mainly over the age of 50 and exclusively white, and our meetings used to average between 4-8 people. In comparison, our branch now averages around 20 people at each meeting. Earlier this year, we had to book a 'Marxism house', where 19 people from the branch and wider movement stayed together when attending Marxism.

And we are led by young black, brown, trans, and queer women - in the recent BAME SWP caucus, around 38 people attended overall, and 9 of those were from the Cardiff branch.

A difficult beginning

At the time I joined, the movement taking over the streets of the UK was Extinction Rebellion (XR). Direct action was sweeping across the country, and through XR a new wave of young activists were having their first induction into political theory.

Throwing myself into that movement taught me a lot, and it definitely put me through a crash course on sectarianism. I quickly learnt that if we were going to grow and move forward as a party, we'd need to first (re)gain the trust of various activists and their different groups.

In all honesty, I found this movement incredibly difficult. I was

often the only member of the branch at Cardiff XR meetings, and often I felt quite isolated. I struggled to create any level of formal party intervention, partly because of the constant battles I had with sectarians, but also because of the very limited influence the branch had on the movement, other than through me.

I think it's fair to say that individually, I became a key part of the leadership of the XR leadership of the movement in Wales (e.g. I often spoke publicly on behalf of Wales XR and met the First Minister of Wales for XR etc) but this never translated into new party members or even getting anyone to come to a branch meeting.

Had I managed to bring anyone to a branch meeting, I think comrades would agree that the branch was not, anyway, an enticing place to be. Our meetings at the time were very small and wouldn't have given anyone a great first impression of the party (one particularly low point was a meeting of just three people).

The building block of Black Lives Matter (BLM)

Then, the BLM movement exploded onto our streets. Initially, the movement in Cardiff was very inexperienced, but through our work in SUTR in the years prior to BLM, I was able to quickly get to know the members of the newly formed 'BLM Cardiff', and I, with SUTR Cardiff, organized joint protests with BLM Cardiff.

As time went on, through my work and friendship with them, they invited me to join the group. This is where many people

might have disagreed with my priorities, but it was clear to me that the anti-racist movement in Cardiff was incredibly underdeveloped, and at that point, SUTR was not seen, whether we liked it or not, as the place to be when it came to fighting racism - BLM was that place.

At the time, our SUTR group in Cardiff was overwhelmingly white, fairly old, and, frankly, a bit tired. It was my view, one that I also made clear in national SWP caucuses, that party members across the country should throw themselves into building the vibrant BLM movement.

If there was a group in your local area, you should join it and try to lead it! And if there wasn't one, you should create one, and help shape the movement. And if that meant putting more emphasis on BLM than on your local SUTR group, then so be it.

There was no mandated 'BLM politics' - there was no central organisation, despite attempts by various groups and BLM UK to create one, all of which failed. This is evidenced by the fact that as of 2024, BLM Cardiff remains the only functional BLM group in the UK.

BLM stood out to me as an opportunity to shape the next generation of black and brown radical anti-racists in Wales. In all honesty, I don't think that as a party, we tactically approached the BLM movement with enough flexibility and open mindedness.

That is not to say that we didn't support it, but from memory, there were very few comrades really involved in BLM groups, let alone leading the BLM movement in their local area. Like XR, scores of new young activists were becoming radicalised

at this point, and in the case of those drawn towards BLM, many also wanted to understand racism at a deeper level.

In the SWP, we are justifiably proud of our analysis of racism. It helped us beat back the fascists last time around, and it's been an essential accompaniment to the principled anti-imperialist positions we've adopted since our formation.

The BLM movement was a real opportunity to win a new layer of activists to our politics, even though obviously that didn't come without its challenges. As with every movement, there was a real battle for ideas. And one or two of those battles were undoubtedly within the party itself - there were one or two fiery internal political arguments about what our priorities and approach should be, including when racism within the Welsh nationalist movement reared its ugly head at one particular point.

But the proof of the pudding was really in the activity, and it was by leading the local BLM movement that it was possible to show that revolutionary politics are the way forward, and the racism of South Wales police continued to create opportunities to build important local campaigns, with BLM at the forefront.

Two young black men, Mohamud and Mouayed, died after police contact in 2021; a young black woman, Siyanda Mngaza, was sentenced to four years in prison after being attacked by four white men; and in 2019, Christopher Kapessa, a 13 year old schoolboy, lost his life after being pushed into a river by a white school child in a racially-motivated attack, something over which South Wales Police refused to take action.

BLM Cardiff was rocketed to the forefront of a national

movement against police brutality and racism, and in the process, SUTR Cardiff was able to move from the sidelines, into the front and centre, to help lead that movement with BLM Cardiff.

This is something which, frankly, I don't think would have happened if I had initially taken the position of remaining only in SUTR and not taking the opportunity that we did, to build and lead BLM Cardiff.

As time went on, the BLM movement in Cardiff gained increasing momentum, illustrated by our follower account on Instagram, which peaked at around 20,000 followers, the second highest number in the UK, trailing only behind BLM UK.

Three out of the five early members of BLM Cardiff, all black and brown women, subsequently joined the branch. We definitely didn't do this by standing outside of the movement, looking in, setting up a stall worried only about how many papers we sold, or waxing lyrical that SUTR was the 'correct' vehicle for anti-racism (whether true or not). Instead, we built and led a radical anti-racist movement in Cardiff, that young black and brown people saw as something worth joining. And we also built relationships with a wide layer of people - even if they don't join the party, we built alliances with them and created mutual respect and meaningful collaboration.

A problem remained, however, and that was actually being able to retain those members (something I will go into more detail about later). And that's where luck comes into play. I would speak to comrades, especially Ruth, who would reassure me that, in times of finding movements quite isolating, that if

we could only recruit and keep just one or two new young comrades, the branch would soon become unrecognisable. Luckily, Sophia Beach recommended I contact a young Black woman in Bournemouth Uni, who was soon returning to Cardiff. Kwabena had been getting involved in SUTR and had interest in joining the party. On return to Cardiff I recommended she join BLM Cardiff.

This was a turning point, as now we had two new members from building in the BLM movement, who were both young women of colour (the other two we failed to retain). To this day, it is myself and Kwabena that lead BLM Cardiff. And it is BLM Cardiff that became an invaluable tool in shaping the movements in Cardiff, including organising all of the pro-Palestine demonstrations in Cardiff during the 2021 intifada.

This logic, which I unsuccessfully applied in the XR movement, worked incredibly well in BLM. And it only became more successful, as our momentum as a branch began to increase. Another young brown woman joined, Sonia, who has also made an immeasurable difference to the branch.

Fast forward to the beginning of the most recent intifada, incomparable in scale to any other in recent memory. This is where, frankly, the work that I and others put in, really came to fruition. For brief context, in Cardiff there is a PSC Cardiff group, a particularly conservative collection of older, white activists. After October 7, PSC Cardiff called an emergency demonstration in Cardiff on the 11th. Hundreds showed up at short notice, and then they organised a demonstration, the first Saturday demonstration, on 21 October. Thousands

showed up. Literally thousands.

With the following Saturday, 28 October, fast approaching, PSC had yet to put out a poster for another demonstration. I had a good relationship with the local PSC group, so I contacted them and asked when the next demo would be advertised, to which they replied that there would be no Saturday demonstration in Cardiff on the 28th, and instead, they would be encouraging people to support a demonstration in Newport. This, to me, was a huge mistake.

We had our weekly branch meeting that Wednesday and I raised that we, as BLM Cardiff, should sidestep PSC and organise another demonstration ourselves instead on Saturday the 28th.

As I mentioned, it was BLM Cardiff that organised the 2021 demonstrations, often with a grassroots group called Stand Up for Palestine, led by young Arabs and others from the region, who were far more radical than PSC.

This led to a debate in the branch, with some comrades arguing that we should respect the decision of PSC and just travel to Newport and support that march instead. For myself and others, though, the Arab working class had clearly started to awaken in Cardiff, and we knew that thousands of people would want to take to the streets on the 28th, and that this was what we should be prioritising - not the feelings of PSC, a conservative group of activists who would dampen revolutionary spirit, not ignite it.

Thankfully, it was agreed that we call for a demonstration, with BLM Cardiff and Stand Up for Palestine. I contacted my

Palestinian brother, Mohammed, who had started Stand Up for Palestine, and with only 48 hours before the 28th, we put out the poster.

I think around 4-5000 people took to the streets of Cardiff that day. Our decision was vindicated and since then, we in BLM Cardiff and Stand Up for Palestine, have organised every single action for Palestine, frankly sidelining the conservative PSC in Cardiff. That is not say we do not work with them - we are more than cooperative - but it is us who are always pushing the movement forward, with the Arab working class at the heart of it. And frankly, PSC have had to keep up.

From here, the party has been the main presence on the marches. Our placards are on every demo, Kwabena will speak holding Socialist Worker, and frankly, we are seen as the leaders of the movement.

From the days of my time in XR, when I was outnumbered by sectarians, the leaders of the queer movement in Cardiff are not only joining the branch but defending the party against attacks by sectarians. That is through the long-term building of trust and friendship. In fact, one of those people, who is an instrumental person in the queer movement for Palestine, and more generally, in Cardiff, has joined the party on the basis that we are where 'everything is happening', and that our branch is a place for black and brown revolutionaries. We have continued to have an influx of new members, citing our role in the movement in Cardiff, and especially the Palestine movement.

And this directly impacts SUTR - we are talking about black and brown activists from BLM, Palestine, now wanting to fight

fascism alongside us. Our influence in the wider movement has led to a re-energizing of SUTR, not only with our own predominantly black and brown branch, but with those on the wider left.

Movement building ≠ movementism

This is not movementism - this is the building of alliances and trust within movements, and shaping the political arguments that characterize them.

When speaking to comrades in other parts of the UK, or hearing comrades speaking, it sometimes seems that we speak of movements as if we are eternally on the periphery of them. That 'Stop the War, PSC, BLM, or whichever other group it is,' is sectarian so does not allow us a presence on the marches, or an active role as a party'. My question would be - why are we, as revolutionaries not joining these groups, arguing for the correct political conclusions, and seeking to lead these groups in activity? Why are we not building connections with those in the movement so that we can bypass sectarianism and win new audiences and contacts, through building mutual respect and alliances?

This can require flexibility and an unorthodox approach in certain circumstances - I fully acknowledge that there will be particular contexts in various cities that make this far more difficult than in others. But it is about getting your foot in the door, one or two members can change everything and things can really snowball from there. And from there your branch

will start to reflect those movements - our branch looks like the BLM and Palestine movements do because we are such an intrinsic part of those movements. And you go from entering into a mass movement relatively isolated, to entering as an ensemble, and being able to shape the politics.

I am not saying comrades are not doing enough - but the key to how we have built the branch in Cardiff has undoubtedly been by shaping and leading the various movements. For instance, I met a Sudanese friend through anti-racist activity years ago, and we recently started a group called Cardiff4Sudan. Through that group, we have become a vehicle for pushing revolutionary politics within the Sudanese movement, and a young Sudanese woman activist has now joined the branch.

Equally, even if they do not join the party - our connection with the wider movement is important (five Sudanese comrades came to Marxism), and building a following in local mosques, by seeking invites to address Friday prayers, has also been important in mobilising amongst the Muslim community.

A welcome set of problems

We are by no means perfect, as an influx of members joining in this way leads to a whole new set of problems, but they are problems we are more than happy to have.

The issue that I touched upon earlier - being able to retain members in times where the struggle is low and there is no mass activity. It requires a solid grounding of new members in

the politics of revolution - to avoid falling into the inevitable logic of 'movementism'. A key issue is that our newer members aren't confident in selling the paper, for instance, so building political confidence amongst new members, including through good, well-attended educationals, is key. As is arguing against the odd 'snipe' from older members that we are just 'cheerleading' movements and not 'building the party', because not all our new members are confident about selling the papers.

We have also found it difficult to build in the university, despite having many members who are in university. In some ways, this has benefited us, as having the 'main' branch as a focal point has led to many new members feeling directly involved in the wider movement, rather than isolated in a university SWSS group. Of course, there is a happy medium here, but we are yet to attain it.

And we haven't defeated sectarianism, there are still sectarians who try to attack us - in fact one 'activist' in Cardiff recently tweeted that the SWP has Cardiff 'on lock'. Another individual who I organised with primarily in XR, complained recently in a group chat of tens, that it is unfair because SWP has 'all the organising power'. Sectarians will remain sectarians, but we have gained the respect and trust of the movement.

Our next steps are to ensure each new member understands the role of a revolutionary party, and how we can continue to build in the future.

Confronting conservatism & sectarianism in the Palestine movement in Scotland

Keir (Glasgow)

Over the last year the SWP in Scotland has thrown itself into building the Palestine solidarity movement and have fought to develop anti-imperialist cutting edge and militancy within Stop the War and the wider Palestine solidarity movement. Comrades have played an important ideological role by injecting anti-imperialist politics into the movement, raising arguments about role of US/UK imperialism in the Middle East, imperialism's relationship to Zionism and the Israeli state. We organised two well attended assemblies that strived to integrate a deeper analysis of the wider geopolitical context of intensifying inter imperialist rivalries; manifested in the proxy war in Ukraine between Russia, NATO and American imperialism and the

sharpening tensions between US and China.

