

Firefighters discuss strategy to fight cuts

Hugh Caffrey
North West Socialist Party

Seventy delegates to the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) conference attended the official fringe meeting about how to fight the cuts.

On the panel was Dave Nellist for the National Shop Stewards Network (NSSN), speakers from Right to Work and Coalition of Resistance, FBU activist Steve Roberts who stood for the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) in Rugby, and Matt Wrack FBU gen-

eral secretary.

Dave Nellist contrasted the fury of millions at the Con-Dems' cuts with the insipid opposition from the benches of New Labour.

In the 1980s, explained Dave, Labour councils at least initially opposed the Thatcher government before they all bowed the knee - except for Liverpool and Lambeth. But now the unions are faced with fighting cuts with no real parliamentary support.

"We can defeat the Con-Dems' plans through widespread, coordinated strike action, which should

include a 24-hour public sector general strike," Dave said. "But the question of course is, what follows after we get rid of them? We need trade union policies, socialist policies, of opposition to all cuts and privatisation and we need a vehicle like TUSC which can address that issue too."

Steve Roberts explained how he and other TUSC supporters brought together "a strong spectrum of left candidates" on behalf of TUSC in Rugby.

Matt Wrack outlined the battles facing the FBU and all public sector

unions. Matt explained the need for coordinated industrial action on a scale capable of defeating the Con-Dems' attacks.

For more anti cuts reports and analysis go to

www.socialistparty.org.uk

The FBU still has socialism as an objective of the union's constitution, said Matt, and a socialist political solution is necessary.

A range of comments and ques-

tions from the floor reflected the frustration of many workers at the employers' offensive, including falling wages, not yet being matched by a mass national anti-cuts movement or a sufficiently powerful political alternative.

Dave, Steve and Matt in their replies indicated the urgent need to strengthen the industrial and political struggle against the neoliberal parties' agenda and for a socialist working class political alternative.

The NSSN and the TUSC can make a powerful contribution to these battles.

Challenging Tories' plans to kill our health service

Andy Ford
Unite North West regional health committee

About 40 people gathered at a meeting, called by Defend the NHS, at the West Kirby Social Club, Wirral, on 20 May to quiz Tory MP, Esther McVey on the NHS white paper.

She gave a very assertive presentation on the NHS - it was full of waste, all the money went on managers and pen-pushers instead of doctors and nurses, the outcomes on cancer and heart disease were the worst in Europe, all the while claiming total

support of the NHS whilst totally knocking it.

However, members of the audience picked apart her points. One retired NHS manager pointed out that the NHS, as a huge organisation, actually needs managing and organising. "Who are all these pen-pushers?" he asked. "You can't just lump all managers together, it's ridiculous."

Others, including a hospital consultant, pointed out that the outcomes on cancer had improved dramatically with a bit of investment.

Then came Esther McVey's biggest point: "Labour did the same. They

used private enterprise to drive efficiency - they had the Independent Sector Treatment Centres, PFI."

This caused something of an uproar as everyone tried to tell her how much PFI (private finance) projects cost. She then tried to turn the audience against Liverpool campaigner, Sam Semoff, for trying to block the PFI at the Royal Liverpool Hospital.

"So you tried to stop the new hospital in Liverpool," she said. But no one liked the personal attack, which I think harmed her argument if anything.

Six copies of the Socialist were sold.



On 19 May Keep Our NHS Public supporters in Congleton, Cheshire, lobbied local Tory MP Fiona Bruce against the Con-Dems' privatisation plans, handing in an 1,100 signature petition gathered in the town photo Hugh Caffrey

Fighting fund appeal Support the socialist fightback

Ken Douglas

Tory prime minister David Cameron and his cabinet of fellow Con-Dem millionaires - combined wealth £60 million - have made another attempt to relaunch their 'big' idea of the 'Big Society'.

This consists of trying to persuade all the workers who are currently being made redundant in the NHS and by local councils to then provide their services for free, helping to run patient services, local libraries etc.

Yet a recent report showed that the average salary of big business fat cats has risen to over £3.7 million - over 145 times the average median wage.

3.7 £3.7 million: average fat cat pay

Here's an idea: why don't the fat cats donate their services for free (whatever they may be and whether

we want them is a different question)? Then we can use the saved money to pay people who actually work for a living, providing much needed services.

