Tory MP claims he can't live on £300k

We can't live on poverty pay!

Claire Job, Swansea Socialist Party

Tory MP Mark Simmonds recently announced he was leaving parliament. He claims that his MP's wage and expenses don't give him the life he aspires to for himself and his family.

Well join the club, Mr Simmonds! Your government's policies and actions over the last four years have made every family I know feel the same way - and with far greater cause. Simmonds gets no sympathy from me. I'm a nurse and he does not spare public sector workers a second thought.

Simmonds and his wife (working as his assistant) have a combined yearly wage of £115,000. He can claim an additional £27,875 in accommodation expenses. In 2013 he reportedly claimed £173,000 in expenses. Simmonds, however, thinks this income represented too great a "sacrifice" on his part to work in public office.

What does this man know about 'sacrifice' for his family? This career politician is far removed from the rest of us - he knows nothing of the sacrifice ordinary people make every day.

Worse still, while Mr Simmonds is concerned about 'feathering his nest' he makes sure that others in London lose their nests. The money he takes from taxpayers to house him in London, money that he claims is not enough, is actually £2,000 more than the benefit cap that he vocally supports! This cap is responsible for driving Londoners with no prospect of work out of their homes and communities.

Simmonds aspires to be one of the top 1% with privilege and riches. The rest of us wish for a job, a living wage, a home that is safe, education and health for our families and enough money to relegate the atrocious concept of 'food banks' to history.

NHS

His party in government has denied 70% of nurses a pay rise over the next two years. That's after four years of below-inflation pay rises which resulted in a 10% pay cut in real terms.

The Tories are demolishing the health service but NHS workers are working harder than ever against the odds to deliver services and safe patient care. That's why Unison is balloting health workers over strike action: if approved, health workers will be on strike in October. We have no choice but to take this action to defend pay and conditions being devastated by Simmonds and his friends.

These politicians know nothing of the life we lead as a result of decisions they make. Their policies are making the gap between those who have and those who don't have, wider than ever before.

We need to replace all the 'Mark Simmondses' in parliament with workers' representatives paid workers' wages, who will fight for a socialist society run for people's needs.
Demonstrate:

NSSN rally and lobby of the TUC Congress: 'Keep striking together for a pay rise'

Speakers include Mark Serwotka, PCS general secretary

2pm, Sunday 7 September in Liverpool

Jurys Hotel, opposite Echo Arena Conference Centre in Albert Dock

See www.shopstewards.net for more - email info@shopstewards.net

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Protests, strikes and equality

Women in World War One

Jane James and Jim Horton

World War One resulted in the horrific slaughter of millions of workers who were initially encouraged and then conscripted into the bloody horrors of trench warfare. Women too were cajoled to do their bit for 'the war to end all wars' by replacing the men sent to the front in factories and workplaces across Britain.

But in this anniversary year there is likely to be scant attention given to the militant struggles of working class women during those four years of brutal conflict, where class divisions remained a feature of everyday life.

Historians often refer to how World War One transformed the lives of and attitudes towards women, and claim that women were rewarded for their wartime sacrifices with the extension of the right to vote at the end of hostilities.

The reality though was very different as working class women, abandoned by the national leaders of the trade unions and suffrage movement, fought their own battles for equal pay and women's rights.

It is true that during the war hundreds of thousands of women found themselves engaged in jobs which had previously been the preserve of men. But while the old notions of male and female work were to an extent challenged, albeit temporarily, pay remained unequal.

The post-war extension of the franchise was also not applied equally. All men over the age of 21 were given the vote, while for women it was limited to those who were householders and over the age of 30, excluding many working class women.

Many portrayals of women during the war tend to focus on the volunteers of the Voluntary Aid Detachment (VAD), such as in the recent BBC1 drama series 'The Crimson Field', and the Women's Land Army (WLA), which by 1918 had 20,000 members.
But for the first time women also took up posts on the railways, buses and trams, and in the post office, banking, retail, and the civil service. Women became window cleaners, chimney sweeps, coal deliverers, street sweepers, electricians and firefighters.

The flood of women into the munitions factories also caught the imagination of commentators. Paintings depicting women factory workers by female artists such Anna Airy and Flora Lion attest to the profound cultural changes of the times.

The feelings of social dislocation were captured in the 1918 poem by Nina MacDonald, Sing a Song of Wartime (to the tune of Sing a Song of Sixpence), which ends with the verse:

_Ev'ry body's doing_

_Something for the War,_

_Girls are doing things_

_They've never done before,_

_Go as 'bus conductors,_

_Drive a car or van,_

_All the world is topsy-turvy_

_Since the War began._

The common impression that women were absent from the workplace prior to the war is mistaken: About four million women, a quarter of the female population, were employed outside the home.

The beginning of the war actually initially resulted in a dramatic decline in female employment, traditional industries employing women such as dressmaking virtually collapsed as richer women bought fewer luxury goods.

The cotton industry was also affected by the closure of the North Sea to shipping. By September 1914 nearly half of women were unemployed.

The war did eventually result in one and a half million women joining the workforce for the first time. This was facilitated by the provision of nurseries, a progressive measure which was reversed at the end of the war as the political establishment sought to drag women back into their traditional pre-war roles.

The incorporation of women into the workforce was not achieved without resentment and some resistance from many members of the craft unions, with most male professions remaining closed to women throughout the war.

But the divisions in society were not restricted to gender. The types of jobs women went into were greatly influenced by their social class.

The WLA consisted of mainly upper and middle class women. Working class women were deemed unsuitable on the grounds that they lacked the 'high moral fibre' necessary for farm life.
It was also upper and middle class women who enlisted with VAD. Many sacrificed their lives working as nurses on the front line, but a large number did morning stints at local hospitals while domestic servants cleaned their homes.

In contrast, working class women worked during the war out of necessity. However, for many, the war did change the nature of their work, giving them an opportunity to escape grossly exploitative jobs in domestic service and sweated labour.

**Factory conditions**

An estimated 800,000 women eventually became employed in all aspects of the munitions industry. Three quarters of these worked under the direct aegis of the Ministry of Munitions, in effect state control and national planning of munitions manufacturers following the failures of private industry early in the war.

Working conditions in the munitions factories were harsh. Hours were long, and with the relaxation of health and safety regulations the conditions of work were dangerous. It had a disastrous impact on women's health.

Poisoning from the chemical TNT was common, resulting in the yellowing of the skin which earned women workers the nickname 'Canary Girls'.

Yet toxic jaundice was serious. Thousands of women, and men, inhaled and ingested dust. They suffered stomach pains, giddiness, drowsiness and swelling of hands and feet.

The first deaths of women workers from this insidious disease were reported in 1916, but little action was taken.

Accidents also occurred from the daily handling of explosive chemicals. Hundreds of workers lost their lives in explosions, and thousands of people were made homeless.

Any references to working class women in the anniversary programmes and articles this year are likely to ignore their connection to the trade union movement. The concentration of women workers in the munitions industry encouraged rapid growth in trade union membership.

Overall, female membership rose by 160% during the war, particularly in the National Federation of Women Workers, and the Workers Union. By 1918 the latter employed 20 full-time women officials and had a female membership of over 80,000, a quarter of the union's total membership.

Increasing numbers of women were joining trade unions at a time when the official machinery of the unions had effectively become incorporated into the state.

The best militants, mainly socialists and Marxists, rejected the industrial truce declared by the union leaders and created new rank and file bargaining structures, which by 1917 were to result in the formation of the National Shop Stewards Movement.

This process began on Clydeside where a successful pay strike by engineers in February 1915 had been organised by the Clyde Labour Withholding Committee, the forerunner of the Clyde Workers' Committee (CWC).

**Red Clydeside**
Nine months later, threatened with the deduction of rent arrears from wages, a strike of 15,000 Clyde shipyard workers in support of rent strikes organised by women involved in a tenants' movement against rent increases gave further momentum to the CWC.

William Gallacher, a key leader of the CWC, commented on the role of working class women heading the campaign: "Mrs Barbour, a typical working class housewife, became the leader of the movement such as had never been seen before... Street meetings, back court meetings, drums, bells, trumpets - every method was used to bring the women out and organise them for struggle. Notices were printed by the thousand and put up in the windows: wherever you went you could see them. In street after street, scarcely a window without one: 'We are not paying increased rent."

Teams of women mobilised against sheriff officers (bailiffs) to prevent attempts at eviction. This combined community and industrial action of working class women and men forced the government to immediately implement rent restrictions on private landlords.

The main issue facing the CWC was dilution, the replacement of skilled labour with unskilled labour, including women workers. During war conditions dilution was difficult to prevent.

The CWC agreed not to oppose dilution on the condition that all the industries and national resources were nationalised under workers' control, and that all workers, including women, be paid the standard rate for the job.