Comrades have been engaged in systematic and patient work to develop and strengthen the Stop the War Coalition in Scotland at local, regional and national levels. Stop the War Scotland now has a functioning national Steering Committee with real forces from the STUC, the trade unions, Scottish CND, genuine and new local Stop the War groups and sections of the Labour left, the CP, left nationalists in Scotland.

Our comrades have initiated and led successful mass student walk outs at Glasgow, Edinburgh and St Andrew's universities. Our student members played a leading role in the Aberdeen university student encampment which won a number of its key demands. Our students should be commended especially, for their drive and willingness to act as a political pole of attraction often against more autonomist or sectarian currents on campus.

Party members involved in Stop the War also organised several occupations of train stations in Glasgow and Edinburgh and held sit down protests in all the major cities across Scotland; as well as militant actions supporting BDS campaigns in supermarkets selling Israeli goods. Comrades fought hard to build the Stop the War national trade union days of action, holding successful and decent sized angry lobbies at Glasgow City Council Chambers and some good workplace meetings; for example, a PCS lunch time gathering outside the Scottish Office in Edinburgh and at Paisley University.

We organised and targeted political events to ramp up the pressure on the SNP Scottish Government – holding two successful lobbies of the Scottish Parliament, demanding the

Scottish Government breaks all economic, political and cultural links with Israel and calling for the sacking of Angus Robertson, an SNP government Minister who held a secret meeting with Israel's ambassador to the UK. One highlight was a mass occupation of Glasgow central station that marched with around 1500 people to join a demo at the BBC headquarters in Glasgow

None of these successes have been automatic or without significant political challenges and barriers along the way. They have been hard fought for. It has involved addressing two key issues. Firstly, challenging some of the conservatism within the Stop the War Coalition and within sections of the trade union bureaucracy; by proving in practice what is possible to mobilise on the streets, in workplaces and on college and university campuses. Secondly, by carefully navigating a way through some of the sectarianism and ultra-left currents in the Palestine movement in Scotland.

How did we do this?

Critically, this has meant winning a wide layer of our new members and revitalising our older members, to the politics and methods of the united front, by pushing outwards to relate to the most militant layers of young people, students, the Muslim community and the trade union movement.

Avoiding the pitfalls of being sucked into endless sectarian arguments, but also challenging sectarianism and ultra-leftism politically and in practice has been very essential and very productive. For context, the SPSC and Gaza Genocide Emergency

Committee unfortunately adopted a position of refusing to work with Stop the War in Scotland, deploying spurious and false arguments that Stop the War and SUTR works with Zionists in the Confederation of Friends in Israel in Scotland (COFIS). Secondly, the SPSC and GGEC leadership pursue an ultra-left political approach to working with trade unions, the union bureaucracy, politicians, students, the peace movement and others. One of the consequences of this ultra-left strategy has been to narrow down the size and political impact of the Palestine solidarity movement across Scotland. This has been evidenced by very few or no trade union banners being present on the weekly local and national demonstrations.

Another of the weaknesses of the SPSC/GGEC approach, compared to the coalition of forces that organise the London demos, is the total absence of a strategy where the national and the local fuse and strengthen each other. So for a year now the SPSC groups in Aberdeen and Dundee, Scotland's third and fourth largest cities, have never been involved in organising transport to the 'national' demos regularly called by GGEC in Glasgow or Edinburgh. This has meant the development of the local movement in these cities was hampered with activists remaining isolated and not being able to draw inspiration from larger turnouts. As a result the protests have often become routinistic, not involving new elements in organising them and descending into the likes of weekly lobbies of Barclays.

By contrast, the STW demo in June was the first genuinely national demo, with collective transport organised from several cities, including a full coach from the north east that brought

lots of students involved in the Aberdeen encampment.

We have responded to the sectarianism by being non-sectarian. We have fought to build unity in practice, by supporting and building all GGEC and other solidarity movement events. However, we have also not been afraid to initiate and organise independent Stop the War activities, orientating on reaching out to the most militant layers of the Palestine movement, whilst simultaneously broadening the involvement of the trade union movement and strengthening the social weight of the solidarity movement.

Our strategy of broadening and deepening the movement culminated in a hugely successful Stop the War demo in August with 5,000 in attendance. There were 30 trade union banners on the demo. The former First Minister, Humza Yousaf spoke alongside several trade union leaders from the EIS, PCS, STUC, Jewish organisations, Scottish CND and others. This demo was a major breakthrough for stop the War in Scotland and helped to raise the sights about the possibilities of building a stronger, broader and more united anti-war and Palestine solidarity movement in Scotland.

The success of the demo success took a lot of detailed work and planning; including organising a 65 strong Stop the War fringe meeting at the STUC Conference, several meetings with the STUC leadership to agree key slogans and demands, who then agreed that the STUC would co-sponsor the demo and donated £2000 towards the costs. This opened the flood gates of the wider trade union movement.

Our approach of not being obsessed with going down

sectarian rabbit holes and instead, focusing on pushing outwards, meant that we actually forced the GGEC into joining the national Stop the War demo as a bloc. This is a very good example of how we were able to break down sectarianism in and pull the best people into our orbit in practice.

It is also worth noting that the same methods applied to our SUTR work in Scotland also seen the SPSC and GGEC compelled to join the 5,000 SUTR anti-fascist demo in Glasgow on the 7th September.

These examples point to some of the key lessons that the whole party can learn and generalise from. We must be bold and audacious and avoid being side tracked by pessimism about the possibilities or sectarianism. Driving through our new initiatives is important. We are now in a position to push for our third national Stop the War conference in Glasgow on October 20th and are planning another national Stop the War demo before the end of the year.

We also need to be making the links with Palestine, Islamophobia and the growth of the far right in our Stop the War work. In Scotland, we won a position of Stop the War to support SUTR demos against Tommy Robinson in London and our persistency has also won us having SUTR speakers at Stop the War events.

The last year has been a sharp learning curve for new and old members alike. Winning hegemony on the left is not automatic or inevitable. It will require constant discussion and debate around the united front method, winning a new layers of our members to how to apply it in the real world and building the

size and influence of the party simultaneously. Crucially it involves boldness and audacity.

We still have a way to go but we are on the right track.

Palestine, Labour and the trade unions: building the networks

Sean (Islington)

The last twelve months has seen the biggest and most sustained mass movement any of us can remember. The twenty national demonstrations and the thousands of local protests have involved millions of people. With the Israeli state spreading the conflict to embroil the whole of the Middle East, and aiming to force the US and Britain to support attempts to draw Iran into an all-out war, more people are being brought into the movement.

A year on the movement is still growing.

A new arms race has emerged as conflicts and tensions across the world deepen amongst the major imperialist powers. From the Middle East to the Ukraine to the South China Sea the US, Britain and allies are squaring up to China and Russia with the aim of putting themselves in the most favourable position in preparation for war.

If, or more likely, when these proxy wars spill over into a direct fight between the major global powers. The question for

the movement is how do we build a force inside the organised working class that has the power to prevent the world tipping over into horrors of further war and genocide.

We have turned a corner...

In the last year we have built a network of workplace activists through Stop the War Coalition (StWC), across a number of trade unions which have built action in their workplaces, calling for a ceasefire and an end to the genocide. There have been six days of action in which hundreds of workplaces involving thousands of workers have participated. In UCU the biggest day of action involved 86 colleges and universities in actions ranging from walkouts and lunchtime protests to selfies and stalls.

Teachers, Postal workers, civil servants and local government workers have all participated in the days of action with varying degrees of scale and success.

Trade union Palestine WhatsApp groups have sprung up in a numbers of unions. Many have hundreds of activists.

The trade union block on the national demonstrations has also grown. New and bigger delegations and banners have joined the block. Keeping the block together and lively throughout the demos has allowed the unions to have a greater impact on the marches.

But the impact of the workplace days of action could and should have been bigger and would have been if the trade union leaders had been far bolder in calls for action or as has been in too many cases not calling any at all.

Despite this we have been successful. The success is modest but it is not insignificant. We are not in a position, yet, to call walkouts across the TU movement but we have put on the map the role organised labour could play in defeating the warmongers.

Consistently organising zoom meetings, days of actions and the trade union block has shifted sections of the trade union leaders. The biggest day of action was on February 6th when UCU, NEU and the PCS sent out to their members a call to support the day of action.

The pressure of the movement could also be felt at this year's TUC congress. The TUC has been pulled to the right by the GMB and Unite over the last 4 years, where these unions successfully proposed and carried motions in support of arms spending and opposing moves to a just transition. This year progressive motions on the climate crisis were carried. At the same time Unite and GMB only very narrowly carried their motion in favour of continued fossil fuel use.

A motion on Palestine brought by the NEU calling for a ban on all arm sales to Israel was passed unanimously. An emergency motion brought by UCU calling to stop the escalation of war in the Middle East and for the TUC to support a workplace day of action was also carried unanimously.

Whilst the TUC is merely the echo of the battle it does matter what happens there. The debates reflect the tensions and arguments within the movement. Passing these motions can give confidence to workers to act.

There are talks taking place with the TUC about

implementing the call for a workplace day of action. If this happens, we will need to throw everything we have to make it as militant and wide as possible.

Politics and economics

We have achieved this success by carrying an argument in the unions and workplaces about why war and Palestine are trade union issues. This has been difficult at times. Attempts by employers and managers to victimise, bully and intimidate trade unionists to prevent them organising in their workplaces over Palestine has not deterred thousands of workers from attempting to do so.

The key to success is remembering that in every workplace we are in the majority over the question of Palestine. Opinion polls have shown over 73% believe that there should be a ceasefire.

Another barrier to organising solidarity protests in workplaces comes from within the trade union movement. Both at a national and local level activists have had to challenge the idea that campaigning around Palestine is divisive and a diversion from defending the economic conditions of workers. We have had to carry two main arguments. First, that it is war that divides workers and not those who campaign against war. Second, those workplaces that have a pro Palestine and anti-war position are better placed to be able to unite to fight the economic attacks that workers face.

An employer is much more likely to get away with pushing through job losses or attacks on workers conditions if those

workers succumb to the warmongers arguments that we have a national interest to support Israel's attacks on the Palestinian people. This is also true, of course, if workers are divided by racism, sexism or transphobia.

By conducting an argument about why we must take up the fight against the 'culture wars', and explaining that by doing so we are stronger, we have successfully isolated those trade union leaders who wish to maintain a wall between the economic and political struggles as witnessed at the TUC congress.

Attempts to keep the political and economic struggles separate will not go away. We will need to continue to be the ones that make the argument at every opportunity that uniting the political and economic struggle makes the movement stronger.

Welfare not warfare

The slogan 'welfare not warfare' is not new but it is the central one we need to raise within the movement.

Starmer threw down the gauntlet at the TUC by spending much of his speech telling delegates that his government was elected as 'changed Labour' and will govern as 'changed Labour'. He emphasised that there is no more Corbynism - 'Tough choices' will have to be made. Which means no break from the foreign policies of the Tory government. Starmer is preparing Britain for the 'pre-war world'.

It did not go down well. This Labour government looks set to have the shortest honeymoon period of any previous Labour governments.

The cuts in pensioners' winter allowance and caps on benefits has allowed the far right to attempt to position themselves as the champions of working peoples' living standards. This is why we need to ensure that the case is made on every demo and meeting that the money is there for decent wages and pensions. For every missile launched it is another hospital ward closed and a new school or home not built.

Our understanding of the period of history in which we live is framed by a perspective that recognises that we are in a multifaceted crisis. This means the struggle erupts on multiple fronts at once. This also means we do not have the luxury to choose to fight one campaign at a time. Our perspective should recognise that the struggle will play out on a number of fronts simultaneously and we will need to match this.

We will need to roll over the Palestinian movement into the anti-fascist movement if we are going to create a movement that will be able to repel the fascist threat.

In UCU we have taken an initiative to launch a conference that attempts to reach out beyond the usual suspects of the left within the union. The conference has workshops on Palestine, climate change and racism as well as on how to defend post 16 education in Higher and further education.

To achieve our goal of fighting on all fronts we will need a bigger movement and party with more people involved in organising.

Any future strike wave in defence of workers living standards like that in 2022/3 will need a network rooted in the workplace that can act independently of the trade union

leaders. The networks we are building today around Palestine and stopping the far right can become those future networks.

We need to share this perspective with all those we work alongside within the movement.

Leeds SWSS: Palestine, student politics and united fronts

Benji & Nico (Leeds SWSS)

Leeds SWSS went through a rapid period of change at the beginning of the last academic year. Fuelled by the event of October 7th and the urgent need to organise around Palestine, new members threw themselves into the movement. In place of a mature understanding of imperialism and the need to fight it and capitalism, the political immediacy of the ongoing genocide kept new members going. It was through organising over Palestine that new members began to formally engage with liberation politics, anti-imperialist theories, and how to build mass movements.

This came in conjunction with a few members of SWSS building amicable working relationships with key societies, especially Leeds Palestine Solidarity Group and Leeds Amnesty international. This would eventually lead to a meeting where a loose coalition of student societies came together on the issue of Palestine.

Our personal and human approach to the issue of Palestine was able to convince more moderate societies that we could work together, while maintaining our radical and Marxist analysis at the heart of what we were doing, in the process of pulling students in the movement to the most radical conclusion.

