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www.socialistparty.org.uk

Protesting against all of the cuts

Stroud

ON A march organised by Stroud Against Cuts and Gloucestershire Trades Council, the small town echoed to the sound of 500 anti-cuts protesters determined to oppose the cuts agenda of the coalition government and Tory-led county council.

County library services face 43% cuts with 23 libraries out of the current 43 to be lost, and many serve catchment areas of over 10,000 people. Of the 32 council funded youth services, only six district hubs, with restricted access, will remain. Stroud district council faces one of the largest percentage cuts in the government grant of any council in the country, 28.6% by 2012/13.

Trade unionists from PCS, Unison, Unite, and Usdaw spoke alongside campaigners, Labour, Green and Socialist Party representatives and a local author. Tax dodging by the rich was mentioned by several speakers.

After the demo a debate took place between a former Labour MP, a Green Party councillor, PCS Wales chair and DWP group national vice president Katrine Williams, and Chris Moore of Gloucestershire Socialist Party. Katrine and Chris made their opposition to all cuts clear, supported by most in the audience.

But the former Labour MP thought this position might put off those from single-issue campaigns.

At previous anti-cuts meetings Socialist Party members have raised the idea of a 'no cuts budget' with Green and Labour representatives, both have seven district councillors.

The Greens showed initial interest but have made no commitment, Labour has stayed silent. The anti-cuts movement is building in Stroud and Gloucestershire and will challenge all those imposing or supporting the cuts.

Chris Moore
Gloucestershire Socialist Party

Socialist Party member and PCS organiser Katrine Williams speaks to Stroud demonstrators. *photo Chris Moore*

> *Socialist Party members have raised the idea of a 'no cuts budget' with Green and Labour representatives... The Greens showed initial interest but have made no commitment, Labour has stayed silent.*

Bolton

UNISON MEMBERS working for Bolton council lobbied the council executive as it met to accept the proposals being put forward by directors for £90 million cuts over the next four years.

Around 100 people turned up to make loads of noise and show their disdain for the executive. We then went into the town hall to hear the cuts plans.

The council says it has to cut £60 million out of its spending over the next two years. That's roughly 25% of its controllable budget, while the number of looked-after adults and children in the district increases.

The cuts will be frontloaded, including an estimated £42 million in 2011/12 and £19 million in 2012/13.

Services will be 'downsized' with many social welfare programmes being abolished. Children's Services is one of the areas hardest hit.

Between 600 and 1,000 jobs would go over the next 15 months. Around 1,300 council employees are now receiving letters informing them that their jobs are at risk.

The council meeting ended to chants of "Con-Dems out!" from the lobby. Forthcoming protests include a Bolton libraries campaign protest on 5 February, 11-1pm outside Bolton library, and a lobby of the council executive on 14 February from 2.45pm at Bolton town hall.

Andy Thomas, Bolton Unison (personal capacity), and Robert Mitchell, South Lancashire Socialist Party

Havant

OVER 150 college students and workers joined together to march through Havant in the first demonstration the small Hampshire town has seen in many years.

The demonstration, organised by the Havant section of PACT, the Portsmouth Anti-Cuts group, began in the centre of town and ended outside the constituency surgery of MP David Willetts, the Minister of State for Science and Universities.

The march was supported by Portsmouth trades council as well as the PCS, Unison and Unite union branches, and was led by community activists and college students from Havant.

The Havant march, which followed a larger march in Portsmouth, will in turn be followed by a lobby of the Portsmouth city council budget setting meeting on 8 February. PACT will be challenging the councillors by presenting a 'needs budget' as an alternative to the austerity budget of cuts they will be voting on.

For more information contact portsmouthagainstcuts@gmail.com

Ben Norman

Southwark

MORE THAN 200 council workers, campaigners and residents protested outside Southwark's full council meeting on 25 January. They were angry at the Labour council's plans to slash £33 million from this year's and £18 million from next year's budgets.

These cuts will have a drastic effect on all services and will result in 400 council workers losing their jobs this year.

Councillors were clearly worried about a big protest as they did their best to reduce the size of the protest by calling the meeting at 4pm in the afternoon.

They also tried to prevent protesters from standing outside the front of the town hall by locking the gates at the front of the building and deploying council wardens and big numbers of police at the entrance to the town hall. However, this did not prevent a very lively protest and rally with speeches from local campaigners and trade unionists.