The shop stewards committees spread, particularly to Sheffield where it was broadened to include skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled male and female workers.

JT Murphy, one of the leaders of the Sheffield Workers Committee, explained how the use of women as cheap labour created antagonism between men and women.

Murphy and the Sheffield shop stewards committee sought to overcome this through giving active support to the fight of unskilled workers, men and women for higher wages and encouraging women into the trade union movement.

The male dominated workers' committee condemned sexism and sought closer cooperation with unions representing women workers, particularly the Workers' Union.

**Suffragettes**

The class divisions among women during the war extended to the suffrage movement as the middle class leaders abandoned their votes for women campaigns.

Christabel Pankhurst fully supported the war and became involved in the 'patriotic' movement to pressurise men to enlist in the armed forces. Many off-duty, on-leave and even wounded servicemen became the targets of this movement, as did men found unfit for military service.

Many engineering workers who had trade exemption from military service took to wearing 'On War Service' badges to protect themselves from the white feather vigilantes.

Emmeline and Christabel Pankhurst called for military conscription for men and industrial conscription for women. They placed the funds of their organisation at the disposal of the government. They organised government backed demonstrations to put pressure on women to take up jobs in the factories.
The reactionary nature of their patriotic politics became apparent in their support for the banning of trade unions.

Christabel demanded that unskilled and semi-skilled workers be taken on without any safeguards.

In opposition to her mother and sister, Sylvia Pankhurst championed the cause for equal pay for equal work and fought for better work conditions for women.

Sylvia's East London Federation of Suffragettes continued to agitate on votes for women during the war, while also campaigning for peace, civil liberties, and controls on rents and food prices against the blatant profiteering of the capitalists. They also demanded the nationalisation of food supply and the abolition of private profit.

At the end of the war various women's organisations demanded equal pay, regulation of pay in low paid trades, a 48-hour week, abolition of work fines, maternity provision, and the vote. There were also demands for all trade unions to be open to women workers, with provision for representation of women on union governing bodies.

The ruling class, though, just wanted a return to 'normal business'. But with mass industrial action surpassing pre-war heights and a near insurrectionary atmosphere, the government was compelled to introduce a raft of legislation on rent control, council housing, maternity rights and child welfare. In time, with the defeat of workers' struggles, these progressive measures would be rolled back.

The attitude of the trade unions on women's rights was not consistently progressive. In 1918 a trade union conference passed a motion calling on women to be banned from 'unsuitable' trades and the exclusion of married women from work.

Such views were encouraged by the political establishment which viewed women's position in industry as a wartime expedient.

**Fight for equality**

The adoption of such motions by trade unions could be partly explained by the conditions of a post-war capitalism where millions of demobilised men discovered the harsh realities of the 'land fit for heroes', but it also reflected the limitations of the official leadership of the labour movement who lacked the will to confront capitalism.

It was left to women workers themselves to fight for better conditions and improved pay.

A successful equal pay strike in the same year, the first of its kind, in London and the southeast by women tram and tube workers compelled the government to establish a special inquiry into whether the principle of wage equality between men and women should be applied to all industries.

It concluded that the existing principles of wage determination should not be altered.

More than 50 years would pass before equal pay was placed on a statutory footing, and then only because of the successful strike of women machinists at Fords.

In the midst of the carnage of World War One radical and progressive ideas had emerged on women's rights, which reflected wartime experience including the drawing of women into the trade union movement, and the broader militancy of workers before and during the war.
The best working class militants, women and men, became the leaders of the mass industrial battles against post-war austerity and attacks on workers’ conditions.

Inspired by the 1917 Russian Revolution, they established the Communist Party, which at that time potentially represented the best means to advance the rights of working class women.

One hundred years later we face the similar task of creating independent working class organisations to challenge the inequalities of capitalism.

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**Scotland independence vote: Socialist policies needed to answer Project Fear**

[socialistpartystotland.org.uk](http://socialistpartystotland.org.uk)

Thursday 18 September will see an unprecedented mobilisation to the polls for the referendum on Scottish independence.

An estimated 75-80% of the 4.1 million people entitled to vote are predicted to take part - compared to barely 50% in the 2011 Scottish parliament elections. The strength of feeling, in particular the desire by many working class Yes supporters for fundamental social and economic change, will see hundreds of thousands of the most alienated from the pro-capitalist political establishment participating.

This mood reflects, as Socialist Party Scotland has consistently explained, that support for independence is being driven by a desire to escape from savage austerity and falling incomes.

A recent poll of polls showed No still in the lead, but only by 56% to 44%, an uncomfortable position for the pro-union establishment and the interests of British capitalism that they represent.

The stubborn solidity of the Yes vote is certainly not a result of a convincing case from the Scottish National Party (SNP) leadership or the official Yes campaign.

Rather than offering up policies for fundamental change, an end to austerity and a transformation of living standards, Alex Salmond and co have desperately sought not to raise expectations too high as to what independence on a capitalist basis could deliver.

**Currency war**

This was evident by Salmond's performance in the recent STV debate with Alistair Darling, leader of the Better Together campaign. A mass audience of over one million people watched it on TV, while a further 500,000 followed the debate online.

This was a major opportunity to advance the case for decisive economic and social change under independence based on public ownership of the economy and an end to cuts.

Instead, Salmond persisted with the line that independence under the SNP would be a safe pair of hands for capitalist interests. The SNP would "balance the books" and seek a formal currency union with the rest of the UK.
This would leave the Bank of England in control not only of interest rates but also, in practice, the levels of spending in an independent Scotland.

The leaders of the three pro-union capitalist parties - Labour, Tories and the Lib Dems - have ruled out a Sterling zone in an effort to undermine the SNP's case.

The SNP leadership has continued to insist that a currency union is 'inevitable' once 'normal' relations have been returned to following the referendum. But Cameron, Miliband and Clegg see the SNP's currency proposals as an Achilles Heel to be remorselessly attacked.

A poll immediately following the TV debate saw support for independence fall by 4% - an indication that the SNP are vulnerable as their pro-business position becomes further exposed.

Socialist Party Scotland has consistently explained that even if the Westminster government eventually agreed to a formal Sterling zone with an independent Scotland, it would be an austerity-laden trap from its inception.

By ceding control to the Bank of England and British capitalism an independent Scotland would be locked into a programme of long term cuts.

This has also been the experience of the Eurozone, with savage austerity budgets inflicted on member states. The consequences of this economic torture for Greece, Spain, Ireland and Portugal etc have been catastrophic.

In contrast, a socialist government would carry through democratic nationalisation of the finance sector in Scotland and repudiate the capitalist debts built up through the bailing out of the banks in 2008/09.

It would also be necessary to bring into public ownership, under working class control, the key economic sectors of the economy, including oil, transport and manufacturing.

Through these measures, as well as a state monopoly on foreign trade, it would be possible to use the vast wealth of capitalism to break with the austerity practices of the Bank of England, European Central Bank and International Monetary Fund and invest in jobs, a living wage and the rebuilding of public services in an independent socialist Scotland. This policy would have to be conducted alongside an appeal to the working class in the rest of Britain and Europe to break with capitalism and establish a democratic socialist confederation of states.

Salmond says that it's Scotland's pound and "we're keeping it". But locked out of a formal currency union, were that to be the case, none of the alternatives of 'sterlingisation' (using Sterling without a formal currency arrangement and which is in reality the SNP's Plan B), joining the Euro or a separate Scottish currency - without the nationalisation of banking, finance and the wider economy - would represent an escape from permanent cuts.

**Socialist policies needed**

While it's unclear what the referendum outcome will be, a major contributory factor in the No campaign's lead is doubt about whether an independent capitalist Scotland would economically deliver for the majority. Polls have shown that more people consistently believe that both they and the country as a whole would be worse off under independence.
While this reflects the doubts and uncertainties arising from the deluge of negative propaganda from Project Fear, big business and the media, what is also clear is that the SNP's pro-big business policies are an obstacle to answering the lies of Better Together.

The Scottish government has implemented £3 billion of Con-Dem cuts since 2010 in Scotland. The SNP's 'Outlook for Scotland' public finances paper promises each person would be £1,000 better off after independence, but not until 2029. "If possible," say the SNP, they would increase public spending by £1.2 billion in 2017-18. However, the Scottish parliament's budget will have been cut £6.7 billion by then. A reversal of the cuts under SNP plans for independence is ruled out.

Nicola Sturgeon, deputy first minister, commented: "Independence is not a magic wand. We won't wake up the day after becoming independent and find that all of Scotland's challenges have disappeared or that overnight we've become a richer, more economically successful country."

**Public ownership**

The SNP's lack of a decisive break from capitalist policies and austerity is weakening support for a Yes vote. None more so than promises to slash taxes for big business under independence, including the vastly profitable North Sea Oil industry.

