

‘What we heard’

On the construction workers’ protest on 28 September at Kings Cross station, London, I heard some workers complaining about their conditions.

“After this protest,” said one, “I will have to argue with the contractor to get my wages for the last two weeks and I know others whose wages are four weeks overdue.”

Another worker referred to the uprisings in Libya: “Look at the people in Libya risking their lives to get democracy and we haven’t even got it here!”

Jane James
Haringey Socialist Party

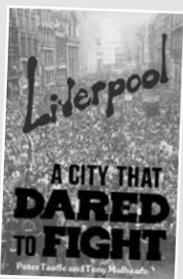
Email ‘what you heard’ to editors@socialistparty.org.uk or text 07432 593 149

Campaigning reports

Worcester Socialist Party sold out of copies of the Socialist in record time on Saturday 24 September while campaigning against health cuts and privatisation. It took only 40 minutes as leaflets were also eagerly snapped up by people worried about the latest attacks on health services locally and the government’s health and social care bill currently going through parliament.

We also found that doing a mid-week stall during the summer holidays in the largest shopping area outside the city centre paid dividends, with workers from a nearby factory showing an interest in socialist ideas and good political discussions with local people.

Ruthie McNally
Worcester Socialist Party



Liverpool A City that Dared to Fight

By Peter Taaffe and Tony Mulhearn
Usually £14.99 - £12.50 including postage to readers of the Socialist

Available from Socialist Books
PO Box 24697, London E11 1YD
020 8988 8789.
bookshop@socialistparty.org.uk
www.socialistbooks.org.uk

London Socialist Students and Socialist Party meeting Poplar and Liverpool councils: ‘If you fight you can win’

Hugo Pierre
Tower Hamlets Socialist Party

On the 90th anniversary of the jailing of the Poplar councillors, Queen Mary University (QM) Socialist Students society, in the heart of the London borough where the Poplar councillors led their struggle, hosted a great joint public meeting with the Socialist Party.

Over 80 people attended the meeting, including QM students and local people who came to learn the lessons of their own area’s working class history, and joined by students and Socialist Party members from other parts of London.

Vik Chechi, Unison union branch secretary at Queen Mary (speaking in a personal capacity), explained how George Lansbury and 39 other Labour councillors defied not only the coalition National Government, but also the then leaders of the Labour Party.

The council, made up of dock workers, railway workers and socialists, coined the slogan ‘better to break the law than break the poor’. They refused to comply with the law until rich areas paid towards relief for London’s poorer areas.

The council introduced equal pay for men and women in the council workforce, increased council jobs and organised a major programme of public works. Vik linked this to the fight against cuts at the university today.

The Poplar struggle was an inspiration to the 1983-87 Liverpool Labour council, led by supporters of Militant (forerunner of the So-

cialist Party). Tony Mulhearn, one of the Liverpool 47 councillors who led the struggle, explained that they were prepared to put their personal property on the line for the struggle against the hated Thatcher government.

Tony explained how the language of socialism was turned into the language of bricks and mortar by the Liverpool 47 as part of their mass struggle that got £60 million funding returned from central government.

The language of socialism was turned into the language of bricks and mortar by the Liverpool 47

The councillors were not kicked out at the ballot box. Instead, they were forced out and fined by a coalition of the unelected district auditor, the courts and the Tories, with the support of the pro-capitalist, pro-union leadership of the Labour Party fronted by Neil Kinnock.

Suzanne Beishon, London organiser of Youth Fight for Jobs, spoke about another anniversary this October, the 1936 Jarrow march, and the importance of this year’s 2011 Jarrow to London March for Jobs.

The last speaker was Socialist Party general secretary Peter Taaffe. He explained how the impact of the Liverpool struggle set the scene for the mass poll tax non-payment cam-



The Liverpool 47 council won massive support photo D Sinclair

campaign which defeated prime minister Margaret Thatcher and her hated tax. In a Militant-led campaign, 18 million people refused to pay, making the tax unworkable.

Peter also pointed out how the recessions that preceded these two famous struggles were an inevitable feature of capitalism just like the present economic crisis we see today. He explained that these struggles led to important reforms for the working class, but “we need a socialist society to democratically plan and use the wealth and resources of society to permanently end recession and want”.

A good discussion on some of the issues and their relevance today took place. Peter made a plea to the many “new faces” in the meeting to join with us and struggle for socialism.

