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Defend jobs and services

PROTEST

26 MARCH

THE PROTESTS and occupations of council budget-setting meetings across the country are a sign of the opposition to the Con-Dem cuts. Wage cuts, job cuts, benefit cuts and now cuts to pensions are stirring the anger of workers young and old. Never has so much been taken from so many by so few.

Nick Chaffey
Secretary, Southern region
Socialist Party

Recently a retired council worker gave me a £10 donation for the Socialist at a county council lobby in Winchester. He was there to support his daughter who works for Sure Start children's centres. The council aims to cut these services by £6 million.

He told me how he grew up in a council house in Winchester and walked to school in his bare feet. He said everything we had gained since then was now under threat. Young mothers came to that lobby to protest at the cuts, angry at the possible loss of these vital services.

In Southampton mass meetings and demonstrations of council workers have opposed the cuts to jobs, pay and services.

At Southampton General Hospital over 200 privatised NHS cleaners are striking over unpaid wages and sick pay.

Parents gathered with their children at Hampshire county council to deliver 12,000 signatures opposing cuts to Sure Start. Opposition to the closure of a local NHS Walk-In



photo S.Beishon

service has forced a u-turn. Revolt is brewing against the Con-Dems' austerity.

The fightback is not just growing in the public sector either. Ford workers are holding a national lobby over attacks to their pensions that could result in Ford's first national strike since the 1970s. The pressure is being felt by ordinary working people who face paying mounting

bills from frozen pay packets.

Everywhere there is angry talk over the impact of cuts. The Trades Union Congress demonstration in London on 26 March will be a beacon to those who want to fight back.

The message of the Socialist Party will be to turn that anger into effective action. To tie together the thousand threads of anti-cuts campaigns across the country into united action to oppose all cuts. The call for a one-day public sector strike has been supported in mass meetings of council workers.

This must be linked to a bold political alternative to the 'Cuts Accord' of the Tories, Liberals and Labour. We don't want Con-Dem quick cuts or Labour's slow cuts. We say no cuts!

The call by the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition to stand anti-cuts election candidates on a programme to defend all jobs, services and benefits will be a vital step in building a political backbone to the anti-cuts movement.

Last week a young Unite union member came to change my electricity meter. Soon we were discussing the cuts. John bought a copy of the Socialist and has now joined the Socialist Party. He will be with other Socialist Party members on the TUC demonstration, putting a fighting, socialist alternative to the cuts. Join us there!

Support University and College Union (UCU) members, striking to defend jobs, pay and pensions. See page 11 for more.

Japan: Tsunami results in misery for millions



AS WE go to press the horrendous tsunami and earthquakes have claimed an estimated 3,000 lives in Japan. The final toll could be tens of thousands.

Millions of people in the affected areas of the north-east are without water, food, electricity or gas. More than 500,000 people have been left homeless.

Across the country many more face blackouts and, far worse, the threat of a nuclear disaster.

Ordinary people around the world will feel tremendous sympathy for those who have suffered such loss.

It is not only the loss of loved ones but of property and possessions too, even any reminder of those who have died.

Now in the aftermath there is a struggle to obtain the basic human requirements, including food and shelter.

Japan is the third largest economy on the planet. But international experiences of natural disasters show that we can have no confidence in the profit-driven capitalist system to efficiently and quickly allocate resources to those in need.

Almost a third of Japan's energy comes from nuclear power. In fact Japan is seen as the cutting edge of technology.

But, as this crisis has exposed, there can be no trust in the safety of nuclear energy production.

The Socialist Party supports the growing demands for an end to the use of nuclear power.

See page 5 for a report from Japan

