# Socialist Party regional conferences East Midlands: Confidence for the fightback

#### **Daniel Fahey** Leicester Socialist Party

On Sunday 5 February, in Leicester, East Midlands Socialist Party held its regional conference. It followed Saturday's counter-protests against the racist English Defence League in the city. The tremendous work undertaken by party members from Leicester and across the region in response to the EDL helped to set the conference's confident tone.

The first speaker, Socialist Party executive committee member Rob Williams, introduced the discussion on a capitalist world in crisis. He explained that 2011 may come to be seen as a punctuation mark in history as we enter a new period of renewed working class struggle.

The positive mood continued with workshops lead by Dave Gorton on building the Socialist Party in workplaces and trade unions, Helen Pattison on youth work, Gary Freeman on the Socialist newspaper and Jean Thorpe on attracting new members to the party.

East Midlands secretary Steve Score provided a report on events and activities of the party in the region over the last year. Highlights included supporting the Derby Bombardier workers' action against job

> Find out about meetings and events at

### www.socialistparty.org.uk /whatson

cuts, and the electrician's JIB dispute, as well the party's involvement in the Trade Unionist and Socialist Campaign.

Other business included the election of a new regional committee slate, and a finance report. Rob Williams ended the conference with a trailblazing report on the diverse work by other sections of the Committee for a Workers' International, in particular Rob emphasised the rapidly developing events in Kazakhstan - see www.socialistworld.net to find out more.

Samantha Garratt Leeds Trinity Union general secretary

Leeds Trinity University College canteen services have been stopped on Saturdays and Sundays for the foreseeable future. Staff have been made redundant and others have had their hours cut.

This is a breach of students' partcatered accommodation contracts, which state that term-time catering services are provided seven days a week. Vending machines have replaced cooked food, with most of the products available being more expensive than in the canteen.

In a half-hearted attempt to apologise for this, the university has given students £50 on their student cards, which can only be spent in the canteen and on soft drinks in the bar, not on food at weekends.

Students' catering facilities are inadequate. For example, in one hall each kitchen has four hob rings and one sink between 25 people, with no fridge or freezer.

The excuse for weekend closure



Socialist Students opposes all education cuts photo S Beishon

was that there weren't enough students coming in. However, the opening hours weren't suitable for students - there have been com-

Leeds Trinity students fight canteen cuts

# Yorkshire: Building the struggle against austerity

**Chaz Lockett** Sheffield City Socialist Party

The Yorkshire Socialist Party regional conference and organisers' school on 4-5 February was attended by 70 people, ranging from participants in the Occupy movement to a former member of the Trade Union Congress general council!

Dave Griffiths, secretary for West Midlands Socialist Party, introduced the conference by covering the roots of the 2008 financial crisis, its continuing repercussions, the eurocrisis, a prolonged period of capitalist stagnation or depression, as well as prospects for the fightback by the workers' movement.

After a lively discussion, we broke up into commissions on the eurozone, Labour and the need for a new

workers' party, challenging the far right, and the trade union struggle.

Saturday closed with a discussion on building the Socialist Party in Yorkshire, introduced by Yorkshire secretary Alistair Tice. As well as discussing how to attract new members, the session also looked at Marxist education. The finance collection raised £350.

Sunday's organisers' school started with North West Socialist Party secretary Hugh Caffrey introducing a discussion on building a revolutionary party within the context of 21st century capitalism. This was followed by a series of workshops on party building.

Socialist Party members left the conference with confidence that we can build the party in Yorkshire, while playing a leading role in the struggle against austerity.

## New society at Leeds College

eeds City College Socialist Students (LCCSS) recently held its first meeting.

The college, merged from separate colleges in the Leeds area, was devoid of any student societies until LCCSS.

Iain Dalton, Yorkshire organiser of Youth Fight for Jobs, introduced the meeting's discussion on Education Maintenance Allowance, which has been abolished by the Con-Dems

The meeting saw a lively discussion between our new society members and we hope build a campaign to take to Leeds city council in the near future.

Molly Allen, Leeds City College **Socialist Students** 

plaints about this for years. One student moved accommodation last year in response to the unsuitable opening times.

Leeds Trinity Union has begun a campaign to bring the canteen back. Our petition got 415 signatures in just three hours. We plan to organise formal complaints and hold a protest on campus.