In contrast there is huge support for public ownership of gas, electricity, transport and oil. The anger at the pro-rich policies of the main parties is growing by the day, as is the idea of a need for a new party to represent the working class majority.

Socialist Party Scotland is campaigning for a Yes vote in September. But we are also putting forward a programme that calls for the powers of independence to be used to end the cuts and for public ownership and democratic control of the main sectors of the economy.

Alongside Tommy Sheridan and others, Socialist Party Scotland has been organising public meetings on the theme of Hope Over Fear - the Socialist Case for Independence.

More than 14,000 people have come to hear Tommy Sheridan since January as part of the tour, looking for ideas they are not getting from the official Yes campaign.

The support for an anti-cuts, pro-socialist case is an indication of the potential for a new mass workers party to become a major force in Scotland.

Central to building such a party will be to stand implacably for the maximum unity of the working class across Scotland, England, Wales and Ireland. We oppose any attempts to divide the workers' movement on national lines.

A socialist Scotland as part of a genuine, voluntary and democratic socialist federation with England Wales and Ireland - and as a step towards a socialist Europe - is the only way to end the nightmare of austerity, cuts and capitalism once and for all.

This article was first published on 11 August 2014 as an editorial from the Socialist, the paper of Socialist Party Scotland: www.socialistpartyscotland.org.uk

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**Scandal of underfunded mental health services**
A NHS mental health worker

The shocking death of actor Robin Williams starkly highlights the fact that depression is a dangerous and life threatening clinical condition.

In 2013, 5,900 clinically depressed people took their own lives. This contrasts with 1,700 people killed in road accidents in the same year. Of these suicides, 76% were men.

Yet according to the professor Simon Wessley, the new president of the Royal College of Psychiatrists, a staggering two-thirds of people with depression get no treatment. "Some children with depression and other mental health problems are getting no treatment at all", he added.

Mental health services have long been the poor relation when it comes to NHS funding. Even between 1990 and 1995 when the overall spending in the NHS was growing, spending on mental health fell.

Tory health secretary Jeremy Hunt has pledged "parity of esteem" between mental health and physical health services.

However, while 65% of people with psychosis are getting treatment, sufferers can wait for up to two years to access services. As a direct comparison, in the physical health sector, 90% of patients get treatment and wait 18 weeks.

Health and cuts

In addition, the range of NHS treatments available to mental health patients is diminishing. Long term Psychodynamic Psychotherapy is increasingly difficult to get on the NHS but is widely available privately. But at more than £30 a session it is out of reach of anyone trying to live on employment support allowance (ESA).

There has been a rise in the availability of Cognitive Behaviour Therapy which is short term (12 sessions) and therefore cheaper. However, psychologist Dr Tamara McClintock Greenberg writing in the Huffington Post (2011) stated that CBT only helps 20% of patients.

Many more of our patients are being forced into insecure, substandard housing in the private sector as the availability of council flats has been depleted. Cuts to benefit payments increase stress which exacerbates mental illness.

Evidence shows that sustained or chronic stress, in particular, leads to elevated hormones such as cortisol, the "stress hormone", and reduced serotonin and other neurotransmitters in the brain, which has been linked to depression.

Those patients who may recover sufficiently to consider employment face the frustration of being expected to work for free in volunteering roles or to take low paid work.

Mental illness strikes all people from every social class. However, the experiences of our patients suggests that increasingly limited access to the material basics, imposed on working class people in particular, impede recovery and increase relapse rates.

In December 2005 the social work magazine, Community Care, reported that black and ethnic minority groups are over-represented in mental health services and that they are more likely to experience seclusion and physical restraint. This is a damning indictment on the way society operates.
Effectively dealing with mental illness means additional investment in mental health services and stopping the creep of the 'one size fits all approach' in treatment provision.

It also involves taking steps to address the poverty and inequality at the root of much ill health - "...the more equally wealth is distributed the better the health of that society" ('The Spirit Level' - Wilkinson and Pickett 2010).

- Two-thirds of people suffering with common mental health problems will get no treatment whatsoever
- 1,700 beds for mental health patients have been cut over the last two years
- One in four British adults will suffer from at least one mental health problem in a year

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**Government creates economic mirage as election approaches**

Simon Carter

Ahead of next year's general election, Tory Chancellor George Osborne and Lib Dem Treasury minister Danny Alexander have been regaling the mainstream media with tales of government success in increasing employment, in an expanding economy.

They have, however, remained silent on the reported fall in average earnings in the April to June quarter which means that household incomes continue to be squeezed.

And far from the coalition's four year-long austerity measures turning the economy around, again there is no government response to the fact that the 'recovery' has been the slowest and shallowest in modern British history.

Moreover, the Con-Dems' much vaunted economic growth appears confined to the service sector rather than manufacturing. And as the main eurozone economies stagnate it's a racing certainty that Britain's pitifully weak manufacturing base will once again contract, shedding more jobs.

An examination of the employment statistics also leaves little for the government to crow about as nearly half the increase in jobs (408,000) over the last year has come from self-employment. This group now accounts for a staggering 4.59 million workers. And we're not talking about large numbers of millionaire entrepreneurs but instead many low paid, precarious workers unable to secure permanent, well-paid employment. In December 2013 the Joseph Rowntree trust reported that these workers had suffered a fall in income of 31% over the last 12 years.

And while youth unemployment has officially fallen to 16.9% from 21.4% over the last 18 months it is still higher than the pre-crisis 13.8% in 2008.

It seems that that the biggest growth has been in government propaganda!

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**Them & Us**
Mind the gap

The fall in average earnings in the last economic quarter didn't affect Britain's fat cat executives. The bosses of the UK's biggest 100 companies, on average, increased their pay from £4.1 million in 2012 to £4.7 million last year. They now 'earn' 143 times the average salary of their workers. That gap rises to 175 times when compared with the average UK salary. Back in the 1990s the gap was 60 times the average salary.

- £3.8 billion yearly cut in pension credits from 2010 to 2017 (source: TUC)

Unfit for purpose

The most vulnerable people are increasingly being targeted by the government's draconian benefit sanctions regime. The drive to make funding cuts has resulted in a 350% increase in sanctions applied to sick and disabled claimants in the last year. Even a minor mistake of missing an appointment at the Jobcentre can result in the suspension of benefits for up to three years!

Some 500,000 disabled people receiving Employment Support Allowance have had their benefits sanctioned after being deemed 'fit for work' by private contractor Atos, working for the Department for Work and Pensions.

Following widespread protests, Atos has now agreed to an early exit from the work capability assessment programme, but the sanctions regime remains.

Killer market

It seems that promising developments in a vaccine for the deadly Ebola virus, which has killed over 1,000 people in four African countries, were not pursued by pharmaceutical companies because they were deemed 'unprofitable'. According to Marie-Paule Kieny, assistant World Health Organisation director general: "It's a market failure because this is typically a disease of poor people in poor countries, and so there is no market."

Race to the bottom

One in four women workers in the UK are in low-paid work. Of these, one in eight is on zero-hour contracts, according to the Fawcett Society. It adds that one in five women (22%) earning less than £7.44 an hour (the national 'living wage' during the survey) was educated to degree level, with over a third (36%) describing themselves as "overqualified" for their job.

Housing costs

A report by think tank Resolution Foundation says that 1.6 million households in the UK are spending more than 50% of their disposable income on housing costs.

Around 63% (990,000) are working households, 30% (480,000) are workless households and 7% (110,000) are retired households.

Welsh councils have a choice
"You can only spend them once." This was Welsh Local Government Association chief executive Steve Thomas’ explanation of why Welsh councils plan to cut £7-800 million after it was revealed that they hold reserves of over £700 million.

Well no shit Sherlock! I hadn't realised before that you can only spend money once!

He also claims that the majority of those reserves are 'earmarked'. But even the £163 million-plus available, according to Mr Thomas, could help buy some much-needed time for councils and more importantly, for council workers and service users.

But this would only be worth doing if Welsh councils, or more precisely, the 50% of them that are Labour-led, intended to use any such breathing space to build a campaign uniting local authority workers whose jobs are at risk with users of council services that are threatened.

**Labour cuts**

Unfortunately Welsh Labour councils have been no more reluctant to pass on Con-Dem cuts than their Tory counterparts in England. Neither has the Welsh Labour Government.

No wonder a study by the Children's Society and Stepchange has found that 23% of Welsh families are struggling with household debt, getting behind on bills and failing to keep up loan repayments.

Apart from byelections, Welsh people won't get a chance to elect councillors willing to fight, rather than implement Con-Dem cuts, until at least 2017. All the more reason for socialists to put forward an alternative in next year's general election.

