

## the Socialist postbag

**Do you have something to say?**

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**Home from home**

The Liverpool Echo reports that Steve Fitzsimmons, who was a Tory councillor in Woolton ward in Liverpool for ten years, losing his seat in 1998, had joined the Labour Party. He said that the coalition had unfairly hit Liverpool with its cuts programme. Fitzsimmons was quoted as saying: "I believe the Labour Party has changed and I feel comfortable and at home in the party." That's not surprising. Joe Anderson, Labour group leader on Liverpool city council, in stark contrast to the famous 47 Liverpool councillors in the 1980s (see article below) passed on £91 million of cuts from its budget after a huge reduction in government funding. Not a hint of a "needs based budget" just cuts passed straight through to local services and jobs. Labour sounds like a home from home for a Tory councillor.

**Mark Wright**

**Blaming young victims**

On Monday, Tory MP Nadine Dorries appeared on the Vanessa show to discuss her Private Member's Bill which proposes that girls be taught abstinence in sex education classes in school. This sexist and ludicrous proposal deserves complaints and campaigns in itself. However, in trying to justify her proposal she said "if a stronger 'just say no' message was given to children in school then... we'd probably have less sex abuse." She ultimately places the responsibility of child abuse onto the victims themselves.

I called her office and spoke to a man who stutteringly tried to defend her by claiming she has the 'best interests of children at heart'. I tried to explain why her comments were so offensive and ignorant but he terminated the call. These remarks and actions are sadly representative of a government and an ideology which attacks every vestige of social and cultural progress which might serve to empower people against all forms of exploitation.

**Holly Smith**  
Brighton

**How the other 0.1% live**

I was pleased to see the new High Pay Commission report flagged up in the previous issue of the Socialist. It shows

that while most people in Britain will be suffering cuts, job losses, rising education fees, privatisation and much more, a small, wealthy, parasitic minority are actually doing very well. Chief Executives of FTSE 100 companies earn on average £3.7 million - that's 145 times the average wage. By 2020 it is predicted this differential will rise to 214 times the average. 0.1% of the population earn over 5% of all money earned and the Commission says that this amount will double by 2025 and almost treble by 2035. Victorian levels of inequality exist because successive governments, Tory and Labour, put the interests of the markets above that of working people. Socialists are out to change this. It is in the capitalist system's nature for there to be a massive gap between rich and poor.

We fight for public ownership - taking wealth and the means of production out of the fat cats' hands so the economy can be run for need, not profit. Don't just get angry at this report - join the Socialist Party, and fight to get rid of capitalism.

**Phil Smith**

**Google's googly**

Tory chancellor George Osborne went to Google's Zeitgeist conference in Britain recently to fawn over the multinational. Google is the biggest company in the computer search engine sphere, around ten times the size of its nearest rival, with an annual worldwide revenue of £20 billion, mostly from advertising. Google's unofficial slogan is 'Don't be evil!' 'Don't pay taxes' might be more truthful.

The firm's revenues from Britain soared to £6.35 billion last year. Yet its official subsidiary, Google UK Limited, pays only £8 million UK corporation tax, claiming that its total revenues were £526 million. So while Google luxuriates in profits, its UK subsidiary officially works at a loss. Legally it channels most income through Ireland and other places where corporation tax is even lower than in Cameronland. London's Evening Standard estimates that Google is probably not paying several hundred million pounds in corporation tax. Google may not consider itself evil but public service users and workers facing job losses and service cuts may disagree.

**Keith Whitehead**

# Wapping exhibition review

## Leadership failed print workers in vital battle

**Bill Mullins**

Throughout May the Marx Memorial Library (MML) in Clerkenwell Green, London has been largely given over to the 'News International Dispute; 25 years on' exhibition. Print and media unions Unite/GPMU sector and the National Union of Journalists organised the event alongside the Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom (CPBF) and the MML.

25 years ago print boss Rupert Murdoch set out to destroy the Fleet Street print unions and in the process make himself the biggest media mogul on the planet. The CPBF's involvement shows that this dispute was not only about jobs and trade union rights but also about the monopolisation of the press and broadcasting in Britain and worldwide.

As the exhibition shows, in 1969 Murdoch persuaded the print unions to back his bid for the Sun from the owners of the Daily Mirror. Up to then the Sun had been a Labour-supporting paper. Under Murdoch, along with his recently acquired News of the World, it became a rabidly pro-Thatcher newspaper.

The exhibition displays a secret letter that Murdoch's lawyers, Farrer & Co wrote to Murdoch before the dispute in 1986. It says: "If the moment came when it was necessary to dispense with the present workforce...the cheapest way would be to dismiss employees while participating in a strike".