- We demand:
- The canteen is open at weekends to provide suitable provisions for all, with opening hours that suit students' needs
- The canteen re-employs all canteen staff made redundant
- Part-catered halls are equipped with suitable cooking facilities, including fridges

# Tower Hamlets: Save Rushmead one stop shop - fight all cuts

#### Naomi Byron

Tower Hamlets Socialist Party

It's almost unheard of to see Labour Party members campaigning in Tower Hamlets, east London, more than two months before an election. But on 4 February, Labour had a stall to save Rushmead one-stop shop, a local housing office that serves around 50,000 people a year.

The campaign is also supported by Tower Hamlets Unison, staff and local residents. Half of all recent enquiries to the one-stop shop have been about housing benefit cuts, which will affect thousands in the borough.

present supported the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition pledge for anti-cuts candidates in the London assembly elections, and signed the Socialist Party petition for public sector unions to coordinate another pension strike.

A brief rally only had the Labour MP and the Tower Hamlets Unison branch secretary speaking. Fortunately the Unison speaker, after welcoming Labour's support for the Rushmead campaign, said it was a disgrace that Labour are making cuts elsewhere.

The hypocrisy from Labour coun-

cillors is astonishing. Labour voted to cut several local housing offices, and to transfer all council housing to an Almo (the first step to privatisation) despite tenants repeatedly voting to stay with the council.

Labour still has a majority on the council. But now Tower Hamlets has an elected ex-Labour 'independent' mayor, Lutfur Rahman, whose executive office is closing Rushmead.

The campaign to save Rushmead needs to be linked with the campaign to stop all cuts, not used to prop up the political careers of councillors who support cuts.

Socialist Party 2012 congress The Socialist Party's (SP) 2012 national congress is taking place on

10-12 March. The congress British perspectives and party building documents, written by the SP's executive committee amendments to EC documents, finance/caucus reports and visitors' names is 2 March.

Every SP branch has a congress delegation based on the size of the branch. The fee is £45 a delegate (EC), as well as the draft agenda, and there will also be a pooled fare, as well as accommodation costs. SP members that aren't delegates are welcome as visitors, subject to space (visitor's fee £15 a day).

have been sent to SP branches and should be discussed at branch meetings.

The deadline for branch resolutions, crèche place booking, and delegation names and deposits is 24 February. The deadline for branch

SP members should contact their branch secretary for more information.

It is the most vulnerable who will be worst affected if Rushmead closes. One of the other major cuts planned in council spending is to the homeless service!

The Rushmead Unison members

### Raffle - Ken Loach at the BBC

Win the Ken Loach at the BBC DVD box set (RRP £51.05), reviewed in the Socialist issue 699, by entering the Socialist Party raffle - £1 a ticket. Phone 020 8988 8771 or send cheques (made payable to Socialist Party) to DVD raffle, Socialist Party, PO Box 24697, London E11 1YD The draw will take place on 10 March 2012.

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### SOCIALIST PARTY FIGHTING FUND

| £ target £ received |        |       |  | January-March 2012 |  |  |  |  | D | Deadline 30 March |  |  |  |
|---------------------|--------|-------|--|--------------------|--|--|--|--|---|-------------------|--|--|--|
| South West          | 1,400  | 583   |  |                    |  |  |  |  |   |                   |  |  |  |
| London              | 6,100  | 2,048 |  |                    |  |  |  |  |   |                   |  |  |  |
| Northern            | 600    | 196   |  |                    |  |  |  |  |   |                   |  |  |  |
| North West          | 1,200  | 389   |  |                    |  |  |  |  |   |                   |  |  |  |
| Eastern             | 1,200  | 331   |  |                    |  |  |  |  |   |                   |  |  |  |
| Wales               | 2,300  | 596   |  |                    |  |  |  |  |   |                   |  |  |  |
| Yorkshire           | 2,900  | 675   |  |                    |  |  |  |  |   |                   |  |  |  |
| Southern            | 1,200  | 252   |  |                    |  |  |  |  |   |                   |  |  |  |
| West Midlands       | 2,100  | 312   |  |                    |  |  |  |  |   |                   |  |  |  |
| East Midlands       | 1,550  | 187   |  |                    |  |  |  |  |   |                   |  |  |  |
| South East          | 1,000  | 30    |  |                    |  |  |  |  |   |                   |  |  |  |
| England & Wales     | 3,450  | 186   |  |                    |  |  |  |  |   |                   |  |  |  |
| TOTAL               | 25,000 | 5,790 |  |                    |  |  |  |  |   |                   |  |  |  |