In the second term, we built on the foundations that we had built, by including cultural student societies and aspects of the trade union movement. Off the back of this we went into an occupation of the iconic Parkinson's Building, followed by a more drawn-out encampment. Throughout all of this we have had incredible support from the community, through rallies and communal events.

In building for the Parkinson's occupation, we reached out to Student Rebellion in getting involved with the planning and functioning of the occupation, despite them having so far excluded themselves from the movement for 5 months.

With the inclusion of more autonomist and anarchist politics into the movement we saw the beginning of a change in how the coalition was organised and understood. Structural changes to the coalition through the introductions of working groups and regular meetings provided a basis for a 'horizontal' organisational structure while the decision-making process was dominated by a handful of people unaccountable to the rest of the coalition.

Also detrimental was us naively allowing for these student groups to act as the voice of experience with regards to occupations, despite the Parkinson's occupation having a completely different

character to those done by climate action groups.

This tension developed into the question of 'direct action' against mass action which would haunt political activity on campus for the rest of term. Ultimately this tension led to a contradiction between a desire to bring new layers of students into an open occupation, and a divide on questions around security culture and small militant actions.

During the encampment we faced another challenge to our politics and to the character of the movement, through moralistic arguments, and desperation for change. Combining the two together we saw an increase of 'direct actions', in the process abandoning a student base who had become a reliable base of our support. Moralistic arguments and desperation turned people away, vilified individuals for little reason and to an extent blamed students for not getting involved. This proved to be a challenge that led initially to a reach out to the West Yorkshire Palestine movement and later to even more drastic security culture measures.

This developed into an almost factional infight, where moralistic, 'direct actioners', were looking to develop a prefigurative space that could with the 'right' tactic indefinitely fight for a free Palestine and SWSS who found ourselves caught between defending the encampment and critiquing the lack of engagement with it from students and the Leeds community. We also lost many of the moderate elements as rhetoric became disconnected from the wider Palestine movement. We eventually were able to argue for the end of the encampment during the summer, arguing that we would

have a whole summer to reassess, and build for the new term.

This became a toxic mix with the moralism and desperation. The last few weeks were amongst the most tense and personally depressing experiences. This as well as burn out within SWSS members meant that we lost many of the crucial arguments. We were unable to communicate our ideas to this layer of student radicals, who had not seen how we built nor showed interest in understanding or resolving political differences.

What we have learnt from working in coalitions with other student groups is that it can be difficult and oftentimes unrewarding. However, there is an appetite not only for our energy and activism but our politics on campus.

Although there are sectarian elements, with political clarity, and a respect for the differences in opinions of others there is a way to manage and maintain unity. Furthermore, although we had taken measures to ensure the coalition isn't formalised, we can still carve out a space on campus to operate as SWSS either through calling something ourselves or when it is politically possible within united fronts on campus. Student politics is ever changing, and with that you never know what is truly round the corner.

Stand Up To Racism's supposed unprincipled stance on Palestine has come back to haunt us again and again from not only sectarian elements outside of the party but also members within. Mistakes made by SUTR organisers elsewhere and their perceived conservatism around the issue of Palestine had become something people point to as 'proof' of our unseriousness and lack of conviction towards Palestinian liberation.

While the party's united front politics is convincing enough, some members have made the mistake of actively denying the Palestine movement a presence in SUTR, going as far as to prevent Palestinian flags, banners, chants, and speakers from being a part of SUTR demos. This disconnect between SWP's official stance and the behaviours of its members has hurt the trust and relationships we had built with Palestine organisers, in turn diminishing our hegemony within the movement.

We are both proud and critical of how we engaged with politics on campus over the previous academic year. Our unpreparedness in combating the ideas and politics (or lack thereof) espoused by autonomists and anarchists proved to be detrimental not just to SWSS but the movement itself. Our unyielding focus on Palestine, which included a pursuit to do all that could be done for liberation, left us unprepared for mobilisations of the far right as well as other key areas of campus politics.

However, it cannot be denied that the if not political then the humanitarian urgency meant that the question of Palestine is still vital ground any revolutionary socialist should be at the centre of. It is also important to put across that our political clarity and frankness within the Palestine movement has ensured that despite sectarian infighting we have maintained relevance and sympathy from many other activists.

One critical mistake was the failure to maintain SWSS meetings in a space outside of the Palestine movement. Not only did it restrict the development of student comrades on other questions, but it separated those prepared to engage

in the Palestine movement and SWSS members who had been left unengaged, or for whatever reason behind the latest developments. Going into the new term, with an influx of new SWSS members we do not want to make the same mistake, as we look to maintain weekly meetings on subjects as broad as our politics allows, but to also have a space where we are not under the scrutiny of sectarian elements, and can keep members, and students close to us informed.

This must come hand in hand with a concentrated effort in bringing new members into the organising of SWSS, through engagement from postering runs and stalls to chairing and speaking at meetings and rallies. This confidence in SWSS members will be developed in part through weekly meetings, but also by the role that existing members will play at bringing through newer less experienced comrades. There is also a hope that this confidence encourages members to engage in practice as well as develop a broad and deep understanding of theory.

All in for Palestine, made sense at the time of the encampment, however with the threatening developments over the summer in the toxic mix of Reform UK and Tommy Robinson it has become clear that we will need to build an anti-racist and anti-fascist movement on campus.

We have succeeded in the student union putting a coach on for the 26th October and hope that this will be an opening to build an anti-racist campus. However, we know that we need to challenge the very system, and as a student society, the many iterations that the university and the capitalist system

more generally throw at students and workers.

Lastly there is the need to develop better levels of communication between us and on a national level. This starts with building around caucuses and developing a student society that is welcoming of concerns being raised and questions no matter what, whether they are about how we organise or the theory that we learn.

Furthermore, we need to manage our expectations, not to limit what we do, but to make sure what we do, we do well. For this reason, we will take the three pillars proposed of Palestine, Smashing the far right and fighting Keir Starmer as our starting point, as well as a serious focus on building a revolutionary socialist cadre armed with the ideas to engage with the world around them.

Socialist Worker and fighting for hegemony

Central Committee

Introduction

Can the SWP make a turn outwards and win hegemony on the radical left? Yes—but only with a much stronger and much more used Socialist Worker.

We have seen the importance of Socialist Worker and revolutionary journalism in the last year. Look at Socialist Worker’s coverage around the one-year anniversary of 7 October. It combined ideological clarity, interviews with people at the “top” of the movement and voices of people building it on the ground.

Each week Socialist Worker features voices of working class people who are victims of Labour’s austerity as part of widening our reach and winning an argument for more struggle. And we’re launching a “Teach Yourself Marxism” column series alongside our other ideological articles.

There are big opportunities to grow the party among workers and students and lead in movements. And we’ll be better able to grasp those opportunities if Socialist Worker—online and

print—meets its full potential with an enhanced offering.

We need to think *strategically for the long term*—what do we want Socialist Worker to look like in five years' time?

- What's our vision for Socialist Worker?
- What form should our publications take and what sort of content should we produce?
- How are we going to develop a new generation of revolutionary journalists, with a high level of politics, to work on Socialist Worker?

What makes revolutionary media unique?

Our understanding of the *relationship between party and class* is key to what makes revolutionary media unique.

The need for a revolutionary party flows from a contradiction. Firstly, the ruling ideas of our society are the ideas of the ruling class. Secondly, we argue that the self-emancipation of the working class is the act of the working class. Working class people's ideas are “uneven” under capitalism. Some want to tear the head off capitalism, while others are reactionaries who buy into the system.

The majority sit somewhere in between with both progressive and backward ideas. A reformist party—such as the Labour Party—reflects all of those contradictions and panders to backward ideas, while a revolutionary party organises together the most militant fighters to influence

broader layers of the working class and shape struggles.

Socialist Worker is different because we want our readers to use our news and analysis to build resistance. We want to report on every strike to highlight every example of working class people fighting back. We do that to encourage support and solidarity for strikers but also to intervene with arguments about how they can win.

Socialist Worker should be a pole of attraction beyond the party. It has to become a go-to place on the radical left, in the radical wing of movements and among people fighting back—the anti-fascist who took to the streets against the far right riots in the summer, the Palestine protester who backs the resistance and wants more militant action, those who voted for left wing alternatives for Labour, the strikers who rejected bad deals.

They have to see it as the place to go for stories of struggle that point a way to win, political arguments they can use to convince others, and ideologically-powered analysis and theoretical pieces that answer their questions whether on degrowth or decolonisation.

That's part of the SWP making a turn. But we'll never do that unless we build a new interventionist Marxist cadre in the party. We need comrades who are ideologically confident, think critically for themselves, make an analysis of the situation and point a way forward.

Here, Socialist Worker, alongside International Socialism Journal (ISJ) and our educational programme, has an important role to play in educating a new layer of members

in Marxist ideas.

Furthermore, we're going into a time of more political turmoil—the threat of wider imperialist wars, a Starmer government that offers no alternative, the persistence of Labourism and possible breaks from it, the intensification of state racism and the far right on the rise, the potential for explosive movements that throw up big ideological and strategic questions.

Socialist Worker has an important role to play in steering the party in political arguments: for example, in the way it has done over Palestine and 7 October, Ukraine or the general election.

However, Socialist Worker is a much underused tool. We need many more comrades to use Socialist Worker, sell it and share its articles with people they work and campaign with.

The challenges we face

Today, Socialist Worker has to fight harder to win a stable audience, as a physical newspaper and online. For example, into the 2000s, if you wanted to know what was happening in workplace struggles or on the Labour left, you had an incentive to buy a copy of Socialist Worker every week because it had information you couldn't find anywhere else.

This is much less true in a world of multiple sources and (far more) instantaneous information. Consequently, we have to work harder for our content to have an “added value” (for example, useful facts that we have dug out for readers to use, voices and interviews you won't get elsewhere, political

analysis where people learn something new).

Our different audiences are fragmented on social media and often in the real world. You can do one platform well and win an audience among a particular demographic but that still leaves many others open.

We have to move the discussion about online content on from, “Wouldn’t it be really good to do a live show or podcast or TikTok videos,” because other left wing platforms do it. These are important questions. But we have to frame these debates around the party/class relationship—and how we utilise these different platforms for our unique purpose and what sorts of content best fit what we’re trying to do.

What should Socialist Worker look like?

We need more reportage and more longer ideologically-powered articles.

- A website that has more daily content and feels more dynamic. Think of our coverage of the 7 October anniversary, the summer riots and the anti-fascist mobilisations, or the Cass Review. Our aim is producing daily content and the print copy is a distillation of the best of the web and additional material that presents a coherent worldview each week.
- A weekly newspaper redesigned in the future to accommodate longer articles.
- A social media strategy based on engaging with users which funnels people to subscribe, join and come to our events.

- An aim to produce more of other sorts of media: for example, video content.

The website

Socialist Worker has taken important steps forward online. In 2016, we took a leap from dumping the whole of Socialist Worker online once a week to producing web articles every day.

We need to make another leap to have a more dynamic website with more reportage and ideological articles. We need to see ourselves as producing both a daily website and a weekly newspaper, with the former not an adjunct to the latter.

We are a long way off—years, not months—from being able to achieve what we need to; however, this is an example of what daily output we aim for on a long-term basis:

- Three or four news articles with an “added value” to the reader.
- An analysis or comment article.
- An in-depth article.

The website shouldn’t just copy the format of the print edition. First, there should be more additional stories that only appear on the website—drawn from the journalists and beyond. For example, we rightly dedicated the whole of the print paper to Palestine in November, but could have tried to publish features on other topics online.

Second, we are recategorising the whole website under “topics” rather than “article types” as done by all the major

newspapers. For example, the BBC top menu items are: Gaza-Israel War, Ukraine War, Cost of Living Crisis, then News, World News. What reader knows the difference between an SW “Feature” and an SW “Background Check”?

This will make it feel more dynamic and refreshed: “good practice” on websites is a refresh every two years, a redesign every five years.

The print edition

The physical copy fulfils two key functions: agitation and cadre-building. Can you imagine agitating for our politics on the Palestine demonstrations without Socialist Worker’s front pages? And having people sell Socialist Worker is part of developing their confidence in our politics and cadreising people.

We will need to change Socialist Worker’s design over the next two years. The design—what articles go where, what space we give to news or more in-depth pieces—will seem like a technical issue. But these are all political questions shaped by the political period the party is operating in.

The Socialist Worker redesign was premised on a higher level of workers’ struggle in the wake of the global financial crisis and the victory of the Tory-Liberal coalition in the general election of 2010. The emphasis was to have a “whiff of the workers’ vodka” in our coverage, with more pages and more space for more and shorter reports.

We will need a paper that accommodates longer pieces—this

includes meatier news and analysis pieces and features.

We reduced the number of pages in the physical copy of Socialist Worker from 20 to 16 in September. This was a short-term move out of necessity as we identify and train a new generation of revolutionary journalists.

The CC recognises the urgency of strengthening the Socialist Worker editorial board:

- We will employ two more journalists by summer 2025. This may come at a cost: i.e. those people may well make good organisers, but they'll come onto Socialist Worker. It needs the politically strongest of the new cadre coming through.
- We are not waiting until summer 2025 to identify new journalists—and, if possible, will employ others as soon as we can.
- We have begun identifying comrades who could be journalists during the next couple of years.
- We have begun a process of training a new generation of writers in the party.