In 1983 Murdoch managers engaged the unions in talks about moving production of the papers from Fleet Street to Wapping, with the use of new production methods. But in 1985 Murdoch broke off the talks and served six months' notice on the unions to effectively end union presence in the papers.

Murdoch aimed to introduce legally binding 'no strike' agreements, to end the closed shop and to end in particular the influence of the chapels (the local union branches which were the real source of workers' control of Fleet Street.) After all it was the Daily Mail printers' refusal to print a vicious article against the miners in 1926 that was the signal for the general strike to begin.

The national press unions at the time, Sogat, NGA, AUEW and the NUJ called a strike ballot on 24 January 1986. Murdoch then implemented his plan to smash the unions and began the process of sack-



**Demo supporting the print workers** photo Mick Carroll

ing what became over 5,500 men and women.

For a whole year the local print unions called for regular mass picketing/demonstrations outside the fortified Wapping plant in London and the Kinning Park plant in Glasgow. Every Wednesday and Saturday for 12 months thousands of workers descended on Wapping. There they met with vicious charges from mounted police in full riot gear, fresh from the state's war against the miners in 1984-85.

Workers in the wholesale distribution outlets for the Sun and News of the World refused to handle the papers. Pickets chased the "white mice" (the vans which delivered the papers to the news agents) and many other actions took place. The mass picketing of Wapping was aimed in particular at the TNT juggernaut lorries that brought the newspapers out of the Wapping plant.

The unions were taken to court for secondary picketing and other so-called "illegal" actions. Massive fines were imposed on the unions and Sogat had its funds sequestered by the courts (in effect the union's bank accounts were frozen).

The Metropolitan police hospitalised hundreds of pickets and demonstrators. Over 1,400 trade unionists were arrested during the dispute. In an inquiry afterwards by Northamptonshire police, the Met were found to have acted in a "violent and undisciplined way" but no-

body was put on trial as a result.

Disgracefully Eric Hammond, the general secretary of the EEPTU (electricians' union) was proved to have been in secret talks with Murdoch well before the strike. He had been responsible for recruiting a strike-breaking workforce mainly from southern England and bussing them into Wapping every night.

Despite this the TUC refused to throw the EEPTU out of its ranks for this crime against the print workers, (it was thrown out a year after the strike for negotiating single union deals with other employers).

Following the attacks on the union funds the national print unions called off the strike in February 1987.

The exhibition is well worth visiting (and it's free). It is a reminder that the 1980s was a decade where the unions were under systematic attack from the employers, the state, the police and the courts.

Fleet Street print unions were some of the best organised in any industry but it was not enough to stop the defeat. All the capitalist system's resources were used against them. It would have required the mobilisation of the whole trade union movement to win this battle but it would have needed a political answer as well.

The TUC's right wing leaders in effect stood by, as they did with the miners earlier, as the printers were driven into defeat. This is the main lesson from the battle of Wapping.

# Why Liverpool needs a needs budget

On 14 May Derek Hatton, deputy leader of the 47 Liverpool councillors in their battle against the Tory government's cuts from 1983 to 1987, pronounced in the Liverpool Echo newspaper that refusing to implement the cuts would be political suicide for present-day Labour leader Joe Anderson. Socialist Party member TONY MULHEARN, a leading Liverpool 47 councillor and president of Liverpool district Labour Party at the time, wrote this letter refuting this idea.

The mantra 'not going illegal' seems to be the catch-all excuse for implementing the most savage cuts in Liverpool's history. We [the Liverpool

47 group and the Socialist Party - Eds.] have argued for a needs budget not an illegal budget. This means using every legal device to defend

jobs and services - using council reserves, taking privatised services back in-house.

Such action would need to be linked to a mass anti-cuts campaign involving trade unions, community organisations and council workers on a clear policy of compelling the Con-Dem government to abandon its punitive policies, with an appeal to other local authorities to do the same.

Jobs, wages and services are being cut while the income of CEOs increased hugely last year; the

culprits for the crisis, the bankers, continue to gorge themselves on obscene bonuses; Cameron's advisers say the NHS should be up for grabs to the private health companies.

This outrageous situation cries out for courageous leadership committed to defending workers and those least able to defend themselves.

As for the argument that the conditions for mass struggle don't exist: history shows that, where leadership is given, support will be forthcoming

as the Liverpool 47 showed in the 80s, as did Tom Mann in 1911.

Derek's stance may bring comfort to the Con-Dems and the Labour council, but it will do nothing to mitigate the attacks on the workers of Liverpool who, unless resistance is organised, will suffer further from the next round of cuts.

As for Joe's 'political suicide' if he made a stand, I don't believe that would necessarily follow. If it did, the defence of working families is of infinitely greater importance than Joe Anderson's political career.