

# the Socialist

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## Greece, Portugal, Spain, Italy...

# FIGHT AUSTERITY

...in Britain, build for  
united strike action  
on 28 March

**Hannah Sell**  
Socialist Party deputy general  
secretary

The misery facing the Greek people is summed up by the human tragedy of hundreds of families giving up their children because they can no longer afford to feed them. And yet the hated 'troika' – the big business institutions of the IMF, EU and ECB – demand even more pain.

The latest austerity package will mean a lowering of the minimum wage by 20%, and the cutting of more public sector jobs. The

Greek prime minister – an unelected banker – and the main big business parties voted to inflict this unimaginable misery on the population of Greece. They were met with a mass revolt.

The Greek working class has shown relentless determination to stop their mass impoverishment by the vultures of the global markets and their representatives. Even the police union has joined in, threatening to arrest the troika!

On 10-11 February Greek workers took their 16th general strike action in two years, this time for 48 hours. Across the country workplaces and 20 local council chambers are under workers' oc-

cupation. But the only way for the workers to halt the misery is to take power themselves.

A workers' government would need to refuse to accept the dictatorship of the world financial markets. This would mean an immediate refusal to pay the debt.

It would mean the nationalisation, under democratic workers' control, of the banks and financial sector, as well as the resources and key sectors of the economy.

This would allow the development of an emergency plan to invest in the mass creation of jobs and restoration of living standards. Any workers' government that acted in this way would very

quickly win massive support from the working class across Europe.

For us in Britain it is not too difficult to imagine what it is like to be living in Greece. Here too we have a government for the billionaires. Here too we are told the only 'solution' to the economic crisis is a decade or more of austerity for the 99%.

So far the cuts in Britain are not as severe as in Greece: but less than 10% of them have been carried out. If we do not show the same determination as the Greeks to fight back, there is no doubt that Greek-style misery will be our future.

But a mass anti-cuts movement could force this government into

retreat. The next key step is campaigning for united strike action on 28 March against the Con-Dems' attack on public sector pensions.

As in Greece, we must link this to the fight for a different society. Capitalism is not capable of providing us with the basics of a decent life – a reasonably paid job, a living pension, a home, a free education.

Only the fight for a democratic socialist society can guarantee these fundamental rights for all. If you agree – join the Socialist Party.

See interview with Greek socialist on p2



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# the Socialist

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# Greece erupts as government and 'Troika' impose new savage cuts

Workers and left parties must organise serious campaign to kick out the government

On Sunday 12 February the Greek parliament voted for the new austerity cuts demanded by the European Union (EU), International Monetary Fund (IMF) and European Central Bank (ECB) - the 'Troika'. These cuts are a precondition for a €130 billion (£109 billion) bailout to prevent the Greek government defaulting on its massive debts. But the prior announcement of new cuts provoked a 24-hour strike on 7 February and another 48-hour general strike on 10-11 February and enormous protests throughout Greece. Niall Mulholland spoke to Andreas Payiatsos, from Xekinima (the Socialist Party's counterpart in Greece) a participant in the huge protests in Athens.

## How big were the demonstrations against the latest austerity cuts?

The demonstration last Sunday in central Athens was enormous. It was called by the unions and supported by all the main left parties. Up to 500,000 people marched to a rally at Syntagma Square, outside the national parliament building.

Salonika and other Greek cities and towns also saw big demonstrations. Islands like Corfu and Crete were also affected.

## Was the 48-hour general strike effective?

Sunday's rallies were preceded by a 48-hour general strike which succeeded in shutting down all industry, public services and transport. The demonstrations on those two days were relatively small. Most people saw Sunday as the crucial day for protesting; as it was the day parliament would vote on the cuts. So, Sunday saw people back out in the streets in huge numbers.

## The international media mainly reported on the riots and clashes between some protesters and police. What was the real character of the street demonstrations last Sunday?

There were some very large trade union contingents taking part in the 12 February mass protest in Athens. A union linked to the KKE (Greek communist party) had a contingent of tens of thousands. There were also huge numbers of people not under any banner. The mood of demonstrators was very angry. People shouted "thieves" and "liars" and "traitors" at the parliament build-

ing, as the MPs deliberated over new cuts that will pauperise even bigger parts of the population.

However, clashes between riot police and rioters (anarchist groups play a role in this but so do provocateurs) started at around 5.30pm. The police acted with their usual brutality. They indiscriminately attacked demonstrators and used tear gas. The anarchists gathered around them some youth, many of whom are understandably enraged by the situation and conditions they suffer.

Unfortunately, some of these youth were drawn into reckless and counter-productive acts, including looting, by the desperate plight they face. A reported 93 buildings were damaged or destroyed. Even ambulance crews and firefighters were attacked as they tried to deal with emergencies and fires.

Despite all this, many protesters stayed at the square in their tens of thousands.

## What will the new cuts package mean?

This new austerity package is an assault on the poorest in society. The minimum wage will be cut by 22% to just €480 (£402) a month. For under-25 year olds, it is a 32% cut, which means living on €430 (£360) a month. But the worst affected are the young apprentices (nearly all young employees are now branded 'apprentices'). They will see their monthly wage cut to a mere €350 (£293).

As well as this, the measures include sacking 15,000 public sector workers as part of a longer term aim of shedding 150,000 civil servants jobs. Labour laws will be 'liberalised' to make it easier for bosses to fire workers.

All this comes after years of austerity cuts that have left one-in-three Greeks living in poverty, rising homelessness, crime, alcohol and drug addiction and broken families.

Greece is in its fifth year of recession/slump. Soup kitchens in Athens now cater for many thousands, including educated professionals as well as immigrants. The Orthodox Church says it is feeding 250,000 people a day.

## Can the Greek coalition government carry out the cuts?

The so-called ruling 'grand coalition' government, headed by an unelected, EU-imposed 'technocrat' [prime minister Lucas Papdemos], is actually very weak.

image not available

A week ago, the three coalition parties, Pasok, New Democracy and Laos, had a big majority of 266 MPs out of 300 MPs. But the austerity bill was voted through by just 199 MPs. This is because many MPs felt the heat of the mass opposition and decided not to vote against the cuts or to abstain, usually to try to save their political careers.

These dissident MPs were expelled by their parties, which has caused a political earthquake. Pasok, over some months, and New Democracy, in one fell swoop, lost 29 MPs each. Pasok now has fallen to 131 MPs.

The demagogic, far-right Laos lost 3-4% poll support in one week and felt compelled to exit the government just before the vote. Nevertheless, two of its ex-ministers broke ranks and voted for the cuts.

Pasok and New Democracy now make up the government with just 193 seats between them. Pasok has only 8.7% support in polls and ND has gone down by 10% in just over a week to 21%.

## Can the left win elections?

The government stated this week that an election will be held in April. Pasok is set to suffer big losses at the hands of the electorate and likewise New Democracy.

At the same time, the left is picking up in the polls. The KKE and Syriza now have a huge opportunity and jointly have over 30% support in the polls.

But to really capitalise on the situation they must adopt fighting socialist policies and lead the mass struggle to overthrow this government and to defy the demands of the financial markets.

They need to urge their supporters

to initiate workplace mass meetings to organise occupations and prepare for an indefinite general strike to overthrow the government.

So although the government managed to get the cuts passed in parliament, it is hanging on to power by a thread. The huge anger in society and opposition to cuts has not abated. The unions have shown a glimpse of their power but have not moved to decisively get rid of the government.

The left parties rhetorically call for the fall of the government and for elections but take no concrete initiatives in this direction. The KKE and the Synaspismos left current call, abstractly, for "strikes, occupations, revolt" etc, but do not give any concrete proposals to organise for strikes or occupations to develop the struggle.

## What does Xekinima call for?

The economic and political turmoil is bound to continue. The unions are discussing another general strike within days. But this must not just be to 'let off steam' but a serious effort to kick out the government.

We call for the organising of indefinite general strike action, for mass occupations and protests, to bring down the government. It is a government of thieves which has lost the trust of the people.

Democratically elected assemblies in all the districts need to come together on a city wide, regional and national basis to lay the basis for a government of workers and those exploited by this system, with a programme to end capitalism. Namely, refuse to pay the debt and end all cuts; nationalise the banks and major companies and run them democratically by working people and

those exploited by capitalism; and introduce an emergency democratic plan to rebuild the economy.

We call for a wave of new city square occupations in Athens and Salonika and other cities and towns, for example, to create a focus so that resistance can continue; to build for and to encourage a new strike wave, and a wave of workplace, college, school and community occupations.

## What is the socialist answer to the crisis?

Not surprisingly, 54% of Greeks are now "against the EU" and 35% are "against the euro". Despite their fears of the 'unknown', many Greeks ask themselves; 'can the situation be any worse outside of the eurozone?'

The surge in electoral support for the KKE and Syriza shows that the left is in a position to potentially form a majority government.

