

## the Socialist postbag

**Do you have something to say?**

Send your news, views and criticism in not more than 150 words to Socialist Postbag, PO Box 24697, London E11 1YD, or phone 020 8988 8771, email: editors@socialistparty.org.uk. We reserve the right to shorten letters. Don't forget to give your name, address and phone number. Confidentiality will be respected if requested.

**Labour's scab turn**

On 26 November Newham Labour Party members were out in Stratford, east London, supporting the 30 November public sector workers' pensions strike. Given Labour leader Ed Miliband's condemnation of the public sector workers' strike on 30 June, this turnaround was a pleasant surprise.

However, Labour's rehabilitation is premature. Labour-run Newham council is employing agency workers to scab on a teachers' strike at the borough's Langham School. The National Union of Teachers has called a three-day strike because of the failure to resolve, at Acas, issues of excessive workloads and management bullying at the school.

It is illegal to hire agency workers to scab during a strike according to recent Department for Education advice to employers but it's legal for an employment agency to supply scab workers as long as the employer (eg the school or local authority) directly employs them. Agency workers might have no idea they are being used for strike-breaking purposes.

Newham council's strike-breaking attitude does not surprise local trade unionists. Under the leadership of Blairite Sir Robin Wales, the Labour-run council has previously derecognised Unison, evicted its union office, and sacked a local union officer.

**Simon Carter  
Newham**

**Young people back N30**

A BBC poll shows that 79% of 16-24 year olds surveyed support the N30 strike action over pensions. No wonder – young workers will lose the most if the government's attacks on pensions go through.

Yet only 16% of that age range are trade union members. Hopefully action on 30 November will encourage many young people to join a union, including those out of work. Unite now has a 50p a week "community" membership fee

for the unemployed as well as students. Unite and other unions have supported the Youth Fight for Jobs campaign.

But unions need to step up their efforts on recruiting young workers – in the private as well as the public sector. Follow the PCS union's lead – its 800-member strong young members' network involves young workers in democratically organising and taking part in union activity.

Rebuilding the rank-and-file structures of trade unions is a vital part of the fightback against all cuts.

**Jeff Allen**

**Insider trading lives on**

The Financial Services Authority claims to have closed a major loophole in regulations aimed at stopping 'insider trading', where stockbrokers or investment bankers use 'insider' knowledge of mergers, share issues, etc to place investments on their own behalf and make a killing.

Now banks, hedge fund managers etc have to record all conversations on their staff's mobiles and keep them for six months. Landline conversations have been subject to these rules since 2008 after a "surge in unorthodox trades before mergers".



Like all other attempts to control what Ed Miliband calls 'predatory behaviour' the bosses find a dozen ways to get round it. Roaming between networks reduces the risk of being caught. Only work-issued mobiles are covered since privacy rights rule out the monitoring of personal mobiles. And there's nothing to stop traders meeting in a bar or restaurant to arrange their deals.

Insider trading is dead - long live insider trading!

**Paul Gerrard**

**Dirty work**

The excellent letter by Clive Walder (Socialist 694) mentions Liverpool Labour council's refusal to do the dirty work for the Tories in the 1980s.

Today in my own area in South Wales at least two councils, Labour councils, appear to be prepared to do this work. Port Talbot council, and Rhondda Cynon Taff council are allegedly undermining and attacking the jobs, pay and conditions of their very own staff. What makes it even sadder is that doubtless many of these workers are Labour voters.

Firstly I would suggest that the Labour council leaders need to remember who voted for them. Secondly the voters should seriously reconsider where they put their X at the next election, and only vote for those candidates who will genuinely defend workers' interests.

**Lin Black  
Swansea**

# A message from Tommy Sheridan

Tommy Sheridan, class fighter and socialist ex-Member of the Scottish Parliament, sent this message of solidarity to be read out to the Socialism 2011 rally on 5 November. Unfortunately the letter only arrived after the rally but we are proud to publish Tommy's letter.

"Throughout my incarceration I have been supported and encouraged by kind letters from Socialist Party members all across Britain and indeed the world. Every one of them is very much appreciated.

This rally is vital in the long but necessary march to forge left unity of action and purpose around a socialist alternative to the current slash and burn policies of the ConDem millionaires and charlatans who wish to hold ordinary people responsible for the crimes of the bankers, chief executives and their political lackeys in Westminster.

Their collective greed and desire to usurp society's resources with obscene salaries and pensions has robbed the public purse. There is no alternative to resistance to their savage cuts programme and the dishonest and disgraceful mantra of 'we're all in this together'.

Socialist ideas and policies around genuine public ownership of our resources and real and meaningful redistribution of wealth and power are needed more than ever. A whole new generation is there to be won to the cause of justice and equality, the cornerstones of socialism.

Now is the time to proclaim our belief in socialism louder than ever.