The constituent parts of the Trades Unionist and Socialist Coalition in Wales, including the Socialist Party and the RMT union, are meeting to plan where and who to stand.

When other parties are scrapping to see which one of them gets to make the cuts they all agree on, we will offer a no cuts, socialist alternative to as many working class communities in Wales as possible.

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**Why I joined the Socialists**

**More than shouting at the news**

As a teenager, I was involved with various activist groups. Then life took over, and my activities outside of work tended to revolve around that wonderful place known as the pub. Two decades later, with a Tory government in power again, that feeling of injustice is back with a vengeance.

I have worked in care for the vast majority of my adult life, and seeing how devastating this government has been to so many vulnerable people, I had to do something.

I have been a union rep for 12 years on and off, but this didn't fulfil my desire to make a difference. I needed somewhere I could discuss the changes that must happen, rather than just shouting at the news.
Through chance, the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) appeared in front of me, hidden away in a BBC list of all the parties standing in the local elections.

I have said (some say shouted) for years that the unions should stop paying for the Labour Party. By getting involved in TUSC, I met members of the Socialist Party (which is one of the constituent parts of TUSC).

Getting active

My timing could have been better - my wife was expecting our first baby and the unions were calling everyone out on strike. But here I am, a fully paid up member of the Socialist Party, and waiting for a new son any day now. I am determined to attend more of the meetings when I can, and if I change jobs I hope to stand in the local elections for TUSC.

Jay Mitchell, Leeds Socialist Party member and Unite the Union rep

Iraq: Only united action can stop sectarian war

Iraqis and Kurds must not trust imperialist 'helpers'

Robert Bechert, CWI

Millions of working people around the world have been shocked at the rapid advance of the extreme religious fundamentalists of 'Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant' (ISIS) who have now proclaimed the foundation of a 'caliphate', the 'Islamic State'.

While most 'reports' from this war zone must be treated with caution, there is no doubt about ISIS's sectarian brutality towards opponents and other religions, something they themselves highlight in their own propaganda videos. Despite their opposition to the big imperialist powers and populist hostility to some aspects of capitalism, ISIS is not progressive in any sense and does not stand for an end to exploitation and oppression. Its methods include a dictatorial fascist-style crushing of all who do not follow their version of Islam and their single leader, now renamed Caliph Ibrahim, ruler of the 'Islamic State'. In practice, ISIS follows a similar murderous path to previous religious fundamentalists like the Catholic Crusaders who slaughtered Muslims, Jews and Orthodox Christians in their march through the Middle East in the Middle Ages, or the combatants in Europe's Thirty Years War in the 17th century.

ISIS's rapid advance is not only a threat to those who do not accept its rule or who follow a different religion, it also immediately poses a challenge to the western imperialist powers.

ISIS threatens not just the break-up of states established on the basis of the 1916 Sykes-Picot agreement between Britain and France, but it represents the most virulent 'blow-back' to Bush and Blair's post-9/11 neo-con strategy, which could now undermine the western imperialists' position in the Middle East and beyond.

Legacy
Desperately, the West, while searching for an answer to ISIS, is trying to scratch at least a tiny propaganda advantage from ISIS's advance. Thus Western leaders strive to portray themselves as humanitarian defenders of the oppressed as they attempt to escape from the poisonous legacy of the 2003 invasion of Iraq.

But this is not possible. ISIS's advance represents a crushing defeat of the policies previously pursued by the US and Britain, with the support of the major parties in both of these countries - the Republicans and Democrats in the US and Labour and Conservatives in Britain.

At the time of the invasion of Iraq, the CWI warned that this imperialist intervention would lead to the break-up of Iraq into rival ethnic and religious entities. We said this, not out of support for Saddam's dictatorship but because the only progressive force that could overthrow Saddam would have been a movement of the Iraqi working and poor masses. The CWI warned that, without such a mass movement capable of breaking with capitalism and imperialism, Iraq would tend to break-up, resulting in ethnic or religious-based entities ruled by new would-be mini-Saddams.

This argument was dismissed by Tony Blair, the 2003 invasion's chief propagandist, who tried to camouflage that imperialist adventure by claiming that only intervention could remove Saddam's dictatorship. The 2011 revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt showed that was false, when mass action removed dictators. But Tony Blair was never against dictators, just dictators who did not agree with him. Thus he is perfectly happy to work with the new Egyptian would-be dictator, Sisi, and get paid for his advice!

Now Blair tries to claim that ISIS has grown because of the West's failure to arm the opposition in Syria. But in Iraq ISIS has armed itself by seizing weaponry given to the Iraqi army by the West! At one stage, elements in the West, as well as in the Middle East, looked favourably on ISIS; in June, ISIS posted on the web photos of some of their fighters with right-wing US Senator John McCain who spoke of his "very moving experience to meet these fighters".

**Turkish government**

The Turkish government, which previously effectively tolerated ISIS's growth in Syria by allowing it free movement across its borders, now feels threatened by ISIS's new-found strength that threatens both the close relations Ankara has been building with the Kurdistan regional government in northern Iraq and, in the longer term, to have an impact within Turkey itself.

In Iraq, the speed of ISIS's advance was a result of the sectarian policies followed by the Shia Maliki clique which, alienating Sunni tribes and the Kurds, hastened the country's break up.

There is no certainty that new Iraqi prime minister Abadi will be able to completely prise away from ISIS some of the Sunni tribes and opposition which joined them in reaction to Maliki's sectarian policies. While both Saudi Arabia and Iran, respectively the leading Sunni and Shia powers, have welcomed Abadi, it is not clear how many Iraqi Sunnis will see him as a break with the previous, sectarian Shia rule.

Given the horrific reports of how ISIS treats opponents or those it sees as 'non-believers' it is natural that there is a growing demand for action to stop its advance.

After the previous wars and 're-building' in both Afghanistan and Iraq, there is little popular expectation anywhere in the world that a renewed western deployment in Iraq would fundamentally alter the situation. Certainly the western ruling class would like to avoid once again putting large numbers of troops on Iraqi soil, although it cannot be entirely ruled out that an attempt to hold parts of Iraq may take place.
With the collapse of the Iraqi army's military resistance to ISIS, western imperialism is immediately looking to strengthen Kurdish forces, particularly those linked to the regional government. This, they hope, will also allow western imperialism to maintain a foothold in the region. It is not accidental that the British government has sent one of its most right-wing policy setters, Hadhim Zahawi, who happens to be of Kurdish origin, to Irbil. Kurdish workers and youth should have no trust whatsoever in such 'helpers' who, as in Zahawi's case, support vicious attacks on the poor in their home countries.

**Workers' resistance key**

Iraqi and Kurdish working people must have no trust in the imperialist powers. These powers are quite prepared to support sectarian religious regimes like Saudi Arabia when it is useful to do so. The key to stopping the unfolding sectarian war is building a resistance amongst working people, a resistance that fights against the sectarian attacks by forces like ISIS and the Shia death squads operating in and around Baghdad while, at the same time, defending the rights of peoples like the Kurds to self-determination.

This can only be based upon building democratically-run, non-sectarian bodies as the basis for popular defence, which would be able to appeal to those Sunnis who have rallied to ISIS as a means of defending themselves from sectarian Shia attack. Without such a non-sectarian approach, there is a danger that imperialist-backed military action against ISIS will not weaken it and may actually increase its support in some areas.

However, military setbacks or defeats for ISIS will not be the end of the crisis gripping both Iraq and Syria. In both countries the fight against oppression, dictatorship and poverty requires the creation of a movement of working people. Only such movements can struggle for democratic rights (including full freedom for religious and non-religious alike), oppose further imperialist intervention and fight for governments led by genuine representatives of the working people and poor, which are prepared to break with the capitalist system that has failed the peoples of the Middle East and begin the socialist transformation of the region.

This version of this article was first posted on the Socialist Party website on 15 August 2014 and may vary slightly from the version subsequently printed in The Socialist.

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**USA: Ferguson erupts over police killing**

The police killing of unarmed black youth, Michael Brown, in the Ferguson suburb of Missouri on 9 August, has led to a storm of protest across the USA. Millions of people around the world have witnessed a heavily militarised police force attacking peaceful demonstrators with tear gas, stun grenades and even live rounds. With Ferguson resembling a war zone the authorities imposed a curfew, made arrests, and mobilised the National Guard to quell further protests. However, residents have refused to be cowed and continue to publicly demonstrate for social justice.

Like the Trayvon Martin vigilante shooting in 2012, the Michael Brown killing has revealed the deep racial and class divisions in US capitalism and the injustice and brutality of the state machine.
"The United States of America is not for black people."... "Mike Brown was the straw that broke the camel's back. That's when we said enough is enough. That's it".

These two quotes from protesters in Ferguson sum up the mood after the shooting of yet another young black man by the police.