What can comrades do?

- Sell Socialist Worker at work - it's how you'll build a political base at work and identify the best people
- Are there arguments going on in your local Palestine or anti-racist group? Share our articles and discuss them with people as well as selling them the paper.

- Share our online articles into trade union, united front and campaign WhatsApp groups and with key contacts in your area. And discuss the articles with them afterwards.
- Can you write a report from picket lines, protests and meetings that you've been to? You can go back and sell people Socialist Worker building a relationship and deepening our roots.
- Can you ask workers for short videos explaining their strike, how to support them, and how their struggle connects to others? We can post these on social media and feature them in Socialist Worker online and you can share it with them.
- Are you interested in reviewing a book, film, play or exhibition? Get in touch.
- Do you take photographs or videos that we could use?
- Do you have ideas for our History & Theory articles? Is there an important ideological question we should cover or anniversary we should mark? Drop us a line.
- Buy it, read it, sell it and share it online

Death, taxes and Socialist Worker sales

Miriam, Ben & Alan (Newham)

What follows is a report of a workplace sale established since the last SWP conference.

Stratford in East London is a somewhat strange place, or perhaps more accurately it is two places—one far stranger than the other! Development of the Olympic park in the aftermath of the 2012 games has given rise to, unfortunately almost inevitably, hundreds of unaffordable flats.

But it also is now home to two new university campuses (UCL East and UAL: London College of Fashion) and before long a new V&A exhibition and storage space, a new BBC recording studio and a new home to Sadlers Wells.

A previous stage of development brought a large Transport for London building, the Financial Conduct Authority and a very large HM Government building mostly or entirely involved in collecting taxes. All of these have, or will likely have, trade union members in them.

The obvious place to start seemed to be the largest building, the tax office at 14 Westfield Avenue. Government documents

regarding the reorganisation of HMRC explain that this office is designed for almost 5,000 Full Time Equivalent posts!

The civil service despite the best efforts of the bosses still has a lot of home working so those aren't the numbers you see on an average Thursday morning. Nonetheless, there is a very steady stream of what is likely hundreds of people that pass you in the hour we spend outside the office.

We realised quickly that workers come from all over to work there (not least because of a consolidation of London tax offices)—but there are plenty from East London in general and Newham in particular.

We also realised that the number of union members (PCS in particular) was substantial. And that the union was relatively active because we have regularly been asked if our materials were from the union.

Our first attempt was back in March where four comrades gave out over 200 copies of a Socialist Worker leaflet “Vote Yes for strikes, All-out to win ballots”. We reported that we took £19 in donations and sold 5sw using the Stop Israeli Genocide petition. A PCS rep also bought a paper.

The next time we made it there was early May where three of us gave out flyers for our comrades standing in PCS group and national elections. We reported that we took £37 using a refugees welcome petition and 13 copies of the paper were sold. We also made a contact for the SWP branch.

Our next visit was a 7 June. For various reasons we hadn't been able to do earlier in the week. We reported that despite footfall being what I estimated to be only 20 percent of what it was on a

Thursday, £18 was collected and 5sw sold. We shan't return on a Friday! We leafleted for Marxism 2024.

The following week we sold 11sw collecting £38 and leafleting for Marxism 2024. Our efforts then took a break over the summer it would appear.

In mid September, we took the decision to bite the bullet and finally go weekly. On 19 September we took £44.10 with 8 copies of Socialist Worker sold. We gave out leaflets for the demonstration against Tommy Robinson on 26 October. We used a petition on winter fuel payments and spoke at length with a PCS rep.

We learned that the branch had got quite close to the 50 percent threshold in the most recent strike ballot. Good to know in the context of the threshold not being met across the HMRC.

The following week we took £62 and sold 6 copies of the paper. We used a stop bombing Lebanon petition and leafleted for both 5 October Palestine demonstration and 26 October.

On Thursday 3 October we took £58 with 11sw sold. Our main focus was building the 5 October but we also gave out leaflets for 26 October against Tommy Robinson.

And on the day of the deadline for this bulletin (Thursday 10 October) we took £34, with five copies of the paper sold, petitioning over arm sales to Israel and leafleting for 26.10.

PCS reps are trying, at the time of writing, to get a union meeting together to discuss mobilising for 26 October and we are liaising to try to get a Stand Up to Racism speaker to it as they have requested.

One further idea we had was to do a collection for the striking

security guards at Stratford Job Centre but we missed our moment. It would take a bit of preparation of putting in a leaflet to say when we were going to do the collection. Hopefully, we'll get another chance to give this a go soon.

We have no comrade working in that office yet the response has been so encouraging that it has made for a very sustainable intervention. People are pleased to see us and glad we are raising the issues that we are, in particular Palestine.

We are yet to develop regular sales to people seeking out the paper but we have had some positive feedback from a couple of people that have read it.

This "workplace sale" has shown the very political times we live in and the way people are looking for a lead. Campaigning outside a workplace is different to a public campaign stall. It's a more clearly defined space, one where there is, potentially, a union and possibly even a history of strikes.

Not every branch will be lucky enough to have such a big workplace on its patch but it's hard to believe that others won't be met with a similar type of response. It seems to us that every branch of the SWP ought to develop a strategic orientation on at least one local workplace. An approach that could pay off around mobilisations like 26 October.

But also it's clear to us that at some point we may well recruit to SWP from this.

From this vantage point, continued sales of Socialist Worker here feel like a certainty.

Limiting our workplace interventions just to where we have comrades working or only when there's a picket line seems to be

missing a trick.

But also where we do have comrades, this type of intervention can support and help to build around them over various political initiatives and or disputes/ strike action.

SWSS

educational work

**Patrick (Glasgow SWSS), Sean (Queen Mary SWSS)
and Wilf (Manchester SWSS)**

When the Palestine movement exploded in October last year, SWSS proved that it could be a bold interventionist force. On campuses up and down the country we were the first to call protests and rallies; often we were the first to hold meetings about Palestine on campus, providing a clear political analysis. From January, many SWSS groups played important roles in setting up and acting within the encampment movement.

Nevertheless, the encampments were difficult terrain for many of us. It tended to be difficult for us to find an audience within them. Many of us felt squeezed by both the autonomist ideas that frequently dominated them and by competition from other Marxist groups. The embeddedness and length of the intervention required also exerted strong pressure to dissolve into the movement and adapt to its politics.

The turn to weekly SWSS meetings at the national student meeting in September will go a way to correct this tendency and likely spur growth. But the deepening and interlocking crises of capitalism will produce further eruptions on campus SWSS must respond to, necessitating we shift focus back to intervening.

There are layers of students receptive to our arguments who

want to get involved. But, if thrown into the movement without a solid political basis, they risk being pulled by other forces. Bristol SWSS' spilt from the party this summer to become a 'Leftist Collective' occurred partly because they weren't confident in the overall project of the SWP or the revolutionary party — a clear warning sign that could be repeated. Un-caderised recruits may equally drop-out following a downturn in the movement or upon graduation.

Building a politically confident cadre in SWSS that is fully won to the project of the SWP is thus evidently needed to make sure SWSS is not only a pole of attraction to students radicalised by Palestine and the failures of the system, but also an interventionist force capable of retaining new members and combatting corrosive ideas in the movement, such as autonomism.

Building this cadre requires keeping education from falling on the back-burner. We appreciate the Student Office's new educational document is a great step forward, but we believe education must be treated as a core area of party activity like intervention or propaganda, requiring a strategy that is carried out systematically, routinely and consistently. If possible, someone from the Central Office should be entrusted to oversee this work is carried out as their main responsibility.

We suggest that as part of such a strategy:

- SWSS groups be encouraged to hold discussions of short works as part of their weekly caucuses (or at least a branch educational), led by an experienced member or someone from the branch. This comrade should be responsible for

ensuring that reading and discussion is not brushed aside once the next big intervention happens. We believe these discussions can and should not only include Why You Should be a Socialist or the Education for Socialists pamphlets, but introductory works of Marx, Engels Lenin, Luxemburg, Trotsky etc., like State and Revolution, Wage Labour and Capital or Socialism: Utopian and Scientific, and core IST works, like Party and Class. This would familiarise members with Marxist theory in an accessible and routine way.

- Carrying on with the good work the party is already doing around education, we should continue to consistently plan Weekenders, Day Schools and events like RedFest.
- Encouraging a culture of discussion around reading and texts. Making sure reading and discussing the ISJ is part of the SWSS routine, including to prepare for meetings.
- This must go hand in hand with a holistic publishing strategy. Bookmarks should produce a short collections of works from foundational Marxist theorists and works from the IST tradition. We hope long reads on theoretical topics will soon become a greater part of Socialist Worker's online output.
- The Centre could consider occasionally producing longer-form educational content online in future, like theory-based podcast episodes or videos for SWP TV.

How we built Hastings branch

Simon, Louis, Ben (Hastings)

How have we built the branch in Hastings? Lessons to be learnt from Hastings SWP.

Context

Hastings is a working class town in a sea of Tory East Sussex, with historically a strong Labour left but weak unions. For several years there have been large networks of refugee support groups and Palestine solidarity. The demise of Corbynism has seen the left floundering and the electoral rise of the Greens. There are deep pools of working class poverty and Reform UK got over 6,000 votes at the general election. It's against this background that we have built our branch.

Foundation in 2021

The current iteration of Hastings SWP was started by two experienced members who moved from London to Hastings in late 2020. Initial branch meetings were conducted exclusively on Zoom due to the Covid-19 pandemic but we began (near) weekly public campaign stalls in Hastings town centre from

April 2021, and face-to-face branch meetings from September. Given the proximity of Hastings to London, and the reliability of the rail service, we can normally attract guest speakers in-person however we are able to hold hybrid meetings when speakers are not able to attend in-person.

Branch meetings

Since September 2021, when travel restrictions were lifted, we have established a regular routine of weekly political branch meetings (averaging 12-13 attendees, with 2 or 3 non-members), weekly (where possible) public campaign stalls and intervening as the Party wherever there was struggle (as well as operating in genuine united fronts).

Our role in the 2022 strike wave was very important to establishing the branch and our public meeting with Joseph Choonara after the May Day march of 2023 was one of our biggest ever meetings (with 27 people in attendance).

It's worth emphasising the size of our branch meetings from Spring 2024. Until the summer they were typically about 15 people and occasionally over 20. Sophia Beach's meeting on the 29th May, to promote the book she co-authored with Lewis Nielsen, 'Why You Should Be a Socialist' was a great success, with 30 people in attendance. We've since sold over twenty-five copies of WYSBAS. Meetings have dipped since the summer mainly because a number of comrades have left to go to Uni elsewhere, and due to holidays.

Public campaign stalls

Campaign stalls in Hastings town centre, have been less frequent since 7th October 2023, the escalation of Israel's assaults on Gaza and ongoing genocide of Palestinians. Given the relatively small size of Hastings branch, around 4 or 5 core active members, we have prioritised attending the national pro-Palestine marches in London but we usually hold two or three stalls a month.

The stalls have covered a range of topics, including combating racism and xenophobia, the jingoism surrounding Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the Conservative and Labour government's support for Israel to commit war crimes, and the attacks on the working class, such as the two-child benefit cap and the restriction of the winter fuel allowance.

Solidarity action with the local PSC

Hastings SWP members have supported Hastings & Rye Palestine Solidarity Campaign (PSC), attending organising meetings and taking part in protests, such the 'Peace Camp for Palestine' at General Dynamics, a factory in Hastings that constructs navigation components for missiles sold to the Israeli Defence Force, and used to slaughter Palestinians.

While we are united in campaigning for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza, the West Bank, and now Lebanon, and the right of return for all Palestinian refugees, there are some tensions between Hastings SWP and the local PSC group. These tensions were felt most keenly in the run-up to the local election, with candidates from the Communist Party and the Workers Party

of Great Britain invited to speak at the 'Peace Camp', along with a then key figure within Hastings SWP, chair of Bexhill SUTR and trans activist. The Communist Party candidate espoused some transphobic views and the Workers Party candidate (who was and remains an active member of the local PSC) defended Russia's invasion of Ukraine. SWP members countered these arguments, affirming trans rights and opposition to imperialism. Our arguments in the local Palestine movement, such as those around trans rights, tend to be popular with the majority of PSC members and demonstration attendees.

Stand Up to Racism (SUTR)

SWP members have been central to all the SUTR initiatives. This includes working with existing refugee support groups, such as Hastings Supports Refugees and the Buddy Project, for example, in vigils and protests against deaths in the Channel.

In response to the Tories' racist scapegoating of migrants and refugees in the run-up to the general election, SWP members and other anti-racists in Hastings & Bexhill SUTR lead a leafleting campaign, held SUTR campaign stalls and organised a public meeting in Bexhill, which included speakers from the Liberal Democrats and the Green Party, and where we were able to recruit two new members to the party.

In August, in the wake of the far-right riots following the knife attack in Southport, Hastings Mosque received an email threat of a violent attack. Hastings SUTR called a counter-demonstration, which rallied around 50 people in solidarity

within 2 hours, and 700 people joined the ‘SUTR Hastings and Bexhill’ WhatsApp group.