Chris Newby

For the latest reports on meetings, protests and industrial action taking place against cuts, and to find out about meetings and events in your area, go to:
www.socialistparty.org.uk

Socialist Party congress appeal
Fund the fightback!

AT THE end of February, delegates from every branch of the Socialist Party will be meeting at the Socialist Party Congress 2011 to debate the political situation in Britain and the way forward for the party. There will be a national fighting fund appeal at this congress and the party is asking every member and supporter to make a donation to enable the party to finance its campaigning work, particularly in the anti-cuts movement and amongst trade unionists and students.

Ken Douglas
Socialist Party national treasurer

The current coalition government is poised to tear apart our NHS and vital council services, axing jobs and handing over privatised contracts to their big-business pals in the City – the same ones who oversaw the near-collapse of the banking system.

We need to get the message out that this government can be defeated by a determined mass anti-cuts campaign with trade unionists at its head. This means printing the leaflets, posters and placards to enable us to participate as effectively as possible in every lobby, every protest and every demo that takes place.

In the May elections it will be vital that socialists provide an alternative to the cuts agendas of all three main parties. Labour councils should be fighting the cuts but they are following Ed Miliband's lead and slashing services. The reality is that if a Labour government was in power the councils would be implementing Labour cuts. Therefore we should be aiming to stand as many candidates as possible as part of the Trade Union and Socialist Coalition.

This all costs money. Printing costs are going up and it can cost over £1,000 just to produce the placards for one demo. Ensuring we have enough leaflets can cost even more than that. Mark Serwortka, PCS general secretary, predicts that one million people will take part on the Trade Union Congress national demonstration on 26 March. Everyone on that march needs to see the socialist alternative to cuts!

The postal costs for the Socialist have increased by £8,000 in the last year alone. As a result of these and other rising costs we urgently need to boost the Socialist Party campaign funds. Can you help? Can you make a donation and ask other members and supporters to make one too?

You can make your donation via the website, by calling 020 8988 8777 or by post using the form below. Please make all cheques payable to the Socialist Party and mark your donation 'Congress 2011 appeal'.

The madness of King George cuts

THE FOUR-YEAR campaign to keep the accident and emergency department open at King George hospital, east London, continued on Saturday with another demonstration from the hospital to Ilford town centre. Also at stake are maternity and other services.

This plan will devastate local health care. Ambulance drivers have reported that they have been diverted back to King George when the nearest alternative, Queen's in Romford, cannot cope. The plans by the primary care trust will affect at least 700,000 people who face a significantly longer – and in some cases potentially fatal – journey to Whipps Cross hospital in Waltham Forest or to Queen's.

The anger of local people has forced the two local MPs – Tory Lee Scott and New Labour's Mike Gapes – to back the campaign. And they do so without a hint of irony.

It was down to two Socialist Party speakers to point out that successive governments – from Thatcher in the 1980s, the Blair/Brown administrations, and now the Con-Dem coalition – have systematically eroded public healthcare. Their comments really struck a chord with the crowd.

Although the supposedly final decision to close these essential services has been taken, it has yet to be ratified. Con-Dem cuts cost lives - the campaign continues.

Manny Thain

John Macreadie memorial

To pay tribute to the work, ideas and life of John Macreadie, who sadly passed away on 22 December 2010, the Public and Commercial Services union (PCS) is hosting a memorial on Monday 7 February.

A Socialist Party fighting fund appeal has been launched in the name of John Macreadie, at the request of Terry Adams with support from John's wife Roisin.

John was a courageous class fighter and a militant leader in his work for the PCS and its precursor the Civil and Public Services Association (CPSA), as well as the wider trade union and labour movement.

Please send donations, made payable to the Socialist Party, to PO Box 24697, London E11 1YD. An obituary for John was carried in issue 652 of the Socialist and can be read at www.socialistparty.org.uk

John Macreadie memorial
Monday 7 February, 5pm-8pm
Room 4.4, PCS headquarters, 160 Falcon Road, Clapham Junction, London SW11 2LN

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SOCIALIST PARTY FIGHTING FUND

January-March 2011 — deadline: 8 April

	£ target	£ received
Southern	1,200	1,183
East Midlands	1,550	584
London	6,100	1,597
Eastern	1,200	287
North West	1,200	235
Northern	600	103
Wales	2,300	354
South West	1,400	172
South East	1,000	117
West Midlands	2,100	223
Yorkshire	2,900	300
England & Wales	3,450	52
TOTAL	25,000	5,212