

# Northern Ireland Broad left gains in union elections

**N**ORTHERN IRELAND'S largest trade union, NIPSA, has completed elections for its executive body, the general council. In a significant turnaround from last year's results, the left activist group, NIPSA broad left, which includes Socialist Party members, scored a spectacular success.

**Padraig Mulholland,**  
NIPSA Public Officers' Executive  
and Socialist Party (CWI Ireland)  
member, Belfast

The broad left increased its seats on the 25-member executive from four to 12, with three Socialist Party members topping the poll.

The Northern Ireland Public Service Alliance (NIPSA) represents over 45,000 members from across the civil and public services and the voluntary sector.

Although the results leave the

right wing in control, with a one seat majority, the outcome of the election is a clear signal that members want the union to change direction and to begin seriously to fight against cuts.

NIPSA has a significant membership base in health, local government and the civil service in the North. It can have a considerable influence in mobilising public sector workers for action against cuts.

Decisive control of the union executive by the right wing for the last year is one of the factors that allowed them to smother struggles by public sector workers.

Now the left on the executive can expose the union right wing and build stronger support for resistance to the cuts.

A key issue for NIPSA is taking political action to complement industrial action. The left, including the Socialist Party, has been fighting for

NIPSA to do this, including supporting candidates to oppose the cuts imposed by the Northern Ireland Assembly Executive.

Last year's NIPSA conference voted by a majority to move towards political action. But the motion was lost due to the undemocratic requirement for a two-thirds majority.

In the recent elections, the broad left manifesto made the call to: "Put genuine anti-sectarian working class representatives in the Assembly to fight cuts".

The subsequent vote for broad left candidates reinforces the support for the argument for political representation.

This election is an important step in a positive direction for the left in NIPSA. With a determined left programme the union can begin to become a vehicle for resistance to cuts.



NIPSA members on the march.

photo Socialist Party Ireland

## Privatisation threat to the blood service?

**N**HS WORKERS in NHS Blood and Transplant (NHSBT) were amazed to find themselves targeted in a series of carefully orchestrated leaks from the Department of Health, informing us that the government was looking at privatising 'key elements' of the Blood Service. Incredibly they have branded NHSBT as a 'quango'.

Various journalists and blogs close to the Tory party quoted Department of Health 'sources' to the effect that they had invited firms such as Capita and DHL to look over the "transport and storage of blood", whatever that might mean. The only bit of NHSBT explicitly ruled out was the actual collection of blood carried out in church halls, factory canteens and town halls up and down the land by nurses and donor carers.

Any privatisation represents a grave threat to the staff of NHSBT - after all it was the National Audit Office who found the biggest single saving from privatisation was in the pensions of the privatised workers - but also to the service provided. Blood donors would rightly be horrified to see shady Tory spivs turning a profit from their freely given donations.

NHSBT is actually a daily and un-



Nothing is safe from privatisation.

photo Paul Mattsson

sung miracle - every day thousands of people turn up to give a pint of blood, for no payment. That blood is tested and processed to high standards, and given to the patients who need it - irrespective of their wealth or means - just on the basis of clinical need.

Thanks to the way blood is processed in the blood centres, one unit can treat three patients - each pint of blood can be split into red cells, platelets and plasma, and given to

patients with different needs. It is also tested for hepatitis and HIV. It is not something that is open to cost-cutting.

Both the main unions in NHSBT, Unite and Unison, have responded immediately. The workforce are the guardians of this precious service - which actually pre-dates the NHS itself - and they will fight to preserve it for patients and donors.

By NHSBT workers

## Action called off by Birmingham bin workers

**T**HE LONG running dispute between Birmingham city council and its refuse workers ended when agreement was reached on 9 March.

Birmingham refuse workers took four days of strike action before Christmas. This was in opposition to plans to cut salaries by as much as £4,000 a year under the single status agreement between unions and local authority employers. The council blamed sex discrimination

legislation which meant it could not pay bonuses to men that were not available to women.

Industrial action was called off early this year pending further talks. In February the workers had rejected by 95% to 5% an almost identical offer to that which was accepted.