On Wednesday 7th August, from 6-8pm, Hastings SUTR lead another counter-demonstration to a fascist protest against a local solicitor’s office that represents asylum seekers. Some 600 people united around chants of ‘Say it loud, say it clear, refugees are welcome here!’ and ‘We are many, you are few. We are Hastings, who are you?’. This counter-demonstration was followed by a rally in the town centre the following Saturday and an organising meeting the following Monday.

Although the local Green Party council leader and the Labour MP had called for the counter-demo to be cancelled, and the far-right thugs left to the mercy of the police, Hastings SUTR argued that calling off the protest at such short notice would be irresponsible, and only endanger anti-racist activists. We argued that only mass mobilisation can defeat the far right.

Trans Pride

Hastings SWP also took part in Hastings Pride on Sunday 25th August. A few younger comrades lead the ‘Pride was a Protest’ bloc on the march along the seafront, with chants of ‘We will not be quiet, Stonewall was a riot!’ and ‘Wes Streeting, shame on you!’, in response to the Cass Review, which sought to restrict access to hormone blockers. This bloc was largely organised by SWP comrades, adding a radical and defiant edge to a march that doesn’t often identify itself with anti-capitalist or anti-government slogans.

Educationals

As a branch we are trying to develop new members - rapidly. We do that through educationals.

The aim with these sessions is to bolster the newer comrades' confidence in the politics of the party, thereby making them more likely to get involved in the important practical work. A small but consistent group of newer/younger comrades have been attending, and after only 4 sessions one of the comrades in question has joined the branch committee, showing an interest in helping out with the running of the branch.

These sessions have also been valuable in granting confidence to those members who still find the branch meetings slightly intimidating and feel reluctant to speak, giving them the theoretical understanding with which to pose interesting political questions and make concise points.

For all the comrades who have been attending, the educationals have been an invaluable source of learning for the fundamentals of Marxist politics, providing a safe and supportive space in which they can grow into confident revolutionaries.

We are also trying to grow the branch by getting new members to chair meetings, to introduce branch meetings, to buy books from a big bookstall and by establishing a branch committee that meets weekly on Zoom. We also publish a weekly e-newsletter advertising our meetings and actions which goes to about 250 people every week, and have made an effort to have a very active branch Instagram account, which was how one of our newer members found out about us. We have personally found that

Instagram works much more effectively as a way of spreading information about meetings/actions, rather than Facebook or X (Twitter). We have not yet tried Tik Tok.

Neurodiversity and the SWP

Roddy (Newham)

Recent years have seen a sharp rise in the number of people diagnosed with neurodivergent conditions in the UK, accompanied by greater public debate on the related issues. This in turn raises questions about how the SWP should respond and what actions we should take.

Our party has begun to address this debate, from the piece in last year's pre-conference bulletin to discussions at this year's Marxism, Scotland's RedFest and at current branch meetings. Robert Chapman's popular book *Empire of Normality* argues that modern capitalism generates neurodivergence, while the new edition of my own book on disability addresses the current dominance of identity politics as a framework of analysis - often at the expense of a class perspective.

There is insufficient space here to adequately address the range of complex issues involved. This document therefore outlines only those I see as most relevant, as well as some proposals for the party to consider. I write not as someone who identifies as neurodivergent but as a member with a longstanding interest and engagement with the politics and theory of disability.

What is neurodiversity?

Neurodiversity is an intensely political issue which highlights questions of oppression, class and identity as well as notions of normality and the ‘other’ associated with disability discrimination.

The term ‘neurodiversity’ encompasses both typical and atypical ways of thinking and behaviour. Neurodivergent, referring only to the latter, was initially applied only to the autistic spectrum, with which it remains most strongly associated. In more recent years, however, the term has become an umbrella concept incorporating more very different conditions or ‘identities’, including dyslexia, dyspraxia, attention deficit disorders (or AD(H)D - with or without hyperactivity) and Tourette’s syndrome.

The concept of neurodiversity was developed by Judy Singer in the late 1990s as a way of understanding autism. Basing her ideas on the social model of disability, Singer argued that neurodiversity should be recognised politically in a similar way to categories such as “class/gender/race.” The rise of the internet and social media enabled autistic people who found in-person interaction challenging to communicate more easily and to build networks. This in turn helped to facilitate the development of a neurodiversity movement. The principal demand of today’s movement (which remains essentially an online phenomenon) is that neurodivergent differences are accepted as part of human diversity instead of being cured or stigmatised.

Neurodivergent conditions / identities

Autism was first characterised in the early 1940s as a rare form of male childhood psychosis. It was only in the late 1980s that new diagnostic standards and criteria began to be applied to children and adults with less severe impairments.

These criteria – centred around “difficulties with social communication and social interaction” and “restricted and repetitive patterns of behaviours, activities or interests” – have been repeatedly revised and widened. This has led to claims that the diagnostic process is flawed, that the category is too broad to be meaningful or useful, and more recently to the suggestion that there is not one but many kinds of autism.

Even within these characteristics, there is a great deal of divergence. Some autistic people are entirely non-verbal, while others show no obvious indication of autism. The notion of a spectrum suggests a sliding scale of severity, but this is further complicated by the fact that most autistic people also have other co-occurring conditions, particularly mental health or learning difficulties, sleeping problems, unusual eating behaviours and/or strong sensory sensitivities.

Although the diagnostic criteria for specific neurodivergent conditions differ sharply, most involve a weak working memory and a slow cognitive processing speed. Difficulties with working memory include problems with personal organisation, such as forgetting appointments and misplacing or losing things. People with a slow processing speed take longer to write and to understand what they read and may struggle with everyday

activities such as managing crowds or following directions. Many neurodivergent people also have difficulties with aspects of ‘executive function’ - planning, prioritisation and organisational skills. AD(H)D is distinct in that many of those with a diagnosis depend on medication to alleviate their difficulties. AD(H)D was only accepted in the UK as a valid diagnosis for adults as well as children in 2008.

As this brief summary shows, many people experience their neurodivergent conditions as impairments and therefore have support needs. This contrasts with claims that neurodivergence principally concerns a highly differentiated group of individuals who “think differently” from the majority, with the latter designated in a crude and binary fashion to be “neurotypical”.

Diagnosis and identity

Diagnosis is essential to obtaining support in education or work, but those referred via the NHS for suspected AD(H)D or autism must wait for up to two years for an assessment, which means there is often under-diagnosis. It also leads many people to pay up to £1500 for a private assessment. However, as shown by a recent BBC Panorama report on AD(H)D, they may receive a positive diagnosis on the flimsiest of evidence – then prescribed strong and addictive medication, possibly for the rest of their lives.

Many people with an autism or AD(H)D diagnosis do not identify as neurodivergent, and (so far at any rate) most people with a dyslexia or dyspraxia diagnosis do not either. On the

other hand, many people who identify as neurodivergent or may meet the criteria don't have or want a specific diagnosis.

Although more black people and more females are being diagnosed with autism in the US and UK, it is still less recognised in girls and women. Masking – consciously or unconsciously disguising or hiding neurodivergent traits – can lead to serious mental distress. It is particularly common among females, who are more likely to be misdiagnosed (particularly with psychiatric conditions) or diagnosed later in life than males.

Diagnostic categories suggest clear-cut boundaries, but in reality the cognitive profiles of individuals vary widely. At a certain point, the relevant characteristics become significant enough to exceed the diagnostic threshold to a lesser or greater extent. If there is no 'normal' state of human brain or mind and diversity is the norm, this raises the question as to whether anyone is 'neurotypical'. To put it crudely, when does a little geeky or nerdy become autistic? Given the huge variation in profiles, it is increasingly common to talk of 'many autisms' instead of just one.

Capitalism and discrimination

Capitalism aims to turn human beings into mere machines for generating surplus value (although the problem for capitalists is that we are not!). The demand for a more literate and specialised workforce means increased testing and ranking of workers in terms of mental and neurological ability. Our bodies and minds are assessed for fitness to work by a variety of professions,

based on the concept of a measurable normality. Those who don't fit are blamed for their differences or impairments, and marginalised or discarded.

The employment rate for autistic people (29 per cent) is one of the lowest of all disability groups and the pay gap the largest; on average a third less than for non-disabled people. Autistic people who are in work often mask their traits; only a third disclose disability to employers and workmates. Many neurodivergent children drop out of education, and may even be placed in UK psychiatric units, because schools cannot meet their support needs and no other form of support is available.

All this leads to many of the co-occurring difficulties described above - caused by the mental strain and distress of coping with discrimination. The social model of disability offers a useful starting point for understanding the politics of neurodiversity. My own critical reading of the social model states that, while an individual's mental, physical or sensory impairments may present significant disadvantages, the fundamental disablement is our society's neglect, stigmatising and exclusion of people who have impairments.

Neurodivergent conditions are more complex, however, than an impairment such as a mobility or hearing difficulty. On the one hand, it may be difficult to determine which difficulties are due to autism or AD(H)D and which are due to mental distress such as anxiety. On the other, some individuals see their neurodivergence as giving them particular advantages in terms of how they think or see the world (Greta Thunberg, eg, calls autism her 'superpower'). Those with sufficient money

or resources can afford to overcome or compensate for their impairments by obtaining support unavailable to many working class people.

What should the SWP do and say?

Revolutionary socialists must be the tribunes of the oppressed, the first to call out discrimination and to build unity against divisions that weaken our ability to fight capitalism and all its ills.

We have work to do in developing our approach to neurodivergence and its relation to disability as a form of discrimination. In the meantime, there are principles on which we can agree and changes which we can make. A starting point is that all neurodivergent people, whether formally assessed or self-diagnosed, should have their identity respected and accepted.

The Equality Act of 2010 requires that reasonable adjustments are made to public events to ensure they are as accessible as possible to disabled people. This may seem an obvious point, but the SWP is a small organisation with limited resources.

The central committee consults disabled members when organising large events such as the Marxism Festival. Last year's Marxism included a quiet room for the first time and feedback shows that this needs to be retained in future. Some comrades may struggle to deal with large crowds and noisy environments, so we should make smaller rooms available so that there is an option to join the biggest meetings live online.

Local branches are likely to find it more difficult to make

such extensive provision, or to identify or afford suitable premises for meetings. In the aftermath of the COVID-19 lockdown, the SWP has rightly prioritised rebuilding in-person events as essential for effective discussion and organisation. In most cases, however, it should be possible to offer the option of attending party meetings (and eg, Bookmarks author events) online too.

Revolutionary minds

Our goal is nothing less than a total transformation of society. This will involve utilising the full range of skills and talents which capitalism has neglected, marginalised and distorted. Any future revolution worthy of the name will harness contrary minds; people who do not conform in all sorts of ways that others may take for granted and who need the solidarity and support of their comrades to reach their full potential.

We are of course not in the midst of a revolution. Our principal aim is to build the fight against capitalism, and it is simply a fact that some of our activities (from campaign stalls in all weathers to early morning picket lines or noisy mass protests) are less accessible for some comrades. Making our party more inclusive is not always easy or straightforward, but our aim must be to help and encourage every member to find a role in that fight.

Mental health oppression: Where next for the SWP?

John (Colchester)

At the last Party Council in September 2024, I was pleasantly surprised that not one delegate used language that reinforces Mental Health Oppression (MHO).

As someone who experiences mental distress I found the absence of such language both inclusive and it made the Party Council much more enjoyable.

I started writing into the party press (Socialist Worker, Socialist Review and the Pre conference Bulletins) 8 years ago culminating in the What We Stand For Column being updated to incorporate our opposition to disability discrimination including mental distress four years ago. In that time the SWP have produced a book (The Politics of the Mind by Iain Ferguson) on mental distress and another on Disability more widely (Disability A Very Capitalist Condition by Roddy Slorach).

With Socialist Worker and International Socialism Journal fine tuned to exclude language that reinforces MHO alongside

greater awareness across the party, I am sorry to say I still hear comrades who should know better (ie long standing ones) continue to use such language and just as worrying other comrades not challenging the use of such language.

This has repercussions because if members use and others fail to challenge such language within the SWP you can bet your bottom dollar that they also act the same at work, in trade unions and within the various united fronts that we work in.

The SWP is now unique in that it not only recognises that there is such a thing as Mental Health Oppression but also opposes language that reinforces MHO.

However, having taken this principled stand the danger is we rest on our laurels and say to ourselves “job done”. The job is, sadly, not done.

MHO and language that reinforces MHO is all too prevalent throughout society - in everyday discourse, on the TV, in the papers, at work, university and school.

There is one area in which language (in particular) is used to reinforce MHO that could also at the same time be the foundation stone of a fightback against MHO and language that reinforces MHO. And that is the trade unions.

The TUC and trade unions in general oppose cuts to mental health services and yet trade union leaders as well as local branch officials and rank and file trade unionists will still use language such as “mad”, “crazy” and so on when opposing job cuts etc. To me opposing cuts to mental health services and using language that reinforces MHO is a case of one step forward one step backwards.

I wonder how many comrades have submitted motions to their local AGM, regional and national conferences to get their trade union to stop using such discriminatory and offensive language?