Missouri isn't an isolated incident. In the face of globalised austerity, racial tension is not only fed by right wing propaganda but is the by-product of capitalism which seeks to protect profit, and increase control over the working class by 'any means necessary'.

America like many other state powers has been quietly arming its police for battle since the early 1990s under the guise of first fighting the 'drugs crisis' and later terrorism.

The 1990 National Defence Authorisation Act allowed the secretary of Defence to "transfer to Federal and State agencies personal property of the Department of Defence, including small arms and ammunition".

The latest justification for the arming of the civilian police is national security. Up to $4.3 billion has been spent on equipping them.

The militarisation of the police is a global evil. The water cannons in London, the rubber bullets and tear gas in Taksim Square or Brazil are a testament to so-called modern policing.

As austerity bites and people all over the world are forced into the realisation that the police will not be there to protect and serve. The shocking images we've seen in Ferguson could soon be coming to a street near you.

The link between poverty and crime is indisputable, the lack of opportunity and the general feeling of marginalisation and isolation of poor black communities. The way the state responds to the needs of these communities is being played out around the world.

The crisis in Ferguson has parallels with Tottenham and Brixton. In the UK, black people are at the sharp end of austerity.

In the 12 months up to March 2014 there was an overall drop in unemployment of 12.9%, 14.6% for white people. But in the same period there was a 4.5% rise in the number of African and Caribbean people out of work. If this trend continues any British city could erupt into the next 'Ferguson'.

Ferguson is more than the shooting of another innocent black teenager; it highlights the continuing racial inequalities around the world. It has shone a light on the way the state plans to 'deal' with these inequalities. Equally it is has shown that there is a time when people say 'enough is enough'.

What's needed now is organisation, to force the issues of race inequalities onto the public agenda. Just as right wing parties have pushed nationalist propaganda into the forefront of British politics, the working class need to force the issue of racial inequality in the UK in the run up to the election. The police killing of Mark Duggan in Tottenham has shown it only takes a spark to ignite working class anger when there's nothing to lose.

Systemic racism in profit-driven capitalist society
Eljeer Hawkins, Socialist Alternative, Harlem, New York

Ferguson is 70% black with a predominately white police force. In a population of 21,000, a quarter of the residents live below the poverty line.

In Ferguson and many other cities in the US, for workers and people of colour, the police are viewed like an occupying army. For years racial tensions have been boiling over.

To put an end to the crisis facing our youth - who face systemic racism in this profit-driven, capitalist society - we can't let this anger dissipate into thin air.

The FBI and Justice department have moved in swiftly to assist the local authorities and begin what they call an investigation. Democratic Party officials have attempted to tamp down the frustration of the community. Unfortunately, the National Association for Advancement of Coloured People (NAACP) is not throwing its full weight behind spreading the protests and addressing the root cause of the problem.

These events point to the immediate need for working class people to work together in building an independent united grassroots movement of workers, youth and people of colour - to fight for living wage jobs, housing, health care, education and a living wage for all, as well as an ending police violence and establishing direct democratic community control over public safety.

Lessons

We need to draw the lessons from the Trayvon Martin case: the demonstrations, protest, civil disobedience and strikes need to spread to mount pressure on the police and judicial system to bring justice to the Brown family.

We need to build new mass organisations that will reject the bankrupt politics of the Democratic Party, a pro-capitalist politics that accepts the status quo of systemic racism and violence.

The underlying function of law enforcement and the prison system within this capitalist society is to defend and maintain massive inequality. The richest 1% maximises their profits while perpetuating endemic poverty, government neglect, blatant corruption and mass unemployment.

In periods of capitalist and social crisis, law enforcement and the ruling elite ramp up their tactics of surveillance and repression to firm up their control of society, out of fear of social explosions against the conditions they've created.

As a historical reminder, after the Watts rebellion on 11 August 1965, it was one year later that the Black Panther Party for Self-Defence in Oakland was born. The Panthers expressed a bold, radical and democratic socialist vision, grounded in a fight against global capitalism and institutional racism. As Malcolm X once stated:

"We declare our right on this earth...to be a human being, to be respected as a human being, to be given the rights of a human being in this society, on this earth, in this day, which we intend to bring into existence by any means necessary."

Jess Spear election success
Hot on the heels of socialist Kshama Sawant's earth shattering election victory in Seattle and the game changing success of the '$15 Now' end low pay campaign, comes Jess Spear. Socialist Alternative member Jess is attempting to go even further in a run for Washington State legislature.

Jess's opponent, Frank Chopp, is a 20-year Democratic Party incumbent. McDonalds and Walmart, oil giants, banks and real estate conglomerates, insurance companies and the pharmaceutical industry all donate to Frank Chopp as someone who will fight their corner. As Speaker of the House of Representatives, he secured $11.9 billion in bailouts for Boeing. Boeing is one of Chopp's all-time highest donors.

Jess needed just 1% in August's primary vote to proceed to the general election in November. Even without the endorsement of Seattle's free independent newspaper, the Stranger, Jess is set to win more than 20%.

In just a short time, the Vote Spear campaign has amassed 170 volunteers and raised a tremendous $38,000. Her campaign has championed the success of the $15 Now campaign, demanded rent control and highlighted environmental concerns.

Chopp is worried about her chances. He normally uses his power and prestige to raise $150,000, spending very little in his own race and instead donating his campaign budget to other Democrats, buying patronage across Washington.

This year, Chopp wants to raise double that amount and is using every penny to defend his own seat. Out of touch Chopp has attempted to portray himself as an 'activist', and has even come out in favour of rent control (following decades in power doing nothing to bring it about) as Kshama's opponent did on the minimum wage issue.

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**Capitalism means war**

**Join the socialists!**

**Steffan Bateman and Ross Saunders**

Nato, the war-machine of Western capitalism, will descend on Newport in South Wales for its summit at the beginning of September. Dogging the heels of Obama, Merkel and other world leaders will be thousands of protesters.

Newport, like every other part of working-class Britain, has been stripped bare by austerity. The Welsh Assembly and the city council - both run by Labour - have put up no opposition to the government's cuts.

While the rich and powerful swan around at the summit in the Celtic Manor resort on the hill, the city centre is a ghost town of boarded-up shops. Hundreds are hounded for the bedroom tax and the local University of South Wales could lose an entire campus.

Meanwhile, the resources magically appear to fund the biggest police operation in British history, involving 20,000 officers and 13 miles of high-tech fencing. It doesn't stop there: having
squandered £20 billion on war in Iraq and Afghanistan, the British government has dedicated another £20 billion to Trident nuclear weapons. A strange way to tighten your belt.

The protest in Newport is a chance to unite the anti-war movement with trade unionists and anti-austerity campaigners against what is the largest gathering of capitalist world leaders the UK will have ever seen.

Nato's claim to be "building stability in an unpredictable world" is exposed the world over as a naked lie. Nato affiliates are directly responsible for the quagmire that has developed in Iraq in the aftermath of Bush and Blair's invasion in 2003. They gave the brutal Israeli government as much support as they could get away with. The squabble between the Nato bloc and Putin's capitalist Russia over markets and resources has littered eastern Ukraine with bodies.

US diplomat, George F Kennan, came closer to the truth when he said Nato's purpose is: "to establish a scheme of relationships which can enable us to keep up the position of inequalities." Nato is the military wing of profiteering American and European capitalism. They intervene not to safeguard peace and stability but in order to make sure the world's rich get richer and poor get poorer.

We desperately need a new, mass workers' party to unite our side against the warmongering profiteers. But the situation also poses more fundamental questions.

The choice must be made between the capitalist system of invasions, drone attacks, and torture, and a socialist system where all the world's resources could be co-operatively used for the benefits of all. The billions spent on war around the world should be used to improve the lives of ordinary people, not invested in industrial-scale slaughter.

War and capitalism are inseparable. If you're interested in fighting for the alternative, join the red bloc for socialism on the 'No Nato' demonstrations in Newport, and join the Socialist Party!

**Demonstrate - 30 August**

**Meet 1pm at Newport Civic Centre for a march around the city**

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**Fight for real jobs**

**Join the Fast Food Rights day of action on 28 August**

**Mary Finch**

Iain Duncan Smith may claim his changes to the welfare state are making everyone 'better off'. But the 868,000 16 to 24 year olds who are still unemployed tell a different story. In fact the Institute for Public Policy Research says that even if there was a full economic recovery, youth unemployment will still be a huge problem.

With the onslaught of government funding cuts to the public sector, existing jobs are being slashed. Education cuts mean vocational training courses are also under attack. Young people are being forced out of higher education by £9,000 a year tuition fees. Even with a degree or vocational qualifications, many are forced onto low paid, zero-hour contract jobs.
Fast Food Rights

The talents and aspirations of a whole generation are being crushed by a system that is unable to cater to them. Capitalism is a system based solely on the maximisation of profit - for us that means depressed wages, zero-hour contracts, and employing the minimum number of workers necessary.