Bin workers will lose between £600 and £4,000 a year. Workers interviewed on local news felt disappoint-

ed but resigned to the situation.

It was clearly a mistake to postpone the dispute when action was effective. Action should have continued while the talks were going on. Local authority unions need to be much more decisive if pay, conditions and jobs are not to be decimated in the future

**Clive Walder, Birmingham  
Socialist Party**

## Left victory in building workers' union

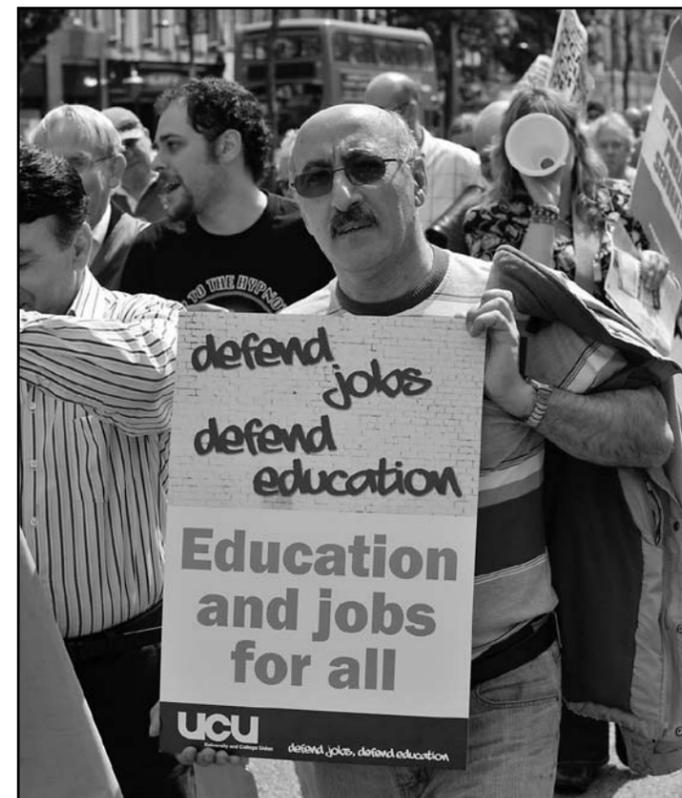
**T**HERE HAS been a victory for the left and the rank and file in building workers' union Ucat. After a long campaign by victimised official Mick Dooley, the Certification Officer has forced general secretary Alan Richie to stand down immediately and ordered a re-run of the

2009 election. The reason for this is because less than half of Ucat's 130,000 members received a ballot paper!

Mick was the runner-up in the election and was sacked last week by the union after being victimised and harassed since late 2009. He

stood in the election on a fighting programme of revitalising the rank and file of the union and taking on the employers. This decision will be welcomed by all those in Ucat who are committed to transforming the union into a fighting organisation.

## Defend jobs and education at Newcastle College



The trade unions need to organise action to save jobs and education.

photo Paul Mattsson

**N**EWCASTLE COLLEGE is threatening to sack 171 workers, including 124 teaching staff. Elaine Brunskill spoke to an instructor, a Unison trade union member, from the college.

Staff found out about the redundancy plans when they received an email from the college. This sent a shock-wave amongst workers and students. The instructor explained this was quickly followed by material from the University and College Union (UCU).

Leaflets and material put out on the internet by UCU explained how the college is blaming austerity cuts, however last year the college made a surplus of £6 million. Also, just days before the redundancy plans were put out, the college announced plans for a new building.

The instructor told how staff at the college, with the threat of being made redundant hanging

over them, were shocked to hear that the principal, Jackie Fisher, received a whopping 32% pay increase last year. According to UCU this took her pay for 2009/2010 to £259,772, making her one of the highest-paid principals in the country.

Furthermore, the instructor pointed out that this generosity was also shown to the leadership team who have been awarded up to £100,000 each. He said: "How can these people justify this while workers are being sacked?"

He went on to explain the impact all this will have on thousands of students who will not be able to access education, just at a time when youth unemployment is soaring.

Workers and students will fight to defend jobs and education at Newcastle college and will be looking to the trade unions, including Unison, to take a lead.