Copies of the book Liverpool: A City That Dared To Fight were snapped up (see left) and £990 was raised in the fighting fund appeal.

- See the Socialist issue 686 for more on the Poplar council, and go to www.socialistparty.org.uk for a video of the London meeting.

No way forward given by ‘reclaim Labour’ speakers

Tony Mulhearn
Former ‘Liverpool 47’ Labour councillor

The Labour Representation Committee fringe meeting at Labour Party conference was addressed by a heavyweight platform of speakers. This included former Labour Party left MP Tony Benn, Unite union general secretary Len McCluskey, PCS union general secretary Mark Serwotka, and current Labour MPs Jeremy Corbyn and John McDonnell.

The scene was set for this discussion by Ed Balls’ call to arms for working class people: ‘Vote for us and nothing will change!’

Tony Benn called for activists to make demands on the leadership. However, no demands were formulated!

Len McCluskey told the meeting that he expected Ed Miliband to

pursue policies which met workers’ aspirations, but sounded totally unconvinced that it was going to happen.

John McDonnell deplored the failure of Labour MPs to even support his amendment to the Tory anti-trade union laws which sought to remove the most pernicious element of the legislation.

Mark Serwotka, in a fighting speech, told the meeting that of the last four strikes in the Department for Work and Pensions, three of them had taken place against the policies of staff reduction and wage restraint being implemented by New Labour.

Jeremy Corbyn welcomed members of the ‘Liverpool 47’ to the meeting and expressed his continued support for that magnificent struggle.

John McDonnell jokingly remarked to the meeting that the right wing’s notion of allowing non-party

members to influence policy would give “Tony a chance to conduct an entry tactic back into the party”.

In the past Tony Benn would always refer to the magnificent struggle of the 47 whom he supported unstintingly in the 1980s, addressing many rallies and demonstrations in Liverpool. Any reference to the 47 on this occasion was notable by its absence.

No way in

All of the speakers’ comments reinforced the reality that the Labour Party is now constitutionally, ideologically and organisationally incapable of reflecting the interests of working class people.

Mark Serwotka underlined this when he remarked that: “if we had more MPs like John McDonnell the interests of the working class would be better served.”

But the iron grip of the right wing

on the selection process for MPs and councillors is now so rigid that anybody professing to stand for socialism would automatically be excluded from consideration for public office.

Yet, in spite of this, not a single speaker called for breaking the link between the unions and Labour, nor was there even a strategy advanced for winning the Labour Party back to where it was before it was hijacked by capitalist entrists Tony Blair, Peter Mandelson and their army of lickspittles.

Unfortunately during the debate which followed, no one said that Labour had been transformed into an openly capitalist party and that the best course of action was to join the campaign for a new mass party of the working class.

I would have made this point but, despite having my hand raised for over an hour, I was not called into the discussion.

SOCIALIST PARTY FIGHTING FUND

	£ target	£ received	July-September 2011				Deadline: 7 October
North West	1,200	2,812	█	█	█	█	█
Eastern	1,200	1,441	█	█	█	█	█
Wales	2,300	2,594	█	█	█	█	█
West Midlands	2,100	1,699	█	█	█	█	█
Yorkshire	2,900	2,080	█	█	█	█	█
East Midlands	1,550	897	█	█	█	█	█
Southern	1,200	643	█	█	█	█	█
South East	1,000	486	█	█	█	█	█
London	6,100	2,871	█	█	█	█	█
South West	1,400	640	█	█	█	█	█
Northern	600	186	█	█	█	█	█
England & Wales	3,450	303	█	█	█	█	█
TOTAL	25,000	16,656	█	█	█	█	█

Get involved

I'd like to join the Socialist Party I'd like more information about the Socialist Party
Donate I'd like to donate £ _____ to the Socialist Party **please make cheques payable to Socialist Party**
Subscribe 12 issues £9 6 months £18 1 year £36 please make cheques payable to Socialist Publications Ltd

Western Europe: 12 issues £16, half year £32, year £50 Rest of world: 12 issues £25, half year £50, year £90

Return slip or pay at www.socialistparty.org.uk/subscribe

Name _____
Address and postcode _____
tel/email _____

Return to: Socialist Party, PO Box 24697, London E11 1YD or phone 020 8988 8777 to pay by card, to arrange a direct debit, or to join.

Credit card No: _____

Name: _____ Start Date: _____ Expiry Date: _____ Security Code: _____ Issue No: _____