

the**socialist**postbag**Do you have something to say?**

Send your news, views and criticism in not more than 150 words to Socialist Postbag, PO Box 24697, London E11 1YD, or phone 020 8988 8771, email: editors@socialistparty.org.uk. We reserve the right to shorten letters. Don't forget to give your name, address and phone number. Confidentiality will be respected if requested.

Cuts hit hard

My local Citizens Advice Bureau has already had its funds cut and employee hours reduced. If it took us six months to get a finance plan in place, what about those under immediate threat? If you go to the "drop-in", they just refer you back to the finance adviser (who has had her hours cut and is predicting even longer queues after the cuts). This will leave the most vulnerable even more vulnerable. Meanwhile we're returning to one of the most regressive policies yet, widely employed during the Thatcher era. Bed and breakfasts are being block-booked for homeless victims of the cuts. And what about those people who slip through the net and end up sleeping on the streets?



The Con-Dems hope to increase public housing rents while slashing housing benefit. They say the money generated will build more houses, but as the key client is not going to be able to afford to pay the rent and is probably going to be made homeless, I don't see how this is going to happen.

Rosemary Smith

Franchising torture

The US army logs released by WikiLeaks paint a brutal picture of the torturing and killing of innocent Iraqi civilians in a war fought to boost oil profits and defend western power and prestige. The logs confirm that Al Qa'ida, the supposed reason for the 2003 invasion was almost non-existent at the time but the occupation vastly increased its bombings and support by 2008. Now US politicians want

to get out, the military seem to have been handing over civilian captives to notorious Iraqi army squads such as the Wolf Brigade, former members of Saddam Hussein's elite Republican Guards. The 'forces of democracy' stand to one side as prisoners are handed over to torture squads. There was no requirement to report any incident where US forces were not directly involved even though they were using a franchising system to murder and torture prisoners. New information about deaths and maiming of civilians and troops could add to anger about Britain's involvement in this bloody war. Socialists must support Iraq's working masses and poor in the building of independent political representation against the imperialist powers, the sectarian militias, other warlords and the multinationals who only bring warfare and poverty.

Keith Whitehead

Result!

When I came into work on Wednesday 20 October, three of us in the office were arguing with another colleague about fighting back against the cuts. He said: "you may as well not bother and just get on with it as there is nothing you can do about it". I told him to look at what's happening in France and he said 'well it is achieving anything?' Anyway that was at nine in the morning and he came up to me at 1.30pm and said he would be on the Bristol march on the following Saturday. He asked if it was only those in the union who could attend and asked me the details. Result!

Damhnait Kelly
Public sector worker, Bristol

Positive Tories

The chancellor, George Osborne, said two things in his Comprehensive Spending Review speech about transport in the West Midlands. He said he will extend the Midland Metro, which is welcome. Then he said he'd refurbish Birmingham New Street station. Now the Tories used to complain that New Labour announced positive things over and over again. But here George is announcing work that has already started, and started under the previous government. Are the Tories going to announce something remotely positive every few days to deflect attention from the cuts?

Pete, Worcester

TV review:
How the rich beat the taxman

A worker in Revenue and Customs (HMRC) and PCS union member comments on the recent Channel 4 Dispatches programme.

THE EVIDENCE revealed by the Dispatches programme challenges government claims that "we're all in it together." It counterposes the proposed government clampdown on tax havens to the personal tax affairs of key government ministers who themselves use tax havens or creative tax measures, basically to avoid paying tax.

The Tax Justice Network, set up by people like accountant Richard Murphy, working with unions like the PCS, has done excellent work to expose these tax dodges. The Network's international director John Christensen said: "Tax havens function for the sole purpose of allowing people and companies to avoid and evade tax law and other regulations in the countries where they live or work."

The amount of funds held 'off-shore' by individuals is about \$11.5 trillion – so the amount lost every year in tax revenue on the income from these assets adds up to about \$250 billion – five times what the World Bank estimated was needed to halve world poverty by 2015!

PCS is campaigning to close this tax gap – currently estimated at £120 billion. And a 'Robin Hood' (Tobin) tax could raise some £300 billion through charging just 0.5% on sterling currency transactions by banks between countries, although the companies involved will also strive to avoid those measures!

Tax avoidance seriously undermines public services and the development of a more equal society, both in Britain and globally. But swingeing cuts in HMRC, responsible for bringing in tax revenue, have already destroyed over 20,000 jobs with a further 5,000 job cuts and 200



Philip Green: 'I'm so bloody rich!'

office closures expected by 2011.

The coalition is reinvesting £900 million over four years for work against tax avoidance. HMRC is expected to bring in an extra £7 billion in revenue by 2014/15. But the money is being reinvested from cuts elsewhere, from other areas where HMRC is already struggling to pro-

vide basic customer service for people who can't afford accountants to sort things out for them.

