

# TUSC election challenge: vote socialist to stop the cuts

## Bristol

Trade Unionists and Socialists Against Cuts (TUSC) candidates are standing in 16 seats across Bristol in the local elections. Lib Dem-led Bristol City council is making £28 million of cuts this year. Councillors professed regret and sympathy for those affected as they laid out their attacks on jobs and services.

But crocodile tears don't help anyone. They won't feed pensioners who now have to find an extra 30% of the cost of meals-on-wheels. They won't provide careers advice for young people who are losing a third of Connexions staff in the region. Nor will they keep a roof over the heads of the 240 Bristol council workers that Unison say will lose their jobs this year alone.

Bristolians don't need sympathy from our council, we need jobs and services and now we need action to save them. We know this won't come from the Liberals or the Tories, whose parties are driving these cuts in government. Unfortunately Labour too have said they believe the council needs to cut its budget.

In Frome Vale, TUSC candidate Mark Baker is a member of the national executive of the civil servants' union PCS, one of the trade unions that has been in the frontline of the fightback. In Clifton, Bristol University student Jack Jeffrey is standing against the Lib Dem council leader to highlight her party's rank hypocrisy on tuition fees.

**Tom Baldwin - TUSC candidate, Windmill Hill, Bristol**

## Gateshead

Our local election campaign in Gateshead has met with huge enthusiasm. After every leaflet drop we've had a steady stream of text messages and phone calls. One woman left a voicemail telling us: "I've just got your leaflet through the door, and I'm agreeing with everything you say. I work for the council, and I can see the way the council's going, and basically it's shite!"

Another sent a text message saying he'd read our leaflet and, "I must say I agree with most of it. The bankers r a bunch of criminals. I'm a staunch anti capitalist too. 2 hell with the rotten warmongering lib-lab-con. Good luck 2 u."

After a busy holiday weekend of putting out our leaflets, we were sitting in our local pub. We were approached by the pub landlord, who invited us to have a stall inside his

pub next weekend when he is hosting an international pie festival. Last year over 3,000 people attended the event over the weekend, so we will be kept busy!

**Elaine Brunskill, TUSC candidate, High Fell, Gateshead**

## Hull

As someone who has worked as a community and youth worker for 30 years I am shocked by the massive and devastating destruction of our public and voluntary services by Hull's Lib Dem council.

I was there during the Thatcher years and as a docker and community activist as well as a supporter of the predecessor of the Socialist Party, Militant, I was involved in many a campaign against the Tories and employers. But these cuts go even further. Our communities are facing an unprecedented onslaught by the Con-Dem government and their Lib Dem poodles in Hull:

- 100% cut to the Connexions service that helps our youngsters find work or educational courses
- A massive cutback in children's centres providing support to young mothers and their babies
- 50% cut in Young People's Support services which help vulnerable young people find accommodation and get back on their feet if they need support
- Closure of the prestigious Albermarle music centre and an attack on music services
- Small voluntary groups like Endike community care are faced with closure
- A cut in the incontinence service attacking the dignity of some of our older people

That's why we founded Hull Community Action Network (Hull CAN). We needed a fighting inclusive alliance to give voice to the community and voluntary sector, and be part of the fightback.

We have joined with the trade unions in the public sector to fight the vicious cuts and have marched shoulder to shoulder. We challenged the leader of the council and took part in the 'Hull People's Council' occupation of the Guildhall council chamber. Together we will take the fight to the Tories! Together we will win!

**Paul Spooner, TUSC candidate and joint coordinator, Hull Communities Action Network**



TUSC candidates support workers' action to stop the cuts photo Suzanne Beishon

## Sheffield

This time last year, I agreed with Nick. As a student, I thought that the Lib Dems represented a genuine alternative to the age-old Labour/Conservative roundabout in Parliament.

I thought Clegg would be able to breathe new life into the ailing political system in this country, and that he would follow through on his promises of defending student tuition fees from increases. So I voted for him in his Sheffield Hallam constituency in the general election.