If trade unions can be won over to no longer using language that reinforces MHO and taking it on in workplaces and society this would make a huge difference when it comes to how we all understand mental health.

Comrades, community and mental health

Walter (Newham)

This exploration looks at how such a community of socialist people can thrive, foster relationships with other groups, and provide significant mental health benefits, particularly in contrast to the harmful effects of capitalism.

I am curious about this argument but fear underestimating the complexity of human relationships, backgrounds, and dynamics. I am also quite interested in improving (at least) the human bonding between people tired and disillusioned by living in a society that atomises individuals and seems mostly to promote individualism and career/economic success.

There are several reasons why our mental health can be quite severely impacted.

At least mine is impacted by a low quality of relationships; this fact may have several explanations, including myself. Other reasons might be being far from my parents and their different political views, what is left of my friends, working in a foreign country for necessity, not having a family (with pros and cons), and so on so forth. Well, I won't be here talking about

my problems but rather seeing what deserves to be analysed to improve our mental quality of life in this reality and being part of a group of revolutionaries.

We agree that an “innate” sense of finiteness, solitude and nonsense may always accompany our life. However, what are the consequences of the lifestyle we adopt and the system in which we live on our minds?

I still consider this question totally worth exploring and taking action on.

Understanding mental health: a multifaceted concept

Mental health is traditionally defined as a state of well-being where individuals can cope with life’s stresses, realise their potential, work and contribute to their community. This concept encompasses emotional, psychological, and social well-being, but it extends beyond individual traits to include the influence of societal structures and systems on psychological health.

The influence of Erich Fromm and Frantz Fanon

Erich Fromm, a psychoanalyst and social psychologist, explored the link between mental health and societal structures. He argued that capitalism, focusing on competition and consumerism, alienates individuals from their true selves and each other. Fromm introduced the concept of “social character,” proposing

that the mental health of individuals is shaped by the economic and social systems they inhabit. He believed a system promoting cooperation, creativity, and meaningful work would improve mental health outcomes.

Frantz Fanon, a psychiatrist and philosopher, examined the psychological effects of colonialism and systemic oppression. In “The Wretched of the Earth”, Fanon discussed how the violence and dehumanisation of colonialism contribute to mental disorders among the colonised. He proposed the idea of “sociogenic psychiatry,” emphasising that mental health cannot be fully understood without considering broader socio-political contexts. Fanon’s work suggests that mental health on a societal level requires addressing and dismantling oppressive structures.

Biological and neurobiological perspectives

Scientific approaches to mental health have traditionally focused on biological and neurobiological factors. Sigmund Freud, the father of psychoanalysis, highlighted the impact of unconscious processes and early life experiences on mental health. His work laid the foundation for understanding how individual psyches interact with social influences.

In the modern era, neuroscientists like Eric Kandel have linked mental health to brain function, showing how learning and memory processes affect synaptic connections. This biological basis underscores how experiences, including trauma, can impact mental health. The advent of psychopharmacology has

further advanced treatment by focusing on neurotransmitters' roles in mood regulation. However, these biological approaches have been critiqued for sometimes neglecting the social and environmental factors that contribute to mental illness.

Integrating mental health with societal structures

Social psychiatry, on the opposite side, challenges the traditional biomedical model by emphasising the role of societal structures in mental health. Szasz, in “The Myth of Mental Illness”, argued that many mental disorders are social constructs rather than purely biological phenomena. He criticised psychiatry for being used as a tool of social control, pathologising behaviours that deviate from societal norms without addressing the underlying causes of distress.

The biopsychosocial model

Today, the biopsychosocial model, proposed by George Engel, offers a comprehensive framework that integrates biological, psychological, and social factors in understanding mental health. This model acknowledges that while genetics and brain chemistry are important, psychological and social factors—such as stress, relationships, and socio-economic status—are equally crucial and, in many cases, even more important! It reflects a holistic understanding of mental health, recognising that no single factor can fully explain or address mental health

issues.

Mental health in the context of capitalism

In capitalist “democracies”, mental health is often treated within the framework of the existing socio-economic system, which some scholars argue reinforces the status quo. Critical theorists like Herbert Marcuse have suggested that capitalism’s inherent inequalities contribute to widespread psychological distress.

In this context, the mental health field can be seen as a tool for individual empowerment and social control. While focusing on individual treatment may support the capitalist system by diverting attention from systemic issues like poverty and inequality, a more radical approach would advocate for systemic changes that address these root causes. Marcuse argued that true mental well-being requires a society with more equitably distributed economic power.

A balanced mental health understanding integrates biological and social sciences insights. While scholars like Stutz, Fromm, Fanon and Marcuse highlight the importance of social structures, biological perspectives from Freud to modern neuroscience offer essential insights into the individual aspects of mental health. The biopsychosocial model suggests that true mental well-being is achievable in a society that promotes personal autonomy and collective well-being.

The foundation of a socialist community

A socialist community is based on the principles of solidarity and mutual support. In such a community, members, or comrades, are dedicated to the collective well-being of everyone, working together to oppose exploitation and ensure that resources are shared fairly. This commitment goes beyond just economic issues; it influences every aspect of social life. In a socialist community, each person's well-being is closely connected to the well-being of others, creating a deep sense of belonging and purpose. These feelings are vital for good mental health.

In his work “The German Ideology” (1845), Karl Marx described a true community as one where people are actively involved in each other's lives, not just through work, but in all aspects of living. Marx emphasised that social, economic, and personal lives are intertwined in a real community, fostering a shared responsibility and care for one another.

In simple terms, a socialist community is defined by its commitment to fairness and the collective good, where everyone's health and happiness are interconnected. This environment supports individual and collective well-being, making it a strong foundation for a healthy society.

Practical implementation and expansion

To translate these principles into practice, even within a small community like the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) and beyond, a strategic and evidence-based approach is necessary. Given the inherent complexities of human behaviour and the diversity of backgrounds, motivations, and levels of political consciousness, implementing these principles must be nuanced and adaptable.

So, we need to be reasonably aware of the ideal system and to imagine and reimagine how we could agree on these ideals and transform them into reality. Constructively refusing a reality that, as socialists, we retain unfair and unacceptable, we accept the burden and the challenge of transforming it. To actively explore and modify reality, we need to start an action; the screw-shaped spiral of dialectic materials brings us to another level, which, with the proper struggle, will represent a solid base for the next step.

1. Solidarity: building a strong collective

Interpersonal Connections: Solidarity begins with fostering strong, trusting relationships among comrades and people. This requires creating regular opportunities for collective engagement, such as community organising, study groups, and social events. These activities build mutual understanding and camaraderie, which is essential for a united community.

i) **Mutual Aid Structures:** Establishing mutual aid networks is a concrete way to realise solidarity. These networks involve resource sharing, skills exchange, and emotional support, which meet immediate needs and cultivate a culture of interdependence and collective responsibility.

ii) **Democratic Decision-Making:** Implementing participatory decision-making ensures that all members contribute to and feel ownership of community decisions. Such processes should be transparent, accountable, and reflective of the community's diverse voices.

2. Equality: promoting equity and inclusion

Equality in a socialist context is not limited to equitable access to resources but also encompasses equal respect, recognition, and the valuation of each person's contributions. This egalitarian approach is designed to prevent crystallised hierarchies and power imbalances that often lead to exploitation and alienation prevalent in capitalist systems. By ensuring that every member's voice is heard and valued, a socialist community fosters a more inclusive and supportive environment.

i) **Resource redistribution:** Practically, equality requires actions that ensure equitable access to resources and opportunities. This involves creating systems within the community to guarantee that basic needs, education, and healthcare are accessible to all members, particularly those from marginalised backgrounds. At the actual time, this is still a utopia. Which

resources must be distributed in the community if we live in a capitalist society? Housing and social security are expensive and will be even more costly. Can we create fundraising campaigns for this purpose? Can we establish connections with other societies to foster mutual support, especially for “those in need”?

ii) Education and consciousness-raising: Ongoing education is crucial for dismantling ingrained hierarchies and power imbalances. Through workshops, reading groups, and discussions, comrades can critically examine and challenge existing power structures within the community and broader society. This helps unlearn capitalist norms of competition and individualism.

iii) Inclusive participation: Beyond formal structures, fostering a culture where every member is empowered to contribute is essential. Mentorship programs can support less experienced comrades while rotating leadership roles prevent the consolidation of power. Actively including underrepresented voices ensures the community’s commitment to equality is reflected in practice.

3. Addressing human imperfections

In any collective, particularly within a diverse group committed to socialist principles, conflicts are inevitable. Therefore, effective conflict resolution mechanisms are crucial to maintaining cohesion and advancing shared goals. These mechanisms

should be rooted in scientifically validated approaches such as restorative justice, which emphasises repairing harm and restoring relationships rather than punitive measures. Conflict resolution training, focusing on active listening, empathy, and negotiation skills, can equip comrades to navigate disputes constructively. This training helps prevent conflicts from escalating and fosters a culture of open communication and mutual respect, which is essential for long-term community sustainability.

Balancing ideological purity with practical realism is another critical consideration. While the ultimate goal is the complete redistribution of resources, the dissolution of the state, and the abolition of private property, it is important to recognise and accommodate human limitations in pursuing these objectives. Setting incremental, achievable goals allows for measurable progress, reinforcing commitment and building momentum within the community. This approach acknowledges that systemic change is a gradual process requiring patience and strategic adaptability.

Moreover, the psychological and emotional demands of socialist activism must not be underestimated. The struggle for systemic change often involves significant personal sacrifice, which can lead to burnout if not adequately managed. To address this, it is essential to create support structures within the community, such as mental health resources and peer support networks. These structures can help maintain the well-being and resilience of activists, ensuring they remain committed to the cause over the long term.

Finally, the pursuit of socialist ideals must be carefully balanced with the practical realities of the community's current context. Unrealistic expectations can lead to disillusionment and internal discord, undermining collective efforts. By aligning goals with the community's capacity and ensuring that members are supported materially and emotionally, a socialist community can navigate the inherent challenges of human imperfection while remaining steadfast in its pursuit without falling into reformism, and old-style failed social democracy.

i) Creating a culture of accountability through self-criticism: Creating a culture of accountability in a socialist community requires mechanisms that acknowledge human imperfections while fostering continuous improvement. One of the most effective methods for this is the practice of regular self-criticism. This process involves members of the community reflecting on their actions and decisions in a structured, honest, and constructive manner. The goal is to identify mistakes, learn from them, and prevent their recurrence, thereby maintaining high standards of conduct and alignment with socialist principles.

Self-criticism is pivotal because it ensures the community or organisation does not stray from its core values. Unlike punitive measures that can create fear and division, self-criticism promotes a culture of openness and collective responsibility. It emphasises improvement over punishment, encouraging members to acknowledge their errors without fear of retribution. This approach helps build trust and

cohesion within the group, as everyone is equally accountable and engaged in the collective growth process.

ii) Implementation of self-criticism: It should be institutionalised as a regular practice within the community to implement self-criticism effectively. This can be done through scheduled self-criticism sessions, where individuals are encouraged to reflect on their behaviour and contributions. These sessions should be structured to ensure constructive criticism and focus on improvement rather than blame.

Peer reviews can also play a crucial role in the self-criticism process. By providing external perspectives, peers can highlight blind spots and offer feedback that individuals might not have recognised. This ensures that self-criticism is not merely an internal exercise but one enriched by diverse viewpoints.

The concept of self-criticism is deeply rooted in Mao Zedong's revolutionary teachings. Mao viewed self-criticism as essential for the survival and effectiveness of the Communist Party. In his work "On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People" (1957), Mao argued that self-criticism was crucial for addressing "non-antagonistic contradictions" within the people and the party. He believed that by openly admitting and analysing mistakes, the party could prevent the ossification of thought and avoid the pitfalls of bureaucratisation.

Now, the important question is, historically, how Did Mao Conduct Self-Criticism?

From what I understand, Mao's self-criticism was often strategic. While he admitted to some mistakes, he typically used self-criticism to reinforce his own authority by framing his errors as tactical rather than fundamental. This allowed him to maintain his leadership position while directing blame towards others or emphasising the collective responsibility of the party. Self-criticism sessions in the Communist Party, often brutal and humiliating, were intended to enforce discipline and loyalty, and Mao was both a participant and a manipulator of these processes.

4. Expanding socialist principles to a larger community

i) Cultural sensitivity and adaptation: Expanding socialist principles beyond the initial community requires careful consideration of cultural differences and varying levels of political consciousness. This necessitates a flexible approach that respects local customs, values, and histories, ensuring that socialist ideals are communicated and implemented in a way that resonates with broader society.

ii) Strategic alliances: To broaden the reach of socialist principles, forming alliances with other movements and organisations is crucial. Collaboration on common issues, such as workers' rights, environmental justice, anti-racism, Palestine freedom, anti-colonialism and anti-imperialism, can help integrate socialist principles into wider social struggles, gradually expanding their influence.

iii) Incremental integration: Rather than imposing socialist principles wholesale, a more effective strategy involves integrating them incrementally into existing institutions. But we know that most of the change cannot happen within the rotten parliamentary institution. Still, the critical mass needs to be reached to trigger and ignite the revolution and finally overthrow the ruling class, including its state and the warmonger military industry.

iv) Building relationships within and between groups: In a healthy socialist community, relationships among comrades are built on trust, shared values, and a commitment to collective well-being. These relationships are nurtured through regular interaction, transparent communication, and a culture of mutual respect.