The rank and file of the left parties and unions need to organise from below for socialist policies and democratic, campaigning structures in order to fight for a government of workers and those exploited by capitalism.

Such a government would repudiate the 'debt', take the economy into public ownership, under democratic workers' control and management, introduce jobs and a living wage for all and ensure massive investment in welfare, education and housing.

A workers' government would reject the capitalist EU and instead link up with the working class of the other debt-stricken EU countries, and the whole workers' movement in the EU, in a collective struggle for a socialist confederation of the continent.

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not  
available

# Update: pensions battle

## Build for the biggest possible action on 28 March

**Martin Powell-Davies**  
NUT national executive committee (personal capacity)

This government may have hoped that they had safely got away with their pensions robbery. But they had better think again!

The national executives of the teachers' union NUT, civil servants' union PCS and lecturers' union UCU have all unanimously agreed to build support for a continuing campaign of action, starting with another one-day strike on 28 March. They could well be joined by others including the Northern Ireland Public Sector Alliance (Nipsa) and Scottish teaching unions EIS and SSTA.

Some union leaders may have shamefully withdrawn from the battle but, with the Fire Brigades Union and sections of Unite also considering action, a strong coalition is being forged. Together, we can, and must make sure that it is the Con-Dems who have to retreat, not the unions.

The fog of confusion that spread when the 'heads of agreement' was issued in the new year is starting to clear. The truth is emerging that this shabby 'deal' yielded no further concessions of any significance beyond what had already been won in November. It still means workers having to pay more, retire older, and get less pension when they do.

How can a teacher or firefighter work on into their 60s? With the government threatening teachers with even greater workload, it will be hard enough to work un-



photo Paul Mattsson

til 60, let alone 68. Many workers will be forced to retire long before they reach their state pension age, allowing the government to claw back thousands of pounds more from our pensions.

With pay already frozen, who can afford to see their pension contributions increase by 50%? Staff already struggling with debts could just drop out of the scheme, and retire in poverty. This is still an unjustified extra tax to pay for the bankers' debts and cheapen costs for private profiteers. While teachers would have to pay in more, employers' contributions could be cut!

The NUT will be taking these

arguments out to every school to mobilise support for 28 March and beyond. Like other unions, we'll be calling on members to vote in an indicative survey to give a clear endorsement for this ongoing programme of strike action.

By voting for action, we'll be sending a clear message to the government that the fight for pensions is far from over. At the same time, we'll also be making clear that we are ready to fight against all those other attacks on pay, conditions and public services that this millionaires' government wants to throw at us.

See page 5 for more

# Students to walk out 14 March

## Young Socialist Party members prepare

**Paul Callanan**  
National organiser Youth Fight for Jobs and Education

On Saturday 11 February the National Union of Students (NUS) announced the date for a walk out against education cuts. On the same day 80 young people met on the first day of the Socialist Party's youth weekend. The discussion focussed on how to build for that walkout and how to take forward the struggle for a decent future for young people.

This move by the NUS is a historic step - never in its 90 year history has the NUS called a national walkout. It is now the job of every university and college activist to make sure that the action is a big, militant show of anger. But will the NUS build to make this a success? The movement of protests, occupations and strikes in late 2010 was built from outside of the official structure of the NUS.

Calling a walkout is a positive move however which gives activists the chance to take action with the authority of NUS behind us.

Youth Fight for Jobs and Education will now campaign for local student unions to mobilise for the day and completely shut down education. The day of action needs to be the start of building a mass and democratic student movement.

To aid this the demands of the walkout should make a broad appeal



photo Sarah Wrack

to all students and young people and call for a genuinely fair education system. That would be education as a right, not a privilege to be enjoyed only by those who can afford it.

NUS needs to demand not just lower fees but for them to be scrapped altogether. We call for grant funded higher education. Students in universities also need to build links with those in further education colleges and schools to demand the bringing back and expansion of EMA.

The youth weekend reinforced the determination of Socialist Par-

ty activists to fight for a future for young people. We will build for the student walkout alongside building strong local Youth Fight for Jobs campaigns.

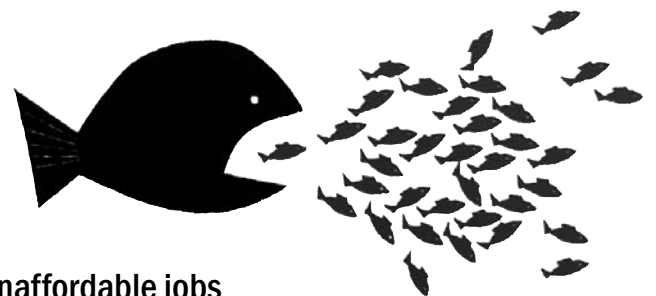
There was also discussion on the need to link the struggles of young people to those of workers in the trade unions. All agreed that one of our tasks is to mobilise young people to protest alongside workers on the day of the next pensions strike in order to build a mass movement that can stop the coalition in its tracks and bring down this rotten system.

### Stop Press

The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition list for the Greater London Assembly elections has been agreed: Alex Gordon, president of rail union RMT will head the list ● Nick Wrack, TUSC national committee ● April Ashley, Unison executive, representing black women members ● Steve Hedley, RMT London organiser ● Ian Leahair, Fire Brigades Union national committee member ● Gary McFarlane, anti-racist activist ● Martin Powell-Davies, executive member

for Inner London of the teachers union NUT ● Joe Simpson, assistant general secretary of the Prison Officers Association ● Jenny Sutton, lecturers union UCU ● Nancy Taaffe, library worker made redundant, former chair Waltham Forest Unison ● Jackie Turner, GP ● Lee Vernon, Young Members convener for London and southeast of the civil service union PCS ● Lesley Woodburn, Unite rep on southeast regional TUC LGBTQ committee ● There is a place reserved for a leading CWU representative Candidates are in a personal capacity

# Them...



### Unaffordable jobs

31% of private sector firms are planning to make redundancies this quarter according to the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD). This makes their prediction of unemployment reaching 2.85 million by the end of the year even more likely. In fact the TUC says that if we include those who cannot find full-time work, the real figure would be as high as 6.3 million. The CIPD's public policy advisor said companies "have decided to push the redundancy button in response to worsening economic news." But the 'worsening economic news' never seems to affect big companies, only the rest of us. We're told our jobs are unaffordable but they've got £130 billion just sitting in the bank! See [www.youthfightforjobs.com](http://www.youthfightforjobs.com) for how to fight back.

has gone up by (taking into account inflation) 1,100% since 1990! Working class fans, with finances squeezed by everything else going on, are excluded from football grounds.

### One rule for them...

Recognising the crippling effect of childcare prices, the Social Market Foundation think tank has helpfully suggested that parents should be able to borrow up to £10,000 to cover the costs. They would then have the repayments directly deducted from future pay checks, much like student loans. But hold on, when the banks were in trouble in 2008, there was no talk of loaning them money, the government bailed them out to the tune of £37 billion, little-to-no questions asked! And as a result parents are losing tax credits, Sure Start and nursery services. They might be forgiven for questioning why they don't also deserve a 'bailout' - free childcare for all.

### Cashing in on Whitney

Everyone knows that an artist's work becomes more valuable after they die. But not quite to the extent that fans saw after the death of Whitney Houston on Saturday 11 February. The price of purchasing The Ultimate Collection on iTunes increased by 60% from £4.99 to £7.99 a matter of hours after the singer was pronounced dead. Sony music claim the original price was wrong and Houston's death just made them realise their mistake. But with her records expected to top charts in the coming weeks, that seems just a little too convenient.

### Whose champion?

The government employs all sorts of do-gooders, wanting to help make the country a better place, to fix our so-called 'broken society'. Take Emma Harrison for example. She is apparently a 'families champion', appointed by Cameron to advise on getting 120,000 jobless families back to work. With unemployment still sky-rocketing, it doesn't seem she's had a resounding success. Harrison runs A4E, one of the private companies contracted to run the government's work-for-your-dole schemes. The company, which she owns 87% of, paid £11 million in dividends last year. That's despite missing all their targets. So remind us again why we're paying Harrison and her cronies that money rather than investing it to actually create some jobs?

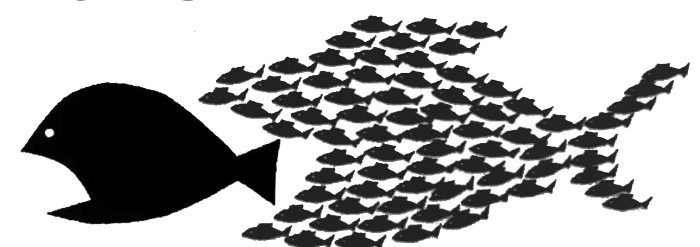

### The beautiful game

Deloitte's Football Money League has shown that the top 20 football clubs in the world earned €4.4 billion between them last year. Four English teams featured - Manchester United (£367 million), Arsenal (£251.1 million), Chelsea (£249.8 million) and Liverpool (£203.3 million). So how come ticket prices for watching these clubs are going through the roof? The price of a season ticket to Liverpool

### Energy rip-off

The Con-Dems promised us lower energy bills. They've even taken the unusual step (for them) of spending money to make homes more energy efficient. But the Guardian has revealed that bills will still go up for two thirds of households, by even more than the increase in oil prices. That's more off the top for the energy companies, who aren't exactly struggling as it is - they're already making an average of £125 a year profit from each household!

