

STOP THE CON-DEMS' SLAVE LABOUR SCHEME

Fight for real jobs!

ON 7 November the Con-Dem government leaked its plans to force the unemployed into unpaid slave labour. 2.5 million people are already out of work and it is estimated that government cuts will mean 725,000 jobs go in the public sector. Another 900,000 job losses in the private sector are forecast as consumer spending drops and private contracts with the public sector are torn up.

Paul Callanan
Youth Fight for Jobs

These proposals amount to the criminalisation of the unemployed. Like community service, people on Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) for over one year will be forced to do menial tasks like painting fences or picking up litter for 30 hours a week for their benefit. The maximum weekly JSA is £65, with less paid to under-25s.

The punishment for refusing this 'work' will be the stopping of JSA for three months. As the government tries to implement its cuts agenda, the unemployed could be used to replace public sector workers on the cheap.

The idea of American style 'workfare' has been trumpeted by the government since the election campaign back in May, and is a pet project of the millionaire Tory work and pensions secretary Iain Duncan Smith.

Government ministers talk about unemployment as if it is some dirty habit that people need to be weaned off. This shows just how detached from real life they are.

Lib Dem Danny Alexander, the chief secretary to the treasury, has said on the BBC's Politics Show that the 'radical reforms' to the welfare system are aimed at getting 'the un-

employed used to work and increasing employability through workplace experience" and "ensuring that everyone benefits from going out to work".

In reality the reforms will demoralise and demotivate people who can't find work. The unemployed would end up in a cycle of unpaid work, with less time and money to actually look for employment.

To put sanctions on people for being unemployed is entirely unjustified. There are only around 500,000 vacancies now – before the cuts have really bitten. The government should be investing in public services and rolling out a huge programme of public works such as house building and other infrastructure projects

to create jobs, rather than slashing them.

Youth Fight for Jobs is organising to fightback against these swingeing attacks on the rights and living standards of young people. We need a huge campaign that links the unemployed, students and workers to fight for real jobs and free education and to beat this government of the rich.

At the Trades Union Congress conference in September the trade union leaders committed themselves to call a national demo against youth unemployment before Christmas. This is now more urgent than ever.

Come to the Youth Fight for Jobs conference – see page 5

"PCS exposed the problem that there are just not enough jobs for the unemployed to take up, following Iain Duncan Smith's comments that the unemployed should just get on a bus to get a job.

Now there has been media coverage of the government's welfare reform plans about compulsory manual labour for those unemployed workers who cannot get a job.

These proposals are likely to make the situation worse as some employers will rush at the chance to get labour on the cheap. So these plans could reduce the limited number of job vacancies available.

The government should focus instead on job creation so that the unemployed can have a real opportunity to get a job rather than vilifying them in the media."

Katrine Williams

PCS civil service union, DWP group vice president



We need a huge campaign that links the unemployed, students and workers to fight for real jobs.
photo Paul Mattsson

whatwestandfor

The Socialist Party fights for socialist change – a democratic society run for the needs of all and not the profits of a few. We also fight, in our day-to-day campaigning, for every possible improvement for working-class people.

As capitalism dominates the globe, the struggle for genuine socialism must be international.

The Socialist Party is part of the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI), a democratic, socialist international that organises in over 40 countries.

Our demands include:

Work & Income

- Trade union struggle to increase the minimum wage to £8 an hour without exemptions as an immediate step towards £10 an hour. For an annual increase in the minimum wage linked to average earnings.
- All workers, including part-timers, temps, casual and migrant workers to have trade union rates of pay, employment protection, and sickness and holiday rights from day one of employment.
- An immediate 50% increase in the state retire-

ment pension, as a step towards a living pension. Reinstatement the link with average earnings now.

- Reject 'Welfare to Work'. For the right to decent benefits, education, training, or a job, without compulsion.
- Scrap the anti-trade union laws! For fighting trade unions, democratically controlled by their members. Full-time union officials to be regularly elected and receive no more than a worker's wage.
- A maximum 35-hour week with no loss of pay.

Public services

- No to privatisation and the Private Finance Initiative (PFI). Renationalise all privatised utilities and services, with compensation paid only on the basis of proven need.
- Fully fund all services and run them under accountable, democratic committees that include representatives of service workers and users.
- Free, publicly run, good quality education, available to all at any age. Abolish university tuition fees now and introduce a living grant. No to academies!
- A socialist NHS to provide for everyone's health needs – free at the point of use and under democratic control. Kick out private contractors!

- Keep council housing publicly owned. For a massive building programme of publicly-owned housing, on an environmentally sustainable basis, to provide good quality homes with low rents.

Environment

- Major research and investment into replacing fossil fuels with renewable energy and into ending the problems of early obsolescence and unrecycled waste.
- Public ownership of the energy generating industries. No to nuclear power. No to Trident.
- A democratically planned, low fare, publicly-owned transport system, as part of an overall plan against environmental pollution.

Rights

- Oppose discrimination on the grounds of race, sex, disability, sexuality, age, and all other forms of prejudice.
- Repeal all laws that trample over civil liberties. For the right to protest! End police harassment.
- Defend abortion rights. For a woman's right to choose when and whether to have children.
- For the right to asylum. No to racist immigration laws.

New workers' party

- For a new mass workers' party drawing together workers, young people and activists from workplace, community, environmental and anti-war campaigns, to provide a fighting, political alternative to the pro-big business parties.
- Trade unions to disaffiliate from the Labour Party now and aid the building of a new workers' party!

Socialism and Internationalism

- No to imperialist wars and occupations. Withdraw the troops immediately from Iraq and Afghanistan!
- Tax the super-rich! For a socialist government to take into public ownership the top 150 companies and banks that dominate the British economy, and run them under democratic working-class control and management. Compensation to be paid only on the basis of proven need.
- A democratic socialist plan of production based on the interests of the overwhelming majority of people, and in a way that safeguards the environment.
- No to the bosses' neo-liberal European Union! For a socialist Europe and a socialist world!