However, more challenges arise when building relationships with other groups, especially those with differing ideologies or practices. The key to overcoming this challenge lies in the principle of inter-group solidarity, where different communities recognise their shared goals and struggles. This does not mean erasing differences but finding common ground and working together toward shared objectives without incurring self-destructive contradictions.

For instance, a socialist community might collaborate with environmental groups, labour unions, or anti-racist organisations. While these groups may not share the same ideology, they often have overlapping goals, such as fighting

against exploitation, anti-racism and anti-fascism, protecting natural resources, or advocating for social justice.

5. Reinforcing and enforcing socialist principles

Positive reinforcement can sustain the momentum of socialist efforts. Recognising and celebrating individual and collective achievements reinforces the value of collective action and encourages continued participation.

Mentors can offer guidance and support, helping newer or younger members navigate the challenges of embodying these ideals.

Enforcing socialist principles should be a collective responsibility. This involves establishing explicit norms and expectations, regularly revisiting them, and ensuring that the community collectively upholds its values. When deviations occur, the focus should be on understanding, education, and reintegration, with more stringent measures reserved for behaviours that consistently undermine the community.

Building and expanding a socialist community requires a systematic, evidence-based approach mindful of human complexities and diverse cultural contexts. By fostering solidarity, promoting equality, and implementing supportive structures, a socialist community can thrive and serve as a model for broader societal transformation.

6. Analysing the impact of capitalism on mental health

Capitalism, with its emphasis on profit, competition, and individualism, has numerous negative impacts on mental

health. One of the most significant effects is creating a highly competitive environment where individuals are pitted against one another constantly for survival. This competition often leads to chronic stress, anxiety, and a sense of alienation, as people are valued not for who they are but for what they can produce or consume.

The commodification of human relationships is another damaging aspect of capitalism. In a capitalist society, relationships are often reduced to transactions, whether in the labour market, where one's worth is determined by productivity, or in social interactions, where networking for personal gain takes precedence over genuine connections. This transactional view of relationships can lead to feelings of isolation, as people may struggle to form deep, meaningful connections with others.

Furthermore, the exploitation inherent in capitalism, where the labour of many enriches a few, creates vast inequalities that have serious mental health implications. Those at the bottom of the economic hierarchy often experience feelings of powerlessness, low self-worth, and despair as they struggle to meet their basic needs in a system that values profit over people.

The long-term effects of capitalism on mental health can be seen across generations. For example, children growing up in poverty are more likely to experience trauma, chronic stress, and limited access to mental health resources, which can have lasting effects on their development and well-being.

A healthy socialist community can have profound positive effects on mental health. First, it provides a strong sense of belonging, a fundamental human need. In a society where people

often feel isolated and disconnected, being part of a close-knit community where one is valued and supported can significantly reduce feelings of loneliness and depression.

Second, emphasising mutual aid and collective responsibility means that individuals cannot face their struggles alone. Whether it's dealing with economic hardships, personal crises, or mental health challenges, comrades in a socialist community know that they can rely on their community for support. This sense of security and support is crucial for mental well-being.

Moreover, the commitment to equality and anti-exploitation within the community helps prevent many of the stressors that contribute to mental health issues in capitalist societies. For example, the pressure to compete for resources, the fear of unemployment, and the stress of financial insecurity are all alleviated in a larger and more complex community where resources are shared and everyone's basic needs are met.

7. Analysing communal living: economic and social perspectives, what do we know?

Aziz Aslan's analysis of communal living, particularly in the anti-capitalist economy of the Zapatista region in Mexico and the Rojava in northern Syria, provides valuable insights into the challenges and potentials of establishing a socialist community. Such communities are founded on shared resources, collective responsibility, and egalitarian governance, offering a radical alternative to capitalist structures. This is no joke, here we are talking about more than 2.000.000 people.

However, the practical challenges of implementing these

ideals are significant and have profound implications for community members' well-being and mental health.

i) Economic challenges and structural tensions

Central to Aslan's critique is that communal ownership and equitable resource distribution are meant to eliminate the inequalities perpetuated by capitalist systems.

While these principles foster solidarity and mutual aid, managing resources equitably can be difficult. Internal conflicts may arise without clear, transparent systems, undermining community cohesion. Karl Polanyi's "substantive economy" concept supports Aslan's view, emphasising that economic systems should be embedded in social relations rather than driven by market forces. However, ensuring fair distribution remains challenging, especially in larger communities where complexities increase inequality risk.

Economic sustainability is another critical issue. Many communities rely on shared labour and pooled income to meet their needs, but this model can be precarious when faced with external economic pressures or internal mismanagement. Rosa Luxemburg's critique of capitalism's tendency to exploit resources resonates here; without robust economic planning, these communities risk replicating the same exploitative dynamics they aim to avoid!

ii) Social dynamics and mental health implications: The social dynamics within a community are deeply connected to its economic structure. A well-functioning communal economy can

enhance social cohesion and individual happiness. Aslan notes the psychological and social benefits of communal living, where collective well-being is prioritised. However, dysfunction within communal systems can have severe consequences. If resource distribution is perceived as unfair or if a few dominate decision-making, members may feel alienated and disenfranchised, leading to stress and mental health issues.

The communal lifestyle, emphasising interdependence, can also pose psychological challenges. Aslan highlights the need to balance community involvement and personal autonomy, warning that too much collective responsibility can lead to social fatigue and burnout. Feminist scholars like Silvia Federici echo this, arguing that communities must navigate boundaries between collective work and individual self-care to avoid replicating exploitative conditions.

Communities are not isolated but embedded within broader societal and economic contexts. The interaction between a community and the surrounding capitalist society presents additional challenges impacting sustainability and members' mental health. Engaging with the broader society is often necessary for practical reasons but can create tensions between socialist ideals and capitalist realities.

Conclusion?

There are several conclusions here, and the argument still needs to be methodically, scientifically and humanistically analysed.

A serious contradiction that I am exploring is that I should

constructively doubt who/what (especially myself) tells me how to live but, at the same time, does not provide any examples.

I have many doubts that an atomised socialist community will be able to gradually promote its principles for the final change and the overthrow of the capitalist neoliberal society.

Indeed, material conditions, cultural backgrounds and clashes between imperialist forces differently shape the minds of people so that a community of people from a village or a city in the Middle East will be different from one from Europe, Asia or South America.

External pressure from predatorial capitalist societies and reactionary states may not provide enough time for communities to achieve a gradual and peaceful change. Let's be realistic: not every society and/or community can afford a gradual transition, and the armed struggle may be necessary for self-preservation or because it is brought to the limit by oppressive state forces.

Also, some people may not like a deep bonding in the life community. As per socialist tradition, most human nature is inclined to peaceful, solidarity, and communal living. However, some people may just reject some of the abovementioned principles and decide to live in an environment of low or high-intensity competition.

Managing the expectations of human relationships is pivotal, and this is something with which I will struggle all my life. Putting too many expectations in something can be enlightening but may bring our mental health to the knees. Knowing how to set limits, perform operations and actions and manage behaviour is better carried out by machines and computers. The

human mind is under the biological influence of a wide internal organic world (of which we still do not know everything) and is shaped by external forces and events.

Still, analysing and living the community life can be rewarding, especially when other bondings are superficial, weak and damaged by an imperialist capitalist system. The company of people can improve our mental health, give us purpose, bolden our struggle, improve our mood and mental health and finally drive through the purpose: revolution.

'For Wales, see England'

Richard (Cardiff)

The 1870 edition of the Encyclopedia Britannica had the above as the entry about Wales. Being a member of the SWP and reading Socialist Worker over the last three decades has been a regular reminder of this title.

For example looking at the coverage of the independence movements in both Wales and Scotland. Even though the latest surveys of support for independence in Wales are now showing support being at record highs and comparable to the support in Scotland before the 2014 referendum campaign there is zero coverage of the Welsh campaigns in SW.

Even the attitude to Welsh and Scottish independence are bizarrely different. Revolutionary socialists support the break up of the United Kingdom and the blow that would represent to the British imperial project. But the SWP's attitude seems to be that this would be great thing if it comes about from a successful Scottish movement while not so good if it were a Welsh independence movement that achieved this.

In Scotland SWP members are playing a key role in injecting socialist politics into the independence movement whereas in Wales the SWP has only occasionally bothered to intervene in

Yes Cymru marches while there has been no new edition of the key party pamphlet 'Socialism in Wales' for over twenty years.

The last two periods of unpopular Labour government in the late 60s and the late 90s/2010s saw a huge surge in support for nationalist movements in both Scotland and Wales.

This next two years is going to see a bigger surge in support for both Welsh and Scottish independence, assuming that the dangerous world conflicts in Ukraine or the middle East don't escalate to a nuclear level. How about this time the SWP is ready and has educated its members before this happens rather than afterwards, as happened post the 1999 Welsh/Scottish elections.

Ukraine – client journalism

Richard (Cardiff)

It has been very depressing reading article after article in SW this year that basically repeats the client journalism of the British and European newspapers, which in itself is misinformation and propaganda via MI5 and the Ukrainian ministry of information. Such as the debunked lie about Russia targeting a children's hospital and many more.

Last year I pointed out the existence of alternative, independent sources of information.

If you want to inform yourself why the invasion of Ukraine was in no way unprovoked and was part of a plan to ultimately balkanise Russia for the benefit of US and European commercial interest then read the Rand corporation's "Extending Russia Competing from Advantageous Ground" ⁶

And the commentary on it by numerous videos of Brian Berletic 'The New Atlas' on youtube.

⁶ https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR3063.html

My perspective for party conference

Ralph (Kent)

“That the emancipation of the working class must be conquered by the working classes themselves; that the struggle for the emancipation of the working classes means not a struggle for class privileges and monopolies, but for equal rights and duties, and the abolition of class rule”

– General Rules of the International Workingmen’s Association⁷

This is the basis upon which the Party is based. It is what we all believe. But is it what our present perspective and our present procedures project to ourselves who are members and to all those whom we wish to become members.

I do not get the feeling that we have a full understanding of what a class based policy entails. I have been involved in politics for nigh on 80 years, having grown up, in a strong working class environment to which I owe my whole view of life.

⁷ <https://www.marxists.org/history/international/iwma/documents/1864/rules.htm>

I do not believe that any political party at the present time represents the whole working class. All political parties in Britain are dominated by the 'new middle class'. I dislike the term 'middle class' as it is now used. The 'middle class' was the rising capitalist class. The 'new middle class' is that section of the working class that has gained some benefits over and above those who are in much greater need.

Turn out in the last general election was below 60% which supports my view that, in terms of income and wealth, the lowest 40% of the population take very little or no part in the democratic process in any form, and are totally ignored by the political structures in this country (Not to mention the very much higher number of working people throughout the world who are similarly ignored)

A very detailed report by the Starmerite Labour Together states "The combined vote of the two main parties are in decline due to the decline in traditional class allegiances. This makes a wider range of cultural values and attitudes relatively more influential for voters as well as making (perceived) performance more decisive in voting choices".⁸

This emphasis on cultural values and attitudes is reflected in the position that the SWP projects through Breakfast In Red and branch meeting titles. What we have lost over the years is the ability to question, debate, argue and discuss over the whole range of political issues on all of which the ultimate aim is the emancipation of the working class.

⁸ How Labour Won - Labour Together's Review of the 2024 Election <https://www.labourtogether.uk/how-labour-won-2024-report>

I do not dispute, but strongly support, the need to tackle racism, to support the Palestinians and to oppose fascism on the streets and elsewhere. I believe we are right to deal with women's rights, transgender issues and disability matters. But that is only part of what we should be doing. I look, every day, at Breakfast in Red in the hope that some of the wider issues of working class politics are raised. I have stopped going to Branch meetings because there is no debate. They have become a means of promoting particular issues which tend to be narrow and do not allow for detailed discussion. I could only attend Marxism on Zoom and was sadly disappointed on what was on offer.

The world is in a dangerous situation. There is much to be considered and opposed, with nuclear war a serious possibility.

Here in Britain, amongst the other crises, there is a political crisis. It is interesting to read the Labour Together Report. Whilst they do suggest that the question of immigration and asylum is an important one for many people, they also show that people are more concerned about the cost of living and the NHS. Even with immigration the concern is with numbers not with immigrants. We make a mistake if we conclude that all those who express concerns about the numbers of immigrants are racists. Their concerns are more to do with housing, health care and other issues which are not to do with migrants but are entirely due to the capitalist system.

The problems that many of the people, who seek to come to Britain, face is the state of affairs in their own country. It is a factor of war, climate, and other issues including sanctions

imposed by western powers.

I do not accept the argument that we are too small to affect change and that we have to put so much of our resources into recruiting students. We have to stand up and present a class argument and appeal to the whole working class, arguing for equal rights and duties, an end to all classes and for a society in which all are equal economically and able to live the lives they wish to live.

Proposed Central Committee

Central Committee

The outgoing Central Committee (CC) proposes the following comrades, and their proposed roles, for election to the CC at conference January 2025.