# ...& Us

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# The battle of Saltley Gates

Forty years ago in 1972, the miners' strike for a fairer pay system saw some of the biggest demonstrations of workers' power since World War Two. The Tory government, led by Edward Heath, was trying to enforce a pay restraint policy in the teeth of rising inflation, which was cutting workers' wages.

**T**he undoubted highlight of the 1972 miners' strike was the gigantic battle around a coke depot in Saltley in Birmingham.

The significance of the depot to the miners and the bosses became clear to all as lorries from around the country headed for the depot. The million-ton mountain of coke was needed to keep industry going.

The National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) had called on the workers of Birmingham to join them outside the depot in a mass picket to stop the lorries coming in. The Birmingham police were equally determined to keep the depot open.

At the time I was a newly elected senior shop steward in the Rover Solihull car plant and a member of the National Union of Vehicle Builders (NUVB), which later merged with the TGWU, now part of Unite.

Like many Birmingham trade union activists I had been following the events of the miners' strike since it started and I had explained to my members the issues around the strike and what it meant to all workers. But the call for solidarity picketing at Saltley gates significantly raised the stakes for all workers in the city.

## Scargill

Arthur Scargill, at the time a Yorkshire NUM official, appeared at a meeting of the east Birmingham district committee of the AUEW engineering union.

There he famously said that he didn't just want collections of money for the miners, he wanted Birmingham workers to come down to Saltley gates and stop the lorries leaving with the scab coke.

My own NUVB district committee was meeting at the same time and made a call on Birmingham car workers to join the mass picket.

From the Monday onwards shop stewards around the Birmingham car and engineering industry, including myself, went down to Saltley gates and joined the miners' picket lines. But when it became clear that we would need far more "bodies" to stop the lorries, we agreed that we would try and get solidarity strikes

The miners were badly affected. But their strike and important victory not only won a fair pay rise but inspired and showed the way forward for other groups of workers fighting to defend their living standards.

Bill Mullins explains an important episode in that victory.



Some of the thousands of workers gathering outside the gates

off the ground.

I remember on the Thursday morning, 10 February, I and a number of other stewards from the plant who had been going down regularly, went to see our convenor. We wanted to get him to agree to call a mass meeting of the 8,000 workers in the Solihull factory to ask them to go on strike in support of the miners and for as many as possible to go down to the mass picket.

As we were speaking to him a knock came on the door. A shop steward came in and told us that the word had got out and the workers were already walking off the job without being asked. Of course we were delighted and went immediately to round up as many workers as possible to get down to Saltley gates.

Geography had an important role in what happened next. The Solihull plant was about six or seven miles from Saltley in east Birmingham. We organised as many cars as possible to get people there.

But in the immediate vicinity of the Saltley depot there were many car component plants, all of them heavily unionised.

As we gathered outside the gates we could at first hear and then see a mass of workers coming over the hump-backed bridge from the direction of some of these component plants.

They included those from SU carburettors, who were mainly women workers, the tractor and transmission workers, led by a pipe band and workers from the General Electric plant from Witton just down the road. The Valour gas heater plant workers were there, and many others.

## Workers pour in

Thousands of workers from at least five different directions began to pour into the area around the coke depot gates.

Until then the 800-strong police present had managed to get it all their own way. They formed a barrier against the pickets to allow the lorries unhindered passage. But the balance of forces rapidly changed as the thousands of Birmingham factory workers entered the scene.

It is difficult to say how many were there but the police later estimated 15,000. The anti-union Birmingham Evening Mail that night said at least

10,000. I and many others thought it was a lot more than either of these figures.

Certainly at least 50,000 workers came out on strike that day, of course not all going down to the picket line.

The cops knew then they were beat and with Scargill, who by now had got up onto a public toilet roof 50 yards from the gates, encouraging the mass ranks of workers forward, the Birmingham chief constable ordered the gates shut and the lorries turned around.

A huge cheer went up from the mass ranks of picketers with this victory. It was undoubtedly the most significant moment of the strike and a massive victory for workers' solidarity.

## Postscript

The miners went on to win their battle and forced a significant pay rise from the Coal Board. The Birmingham police meanwhile licked their wounds and said "never again". In fact they produced a blue tie with a logo of a gate with those words underneath.

# Stagecoach South Yorkshire Management getting desperate!

Alistair Tice

It was -15C overnight. Pickets arrived at the Rawmarsh bus depot in Rotherham at 4.30am on 8 February. Water had been poured over the footpath where the strikers assemble making it into a skating rink. Maybe this shows how desperate Stagecoach bosses are getting?

Over 300 bus drivers in Barnsley and Rotherham, members of Unite, were on their eleventh day of strike action for decent pay.

Their £9 an hour claim has been met but they are sticking out for back-pay from last year and will not accept a pay freeze for the next year.

Stagecoach are doing everything to try to break this strike. Since November, they have bussed in management and scabs from around the

country. Now they are advertising for scabs in the Barnsley JobCentre: £500/week, free accommodation, free bar and bonus! We've contacted the DWP union, the PCS, to try to get this withdrawn.

Stagecoach have cut their fares to only £1 and can run no services after 6pm. They are losing millions of pounds to try to break the union. But boosted by a big solidarity march in Barnsley on 4 February, the strikers are determined to win. They were on strike again on 10 February and have named another four strike days in March.

- Messages of support should be emailed to Barnsley Unite branch secretary Tony Rushforth at: a-rushforth@sky.com

- Cheques should be made payable to TGWU 9/9 Barnsley and sent to A Rushforth, 45 Tune Street, Wombwell, Barnsley S73 8PX



The strikers are determined to win photo Alistair Tice

## In brief

### NSSN conference

National Shop Stewards Network 6th annual conference: Saturday 9 June 11am - 4pm Friends Meeting House, Euston Road, London NW1 2BJ For more information see: www.shopstewards.net Contact the NSSN at: info@shopstewards.net or PO Box 54498, London, E10 9DE

### Tanker strike

Following eight days of strike action with another week long strike called, Jet tanker drivers at Immingham, Stockton and Kingsbury, have forced their employer, haulage firm Wincanton, and their client, ConocoPhillips, to commit to talks about securing a long-term future for the workforce.

Nick Dennis, chair of the Unite National Negotiating Committee for 3,000 unionised tanker drivers, told the Socialist that: "Our strike has been 100% solid with other tanker drivers not crossing our picket lines. We've shown the bosses that we are going to fight their cost-down agenda. If we have to come out on strike again, we won't be on our own, it'll be industry-wide, and that really will hit the forecourts with fuel shortages within days."

### UCU elections

The election of key officers in UCU is taking place against the background of the battle to defend pensions. The UCU Left is standing candidates, most prominently Mark Campbell for general secretary and Angie McConnell for vice president, who will have the support of Socialist Party members in UCU. We have criticisms of the UCU Left, for example over its internal democracy and recent votes to 'name a date' for further strike action independently of other trade unions. We do not accept the arguments of the (mainly Labour-supporting) 'UCU Independent Broad Left' for backing the current general secretary Sally Hunt. Our ultimate goal in UCU is to replicate the successes of PCS Left Unity, which unites the serious forces on the left to provide an effective, fighting union leadership. **Socialist Party members in UCU**

### No pay cuts!

Bin workers across Stoke-on-Trent are incensed at the Labour run city council's plans to slash their wages. The GMB members are planning to vote on strike action to defend their pay and already diminishing living standards. The council want to tear up their contracts and force workers to 'drop pay bands' which means they will lose up £90 a week! A strike could begin before the end of the month to coincide with the council's budget-setting meeting on 23 February. **Andy Bentley and Alan Holdway**

### Unilever pensions

After two successful waves of strike action to defend their pensions, Unilever workers are waiting to hear the results of negotiations with the company. Unilever had previously refused to negotiate over their intention to ditch the final salary pension scheme but the strikes forced them to accept an invitation from Acas to talks with the unions. **More on these and other workplace news stories on www.socialistparty.org.uk**

# Pensions: build for 28 March strike

**John McNally**

National vice-president PCS civil servants' union, personal capacity

PCS's national executive committee have voted unanimously to continue the campaign to fight against the coalition government's pension 'reforms'. The National Union of Teachers (NUT) has also voted to continue the campaign.

This means opposition to the government's plans will continue in two of the four pension sector schemes, civil service and education, giving us a fighting chance to force the government to retreat or at least win substantial concessions.