Danny Alexander, chief secretary to the Treasury, claims "we will be ruthless with tax avoiders", but these examples in the Dispatches programme and elsewhere challenge this:

Andrew Mitchell, secretary of state for international development, is involved in a company, Ingenious, alongside Ryan Giggs and David Beckham, which was registered in the tax haven of the British Virgin Islands.

Sir Phillip Green, owner of Top Shop and BHS and now government adviser, transferred ownership of his companies to his wife who is based in Monaco, a tax haven with no income tax.

Transport secretary Phillip Hammond is paid dividends instead of wages from his company Castlemead Ltd so doesn't have to pay national insurance on this payment. Chancellor George Osborne's father has set up a trust fund which means 40% inheritance tax will not have to be paid on his millions.

A recent article on This is Money financial website says that HMRC's permanent secretary for tax David Hartnett let phone giant Vodafone avoid paying vast sums of tax (stated as £6 billion) on profits racked up by a subsidiary based in a tax haven.

For ordinary working people it's time to come together to change the system. Nationalise these financial institutions under democratic workers' control with compensation paid on the basis of proven need. Close all tax loopholes and reinvest profits in the interests of the majority and not those of the minority super-rich.

On your bus, IDS!

WORK AND Pensions Secretary Iain Duncan Smith (IDS) wants to blame the "feckless" unemployed for mass unemployment in the south Wales valleys. He claims Merthyr is an example of a place where people had become "static" and didn't know that if they got on the bus they'd be in Cardiff an hour later and could look for work there.

Dave Reid,
Cardiff

Maybe IDS should look a bit closer to home when calling on Merthyr's unemployed to "get on the bus" to look for work. Why not ask Tory MP Alun Cairns why he never caught the Cardiff bus when, as a member of the Welsh Assembly, he claimed thousands of pounds for a second home in Cardiff while living 30 miles away near

Bridgend, about the same distance as Merthyr from Cardiff?

Or how about members of his cabinet who are London MPs but claimed they needed expenses for a second home in Westminster for parliament's late night sittings? Couldn't they have caught a night bus home?

Leaving aside the £25 a week in bus fares to be taken off the minimum wage available in Cardiff, it just isn't possible for people to find jobs in Cardiff.

According to the PCS union there are nine Cardiff unemployed chasing every job in Cardiff. In Merthyr there are 1,670 unemployed people and 39 job vacancies, all temporary and part-time. In Merthyr and neighbouring Blaenau Gwent there are more unemployed than there are job vacancies in all of Wales! And this is before 35,000 public sector jobs



The new transport minister?

are cut in Wales by Duncan Smith's government.

This "on your bus" remark is reminiscent of Norman Tebbit's "on your bike" in the 1980s, but also of the authorities' attitude in the 1930s Depression when the unemployed were blamed for not travelling to look for work.

Stand by for more lectures to the unemployed and public sector workers while MPs pretend the banking crisis and their own expenses scandal never happened.

Socialism Today

The Socialist Party's magazine
November 2010 issue includes:

- **Currency war**

Currency conflicts will drive world economy into deeper crisis, writes Lynn Walsh.

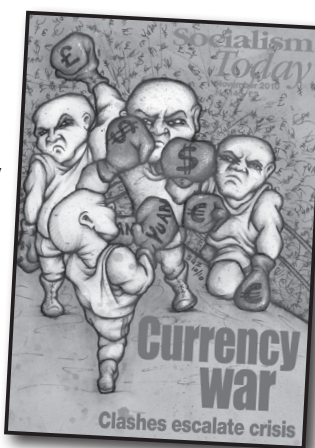
- **Is Red Plenty possible?**

Peter Taaffe writes on the planned economy and the struggle for socialism

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**Bolton: Police brutality exposed**

ON 20 October Alan Clough, a retired corporation gardener from Bury and Unison member, was due in Bolton Magistrates' Court charged with assaulting a police officer during the rally against the far right English Defence League in Bolton in March.

What the police didn't know when they charged him was that the local ITV team covering the event had video evidence which clearly

showed Alan merely linking arms with other demonstrators and not hitting anyone. Instead he was hit with a baton, and being punched while on the ground by another officer.

People helping Alan to his feet are also seen being attacked by police. After seven hours in a cell, Alan's injuries at police hands required medical attention.

On seeing the video the police

decided to drop all charges the day before the hearing. Police brutality will not now come to light.

Alan now faces a struggle to recover a four figure sum for legal fees as he was not entitled to legal aid. Frustrated but undeterred, Alan attended a Bolton Trades Council rally against cuts that same day, on the exact spot where he was wrongfully arrested seven months earlier.

Paul Gerrard, Bury NUT