Alex Callinicos,
international work

Camilla Royle,
Bookmarks

Charlie Kimber,
national office

Hector Puente Sierra,
treasurer & Scotland

Jess Walsh,
trade union work

Joseph Choonara,
International Socialism journal

Julie Sherry,
anti-racism and anti-fascism

Lewis Nielsen,
national secretary

Mark Thomas,
publishing

Nadia Sayed,
student office

Sophia Beach,
student office

Tomáš Tengely-Evans,
Socialist Worker

Weyman Bennett,
anti-racism and anti-fascism

Motion 1: National Committee

Central Committee & National Committee

The below motion has been proposed by the Central Committee and National Committee.

Conference notes:

- 1) The decomposition of mainstream politics is opening a new period in politics, with new challenges, creating dangers from the far right and opportunities for the far left.
- 2) The 2024 SWP conference argued for the party to “make a turn”, giving a lead to struggles and seeking to win hegemony to the left of Labour.

Conference believes:

- 1) Initiatives such as the 2023 Workers’ Summit, our intervention in the Palestine struggle since 7 October 2023, and our response to the racist riots and far-right mobilisations since July 2024 show that such a “turn” is possible.
- 2) To build on our progress, we must combine political clarity, tactical audacity and efforts to recruit to the party and develop

members. Achieving this rests on a combination of clear direction from bodies elected to lead the party, together with serious democratic debate and discussion, drawing on our developing body of theory and practice.

3) The Central Committee (CC) has undergone a process of renewal, with newer and younger comrades now playing a central role alongside more experienced comrades.

4) The National Committee (NC) also has a significant place in the SWP. Its role is to assist the CC in providing national leadership, review the party's work between conferences and, if necessary, to make decisions that are binding on the CC. While the NC has had many valuable discussions, more could be done to ensure that it plays a leading role in the SWP.

5) A slightly smaller NC, able to meet more regularly, and have the kind of detailed, sustained and ongoing discussion required to provide direction, amid an often complex and demanding political situation, would allow it to fulfil its functions more effectively.

Conference resolves:

1) To replace the following in the SWP constitution: "The National Committee consists of 50 members elected at Annual Conference." With: "The National Committee consists of 35 members elected at Annual Conference."

2) To replace the following in the SWP constitution: "The NC normally meets every two months between Annual Conferences."

With: “The CC, in consultation with the NC chairs, should consider calling NC meetings to discuss major political issues that emerge. The NC should normally meet at least every two months between Annual Conferences.”

3) That the NC should be kept informed of major political developments and given sufficient notice to conduct serious discussions, to vote on matters of substance where required, and to consider motions submitted by party branches as described in the constitution.

Motion 2: Amendment to expected behaviour

Central Committee

The below motion has been proposed by the Central Committee as an amendment to the SWP Expected Behaviour Document which is found on our website and sent to all new members.

1) Insert after “Where there is uncertainty over how to address someone, just ask and respect their choice:

“Comrades should always respect the pronouns that people want to use (for example, he/him, she/her, they/them). If someone doesn’t get it right, it’s not just up to trans and non-binary comrades to correct the person.”

2) Insert and replace second paragraph in LGBT+ oppression and transphobia section:

“We oppose all forms of LGBT+ phobia and recognise that LGBT+ people can face different forms of discrimination (for example, bisexual people can face the suggestion that a person is “confused” about their sexuality).”

SWP constitution

1) Introduction

The Socialist Workers Party is an organisation of revolutionary socialists dedicated to the overthrow of capitalism internationally and the construction of a world socialist system.

We belong to and develop the revolutionary communist tradition of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Luxemburg and Trotsky. Central to this tradition is the conception of socialism from below. As Marx put it, “the working class must emancipate itself, and in so doing emancipate the whole of society”. Socialism cannot be achieved by acts of parliament or any kind of dictatorship or minority action but only through the struggles of working people throughout the world.

Since capitalism is a global system, socialism can only succeed through a process of world revolution.

We are internationalists who support struggles around the world against capitalism, imperialism and oppression.

Accordingly we strive to build international forms of organisation and solidarity. The SWP participates in the International Socialist Tendency, which seeks to bring together revolutionary socialists worldwide.

The SWP is an organisation of committed fighters for socialism who believe that the working class is the only force capable of building socialism in the world.

We strive to construct a revolutionary party whose

overwhelming majority are workers. We actively support all struggles against exploitation and oppression. Within those struggles we always seek to involve the widest numbers in joint activity, and to advance socialist ideas.

Democracy is at the heart of socialism and is central to the workings of the SWP. The SWP is a democratic centralist organisation that decides its policies through full discussion and debate among its members and then implements these policies in a united and disciplined way.

The conditions of the class struggle change all the time, and effective socialist intervention requires members' involvement in constant democratic review of party activity and organisation.

In order to be effective in both carrying out the party's democratic decisions and testing them in practice, we need to act in a unified way. Once decisions have been taken, all members are expected to carry out party policies.

Decisions by the Conference of the SWP are binding on all party members and bodies. Subject to the sovereignty of Conference, decisions taken by the Central Committee (CC), National Committee (NC) and Party Council are binding on caucuses, districts and branches, and individual party members.

2) Membership

A member is someone who agrees with the politics of the SWP (as outlined in "Where We Stand", which is printed in each issue of *Socialist Worker*), accepts its constitution, and works within and under the direction of the appropriate party bodies.

All members are expected to pay suitable subscriptions, depending upon their means, to take and sell *Socialist Worker*, and where possible to be members of an appropriate trade union and stand for the position of shop steward or its equivalent.

Any member over three months in arrears may be excluded from membership.

3) Branches and districts

The basic unit of party organisation is the branch. Branches may be organised on geographical or industrial bases.

Branch members meet regularly to determine the branch's work, within the framework of national policy.

Branch members may decide in a meeting to establish some kind of responsible branch structure to direct the branch's work. Such structures can, when so empowered, make binding decisions, subject to review and possible alteration by a full members meeting or higher body. General guidance about these matters may be given from time to time by Conference, the Central Committee or the National Committee.

Where appropriate, branches may be grouped together in a district. As with a branch, district members meeting together may elect a district committee to coordinate party activity across a district.

Establishing a new branch or district, or altering boundaries between them, is subject to the agreement of the Central Committee.

4) Conference

National Conference is the supreme policy making body and is held annually.

Branches and/or districts elect delegates to Conference on a basis proportional to their membership, as determined by the Central Committee. Only members of the organisation may participate in the election of delegates. Only delegates may vote at Conference and participate in electing leading committees.

Three months before each Conference the Central Committee opens a special pre-conference discussion in the organisation. Members are invited to contribute written discussion documents for internal circulation during this period. During the pre-conference period, district aggregates are held where CC members present members with a review of the previous year and an outline of party perspectives. These open meetings give all members the chance to discuss party work, raise questions and points of disagreement and collectively assess the party's development.

The Central Committee nominates a Conference Arrangements Committee of up to seven members, to be ratified or amended by a majority of delegates at the start of conference.

The CAC makes regulations and standing orders for the preparation and conduct of conference, subject to delegates agreement.

The CAC is responsible for the conduct of elections at the conference.

Members of the Central Committee, Conference Arrangements

Committee, National Committee, Party Disputes Committee and full-time workers may attend Conference with speaking rights. The Central Committee may invite observers to attend conference, and these may be invited to speak.

A Special Conference may be called by the Central Committee, the National Committee (see section 6) or at the request of 20 percent of the branches. The decisions of a Special Conference are as binding as those of Annual Conference.

The procedure to call a special conference is as follows: if a branch passes a call for a special conference the branch must immediately inform the national office. The motion must include the issues that have led to the call for a conference. The national secretary must publish the motion calling for a special conference in the next issue of Party Notes.

The national secretary will also declare how many branches are required to meet the 20 percent criterion. To call a special conference, 20 percent of branches must pass the same motion to the one originally passed, and inform the national secretary of this, within 28 days of the publication of the original motion in Party Notes.

5) Central Committee

The CC consists of members elected by the Conference according to the following procedure:

The outgoing Central Committee selects and circulates a provisional slate for the new CC at the beginning of the period for pre-Conference discussion. This is then discussed at the district

aggregates where comrades can propose alternative slates.

At the Conference the outgoing CC proposes a final slate (which may have changed as a result of the pre-Conference discussion). This slate, along with any other that is supported by a minimum of five delegates, is discussed and voted on by Conference.

Between Conferences the CC is entrusted with the political leadership of the organisation and is responsible for the national direction of all political and organisational work, subject to the decision-making powers of Conference.

The CC appoints all full-time organisers. District organisers represent and are responsible to the CC. They work together with the party members in their district to ensure the effective implementation of party policies.

6) National Committee

The National Committee consists of 50 members elected at Annual Conference.

The National Committee assists the Central Committee in providing political leadership for the party and reviews the party's political and organisational work between Conferences. Its decisions are binding on the Central Committee.

In the event of a major disagreement between the Central Committee and the National Committee, the NC has the right to call a Special Conference.

The NC normally meets every two months between Annual Conferences. The national secretary shall normally put the date of the next NC meeting in Party Notes at least three weeks

before the date of the meeting.

Branches should be able to send in motions on matters of national importance if they are passed at a properly-organised branch meeting. The NC should then decide by majority vote if it wishes to hear these motions or not. Any branch which sends in a motion should be informed whether it was heard, and if it was heard then whether it was passed.

Full-time party workers are not eligible for election to the NC. If a comrade elected to the NC subsequently become a full-time party worker, they can continue to attend but cannot vote at the NC.

7) Party discipline and the Disputes Committee

The Disputes Committee's (DC) function is to investigate complaints relating to disciplinary matters and unacceptable behaviour by its members or units. The DC consists of not more than 12 members, elected annually at Conference.

In addition, the CC may nominate up to two members on any panel where CC members are eligible to be on the panel.

Any disciplinary or potentially disciplinary issues (those which could result in a change of status of membership or disciplinary sanction) should be referred to the DC or CC.

The DC has the right to refuse to pursue complaints if it deems any of the following to be the case:

1. The complaint is frivolous;

2. Based on the evidence presented, there is no case to answer;
3. The comrade concerned is trying to use the DC to win battles already lost in the democratic processes of the party.

The DC has powers including to censure a member, suspend a member either from membership of the party or from a position within the party, expel a member, make the member a national member, or take no further action.

In cases of serious breaches, disciplinary measures such as censure, suspension or expulsion may be taken by the CC.

Anyone who is disciplined by the CC and is unhappy about their treatment may appeal to the DC, who will review the decision and can change or reverse it. The DC may also take such disciplinary measures as it deems necessary on its own initiative.

The DC may co-opt members to serve for particular investigations.

The DC is elected directly by SWP conference and ideally should report to conference on all cases heard. However, in some cases the DC may feel it appropriate to report earlier.

In this context the DC may consult the NC for advice or report to an SWP Party Council. Should a DC report be made to a Party Council and be accepted, the report will be considered endorsed as if the report had been made to a full Conference.

Should the DC report or a section of it *not* be endorsed by Conference or Party Council, then an appeal should be referred to the incoming Disputes Committee.

Members of the DC hearing the original complaint should

not sit on the appeal. If necessary the newly elected DC could use its power of co-option to create an acceptable panel to rehear the case.

The decision of any appeal body shall override an earlier decision and this appeal body should report to the conference or Party Council in addition to the DC report. The decision of conference or Party Council on this appeal body decision shall be final.

There is a detailed set of procedures for the Disputes Committee and a guide to Expected Behaviour. These are available to any member from the SWP national secretary(s) or the Disputes Committee and can be viewed at bit.ly/SWPdisputes and bit.ly/SWPbehaviour

8) Party Council

The Party Council is constituted of representatives of branches decided on a numerical basis determined by the CC. It normally meets twice a year. Additional meetings may be called in case of need by the CC. Every branch shall have at least one delegate.

The Party Council reviews the political and organisational work of the SWP (or such aspects of it as it deems necessary) between Conferences, pools the experiences of the members in implementing the line of the organisation and advises the CC. It has power to take decisions on matters of general policy binding on the CC. When appropriate, the CC may call national meetings of party members to discuss any aspect of party work and organisation.

9) Fractions

All members will normally be involved in united front activities in trade unions/student unions and in campaigns. They should be guided by conference policy, the decisions of the NC and the Central Committee.

The CC shall convene fraction meetings of comrades involved in unions, united fronts and student work as appropriate—but at least once a year.

The CC may also call local or regional fraction meetings.

Each fraction will elect a national coordinator. The CC will allocate one of its members to each fraction and campaign activity, and to activity in the student movement.

10) Factions

If a group of party members disagrees with a specific party policy, or a decision taken by a leading committee of the party, they may form a faction during a preconference period by producing a joint statement signed by at least 30 members of the party.

A faction will be given reasonable facilities to argue its point of view and distribute its documents. These must be circulated through the National Office, to ensure that all members have the chance to consider them.

Debate continues until the party at a Special or Annual Conference reaches a decision on the disputed question. Permanent or secret factions are not allowed.

Constitutional changes

This Constitution (along with “Where We Stand”) was agreed by conference 2003, and amended by the special democracy conference of 2009, special conference March 2013, annual conference December 2013, annual conference December 2014, annual conference January 2018 and annual conference January 2019. Either document may be amended by a majority of delegates at any future conference.