

Construction workers defend the JIB

STRIKE TO FIGHT PAY CUTS

Rob Williams

Socialist Party industrial organiser

The pressure is building on the 'Big 7' major construction companies who want to withdraw from the Joint Industry Board (JIB) agreement and impose the new BESNA contracts which will cut pay by up to 35%. Unite have balloted electricians in Balfour Beatty because the company has given 1,600 electricians notice to put them on the BESNA contract from 7 December.

As we go to press, we are waiting for the ballot result.

The Socialist Party campaigned for all Balfour Beatty workers to vote yes for industrial action to start on that day. If Balfour try to stop this strike through an injunction, it should trigger a national unofficial walkout in the construction industry on 7 December.

The company is already starting to panic and has put out a leaflet calling on electricians not to vote to strike.

Balfour Beatty has an order book of £15 billion and made a clear profit of nearly £100 million in the last six months. The chief executive is paid £1 million a year but Balfour want

to savage the wages of their workers, who actually help to make the profits, to the tune of 35%! This is a fight that we can win if we stick together.

Electricians all over the country are fighting back. It's clear that the national demonstration on 9 November has been a gamechanger by building up confidence among the electricians.

Over the last two weeks we've seen walkouts and stoppages at many sites, including Corus on Teesside, Ratcliffe and West Burton power stations, Saltend, and Farringdon in London. 300 electricians demonstrated in Glasgow and last week 150 sparks occupied Gratte Brothers headquarters in London, another of the Big 7.

Workers at the Lindsey Oil Refinery showed two years ago that the bosses can be defeated. Those workers walked out and sparked a national unofficial stoppage to protect their NAEI agreement.

Two to three million public sector workers went on strike on 30 November to defend their pensions. The electricians support their battle. Don't let the government and the greedy employers divide workers in the public and private sectors. As the executive pay rises show, the



Protesting at the Kings Cross station site photo Paul Mattsson

real 'gold-plated' pensions and pay packets are in the boardrooms.

We need to unite the struggles of private and public sector workers to fight for a decent living for all. Future strike action should be coordinated across the public and private sectors.

STOP PRESS 81% of the workers balloted have voted to strike.

Come to the Unite national rank and file meeting to discuss the Balfour Beatty strike

**Saturday 3 December
11am-2pm**

**Woburn Suite, Hotel Russell, 1-8 Russell Square,
London WC1B 5BE**

What we stand for

The Socialist Party fights for socialist change – a democratic society run for the needs of all and not the profits of a few. We also fight, in our day-to-day campaigning, for every possible improvement for working-class people.

As capitalism dominates the globe, the struggle for genuine socialism must be international.

The Socialist Party is part of the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI), a democratic, socialist international that organises in over 40 countries.

Our demands include:

Work and income

- Trade union struggle to increase the minimum wage to £8 an hour without exemptions as an immediate step towards £10 an hour. For an annual increase in the minimum wage linked to average earnings.
- All workers, including part-timers, temps, casual and migrant workers to have trade union rates of pay, employment protection, and sickness and holiday rights from day one of employment.
- An immediate 50% increase in the state

retirement pension, as a step towards a living pension. Reinstate the link with average earnings now.

- Reject 'Welfare to Work'. For the right to decent benefits, education, training, or a job, without compulsion.
- Scrap the anti-trade union laws! For fighting trade unions, democratically controlled by their members. Full-time union officials to be regularly elected and receive no more than a worker's wage.
- A maximum 35-hour week with no loss of pay.

Public services

- No to privatisation and the Private Finance Initiative (PFI). Renationalise all privatised utilities and services, with compensation paid only on the basis of proven need.
- Fully fund all services and run them under accountable, democratic committees that include representatives of service workers and users.
- Free, publicly run, good quality education, available to all at any age. Abolish university tuition fees now and introduce a living grant. No to academies and free schools!
- A socialist NHS to provide for everyone's health needs – free at the point of use and under

democratic control. Kick out private contractors!

- Keep council housing publicly owned. For a massive building programme of publicly owned housing, on an environmentally sustainable basis, to provide good quality homes with low rents.

Environment

- Major research and investment into replacing fossil fuels with renewable energy and into ending the problems of early obsolescence and unrecycled waste.
- Public ownership of the energy generating industries. No to nuclear power. No to Trident.
- A democratically planned, low fare, publicly-owned transport system, as part of an overall plan against environmental pollution.

Rights

- Oppose discrimination on the grounds of race, sex, disability, sexuality, age, and all other forms of prejudice.
- Repeal all laws that trample over civil liberties. For the right to protest! End police harassment.
- Defend abortion rights. For a woman's right to choose when and whether to have children.
- For the right to asylum. No to racist immigration laws.

New workers' party

- For a new mass workers' party drawing together workers, young people and activists from workplace, community, environmental and anti-war campaigns, to provide a fighting, political alternative to the pro-big business parties.
- Trade unions to disaffiliate from the Labour Party now and aid the building of a new workers' party!

Socialism and internationalism

- No to imperialist wars and occupations. Withdraw the troops immediately from Iraq and Afghanistan!
- Tax the super-rich! For a socialist government to take into public ownership the top 150 companies and banks that dominate the British economy, and run them under democratic working-class control and management. Compensation to be paid only on the basis of proven need.
- A democratic socialist plan of production based on the interests of the overwhelming majority of people, and in a way that safeguards the environment.
- No to the bosses' neo-liberal European Union! For a socialist Europe and a socialist world!