

Wave of protests against Con-Dem cuts



Manchester health workers join the protests.

photo Manchester SP

Sheffield

THREE HUNDRED students and trade unionists marched from Sheffield University on 23 October to swell the size of the Yorkshire and Humber TUC rally outside Sheffield town hall to 1,000 protesters, reports Alistair Tice. The march included a lively and noisy Youth Fight for Jobs (YFJ) contingent.

At the rally, a tightly controlled speakers list of Labour Party members and pro-Labour trade unionists lambasted the Con-Dem coalition and Sheffield's Lib Dem council for their savage cuts.

Sheffield MP and coalition deputy prime minister Nick Clegg, the not-so-local boy made bad, was singled out for the most withering attacks.

He was graphically depicted in a Unison advertisement as "Cleggzilla - bringing havoc to a city near you".

However, it was Socialist Party member and PCS union executive member Marion Lloyd who drew the greatest applause when she said: "I am pleased that the TUC has called a national demonstration against the cuts but we can't wait five months, we need it now to build confidence to prepare for a one-day public sector general strike."

Drawing on the example of France, Marion said that to build unity we must oppose all cuts. Marion applauded Sheffield Labour councillors for joining the protest, but called on them to "put your money where your mouths

are". After a by-election, Labour, with two Greens, now have more councillors than the Lib Dems, so Marion said: "Take control of the council, stop the Lib Dem cuts and start by reinstating the 95 jobs cut at Sheffield Futures" (the city's youth careers service).

About 30 people, including several local PCS members, attended the post-rally YFJ meeting to hear speakers from Socialist Students, PCS Young Members Network and YFJ.

York

LEIGH WILKS reports from York where around 250 marchers took part in a demonstration on 23 October. Marching through Parliament Street and the main shopping thoroughfare of Coney Street, the demo

Join the protests

- **Birmingham** protest against university fees and cuts!
Thursday 28 October, 5pm
St Philips Place, Birmingham city centre
Organised by Socialist Students and Youth Fight for Jobs

- **Leicestershire** Against Cuts demonstration: No cuts! Defend public services!
Saturday 30 October, 12 noon
Assemble 12 noon, Victoria Park, London Road, Leicester - near the cafe.

- Stop the cuts - don't let **Hastings** go to hell
Saturday 30 October, 11am
Robertson Street, Hastings, near Debenhams
Hallowe'en rally against the cuts, called by Hastings trades council and Sertuc.
Fancy dress optional!

- Lobby **Liverpool** city council
Wednesday 10 November, from 4.30pm
Outside Liverpool town hall
Called by Liverpool trades council, supported by the North West Shop Stewards Network

attracted cheers and claps of support from shoppers obviously sympathetic to the cause.

Along with York MP Hugh Bayley and representatives from Unison, the PCS and the UCU, Leigh was invited to speak as the secretary of York Socialist Party.

Apart from speaking about the insane BBC 'tour' that asked ordinary voters what they would cut, Leigh reminded demonstrators of the amount of money wasted on the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the lessons of the poll tax battle - the last time the British public faced down the blatant unfairness of a capitalist Tory government.

Lincoln

AROUND 200 workers and students marched through Lincoln against cuts in public services, in a protest called by Lincoln and district trades council, with Unison, PCS, UCU, GMB, NUS and RMT banners.

Manchester

HUGH CAFFREY reports from Manchester where 100 trade unionists and community campaigners rallied in St

Peter's Square on 23 October, organised by the Shop Stewards Network. Afterwards, a democratic discussion agreed to a day of protests on 8 December, when Manchester city council will hold its next full meeting.

Wrexham

50 PEOPLE took part in a Wrexham demonstration organised by the North Wales National Shop Stewards Network, with contingents from the PCS and UCU unions, reports Keith Patten.

Demonstrations also took place on 20 October, the day of the comprehensive spending review. Around 1,000 workers and students marched to Downing Street in London. In Newcastle there was a protest of 500 people angry with the government plans to virtually destroy our public services. 500 public sector workers attended an evening rally in Leeds.

Other 20 October protests included Southampton, Bolton, Basildon, Cardiff, Exeter and Huddersfield. In Nottingham, protests took place on 18, 20 and 21 October. See page 2 and www.socialistparty.org.uk for more protest reports.

Unite general secretary election Right wing candidate on another planet

BACKED BY Murdoch's press and somehow able to fund full-page adverts in newspapers, it's not surprising that Les Bayliss, right-wing candidate for Unite general secretary, condemns strike action, particularly that of the BA cabin crew recently. In an interview with the Guardian he said the BA dispute: "Demonstrated that the union militancy that characterised the 1970s and 1980s did not work... It was like looking at an episode of Life on Mars."

Kevin Parslow

But it's Bayliss who must be living on another planet if he thinks the trade union movement can stand idly by and watch hundreds of thousands of jobs go in the Con-Dem assault on the working class. It would be dangerous to immobilise the largest union in Britain at this crucial time for our class. That makes it necessary to vigorously campaign for the United Left candidate Len McCluskey as the first general secretary of the 1.5 million-member union.

There is clear support for Len in the union's ranks. In nominations he won by far the most, 829 branch



Unite members need a fighting leader.

photo Bob Severn

and workplace nominations, compared to 214 for Bayliss, 137 for Jerry Hicks and 96 for Gail Cartmail. But victory cannot be guaranteed as it is clear that Bayliss does not appeal to the activists but is attempting to win over the more inert members who are not involved in day-to-day

struggles.

That is why Socialist Party members have warned that, despite his radical programme in this election, we cannot support Jerry Hicks in this first-past-the-post election. Jerry is putting forward, amongst other policies, the ideas of the election of

union officials and a workers' wage for them. The Socialist Party supports these demands but we fight for them in the union's structures and the United Left organisation within the union. Socialist MPs implemented this policy in the 1980s and early 1990s.

On the other hand, Len has raised the Liverpool struggles of the 1980s and the poll tax campaign as examples of how Tory prime minister Margaret Thatcher, whose government in the 1980s was far stronger than the current Con-Dem coalition, could be forced to back down and even to resign by mass struggles of our class.

The danger is of Jerry's intervention splitting the left vote and letting in Bayliss. Jerry won a very credible 40,000 votes in last year's Amicus election but Bayliss's sponsor, retiring joint general secretary Derek Simpson, got 60,000! Bayliss has support in the ex-T&G side too. So socialists have to battle to ensure that the right wing is removed from power in the union.

But socialists will not give Len or Jerry a blank cheque. Neither supports disaffiliation from the Labour Party, but even Len has been forced to say that if his proposal to increase resources into the party doesn't

work, he will have to consider another strategy!

Extra 'resources' can only mean human ones, as the union has thrown millions of pounds down the Labour Party drain, so where will he find new members? Not amongst workers disgusted by the New Labour government or by Labour councils carrying out cuts.

Despite Ed Miliband being elected as Labour leader with the votes of trade unionists, it is already clear that he is distancing himself from the unions' demands. He and many other Labour MPs were absent from the vote on John McDonnell's private member's bill to eradicate technicalities as a reason to thwart strike action.

Whoever is elected general secretary of Unite now will face a period of struggles on the industrial and political scenes. This will put enormous pressure on all union leaders to deliver and fight, therefore the prospect of having a left union leader elected is important.

Unite members' participation on the demos on 23 October was welcome and working with the other left-led unions will be important in the battle against the cuts. Only a victory for Len McCluskey could begin to move Unite in this direction.