The government wants us to pay more, work longer, and get less. It intends to impose what is effectively a tax on public sector workers - any money saved goes straight into Treasury coffers to pay the deficit rather than improve the pension schemes.

This attack is part of the coalition's cuts and privatisation programme which represents a staggering transfer of wealth and power from the majority to the tiny big business and banking elite who caused the economic crisis in the first place. The explicitly stated aim of these 'reforms' is the privatisation of large swathes of the public sector by making pensions 'affordable' by ruthlessly cutting workers' terms and conditions.

## Heads of Agreement

Regrettably some union leaderships, along with the TUC have, as the government demanded, agreed that the so-called Heads of Agreement was a basis for settling the dispute. This is despite the fact it gave no concessions whatsoever on the three core issues of paying more, working longer and getting less. In fact the minor concessions these 'leaders' say constitute the basis for a settlement were all on the table before 30 November.

Accepting and trying to sell this 'deal' to members is a catastrophic error of judgement that can only encourage further attacks on the public sector and working people generally.

PCS will be consulting its members in an indicative ballot on a campaign of action to continue the dispute and win concessions on the core issues. Unions not prepared to settle have met in the past few weeks and the PCS proposals are an effective strategy to



The massive potential of the trade union movement - on the London demo on 30 November photo Senan

build the kind of coordinated campaign, including industrial action, to attempt to build the type of pressure to win concessions.

The campaign would involve co-ordinated action with other civil service and education unions, starting with a nationally coordinated strike on 28 March, followed by further national strikes and action in departmental groups and sectors, coordinated with other unions.

The campaign would also involve building political pressure by protests, regional and local demonstrations, lobbying of MPs and continuing to expose the brutal nature of these attacks on workers' rights.

Other unions including the NUT, Northern Ireland Public Sector Alliance (NIPSA) Unite and the University and College Union (UCU) are part of an alliance that could see up to 750,000 workers taking action to fight for justice on pensions. The firefighters' union FBU is also now looking to ballot its members.

In the private sector, unscrupulous employers have been given a clear signal by Cameron to step up attacks on pension schemes not already stolen or destroyed over the past few decades. But resistance is building there as well with Unilever workers striking to defend their

rights. Workers at Ford and Shell are in the firing line too. The potential to coordinate these disputes means that the smug boast of Tory minister Francis Maude that "strikes don't work" may well come back to haunt him sooner than he ever thought possible.

PCS is to ballot its members on whether to reject the government's offer and support the campaign of action. NUT is doing the same in a 'survey' of members. The ballots will start in a few week's time and end in mid-March. Voting will be by post, phone and internet.

## Live ballots

There are live statutory ballots that would have allowed our national executives to call further action without further consultation. But to have done so, given the significant change of circumstances, particularly the fact that the leadership of the largest public sector union, Unison, has caved in to the threats of Maude and Lib Dem treasury minister Danny Alexander would have been wrong.

Members are asking the obvious questions, who will be with us if we are to fight on, could we win on our own and, can we win with a reduced alliance?

PCS has managed to campaign consistently against a cuts and privatisation programme that started under the last Labour government. We have done this by applying the most rigorous standards of democratic accountability, consulting activists and members at every crucial stage of any dispute. PCS believes we must enlist the support of all our members to win concessions on pensions and continue the wider battle against the cuts.

The coalition of eleven unions prepared to fight on clearly represents a reduction in numbers from the two million who struck on 30 November. It will be necessary to explain honestly to members that while concessions are most definitely possible with less we will need to do more. That means we must consult on what is effectively a deepening of the industrial action campaign to build the kind of pressure necessary to win concessions. It is also the case that while workers on 30 November saw the massive potential strength of the trade union movement, over 100,000 became members, the shameful and treacherous role played by some union leaders and the TUC to settle without concessions has been a major setback.

The ballot is therefore not just about getting endorsement for the campaign but about explaining what has happened, why we should not concede on pensions because it will give the green light for even worse outrages.

Finally it is because we can, even with a reduced coalition, win concessions from a government that is in real difficulty. This consultation is about mobilising activists and members.

PCS will continue to participate in talks with the government after the coalition's attempt to exclude us from them was faced down.

The government is increasingly being exposed. Their revolting hate campaign against welfare claimants and disabled people in trying

Resistance to these barbarians is growing. The pensions attack is part of a corrupt profit-first people-last ideological assault by the business elite's biddable politicians. 30 November showed that the majority of people in Britain support those prepared to resist

to push through welfare 'reforms' that will be devastating for low-paid and even middle income people is under enormous scrutiny. So too is their attempt to completely privatise the health service.

Resistance to these barbarians is growing. The pensions attack is part of a corrupt profit-first people-last ideological assault by the business elite's biddable politicians.

30 November showed that the majority of people in Britain support those prepared to resist. Continuing the campaign on pensions can win the support of members in PCS and others in the civil service and education unions and others too in the public and private sectors.

# More murky doings in Murdochland

**Philip Stott**

The fall-out from the Murdochgate scandal has continued following the arrests of ten top editors and journalists who currently work for or have worked for the Sun newspaper.

These arrests are part of the police investigation "Elveden" into suspected bribery and corruption of police officers. It will come as no surprise to anyone aware of the methods of News International that journalists routinely paid police officers for information. Bribing a public official is a criminal offence, but that never stopped the Sun or the News of the World in the past.

Trevor Kavanagh, the associate editor of the Sun has claimed there is a witch-hunt against the paper and News International. He blames

elements of News Corp, who owns News International, for handing over a portion of the 300 million internal company emails to the police that led to the arrests.

There is growing evidence that some within News Corp, who are involved in a power battle with Rupert Murdoch, are looking to get rid of large parts, if not all of the toxic News International.

Kavanagh complained that Sun employees had been subject to dawn raids by up to 20 police officers who went through children's clothes drawers looking for evidence. No doubt the Met police, who lost a police commissioner and deputy commissioner already due to the scandal, are trying to prove their independence from the Murdoch Empire.

However, Kavanagh was not so

forthcoming in his criticisms of police methods when socialist Tommy Sheridan was the subject of a widely condemned police and state vendetta. This included having his home raided and young child traumatised. He was arrested outside his place of work and faced years of persecution, not least by the Scottish Sun and the now defunct News of the World, who he defeated in a defamation case in 2006.

The Socialist continues to call for a genuine democratic public inquiry, involving representatives of the trade union and labour movement, into the actions of the Murdoch empire. This must include the handing over of all documents, emails and other information to allow a full expose of the relationship between News International, the police and the political establishment.



The toxic News International photo Paul Mattsson

# Private hands off our NHS!

## Scrap the health bill

Jon Dale

"Patients could find themselves at the centre of an advertising war for hospital treatment. The private health care partnership, Circle, has launched an advertising campaign to woo Leicestershire patients over the border to the Nottingham NHS treatment centre." (Leicester Mercury 10.2.12)

The NHS never used to spend money on advertising except for health education. Now the 'efficiency' of competition and free markets is pouring in, millions are being wasted on marketing. The Con-Dems' health bill will make this 100 times worse, with more advertising, so less health care.

Allowing "any willing provider" to run different parts of the health service in England will destroy it, leaving a mess of competing businesses. Competition means losers as well as winners. Patients and health workers will be losers. Profit-making companies will win the public money spent on the NHS.

The NHS was set up to be nationally planned and provide equal access to all who needed it. No government ever invested enough to achieve this. But a huge advance was made compared to life before the NHS.

Until 1948, those with money (and some 'charity' patients) could get treated in the best hospitals, in large cities. Many could neither get to these hospitals nor afford them. General practice was very unevenly spread. Poor working class areas could not attract doctors, as they couldn't offer the income earned in more prosperous places.

Private practice and private hospitals remained after the NHS was formed. But it was Margaret Thatcher's 'internal market' (implemented by her successor John Major) that started to expose parts of the NHS to privatisation. She wanted full privatisation but had to hold back. Her cabinet feared the reaction to it would force the labour and trade union movement to resist.

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### Labour party

However, the Labour Party leaders Tony Blair and Gordon Brown forced open the cracks in the NHS, allowing business with its need for profit to flood in. Now Tories Cameron and Lansley are following in their footsteps, detonating an explosion of profiteering that will destroy what remains of a national service. They know Labour's opposition is hot air.

The Con-Dems are determined to go ahead with the health and social care bill despite huge opposition from health workers' organisations and the public. This is because they believe it will allow their friends in big business even more opportunity to make profit from our health service. The bill will pave the way for a decimation of wages and conditions of health workers in the future. And it is part of the Tories' wider agenda of cutting the welfare state to the bone -

making ordinary people pay for the economic crisis.

This is also because of the dilemma which confronts 'modern' capitalism, of restricted opportunities to invest profitably in Britain's depleted manufacturing sector.