How wrong I was! Like all parties who accept the irrational logic of the profit-driven capitalist system, the Liberals have embraced the chance to attack the welfare state that the working class has fought for and won. Clegg has personally sold his student-dominated constituency down the river as a political bargaining chip.

So this year, I'm standing for TUSC in Walkley ward in Sheffield, against all cuts.

**Chaz Lockett, TUSC candidate for Walkley, Sheffield**

## Northern Ireland

The Socialist Party in Northern Ireland is standing candidates in elections to the Northern Ireland Assembly and local councils on 5 May to provide an alternative to the savage cuts agenda of all the sectarian parties.

All the main parties are commit-

ted to carrying out £4 billion worth of cuts over the next four years, including Sinn Féin who opportunistically pose as being opposed to cuts south of the border.

Given the reliance of the economy in the North on public spending, these cuts will be devastating. 123,000 people are already out of work. Youth unemployment is officially above 20%.

The Socialist Party has used the elections to raise support for the Stop the Cuts Campaign which will organise in both Catholic and Protestant communities. In the Assembly elections, we are standing candidates in West, South and East Belfast. We are also running Donal O'Cofaigh in Enniskillen for Fermanagh district council where we are receiving a very warm response. Donal was previously a Sinn Féin councillor until he resigned both his seat and membership of Sinn Féin and joined the Socialist Party.

**Gary Mulcahy, Socialist Party Northern Ireland**

## Stoke

On 21 April a TUSC election rally in Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent was attended by trade unionists from PCS, Unison, NUT, GMB, and CWU.

TUSC candidate for Meir North, Andy Bentley, stressed the need for a new workers' party to represent the working class and that TUSC was a small but significant step to achieving that.

A PCS rep spoke about the need for a public sector strike. Everyone in the room agreed and pledged to talk to their workmates about voting for strike action.

An ex-miner explained that he had been a Labour Party activist for many years but had recently left in disgust and that he wanted to join the Socialist Party, which he did after the meeting.

The Socialist Party and others involved in TUSC have an excellent record of fighting for the rights of people in our area. We don't just show our faces at election time, we campaign every week.

**Mandy, Stoke Socialist Party**

## Wales

24 TUSC candidates are standing in the elections to the Welsh Assembly in two regions, covering 15 constituencies stretching from Cardiff to Swansea.

Candidates include Owen Herbert, member of the RMT council of executives, Mark Evans, member of Unison's local government service executive committee, Les Woodward, GMB convener of Remploy and other members of Unison, Unite, NUT, NASUWT and UCU.

In Wales, the Tories have campaigned to cut education even though every Welsh school student receives £600 a year less funding than in England. Labour and Plaid Cymru have passed a budget cutting funding to the NHS by 7.6%, a 15% cut in real terms. TUSC candidates have demanded to know what kind of choice that is for working class people in Wales - education or health! We have been alone in pledging to fight all cuts.

In Cardiff, there has been a warm reception to the idea of Assembly candidates who will oppose all cuts.

In Pontypridd a number of window bills have gone up and over 50 copies of the Socialist have been sold on doorsteps. This is the great response to campaigning against the disgraceful actions of Labour Rhondda Cynon Taff council, who threatened to sack its workers if they did not sign new contracts with considerably reduced pay and conditions.

**Dave Reid, Cardiff Socialist Party**

## Doncaster

Everyone seems to know Mal Perkins. That's not surprising as he's spent all his life helping and fighting for working class people. Mal worked for 30 years in the construction industry and was a UCATT shop steward in the 1972 building workers' strike.

In the 1980s, he was active in Doncaster Tenants' Federation, campaigning against the Tory Housing Action Trusts. In the 1990s, Mal helped found the first Credit Unions in Donny and helped set up the M25 night shelter for homeless people. He was a Labour Party member for 15 years before resigning in disgust at the corruption of local councillors in the 'Donnygate' scandal.

Three years ago Mal met the Socialist Party, got two new hips, and hasn't stopped campaigning since! Mal Perkins is our TUSC candidate in Doncaster Central. Pointing to the back page of the Socialist, he proudly says to folk: "This is what we stand for, if you agree vote for us, join us."



We need a political alternative to Con-Dem cuts