We need job creation, restored funding for training courses and education, a £10 an hour minimum wage, and an end to zero-hour contracts. We need a party that stands up for these things because the three main parties all stand for protecting the interests of their capitalist friends.

We need a mass movement that fights for a society democratically run in the interests of everyone's needs, not just the super-rich and that can offer jobs, education and services for all.

The Fast Food Rights Campaign, set up the Baker's Food and Allied Workers Union (BFAWU) along with Youth Fight for Jobs and others, has organised a day of action for 28 August. The campaign calls for decent conditions, wages we can genuinely live on, and an end to zero-hour contracts.

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Youth services: jobs and centres slashed

Matt Whale

The public sector union Unison has revealed that three quarters of local authorities have cut youth services. This will come as no surprise for the thousands of children and young people bearing the brunt of these attacks.

Around 2,000 jobs and 350 youth centres have gone between 2012 and 2014 with these numbers expected to double again in the next two years. Around 41,000 places at youth centres have been lost.

Consequences

Youth workers have warned of an increase in anti-social behaviour among young people as the places for them to productively put their energies to use have been closed. The cuts hurt the poorest more than anyone else. Youth workers who assist disadvantaged young people with job applications and point them towards education and apprenticeship opportunities are losing their jobs.

It is claimed that these cuts are to save money - this is a false economy. The Audit Commission found that it costs upwards of £200,000 for every child lost to the criminal system by the age of 16 as opposed to £50,000 to offer them leisure and sporting activities.

Local authorities - run by all of the main parties - are passing on these cuts and refusing to stand up to the Tories and their lap dogs the Lib Dems. The cuts to youth services show that these parties put the needs of the super-rich 1% above the needs of young people who just want the chance to a decent life.

There is huge anger in working class communities. The Socialist Party has previously warned that rioting and other such behaviour would be a result of these attacks. This was proved correct in the summer of 2011, and the potential for similar events to occur again cannot be ruled out.
We call on the trade unions to harness this anger. We need a movement of workers and young people that can defeat these cuts and fight for a society based on need, not greed.

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**Campaign steps up on New Era estate**

*Brian Debus, Hackney Socialist Party*

Hackney Socialist Party members have been campaigning on the New Era estate in Hoxton. The residents of the 90 flats on the estate (which is owned by Richard Benyon, the richest Tory MP) have had their rents increased by over £100 a month in the last year.

The residents' campaign has already received massive national publicity, but the local Labour council has done next to nothing to support the tenants. We call for the council to introduce rent controls to stop this blatant profiteering.

The tenants are planning mass petitioning in Hoxton Market and in the local park over the August bank holiday weekend.

In our first 90 minutes knocking on doors to talk to people on the estate, two of us sold 30 copies of the Socialist.

- The cost of an average house in the UK (£250,000) is ten times bigger than the average salary, rising to 14 times bigger in London
- House prices per square metre have risen by 13% since 2009, going up by 34% in Greater London (61% in Lambeth, south London)
- While profits may be increasing, output in the building sector is 11.3% below its pre-crisis peak. Last year only 109,370 new homes were built in England, when 240,000 new homes a year are needed in order to meet demand.
- Tesco is sitting on enough spare land to build 15,000 new homes - a massive 4.6 million square metres
- Rents take up an average of 50% of disposable income, a trend that is only likely to worsen.
- The number of people who work but have to claim housing benefit has risen by 104% since 2009.
- £24 billion pounds of taxpayers' money a year goes on housing benefit - most of which is going in the pockets of private landlords.
- The government has cut £7 billion into housing benefit and made draconian cuts in council tax benefit adversely affecting low income families.
- There has been a 26% rise in homelessness in England over the last four years, meaning 112,070 people lack proper shelter. The number of rough sleepers in London alone rose by 75% in the same period to reach 6,437.

**A socialist programme of action**

■ Tackle the housing crisis by mass building of council houses
■ Cap all rents in the private sector at council rent level
■ Scrap the bedroom tax
■ For a £10 an hour minimum wage for all
Re-house Charlie Wort!

Southampton Labour-run council has evicted Charlie Wort from his home in St. Marys after the recent death of his mother. They claim he is no longer entitled to be housed by the council. There was a campaign involving local residents and the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition to help Charlie fight the eviction, but the council showed no compassion.

Campaigners are demanding that the council re-house Charlie immediately in St. Marys. Charlie has received support from anti-cuts councillors Keith Morrell and Don Thomas and from local housing campaigner Wilson Bennett. Thanks are also due to the management, staff and regulars of the Angel Pub and the Kingsland Tavern for the support they have shown to Charlie.

Southampton TUSC

Protest camp brings NHS activists together

Staffordshire TUSC supporters

Save Stafford Hospital activists, determined to stop it from being dismantled, have run a protest camp in the hospital grounds for several weeks.

Geoff, who has been at the camp from the beginning, told Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition supporters who visited the camp: "It started with just a few tents but has now grown to around 150 'residents' in just two weeks. Other activists and supporters have visited us from all round the country to show their support."

Visitors have come from Lewisham and Charing Cross in London and from 'Save the Alexandra' in Redditch.

The 'Cancer - Not for Profit' campaign group, which TUSC supporters helped to launch, has also visited to offer support and build links.

This group is fighting the attempted sell-off of £1.2 billion worth of cancer care across Staffordshire. Importantly, the protest camp is being backed by Stafford NHS workers who make regular visits with food and support.

While we were there, a bus arrived with about 30 Doncaster Care UK workers who have been striking to stop savage attacks on their wages.

Within minutes, groups of strikers and protesters were discussing the need to join together to fight the attempt by the government to dismantle and privatise the NHS.

TUSC
The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) is an electoral alliance that stands candidates against all cuts and privatisation. It involves the RMT transport workers' union, leading members of other trade unions including the PCS, NUT and POA, and socialist groups including the Socialist Party. In May 2014 TUSC stood 554 candidates, the largest left-of-Labour local election challenge for over 60 years.

- www.tusc.org.uk

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The People's March for the NHS

Alan Docherty, Teesside Socialist Party

The People's March for the NHS is the brainchild of a group of 'mums' from Darlington who are campaigning against the privatisation of the NHS. The march follows the footsteps of the Jarrow marchers back in 1936, and the 2011 march organised by Youth Fight for Jobs.

The NHS marchers will arrive in Parliament Square, London, on 6 September after covering approximately 300 miles and 23 towns and cities in over three weeks. The message from the 'mums' is a simple one; 'that the NHS is owned by and loved by us and every effort will be made to stop it being sold off'.

The campaign is supported by several trade unions and a range of political groups including sections of the Labour Party, Green Party, and the People's Assembly as well as the unaligned.

It demands the repeal of the Health and Social Care Act and is aiming for four things: Reverse the closure of NHS services; Halt the privatisation of NHS care; Return responsibility for delivering NHS services to the Secretary of State for Health; and to inform the public on what is happening to the NHS and build support for the NHS.

The march commenced on Saturday 16 August with a rally of about 500 people in Jarrow organised by the Northern region TUC. Amongst the platform speakers was Lizi Gray of Youth Fights for Jobs, who was one of the 2011 Jarrow marchers.

Despite claims from Stephen Hepburn, the Jarrow Labour MP, that Labour would, on day one of being re-elected, kick the privateers out of the NHS and reverse the cuts, Lizi told the crowd that the NHS was not safe in Labour's hands. She called for a written commitment from them that they would reverse the cuts.

**Rallies along route**

Rallies are being planned along the route. The march reached Darlington, the organisers' home town, on Monday 18th where a rally was held by Darlington Trades Council. The meeting, that attracted about 100 people, was addressed from the platform by the marchers, the Labour leader of Darlington council, and John Malcolm, a Unison Heath branch secretary and a Socialist Party member.

The meeting was lively, emotional, and inspiring, with plenty of discussion about the state of the NHS and what needs to be done to repair it.

The discussion broadened the debate, linking the fight against privatisation with the fight against cuts in pay and services, and with other public sector workers.
The meeting was reminded that a Labour government continued the process of privatisation of the NHS started by the Tories and laid the basis for the Con-Dems' current policies, and that Labour does not have policies to reverse the cuts. Policies are needed to end the plunder of the NHS by private companies, scrap PFI contracts, nationalise the pharmaceutical companies, and reverse all the cuts in funding and staff.

The marchers made it clear that they would hold all MPs, regardless of party, to account in opposing the privatisation of the NHS.

The march has the potential to inspire a major campaign to demand an end to the privatisation of the NHS and the establishment of a fully funded free health service to meet the needs of public.