They therefore look hungrily to invest in privatised industries - not just health, but other sections as well. Even if this means a more expensive, less efficient, worse service - which it will - nevertheless it could be a profitable outlet for the billions of pounds presently locked up in the vaults of big business.

Nobody believes government claims that GPs will be able to decide what local health services they commission for their patients. The bill gives Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) control of 80% of the NHS budget. They are already being set up even though the bill has not yet become law. Huge corporations like KPMG and McKinsey are 'advising' many of them. It's clear these 'advisers' will direct CCGs to spend more money with private health companies.

### Kill the bill

Patients will wonder if they have been referred to a particular clinic because it is best for them or because their GP stands to gain financially. GPs, their budgets set by government, will become messengers for the cuts, having to explain why they do not have money to provide particular treatments.

Seeing the overwhelming hostility to the bill among health professionals, including GPs, Labour leader Ed Miliband has finally become more vocal. But his plan is "for people of all parties and of none, the professions, the patients and now peers in the House of Lords to work together to try to stop this bill." This strategy is like treating pneumonia with a spoonful of cough linctus and a get-well-soon card.

Labour could kill the bill with one announcement - that a future Labour government would take back into public ownership all privatised health services without compensation, except where there is proven need. That would stop the profit-seeking sharks in their current plans. As there's no prospect that Labour will do this, the reliance of many trade union leaders on a future Labour government to stop the bill is dangerously misleading their members.

Lansley's Bill can be stopped by a mass movement uniting health workers, trade unions and community campaigns, with a national Saturday demonstration to fire the signal that the battle has started.

The splits emerging within the cabinet can be widened and the government itself could fall if strikes of health workers develop as well as plans for further action to defend public sector pensions and against the cuts. A strong and determined lead from the unions is needed. A political alternative must be built to the three parties representing the interests of private health care and big business.

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photo Paul Mattsson

## Case studies: risks of privatisation

### East Midlands Ambulances

Non-emergency ambulance services - known as Patient Transport Services (PTS) - include transferring vulnerable patients to and from their hospital, day care and outpatient appointments, as well as ferrying vital equipment and patient records across different hospital sites.

In many areas of England, PTS services are being put out to tender. Where the contracts have been won by the private sector there have been problems. For example, some patients have been left waiting for up to nine hours. There are some reports of hospital staff having to report patients as being more ill than they are in order to secure transport.

The latest ambulance service to be affected is the East Midlands Ambulance Service (EMAS). Contracts for Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Rutland, Northamptonshire, Nottinghamshire and most of Lincolnshire have been awarded to NSL Ltd, who describe themselves as an "expert outsourced service provider", and the bus company, Arriva Passenger Services.

The contracts were worth £20 million a year to the ambulance service. The total value of the contracts over five years is estimated to be about £130 million.

Will these companies understand that these people are not passengers? They are patients with illnesses and disabilities and complex needs, they are not simply to be picked up and dropped off.

Over 600 staff currently employed by EMAS face an uncertain future following the decision to privatise their jobs. EMAS Unison condemned the decision as one that put financial savings ahead of the quality of service.

Alarmingly, the contracts were based on a 35% reduction in patient journeys

that will be achieved through using new stringent eligibility criteria. Currently transport is booked by the hospital or GP surgery according to patient need, whereas the new contracts will be based on patients making their own booking direct with the private company who will apply the criteria.

This means 35% of patients currently receiving specialist care transport will no longer be eligible. This has particularly worrying consequences, not only for these patients but also for what remains of the EMAS - the Accident and Emergency (A&E) fleet. What is almost certainly going to happen is private companies seeking to offload their difficult and costly patients onto the A&E fleet.

Denying, not providing, is the natural logic of the private sector; as it must manage the financial risk associated with providing health care. Furthermore, the PTS fleet provides a vital function in the event of a major incident or large scale emergency. For example when dealing with multi-casualty road traffic collisions the PTS are often called upon to transport patients who need to be taken to A&E but have non-serious injuries. The ambulance service will no longer have the same access to this vital back-up role.

The exclusion of the private sector from health and social care in 1948 was not a mistake; it was done by design. Bitter experiences meant that private enterprise needed limiting. Don't we learn anything from history?

We must act now to defend our NHS. The Socialist Party calls for a socialist NHS to meet everyone's health needs, free at the point of use and under democratic control. Kick out the private contractors!

**Steve Wells, NHS worker**



photo Paul Mattsson

### Whipps Cross hospital

Privatisation in the NHS is a policy aimed at the reversal of every gain secured by the strength and organisation of health workers and the wider working class over the last 30 years. The experience of workers at Whipps Cross hospital who provide vital support services such as cleaning and portering attest to this.

The profit motive and shareholder dividend payments conflict daily with the need to provide a service based on the real needs of human beings. Successful governments have used 'outsour-

ing' to further cut taxes for the rich while directly transferring public money and assets into the bank accounts of their rich backers.

'Domestics', cleaning workers, have described what privatisation has meant for their job. Previously 'deep-cleaning' had been done by a specialised team. Now general cleaning staff must incorporate this into their routine, including moving heavy furniture, turning beds and so on. This represents an enormous cut in the cleaning service. Workers have suffered back injuries as a result too. They are expected to do a specialised job without training or increased pay.

The workers also reported that they felt they were punished for going on holiday - no training was given to those who covered their areas while they were away meaning that on their return everything had to be cleaned more to make up for a bad job done. This, of course, has massive implications for the health service.

Privatisation is a big concern for workers at Whipps in a pending merger of the hospital with Bart's and the Royal London where there exists possibly the biggest Private Finance Initiative scheme in the country. PFI or Profit From Illness in reality is a huge money maker for capitalists with guaranteed profit year on year for up to 35 years and more and paid for often by workers through cutbacks, down bandings job and service cuts.

The Whipps Cross workers have fought to preserve union organisation as the only sure way of resisting low pay and worsening conditions of working. They have learned in struggle the value of this and have acted in unity, serving as an example to other workers, of the benefits of what being in a trade union can bring.

**A Whipps Cross worker**

### A brief history of privatisation in the NHS

**1948** - Creation of the NHS - but private practice and private hospitals remain

**1952** - Charges introduced for prescriptions, glasses and dental treatment

**1983** - Thatcher starts privatisation of ancillary services (such as cleaning and catering)

**1990** - NHS and Community Care Act introduces an "internal market"

**1992** - PFI introduced in the UK for the first time

**1997** - Blair elected with the promise to remove the internal market. He quickly reverses this position and PFI in the NHS is expanded massively

**2002** - Foundation hospitals launched

**2011** - Con-Dems' Health and Social Care Bill proposes further moves towards privatisation



### The Socialist Party demands:

- No to cuts. For a publicly funded service, free at the point of use, to provide for everyone's health needs
- End big business profiteering from the NHS! Scrap the costly Private Finance Initiative (PFI) schemes. No to private polyclinics and GP consortiums. Scrap the bill
- End 'payment by results'. Take all health services and buildings back from big business and place them under public ownership. Publicly fund and integrate them with the rest of the NHS
- Nationalise the pharmaceutical and medical supply industries and private health providers, with compensation only on the basis of proven need. Bring them under working class control and management
- Abolish Foundation Trusts. For democratic control of local health services by elected health workers and community representatives as well as elected representatives from local and national government
- End NHS job losses and low pay
- For a massive trade union led struggle to defend the NHS
- For a new mass workers' party to fight for the NHS and against cuts and privatisation. For socialist policies and a planned economy to end poverty, bad housing, unemployment, pollution and inequality - the biggest killers and causes of ill-health.

## Gloucestershire says no to Social Enterprise in the NHS

**Continued from page 12**

Last year in Shropshire, South Bedfordshire, Sandwell and elsewhere health trade unions successfully campaigned against transfer to social enterprise. But recently 20 primary care trusts handed staff and services over to Social Enterprise Trusts (SETs) or Community Interest Companies (CICs).

CICs are private limited companies, run as a business to make a profit. After a few years private sector sharks can compete for contracts, gobbling up the CIC minnows. Last September, Central Surrey Health, a flagship social enterprise, lost out in bids for a £500 million health services contract to Assura Medical a private healthcare company 75% owned by Virgin. In Hull, private companies stepped in months after the social enterprise contract was signed.

Yet Gloucestershire health managers told staff they were 'committed to NHS values'. Staff were also told NHS terms and conditions would be preserved. But protection under Tupe (transfer of pay and conditions) rules is much weaker than staying in the NHS.

One local nurse said it would amount to a £4,000 pay cut. Unison obtained a Department of Health letter confirming transferred staff will be given new contracts that are hard to protect. Cornwall council broke promises to transferred NHS staff on pay and pensions.

The SETs scheme was initiated by the previous Labour government. In 2006 then Health Secretary Patricia Hewitt said it gave "the ability to create wealth and employment and could play a greater role in future in the delivery of public services".