**The Leveson inquiry has unearthed details of disgusting and often illegal methods used by the News of the World. Yet Tommy Sheridan was jailed last January on evidence given by NoW journalists - see websites below for more details. Release Tommy now!** photo Paul Mattsson

Standing tall and firm for what we believe is the order of the day. To borrow from the wise words of the great black freedom fighter Malcolm X: "If you don't believe in something you might just fall for anything".

Believe in the inherent goodness within humanity, our ability to co-

operate, combine and stand together in human solidarity. Believe in socialism.

In solidarity, Tommy Sheridan.  
Write to Tommy at 32057, HMP Castle Huntly, Longforgan DD2 5HL  
www.defendtommysheridan.org  
www.facebook.com/citizenotommy

## When bankers were good?

**Ian Pattison**

Ian Hislop's BBC documentary 'When Bankers Were Good' starts by quoting ex-New Labour minister Peter Mandelson's line "I'm intensely relaxed about people getting filthy rich". Hislop contrasts this greed and that of our current bankers with the 'charity' of philanthropic 19th century bankers, like Samuel Gurney and Lord Rothschild.

But greed and crisis are inevitable consequences of an anarchic capitalist system. Similar problems appear again and again. In 1825, a boom was followed by a bust, where 80 banks collapsed. None of these outfits were bailed out - today capitalism believes the banks are 'too big to fail'. A 19th century version of sub-prime debt forced philanthropic banker Samuel Gurney's banks to collapse after his death.

Today's bleak economic crisis was partly fuelled by the replacement of manufacturing by financial services, which produce nothing. Hislop acknowledges that even in the 19th century, many capitalists left manufacturing and other industries to

join banking.

Hislop admits not all bankers were 'good', but only briefly mentions the horrendous living conditions ordinary people suffered with no welfare whatsoever.

Merchant banker George Peabody tried to address the terrible housing problem. But 'Peabody' homes were only for the 'industrious poor', those lucky enough to have a job, people who could afford rent, not the destitute or unemployed.

In the 19th century, the average British household was giving away 10% of its income to charity - the second biggest expenditure after food! But it made little difference. Hislop admits that charity was not a progressive engine of social change as the free market was making society more unequal.

In 1909, social and industrial unrest forced a Liberal government to announce its 'People's Budget'. 'Philanthropic' banker Rothschild opposed taxing the rich to redistribute wealth to the poor.

However, when World War One started in 1914, Rothschild said Britain should pay for the war effort by taxing the rich heavily! Hislop

claims "that's been the policy ever since." But £120 billion is lost in tax unpaid by the super-rich every year, the banks were bailed out by £1.3 trillion, and the profitable half of Northern Rock was sold back to the private sector at a loss of £400 million to the taxpayer.

Lord Turner, chair of the Financial Services Authority, defended bankers, saying that he couldn't imagine the increased living standard of all sections of society in the last 200 years, without banking.

But the vast wealth existing in society is created on the backs on the working class. At one time capitalism was a productive, efficient system, certainly more so than the previous system, feudalism, but that age has clearly long passed.

Socialists don't rely on paternalistic charity from the rich. We fight for democratic socialism. The banks should be nationalised under democratic workers' control and management, so the vast wealth we've created can be used for the benefit of society as a whole. 'When Bankers Were Good' lacks this final conclusion and paints a far rosier picture than is accurate.

## Showing racism the red card

**Chris Newby**

Sepp Blatter, the reactionary, out of touch head of FIFA (world football's governing body), recently told a CNN interviewer that there is no racism in football. Two premiership footballers face racial abuse charges. But racism goes a lot deeper than the comments of Premier League players.

Such blatant racism as spectators chanting and throwing bananas on the pitch when black players were on the field has now largely gone. But racism certainly still exists in football.

Only seven British born Asian play-

ers currently play in the top four tiers of the English professional game. Black footballers make up about a quarter of all players in those top four flights but there are only two black league managers out of 92.

At grassroots level, Cardiff-based STM sports club say their players are subjected to regular racial slurs and taunts. STM player Marcus Phillips says: "We get it [racism] most games. I have witnessed my fellow black players being racially abused by fans shouting racial slurs and making monkey noises - it was disgraceful."

Fan-based anti-racist campaigns, particularly 'Show Racism the Red Card' initiated by Socialist Party

members, have gone some way towards challenging racist ideas on the terraces.

However the battle is part of the fight in society as a whole. A capitalist class in crisis is hell-bent on introducing cuts and attacks on workers' living standards. They employ 'divide and rule' policies designed to appeal to popular prejudices, including racist ideas, to deflect anger away from themselves.

So, if you want to fight racism in football, support groups such as Show Racism the Red Card. You should also support class unity policies to defeat the crazy and divisive cuts schemes of the ruling class - and its defenders such as Sepp Blatter!