Unfortunately none of the main political parties would deliver on these demands. Labour is wedded to neoliberal policies that would keep the NHS open to the theft of public funds by the private sector.

We need to work for the establishment of a mass party that actually represents the interests of working class people. Only then would we have a party in whose hands the NHS was safe.

This version of this article was first posted on the Socialist Party website on 19 August 2014 and may vary slightly from the version subsequently printed in The Socialist.

Protesters condemn mayor Anderson's continuing butchery

Ann Walsh, Liverpool Socialist Party

On Friday 15 August a small but determined contingent attended Labour mayor Anderson's cabinet to express their opposition to the latest butchery of services in Liverpool.

The main agenda item was the closure of eleven of the city's libraries.

Ignoring the demand to retain the libraries Anderson and his clones approved plans to close them. To give a veneer of democratic involvement there will be four weeks of public consultation and a special select committee hearing to examine the issue. Then they will be closed.

Mayor Anderson regurgitated the usual mantra that the level of cuts forced on the council by central government meant there was no alternative but to make 'difficult decisions'.

He also rejected the call from whom the Liverpool Echo described as 'former 80s militant figurehead Tony Mulhern' to set what he described as 'an illegal budget'.

He said: 'You think Liverpool alone can change the world. It did not work in the 1980s and it isn't going to work now.'
Tony Mulhearn responded by reminding the meeting of the £60 million which the Thatcher government conceded in 1985 as a result of the magnificent campaign spearheaded by the 47 socialist councillors.

**Green cuts**

The Green Party's councillor Tom Crone said the outcry about the plans showed 'how much people value these libraries'. Reflecting the confused position of the Greens on how to oppose cuts, Crone suggested that cash be taken from the mayoral and members' fund and the leader's discretionary fund to save libraries at risk, while accepting that other causes this money would have gone towards would then miss out.

Anderson said the Green Party had wanted to use this kitty for multiple projects and accused them of 'opportunistic grandstanding'.

He said that using this money to protect library services would be 'robbing Peter to pay Paul' and added that he had nothing but contempt for their opportunistic position.

Significantly Anderson went on to profess respect for TUSC (Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition), that, unlike the Greens, had made it clear that it stood for total opposition to all cuts, and for a massive campaign to mobilise support for a socialist alternative. However whilst 'respecting TUSC's integrity' he argued that its policy was 'impractical'.

He said: 'The bottom line is doing nothing is not an option. We've got to make those savings.'

**Cuts criticised**

Children's author Alan Gibbons, who supported Tony Mulhearn in the 2012 mayoral election, presented a 10,000-signature petition against the closures. Commenting that he didn't want 'the City of Culture to become the City of Philistinism,' he said the council needed to go back to the drawing board, and added, to applause: 'Why on earth do we have a Labour Party if we don't fight for our people?'

This sentiment was shared by campaigner Ruth Knox, and Tony Mulhearn, who argued that the council needed to stand up to the coalition government and said: 'For the Labour council to proceed in this fashion without any organised opposition at all is frankly unacceptable.' This was greeted with loud applause.

Mayor Anderson said that he was elected ahead of Mr Mulhearn and had won the election based on a manifesto of running the city 'responsibly'. Tony Mulhearn responded by saying that when Labour supporters voted in 2012 they expected Labour to protect them, not to carry out cuts.

'Whether you like it or you don't... I will not set an illegal budget,' was Anderson's retort, regardless of the fact that a no-cuts budget would not have to be 'illegal'.

Speaking after the meeting, mayor Anderson dismissively said: 'Around 24 protesters attended this meeting, which I think shows the vast majority of people accept the fact that we've got difficult choices to make.' His hubris is fuelled by the lack of opposition from trade union leaders, both locally and nationally. In fact most local authority trade union 'leaders' have not given a shred of leadership to those members whose jobs are under threat and when they do call meetings have advised members to accept the cuts and take the money. They have even advanced the argument at meetings that their job is to assist the council in carrying out the cuts. The council's Unite convenor Dave Walsh is the exception to this posture of right wing collaboration.
But there is no question that the rumblings of opposition to Anderson's butchery are growing deeper and louder. Like a smouldering volcano, at some stage the growing resentment will erupt and move in the direction of TUSC and its socialist alternative.

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Campaigning for genuine equality at Leeds Pride

Thousands gathered in Leeds on Sunday 3 August for the city's annual LGBT Pride march. As with previous years there was a strong presence from trade unions and other activists.

A large contingent of the march celebrated the steps forward in equality that gay marriage represented when introduced in March this year.

There was also solid representation from campaigners for further development of equal marriage rights such as equal availability of civil partnerships but especially the removal of the 'spousal veto clause'.

This element of the Tories' same sex marriage legislation forces trans individuals to essentially get permission from their partner before they are able to gain a Gender Recognition Certificate (a document that would allow them to be legally recognised as their correct gender).

Campaigners to stop the deportation of Orashia Edwards to Jamaica were also present. In Jamaica he would face persecution as a bisexual. At present his case is awaiting judicial review of the ludicrous decision that he was being 'dishonest' about his sexuality.

The Socialist Party also had a strong presence at Pride again this year campaigning for LGBTQ equality. Our campaign for a minimum wage of £10 an hour picked up a strong echo.

People recognised that the 'pink pound', the idea that LGBT people, having fewer family ties, have more disposable income and better lifestyles, is a myth that can't possibly last in the face of job cuts, wage cuts and zero-hour contracts.

Michael Johnson, Leeds Socialist Party

TUSC byelection reports

Fleetwood

For the second time in eleven months, TUSC has polled a strong third position for Rossall ward of Fleetwood town council in Lancashire, winning 19% of the vote. TUSC also contested a second seat for the first time, gaining 8%. 
Rossall candidate Ray Smith said: "I shall endeavour to continue my fight against the cuts, fighting for people's rights, the downtrodden, the workers, pensioners, disabled. Most of all I will continue to fight for jobs and investment in our local community."

TUSC will mount a massive challenge at next year's elections for the whole town council. As Ray says, "I'll be back in May next year!"

**Newham**

Mental health worker and Unite steward Mark Dunne will be standing for TUSC in the Beckton ward byelection in Newham, East London.

All council seats in Newham are held by Labour. But, like all other Labour-run local authorities, the council has ploughed through cuts on behalf of the Con-Dems.

Mark is standing to give voters the opportunity to vote for a real no-cuts alternative. That includes building council housing, using the borough's compulsory landlord registration to introduce rent controls, scrapping the bedroom tax and restoring council tax benefits.

**TUSC**

The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) is an electoral alliance that stands candidates against all cuts and privatisation. It involves the RMT transport workers' union, leading members of other trade unions including the PCS, NUT and POA, and socialist groups including the Socialist Party. In May 2014 TUSC stood 554 candidates, the largest left-of-Labour local election challenge for over 60 years.

- [www.tusc.org.uk](http://www.tusc.org.uk)

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**Care UK strike is a fight for the NHS**

_Alistair Tice_

"We're Yorkshire folk, we're like a dog with a bone. We won't give up, we'll never surrender." This is how Doncaster Care UK shop steward Roger Hutt expressed the sheer working-class determination of the fifty-odd Unison members at the strikers' meeting held last night at the end of the latest two weeks strike action.

Having now taken 48 days of strike action in their battle against 35% cuts in terms and conditions as a result of the privatisation of the Supported Living Service for Adults with Learning Difficulties, these former NHS staff voted unanimously to take another three weeks strike action.

**Privatisation**

Just as 30 years ago the miners fought for a year to try to save the coal industry, now Doncaster Care UK workers, including some ex-miners, see their fight as primarily about trying to save the NHS from cuts and privatisation.
Their confidence has been boosted by the national media coverage resulting from the Observer front page and special report articles on the dispute and the role of private equity companies in the care sector (see theguardian.com/society/2014/aug/09/care-workers-private-equity-targets-the-nhs).

**Private equity sharks**

Care UK is owned by Bridgepoint, a private equity firm that also owns Oasis Dental, Pret a Manger and Fat Face. In 2012 Bridgepoint's highest paid director got £1.1 million and they paid out £14 million in bonuses.

Public funds account for 88% of Care UK's revenues yet they have not paid a penny in corporation tax since being bought by Bridgepoint in 2010. The debt used to buy health firms is set against profits, often via big intercompany loans with high interest rates, which means that huge profits are hidden as operating losses are declared.

In 1993, the private sector provided only 5% of state funded domiciliary services, that figure had risen to 89% by 2012 as local councils have cut services and outsourced them to the private sector. Private care companies like Care UK make their profits by slashing wages and conditions, and by cutting standards of training and care.