The Con-Dem government wants to dismantle the NHS, through SET/CIC, £20 to £30 billion cuts and the Health and Social Care Bill that would remove all barriers to privatisation. Yet it was Labour that introduced one of the bill's core policies, Foundation Trusts. Labour simply wants to 'tone down' the bill.

Our NHS is not safe in the hands of any of the main political parties. The public and health workers are prepared to fight to defend our NHS, but a national lead from health trade unions is desperately needed.



# Should socialists support the Green Party?

In issue 703 of the Socialist, Socialist Party member Alec Price criticised the Green Party's claim to be an anti-cuts alternative to New Labour. Below we carry the correspondence that has followed.

## Green Party trade unionist resigns

**Dear Green Party Office,**  
Sadly after six years I feel that I am left with little choice but to cancel my membership of the Green Party.

I have had a number of concerns about the political and organisational direction of the party and some of its electoral representatives and candidates.

However the final tipping point for me has been the budget proposal put forward by the Green Party in Brighton and Hove. This budget proposal, aside from being in contradiction with the national party policy of affiliation to the Coalition of Resistance, is on the face of it proposing millions of pounds of cuts to jobs and already squeezed services.

This for me is unacceptable, even more so when excuses of 'maintaining electoral respectability' are put forward by the party. Sadly it seems that when push comes to shove some elected Greens, with a sniff of personal power, are no different than New Labour or Lib Dems in supporting a Tory agenda.

Whilst I continue to devote my own activist time to working within the anti-cuts movement, I find my position within a party willing to propose such cuts and job losses untenable.

**Andy Hewett**  
Former Green Party campaigns coordinator, trade union group co-chair and parliamentary candidate for Greenwich and Woolwich

**Brighton Stop the Cuts debate with the Greens:**  
brightonhove  
socialistparty.  
blogspot.  
com/2012/02/  
debate-with-green-councilor-on-cuts.  
html

I fully support your criticism of the dreadful defection from the Green Party [to the Tories] of the Norfolk councillor [Phillip Hardy] and share your concern about the separate Green Party in Ireland.

However, before you use these events to write off the entire party let's remember that there has also been some terrible things done by those professing to be socialists in every party.

Elsewhere in your paper you refer to the stand taken by Liverpool council in the 1980s but few of us can be enthusiastic about Derek Hatton's subsequent activities.

We need to put our faith in policies and ideas, not individuals. You didn't mention that Green-led Brighton council was the first to announce that it would be increasing council tax to try and protect as many services as possible from the vicious coalition cuts. They have now been joined by many others.

We need to fight as hard to oppose excessive increases in council house rents, like the average 9% increase being recommended by Labour-controlled Bolsover's cabinet where I am a Green councillor, but we can't unite opposition if we simply perpetuate division.

**Councillor Duncan Kerr**



Councillor Kerr argues against writing off the Green Party. We should never 'write off' anyone willing to fight all cuts and the economic system that causes them. However, until the Green Party adopts a clear strategy to oppose the funding robbery by the Tory/Liberal Democrat government it will end up implementing cuts in local councils.

In Brighton and Hove council, the Green Party has done nothing to build a campaign against the 33%, £35 million, funding reduction from the government.

Their actions in seeking support for their cuts budget will demoralise local service users and council staff looking for a way to resist the cuts. Raising taxes as part of that cuts budget is no substitute.

Unity is important, but unity has to be on the basis of a fightback, not capitulation, no matter how well-intentioned. We argue for a 'needs' budget that reflects the needs of people in Brighton and Hove, and mass working class action to fight for it.

**Jon Redford, Brighton and Hove Socialist Party**

## What we said...

In Brighton, the Green Party emerged as the main electoral outlet for opposition to the cuts. With 33% of the city-wide vote, the Greens surged from 13 to 23 councillors, displacing the Tories as the largest group...

The Greens' record in local government, however, shows that they will disappoint those who see them as a shield against the cuts. In the south London

borough of Lewisham, for example, for four years (2006-10), two Socialist Party and six Green councillors sat in a hung council.

The Socialist Party and Green councillors sometimes voted together, for example, in opposing cuts to local A&E services. But the Greens more often sided with New Labour on key votes, or abstained to help give it a majority, including votes on

cutting council services, homes privatisation plans, and academy schools...

Public representatives are put under extreme pressure from establishment politicians, backed up by the media, senior civil servants or, locally, by council executive officers, to 'be realistic' and accept 'officers' guidance...

The Green Party has not emerged as an expression of the political interests

of the working class, with no acceptance among its members of a class analysis of society and not based on working class organisations, in particular the trade unions. Neither does it have a clear alternative to the capitalist 'free-market' system. When the stakes are high, therefore, the majority of Green councillors will be unable to resist.

From **Socialism Today 149, June 2011**

## Llanelli marches to save hospital

**Gareth Bromhall**  
Llanelli and West Wales Socialist Party

Around 300 trade unionists, health workers, medical professionals and community campaigners marched through Llanelli to oppose the proposed closures at Prince Philip Hospital (PPH).

The march and rally, organised by Llanelli Trades Council, became the lead story on the Welsh news. The mood was one of outrage and determination to fight the proposals of the Hywel Dda Health Board throughout the West Wales area.

Speakers included a representative from local campaigning group SOSPPAN and a former consultant at PPH.

Local trade unionists and Socialist Party members outlined how the proposed closures at PPH had wider implications on jobs and services

throughout Wales and raised the need for a properly funded and democratically-run NHS.

A reported 500 people attended a meeting in Aberystwyth over concerns that Bronlais Hospital could see its services downgraded and

Find out about meetings

and events at

[www.socialistparty.org.uk/whatson](http://www.socialistparty.org.uk/whatson)

transferred to Carmarthen. This follows a letter of 'no confidence' signed by 50 out of 60 senior medical staff, which was sent to the health board and health minister.

We need a united campaign in Llanelli, Aberystwyth, Pembrokeshire and Carmarthen to fight any attempts at cutting services in the Hywel Dda area.

## Socialist councillor leads fight to restore EMA

Coventry Socialist Party councillor Dave Nellist is campaigning against education cuts and tuition fees. Dave launched a petition in October which calls on Coventry council to demand the reinstatement of EMA student payments.

With hundreds of signatures, the petition has forced the council to meet with Dave and local Youth Fight for Jobs (YFJ) campaigners. The petition was presented by Dave Nellist and local YFJ organiser Jethro Waldron.

Dave said: "Young people haven't caused the banking crisis. Instead of spending billions of pounds to bail out the banking system, we should be creating jobs and homes for all, putting the millions before the millionaires. All three major parties tolerate poverty such as this, because to really change it would mean challenging the big business interests in whose favour the country is run."

The council was forced to agree

to help host a meeting with YFJ and city youth campaigns, trade unions, college and university student unions and sixth form representatives.

This meeting will discuss a strategy to campaign against the tripling of students' fees, axing of EMA and to fight for jobs for the city's young people.

**Help get Coventry Socialist Party councillor Dave Nellist re-elected in May's council elections. There are mass canvasses of St Michael's ward organised on Sunday 19 February, 18 March, 1 April, 15 April and 29 April. Contact [lennyshailduffy@gmail.com](mailto:lennyshailduffy@gmail.com)**

### Rob Windsor funeral

The funeral service for former Socialist Party councillor Rob Windsor will be held at Coventry Cathedral at 1pm on Friday 17 February. Read an obituary at [www.socialistparty.org.uk](http://www.socialistparty.org.uk)

## Public oppose Greenwich Library transfer

Despite giving only one week's notice, three meetings organised by the council in Greenwich, south London, were attended by very angry members of the public who demanded that the transfer of libraries to Greenwich Libraries Limited is scrapped.

Unite official Onay Kasab said: "The message at all three meetings was angry and clear - there is no support whatsoever for the privatisation of our library service."

The council website had promised a public opinion survey, but the meetings were held to give 'information only', not consultation. The council had previously cancelled five meetings.

A Unite survey has now received over 1,100 responses from the public opposing the transfer. The union also lobbied the council's cabinet meeting on 14 February.

### Get involved

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### SOCIALIST PARTY FIGHTING FUND

	£ target	£ received	January-March 2012	Deadline 30 March
South West	1,400	845	██████████	██████████
North West	1,200	575	██████████	██████████
Yorkshire	2,900	1,191	██████████	██████████
Northern	600	241	██████████	██████████
East Midlands	1,550	570	██████████	██████████
London	6,100	2,159	██████████	██████████
Wales	2,300	676	██████████	██████████
Eastern	1,200	351	██████████	██████████
Southern	1,200	343	██████████	██████████
West Midlands	2,100	413	██████████	██████████
South East	1,000	30	██████████	██████████
England & Wales	3,450	186	██████████	██████████
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>25,000</b>	<b>7,585</b>	██████████	██████████

# Syria: Anti-regime protesters facing ferocious repression

## No trust in Arab League and imperialist powers

Judy Beishon

The Syrian regime has dramatically stepped up its savage military onslaught on civilians in Homs and other areas, in the worst upsurge of bloody repression since the start of the uprising last March. Local communities in towns and city suburbs have been shelled indiscriminately, killing hundreds.