Socialists have always put forward the idea of a society where the vast wealth is democratically owned and controlled by ordinary working class people. This is the real big society - one where everyone contributes and everyone has access to what they need.

Cameron's version is all the wealth for them - Britain's richest 1,000 people have a combined wealth of £396 billion - and all the misery for us; the real world of falling wages, rising unemployment and cuts in pensions and vital services.

Which version of society would you want? That's why the Socialist Party puts all our resources into building a socialist alternative - but we need your help! Unlike Cameron we have no millionaire backers, we rely on our members and supporters raising money and on donations from ordinary working-class people.

We are just over halfway through the April-June fighting fund quarter, and have raised under a third of the

target. Socialist Party branches will be out fighting NHS cuts and campaigning for support for the unions battling the attacks on pensions. We will also be raising fighting fund to enable us to step up our campaigning.

Find out about Socialist Party meetings near you:
www.socialistparty.org.uk/whatson

Can you help? Can you hold a fund-raiser for the Socialist Party, a car-boot or jumble sale? Why not have a film night and provide refreshments? Can you get people you know to buy the Socialist for the solidarity price of £2 or to make a bigger donation of £10, £50 or £100 to support our work?

Donations can be given using the form below, online at www.socialistparty.org.uk/donate or by phoning 020 8988 8777. Every penny will be used in the struggle to build our version of the big society, a socialist society.

Showing an alternative to cuts in Dorset

Sean Clothier

Socialist Party members sold 25 copies of the Socialist and raised over £35 fighting fund on 21 May at our first stall in Poole, Dorset, for many years.

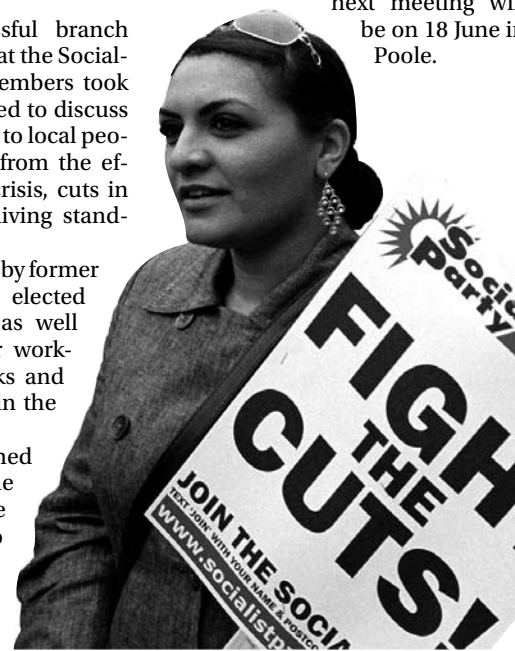
Following a successful branch launch meeting on 'what the Socialist Party stands for,' members took to the streets. We wanted to discuss and offer an alternative to local people who are suffering from the effects of the capitalist crisis, cuts in services and eroding living standards in general.

We were approached by former Labour councillors, elected trade union officials, as well as many public sector workers angry over cutbacks and creeping privatisation in the NHS.

We were well informed by shoppers about the adverse effect these cutbacks are going to have on the poor and the vulnerable. One woman expressed her dismay at the way the

government are targeting helpless, elderly people via cutbacks to meals on wheels programmes.

Clearly this was a positive start for Dorset Socialist Party, and we hope to build on these solid foundations in the coming months. Our next meeting will be on 18 June in Poole.



SOCIALIST PARTY FIGHTING FUND

	£ target	£ received	April-June 2011				Deadline: 8 July
Wales	2,300	1,332	■	■	■	■	■
Yorkshire	2,900	1,285	■	■	■	■	■
West Midlands	2,100	828	■	■	■	■	■
Eastern	1,200	456	■	■	■	■	■
North West	1,200	423	■	■	■	■	■
Southern	1,200	333	■	■	■	■	■
South East	1,000	250	■	■	■	■	■
East Midlands	1,550	380	■	■	■	■	■
London	6,100	1,266	■	■	■	■	■
South West	1,400	207	■	■	■	■	■
Northern	600	88	■	■	■	■	■
England & Wales	3,450	456	■	■	■	■	■
TOTAL	25,000	7,307	■	■	■	■	■

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