**Below minimum wage**

It is estimated that 150,000 care workers are paid less than the minimum wage and 307,000 are on zero-hour contracts. That's why the Doncaster Care UK workers' strike is so important. If they win a substantial pay rise and the Living Wage for new staff in Doncaster, such a victory would inspire thousands of care workers to join a union and fight for a decent living wage.

Unison must seize this opportunity by declaring war on Care UK across the country and mobilising its resources to back the strikers. Likewise trade unionists and socialists in every city and town should prepare now to answer the strikers' call for pickets and protests at every Care UK office and Bridgepoint owned company.

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**Note added on 19 August:**

Care UK have been formally served with the notice for the next strike which will run from Monday 25th August at 7am for three weeks, until Monday 15th September at 7am.

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**North West Fire Service call centre cuts catastrophe**

Hugh Caffrey, Socialist Party North West region
The disastrous consequences of just one element of cuts and privatisation in the fire service recently hit the news, when a fire crew from Carlisle in Cumbria were instructed to attend an incident near Bolton in Lancashire - a 200 mile round trip!

This cock-up is the latest in a series dismissed by management as 'teething problems'. It is because fire service control, previously done by local switchboards, has been centralised for the whole north-west into one facility in Warrington, Cheshire.

This is owned by a private company, with rumours circulating about which senior managers may have got their fingers in the pie.

Staffing levels of control operators at the regional facility are a small fraction of the total number previously employed at local centres.

The result is a potentially lethal cocktail of errors; but instead of addressing these fundamental problems, senior management such as Greater Manchester's chief fire officer Steve McGuirk attempt to sweep them under the carpet.

A firefighter in Greater Manchester told me: "The introduction of North West Fire Control has seen a significant degradation of service.

"The system crashes on a daily basis, crews are given wrong or misleading information and attempts to speak to an operator to clarify information results in an excessive delay.

"Fire Service management have engaged in a strong campaign of propaganda to convince everyone that the system runs fine.

"However, once again, Emperor McGuirk has no clothes on. Everyone knows it. The operators, the firefighters and the management.

"Their own figures state that Regional Control will save £14.94million over 12 years. This averages as a total saving of £311,000 per service, per year.

"The safety of the public and firefighters has been compromised for a saving that will be wiped out by the current wasteful financial mismanagement of the service."

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**Support Bucks strikers**

Buckinghamshire Fire Authority locked out firefighters during the last round of national FBU strike action over pensions on 9-16 August.

The authority barred firefighters from their whole shifts, despite the strike action taking place for two hours from noon then one hour from 11pm.

Messages of protest can be sent to enquiries@bucksfire.gov.uk. Financial support can be sent to Bucks FBU Hardship Fund, account 71603124, sort code 40-33-33.
BT pay cuts: we need less surveys, more action!

Clive Walder, CWU Birmingham, Black Country and Worcester branch

The Communication Workers Union (CWU) telecoms section is once again shying away from a fight with BT and recommending cuts in pay and conditions for new staff.

The 2013 CWU telecoms conference called for an industrial action ballot if there had been no meaningful improvement in performance management by July.

In response, the union conducted a survey asking members three questions: if they had noticed any improvement; if they thought the new agreement (supposed to cure all ills) needed more time to bed in; and if they wished to be balloted for strike action.

Four out of five workers said there had been no improvement and 57% wanted a strike action ballot. But the union will conduct another survey, this time in conjunction with managers' union Prospect.

Their reasoning was that the 28% response rate didn't give them a mandate. The CWU telecoms executive now appears to accept David Cameron's view on ballots!

Also the union has called a special conference on 20-21 August in Birmingham to discuss BT's proposals to employ new recruits on worse pay and conditions.

BT has employed people on inferior terms and conditions in new call centres for a while but this enshrines second class status for new recruits.

BT profits

We've seen £2.3 billion profits, huge investment in BT Sport and £300 million a year being spent buying back the company's own shares to increase dividends.

But they aim to pay new call centre workers £6,000 less a year and new engineers about £4,000 less than their longer serving counterparts.

The current CWU Telecoms leadership is proof of the disaster that is 'partnership' between employer and union and can now do little more than 'sell' BT policy to their members.

Socialists and Broad Left members in the CWU will be vigorously condemning these proposals and campaigning for a fighting union leadership and for taking the entire telecoms industry into public ownership.

See further articles on www.socialistparty.org.uk

Surrey council workers look to strike on pay
In April, Surrey county council imposed a two year pay deal broadly in line with the government's austerity measures on pay constraint. As Surrey County Unison branch have local negotiations on pay, we are not part of the national local government pay dispute.

Surrey County Unison recently put out a consultative ballot over reopening negotiations with the council on pay, after learning that councillors had awarded themselves a pay rise of up to 60%.

Our view is that Unison members should also receive a pay rise. We are not asking for 60% rises, we are asking for a pay increase to keep up with the cost of living.

Members voted in favour of going into a dispute by a whopping 718 to 16 or 98%.

Surrey County Unison supported our colleagues on strike on 10 July. We have the same issues and problems as the rest of our members nationally. We hope to organise and negotiate for better pay with our council on the mandate we have been given.

Andy Pattinson, Surrey Unison (personal capacity)

Peterborough Royal Mail workers stage unofficial walkout

Carl Harper, Peterborough Socialist Party

On Friday 8 August, CWU members working at Royal Mail in the Orton Southgate Delivery Office in Peterborough walked out. Those who participated in the action stated that "ongoing bullying and harassment" of workers led to the unofficial strike.

The business has forced workers nationally to undergo numerous stages of 'modernisation' over a number of years. While in business terms this relentless drive is in the name of 'improved efficiency', in reality it means a chaotic and relentless demand for increased workloads for workers without reward.

As it becomes harder to achieve efficiency savings within the boundaries of national agreements, management bullies and harasses in order to achieve the budgetary savings it desires.

Given the company's privatisation, these disputes are likely to continue and increase in its frequency and severity. The business now has shareholders demanding a return on their investments to satisfy, alongside the funding of pay and bonuses of senior management officials. CEO Moya Greene for instance pocketed £1.35 million last financial year - 50 times more than the average worker!

The workers returned to work with a guarantee from the company - and the union - that their concerns will be "addressed". In practice this means there will be a short-term lull in pressure on the workers which will return with vengeance while the union will undoubtedly look to appease the business's demands for 'improved efficiency'.

'Competition' means of postal companies are 'cherry-picking' the profitable work. Although it is true that this is a threat to Royal Mail who deliver to every address in the UK - with rural locations subsidised by the profitable urban areas - the company is using this as a cover to attack workers.
The overall solution is to take Royal Mail back into public ownership. This way it can deliver a service based on public need not on private greed. Until then workers across the industry need to stand together in defiance.

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Support London Taxi drivers' fight against deregulation

On 14 August, the Uber taxi fare mobile phone app was banned in Berlin. This followed protests in cities across Europe against the software.

Dave Wallis, a London taxi driver, RMT member and Bob Crow's cousin, says why drivers are campaigning against the app


The smartphone app works out fares using GPS. We say this is like using a taxi meter, which only London taxi drivers are legally entitled to do. This is a right that drivers gain from completing the 'Knowledge of London' and attempts to undermine this are an assault on our livelihoods.

Why anyone should want to spend an average of five years studying the London Knowledge when a smartphone app can offer similar privileges is a no brainer.

I believe the allowance of such apps to be another attack on the public transport network, alongside privatisation and deregulation favoured under the Tory-led coalition and London's Mayor Boris Johnson.

June protest

The June protest was superbly attended by drivers and supported by all trade organisations. TfL claimed the protest was pointless. But there were over 10,000 drivers, gridlocking roads from Trafalgar Square all the way west to Notting Hill and East to Tower Hill.

Bridges were also blocked so traffic going south and north was severely affected. Our protest was a complete success.

But now the battle continues. RMT Taxi division held a flash protest on Wednesday 9 July at TfL's Palestra offices, outside a meeting to discuss taxi tariffs. We picketed outside and were supported by passing London taxi drivers and members of the public.
TfL has also said that that the London taxi trade is here to stay and they are not trying to deregulate. But I can assure everyone who uses our iconic taxis that TfL are carrying out what we call back door deregulation.

They have flooded the market by giving permission for satellite minicab/private hire companies to set up in night clubs, shopping centres etc, impacting on the work of the London taxi driver. This is without the illegal touting going on the street, inside stations etc.

London taxi drivers' earnings have dropped more than 50% over the past six years. So when TfL say the London taxi trade is here to stay, I can tell you we will start to disappear off the streets as it will not be financially possible to run our vehicles.

MP Margaret Hodge has written to Boris Johnson asking why TfL allows cars to take bookings through the app without a licence to operate in the capital. London taxi drivers want a fair and level playing field. But TfL don't want to play fair, so our fight will continue.

http://www.socialistparty.org.uk/articles/19116