Incredibly brave and tenacious, hundreds of thousands of people across Syria have been demonstrating time and time again, largely unarmed, knowing that some may be killed and others maimed or detained and tortured.

The Baathist regime of president Bashar al-Assad has overwhelming military advantage, but despite this, communities in revolt are running pockets of resistance scattered across the country.

A growing number of army defectors and civilians are joining local-based groups of the Free Syria Army but this ad hoc force is estimated to be only 10,000-20,000 strong at present and desperate for more arms. It is up against a state army of 500,000 (including reservists) which, for now, is mainly holding together. How long it will stay like this is questionable, especially as a majority of the army rank and file are from the majority Sunni population, substantial sections of which are hostile to the minority Alawite-led regime.

### Weakening base

The shocking brutality of the regime reveals its fundamental weakness; it is struggling to maintain its social base and so is trying to crush all opposition through inflicting sheer terror. But it is failing to subdue the uprising, and escalating its offensive will fuel even greater anger. Conversely, as the opposition is not gaining the upper hand, a stalemate is enduring.

Although events could develop very rapidly towards a head, it is also possible that the struggle could continue to be of a prolonged nature, with even worse onslaughts by the government to come, until a tipping point is eventually reached in favour of the opposition movement or the ruling elite itself decides to remove Assad.

image  
not  
available

image not available

Fearing how far the revolutionary movement could go, those around Assad could engineer his exit in order to try to preserve their vast wealth and privileges and the state institutions that protect them.

They also fear the ever deeper crisis that the economy is descending into, due to the world economic crisis but worsened by sanctions from western imperialism and the Arab League. The uprising has also meant a nosedive in tourism, the diversion of public money to the military and a loss of tax revenues. As a result there are workplace lay-offs and closures, fuel shortages, rising prices and the currency is plunging.

### International response

In the UN security council Russia and China refused to support a resolution demanding that Assad quits, in keeping with their competition with western powers for spheres of influence and unease about the possible consequences for their interests post-Assad.

The Russian ruling class has close links with the Syrian elite, including major investments in Syria and arms deals and has a naval base at the Syrian port of Tartus.

With the failure of the UN resolution, a 'Friends of Syria' grouping is being cobbled together to pursue the interests of the world powers that want to see Assad removed. The Arab League pulled out its temporary 165 observers from Syria during the last weekend of January after, predictably, failing to stop the bloodshed.

The hypocrisy of this tokenism by the super-rich Arab autocracies was shown in their appointment of Sudanese general Mustafa al-Dabi to head the mission. Dabi used to be the military intelligence chief of Sudan's president Omar al-Bashir while genocide and other war crimes were being committed in Darfur.

What interventions will be tried next? The western media is echoing desperate pleas from Syrian civilians for foreign help. However, while billions of ordinary people across the globe are completely genuine in their concern and desire to support any meaningful assist-

ance that can be given to Syrians being slaughtered, the motives and interests of the Arab elites and imperialist ruling classes are entirely different. They view the situation from the standpoint of their own influence and wealth, so any intervention would be in their own class interests and not those of the Syrians being butchered.

Which imperialist power does not have more blood on its hands than even Bashar al-Assad when you look at what they or their allies have done in Iraq, Afghanistan, Chechnya, Bahrain, Gaza and so many other 'interventions'? The chief crime of the Syrian regime in the eyes of western imperialism and its allies is not its brutality but its alliance with their enemy state, Iran.

In any case, foreign military intervention is fraught with great difficulties for the regional and world powers. Ground troops, after the experiences of Iraq and Afghanistan and with the complexities of the situation in Syria are not seen as an option.

Bombardment from the air, or even just enforcement of a 'no-fly zone', would be much harder than it was in Libya, because of the dissipated nature of the opposition in Syria, the more varied terrain, the relatively sophisticated anti-aircraft defences, not to mention the vociferous opposition of Russia, China and Iran and the possible consequences in the region.

The most that may perhaps be considered in the short term is protection/buffer zones near the Turkish border to contain the flow of refugees, enforced by Turkey's military forces, or on the border with Jordan. Also, some governments - including Qatar and Saudi Arabia - are intent on sending covert funding and arms to the Syrian opposition organisations that they are trying to influence.

But this doesn't mean that other regional and world powers won't be drawn into the conflict in a more direct way militarily. They are under huge pressure to be seen to be doing something and they don't want to cede influence to their competitors. A devastating war situation could develop drawing in interventions previously not contemplated.

### Workers' movement

The activists and supporters of the uprising are demanding freedom from corrupt and despotic rule, but underlying their discontent are the material issues of high unemployment, increased poverty, poor housing etc - by-products of capitalist economic crisis and neoliberal policies.

'Change' is demanded by the two main opposition political umbrella organisations but they are broad bodies that are rife with division. They don't have a programme and strategy that can unify and develop the opposition movement on the ground and reach out to the sections of Syrian society that fear there will be a wave of discrimination against certain minorities if Assad falls.

Without a new workers' formation being built that adopts a programme showing a clear way forward on the basis of workers' unity, the dangers of sectarian division are potentially great and are already apparent in areas where the government appears to have deliberately provoked them.

The worst clashes of this nature have been in Homs, where there have been many reports of kidnappings and killings that foster division and cut across united struggle against the regime.

Democratically run workers' defence committees urgently need to be built in every community, with the right to distribute arms. Alongside these, workers' committees are needed that can link together regionally and nationally to build a mass revolutionary movement with an escalating programme of general strikes, workplace occupations, and other actions.

It is important for the movement to reject any imperialist intervention or interference. It needs to appeal to rank and file Syrian army soldiers with a socialist programme for public ownership and workers' control and management of the key industries, which would inspire them to join the side of the revolution, similar to what the Bolsheviks did in Russia in 1917.

See [socialistworld.net](http://socialistworld.net) for the full version of this article.

### The Committee for a Workers' International

The Committee for a Workers' International (CWI) is the socialist international organisation to which the Socialist Party is affiliated.

The CWI is organised in 45 countries and works to unite the working class and oppressed peoples against global capitalism and to fight for a socialist world.

For more details including CWI publications write to: CWI, PO Box 3688, London E11 1YE. email [cwi@worldsoc.co.uk](mailto:cwi@worldsoc.co.uk)

### [www.socialistworld.net](http://www.socialistworld.net)

The CWI website contains news, reports and analysis from around the world. Recent articles include:



### Kazakhstan:

**Workers' leaders under threat of abduction or arrest**

**Urgent protests needed**

Esenbek Ukteshbaev, president of the Kazakhstan Trade Union, 'Zhanartu' ('Renaissance'), and vice-president, Ainur Kurmanov (both pictured above) have been on an extended visit in Moscow as a result of threats to their lives from the Nazarbayev dictatorship in Kazakhstan.

It recently came to the attention of Esenbek and Ainur that the head of the Department of Internal Affairs of the Mangistau region in Kazakhstan, Colonel Amanzhol Kabylov, arrived in Moscow to conduct negotiations with law enforcement officers of the Russian Federation.

This same senior officer of the Kazakh Interior Ministry is at present in charge of "investigations" into the bloody events of December 16-18 in Zhanaozen and at Shetpe station in the Mangistau region, which resulted in the deaths of a large number of striking workers and their relatives who had been involved in a peaceful protest.

A new criminal case is already being fabricated against Esenbek and Ainur in Kazakhstan for 'inciting social discord' and an attempt to blame them and the opposition for the tragic events of December 16-18 is underway. They believe this is the reason for the Colonel's visit - to organise their arrest and subsequent delivery to Kazakhstan. They fear this will be done in secret and without due process.

● see - [www.campaignkazakhstan.org](http://www.campaignkazakhstan.org) to participate in the email campaign and to read protest letters from leading trade unionists, including RMT general secretary Bob Crow.



## 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.

## Defend legal aid

Legal Aid, a system providing proper legal advice and support to those who cannot afford to pay for it, is under threat. The Tories' Legal Aid, Sentencing, and Punishment of Offenders Bill means that the weakest, most vulnerable citizens could lose this entitlement. Many are now involved in benefit and housing disputes with the authorities, but will not be able to obtain legal aid when they need it most.

Peter Smith, Roman Catholic Archbishop of Southwark, recently wrote to the Times drawing attention to this looming social disaster. The Cardinal Hume Centre in London has also voiced serious concerns.

If the conservative Catholic Church is getting vocal on this topic then it is time to try and stop this piece of appalling legislation dead in its tracks.

**Lin Black, Swansea**

## Labour honours "Tarzan!"

The latest bizarre proposal from Liverpool's 'Labour' council is to propose Michael Heseltine as Freeman of Liverpool! Is this the same bloke who slashed £30 million from Liverpool's budget between 1979 and 1983? Who supports a government which is, with Labour's acquiescence, slashing £1 billion from Liverpool's budget over four years?

