Campaigning against all cuts and privatisation

Tower Hamlets

IN 1921 Poplar councillors, led by George Lansbury, electrified British politics by refusing to make working class East Londoners pay unaffordable rates. They did this while still spending money in the borough to improve the lives of the poor.

By contrast 90 years later, on 8 March, Tower Hamlets council passed through cuts of £72 million over the next three years.

Outrageously, only 50 out of 100 residents who queued for the public gallery were allowed into the cham-

Each group in the council put forward a cuts budget. Independents, Labour, Lib Dems and Respect all meekly blamed central government despite the council having £91 million in reserves.

Socialists argue that councillors should instead set 'needs' budgets based on jobs, housing and services, rather than lining the pockets of the

As the Poplar councillors said: "It is better to break the law than break the poor!

Vik Chechi **Tower Hamlets Socialist Party**

Stoke-on-Trent

STOKE-ON-TRENT CITY council. run by a coalition of Labour, Tory, Lib Dem and independents, has voted to slash jobs and services across the city by £36 million, despite having reserves of £61.5 million!

Stoke Socialist Party has said that councillors can use council reserves and borrowing powers to avoid passing on cuts, which is completely within a council's legal powers. This could buy time to build a massive



Barred from the chamber: Waltham Forest service users.

campaign in opposition to all cuts, and to win the needed money from central government.

The council should follow the example of the 47 1983-87 Liverpool Labour councillors who refused to make cuts and instead won £60 million of extra funding from the then Conservative government. The campaign included a march of 50,000 people.

Stoke Socialist Party members, trade unionists and community campaigners will be standing Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) candidates in the 5 May local elections. Any TUSC candidates elected will vote 'no' to cuts and propose a 'needs budget' instead.

Come along to the TUSC public meeting to find out more:

photo Paul Mattsson Monday 21 March, 7.30pm, The White Star, upstairs, 63 Kingsway, Stoke-on-Trent ST4 1JB

Andy Bentley

Waltham Forest

WHEN THE Waltham Forest Anti-Cuts Union led 100 protesters on 8 March on a lively 'pavement walk' from Walthamstow town square to the London borough's town hall, we were met with barricades around the town hall steps.

Despite the barriers, elderly and disabled people, children who use the music service, and council workers challenged councillors as they tried to sneak in.

Most of the protesters were then refused entry to the public gallery, despite there being spare places. Councillors had attempted to fill the seats with friends and family!

The Labour council's budget proposed £29.5 million of 'savings' this year out of a total of £65 million in four years.

There was no real debate in the chamber, but there was lively and sharp debate between the public gallery and the council chamber!

Labour councillors kept saying that they were protecting the most vulnerable, yet a whole tranche of youth services - Connexions, the behaviour support team, the educational welfare service, the youth offending team - are being cut or axed completely.

Kevin Parslow. secretary, Unite Waltham Forest LE1228 branch

Cumbria

IGNORING A 500-strong anti-cuts demonstration in January, the Labour-Tory coalition leading Cumbria county council has now passed a budget that will mean 611 workers lose their jobs.

Half of these jobs losses are in children's services. 49 out of 60 special needs teachers will be sacked and 25 posts in education welfare services cut. 19 firefighter jobs will also go.

Cumbria is a county of stark contrasts. Visitors see the Lake District, home to the retired wealthy and empty holiday homes, or the welloff landowners of the Eden Valley.

But de-industrialised West Cumberland is a low-wage, high unemployment area. In the deprived wards of Carlisle and the west, babies are 50% more likely to die in their first year than in the better-off areas, where life expectancy is ten vears longer.

The Cumbria cuts show the need for a fightback including standing TUSC anti-cuts candidates in the May local elections.

Brent Kennedy

• Wirral and Cheshire Socialist Party members raised £135 fighting fund in Birkenhead when campaigning against cuts in jobs and services.

Save our NHS!

N WEDNESDAY 9 March, 1,000 people marched to save the NHS in east London. Barts and the London NHS Trust plans to cut 630 jobs. The Royal London Hospital in Whitechapel was the starting point for the march of health workers, student nurses, medical students and local residents. Angry chants of "public health, not private wealth" rang out as we made our way past the banks in the City of London to Barts Hospital.

On the march, one of many against health cuts in recent weeks, Socialist Party members and National Shop Stewards Network supporters argued that the health trade unions, in particular Unison, need to call an emergency conference to plan national action.

Defence of the NHS needs to be a key demand of the 26 March Trades Union Congress demo.

35 copies of the Socialist were

Paula Mitchell

Celebrate International Workers' Day in the Socialist with a May Day greeting

Greeting prices include: £500 for a whole page; £300 for a half-page; £170 quarter-page; £90 one-eighth; £50 onesixteenth; £30 1/32; £20 small box; £15 for up to 30 words; £1



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ively discussion at LGBT meeting

HE SOCIALIST Party LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans) group met in London on Saturday 12 and Sunday 13 March.

On Saturday Hannah Sell, Socialist Party deputy general secretary, introduced a discussion on Leon Trotsky's ideas of the transitional programme. This debate included issues over the terminology used in the party's work, specifically the use of the word "Queer" which many radical young LGBT people use to express opposition to the oppression they face in society and the commercialisation of the gay scene.

This discussion will continue. It was recognised that the issue is complicated with legitimate views on both sides. A lot of LGBT people see the word as a term of abuse - although for many young people the word "gay" is one heard in homophobic bullying in schools.

The meeting on Sunday mainly focused on linking LGBT struggle with that of all working class people, specifically with the struggles against devastating cuts sweeping the country and ways to work with the trade unions, both their LGBT groups and the unions as a whole.

Cuts in jobs and services will hit LGBT people and communities especially hard. We in the Socialist Party are determined and ready to offer a vital socialist alternative to this rotten system.

Abigail Parkinson **Southampton Socialist Party**

Leeds: Celebrating International Women's Day

EEDS DISTRICT Socialist Party held a public meeting to celebrate the 100th anniversary of International Women's Day on 8 March. 20 people attended, many coming straight from a 50 strong anti-cuts rally that concentrated on how the cuts will affect women. Speakers included Angie Waller from Barnslev

Socialist Party who highlighted the dispropor-

tionate impact the cuts would have on women throughout Britain, and Samantha Garret from Leeds Trinity Students Against Cuts who spoke on the role of women in the student movements.

Leeds District Socialist Party will be hosting a meeting on Saturday 19 March where female members and supporters can discuss and organise the fightback. Phone 07861 900136 for

more information.

Alicia Blackett **Hyde Park and Headingley Socialist Party**

Find out more about Socialist Party meetings and events:

www.socialistparty.org.uk/whatson

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