He's part of the 'we're all in this together' brigade who defends bankers and FTSE directors whose income increased by 48% last year while workers wages are frozen. Is this the noble millionaire lord who describes closing libraries, Sure Start nurseries, and the loss of council jobs as 'responsible'?

What next? A statue of Thatcher erected outside the Town Hall? After all, Labour's Blair and Brown wined and dined that crazed enemy of the trade union movement at Downing Street to discuss the merits of unregulated capitalism. It's a practice which Liverpool's current Labour council seem eager to adopt.

**Tony Mulhearn**

## No jobs ...

Just before the Jarrow march came to Nottingham last autumn, the council held a large Jobs Fair which thousands of people attended. It was fully booked and people queued for hours to get in. But it wasn't really a 'jobs fair' (there were only 100 real jobs available), the majority of stalls were offering unpaid apprenticeships, work experience or commission

only opportunities.

This year the council has chosen not to lie and called the day what it really is - an apprenticeship fair, with no real jobs that are properly paid on offer. It shows that the situation is getting worse as there are now NO jobs in Nottingham, only unpaid, slave labour 'opportunities'.

**Helen Pattison**

## ...and unreal apprenticeships



The last refuge now for any Tory spokesman, Tory MP, Tory councillor or Tory paper when confronted with the youth unemployment crisis is to utter the word 'apprenticeships'.

But apprenticeships ain't what they used to be. An apprenticeship is no longer for working class young people looking for a career in engineering. High Street banks will soon be calling cashiers apprentices and Tory papers will be proclaiming "record number of apprenticeships" taken up. Don't believe a word. It's a con.

The government should be providing much better work experience and career advice to young people and should give more help to those youth who have decided they are not going to embark on a university career.

**Shaun Shute, Gloucester**

## Solidarity call

A workmate showed me an article in March's Railway Magazine, about a lock-out in Canada by employers Progress Rail, part of the Caterpillar group. They want to slash pay by 55%, eliminate pensions and health care benefits, along with cost of living increases and child care leave. Nearly 500 members of the Canadian

Auto Workers union are refusing this 'offer' and are locked out. They have built iconic Class 66 locomotives used in Britain and elsewhere in Europe and have increased productivity but this is not enough for the company. The workers are refusing to allow in replacement workers or allow out finished locos.

The rail industry is globalised so workers worldwide should take warning and offer support to our Canadian brothers and sisters.

**Pete, Worcester**

## Lessons from Pride

Imagine Nelson Mandela calling off the fight for freedom because the corporate sponsor had pulled out or the Bolsheviks deciding the storming of the winter palace should have been an all-ticket event. That's the situation which profiteering has brought down on Brighton Pride. The controversial fencing off of Preston Park last year which caused many working class participants to abandon the event failed to prevent the financial crisis. The Park event has made a loss over a number of years. In 2011 with the park fenced and ticketed, much greater costs were involved.

People also think that Pride is all about making money and any thought that it is a protest and a celebration of Gay Pride



takes a back seat to the money men. So why should anyone support an event which is seen as "just another rip-off"? Brighton Pride will have to arise as a genuine protest movement recaptured by grassroots activists. A valuable lesson - that the private companies are only interested in the bottom line - will have been learnt.

**Derek McMillan**

## Hit big business

Chancellor Osborne pleads with us not to pester Hester. Labour's Ed Balls complains that the removal of Fred Goodwin's



honours "sends a terrible signal around the world about the way government deals with business." But a movement is building that will take from the bankers not just their ornaments but their power and privilege too.

The anger at inequality and exploitation is already wringing some restrictions on high pay out of reluctant big-business governments. Measures are being taken with far more impact on big business than whether Fred the Shred has a gong or not.

Germany imposed salary caps in bailed-out Commerzbank, which was also directed to lend more to industry. Bosses at the Netherlands' ING were forced to give back millions of Euros in bonuses by growing opposition. Spain's right-wing government imposed severe limits to top pay at bailed-out banks with some packages cut to a quarter of their previous level.

But if the banks were really put under public control, we could democratically decide their pay rates and investment policies and start to end the gross inequality and chaos of the capitalist system.

**Ross Saunders**

## Fighting the loan sharks

I read in the Socialist (issue 703) that the average UK family owes nearly £8,000 in unsecured borrowing and this particular figure increased by 48% over the last year.

In the same paper Linda Taaffe tells us about her encounter with Labour MP Stella Creasy who highlighted the pernicious practices of the loan shark; and then Linda tells us that Creasy's advice is to go to a credit union.

Probably I misunderstood the tone of Linda's comment but I thought it far more sensible, more transitional, to approach a locally based, mutually orientated credit union (CU) than fall under the beguiling sway of the shark's pectoral fin and then be devoured by its serrated dentile jaw. At least the individual in the CU has some opportunity to voice disquiet about the course of the particular local CU rather than being forced to swallow the hook, line and sinker of multinational banks and the pernicious loan sharks; or walk the narrow plank falling into the gaping chasm created by other groups such as AutoMoney or the defunct Farepak.

**Paul Wade**

## Reply from Linda Taaffe

Paul's very graphic criticism clearly highlights the pain workers feel, confronted with these loan sharks. My criticism of credit unions was not against workers using them. Many workers find credit unions more "friendly".

Most council estates had a credit union. They are a way of workers helping each other in hard times, of getting round the system for themselves and families, while not in a position to fight the system together.

However, my remarks were more a criticism of a Labour MP, whose answer to workers' debt, like Labour's answer gen-



erally to the so-called national debt, does not even consider real bank nationalisation.

Also, more workers are now likely to need credit in her constituency because the local Labour council have axed 600 jobs so far without a fight. She substitutes a serious battle against the Tory coalition with doing good works among the poor. Rather than ask the real reasons why wages are low, she refers them to a credit union.

Many early pioneer Labour leaders fought alongside workers to stop wages being cut. For a Labour MP in an area of high levels of poverty to put forward a credit union as an answer to working class debt is lamentably short of the mark.

**Linda Taaffe**

## Racism in football back in the headlines

**Chris Newby**

Luis Suarez's refusal to shake Patrice Evra's hand at the start of the of the recent Manchester United v Liverpool match has brought the issue of racism in football back into the headlines.

Should Suarez have shaken Evra's hand? Yes, if only to reduce the level of tension in an already charged atmosphere. But would that handshake have done anything to reduce the level of racism in football, of course not.

What motivated Liverpool FC's US owners Fenway Sports Group and Liverpool's chief sponsor Standard Chartered bank to put pressure on Suarez and Liverpool manager Kenny Dalglish to make an apology?

Was it concerns over racism or concerns over the damage to the Liverpool 'brand' and therefore their profits.

Standard Chartered have put £81 million over four years into Liverpool, one of the biggest sponsorship deals in British football.

While the overt racism in football of 20-30 years ago may not be so apparent today, it is still there, as witnessed by the racist chanting at the recent Plymouth v Southend game. Micah Richards at Manchester City has had to shut down his Twitter account as a result of racist abuse.

But there is also still the establishment racism that exists in football. Only two out of 92 managers in the English football league are black and only a tiny handful of British born Asians are able to break into the professional game.

Racism in football is inextricably linked to racism in wider society and is not going to be removed by a handshake or the passing of some laws.

As former Liverpool and England player John Barnes, who suffered racial abuse during his football career, said in a recent interview on Talksport radio - you're not going to stop someone from being racist just by introducing a law saying that they can't be racist.

Racism in football will only be fundamentally challenged through mass campaigns involving fans, players, others who work in football and the local community.

This should explain, among other things, the root causes of racism and how it is used by the bosses to protect their profits by dividing people.



**Suarez and Evra**

# Another attempt to assassinate the legacy of Leon Trotsky?

Condemnation of Leon Trotsky is well-trodden ground for so-called biographer Robert Service. Service was condemned by The American Historical Review (June 2011), which considered his 'biography' of Trotsky a complete distortion. This was anticipated by Socialist Party general secretary Peter Taaffe in a review in the Socialist (13 October 2009) where he took Service to task.

Here Peter reviews Service's latest offering, 'Spies & Commissars', in which the skulduggery of British spies like Sidney Reilly is used to spice up the same old false picture of the Bolshevik regime which followed the Russian revolution of 1917 – particularly of its leaders, Lenin and Trotsky.

Service writes in the introduction to this heavy tome: "Lenin and Trotsky... were convinced that Europe was on the threshold of communist revolution and that it needed only a slight nudge from them to make all this happen."

It did not need a "slight nudge" but the workers of Europe needed to emulate their Russian brothers and sisters and take power out of the hands of the capitalists who, through the bloody carnage of World War One, had ruined Europe.

The Bolsheviks, by declaring a unilateral peace, began the process of ending the war. As to the international effect of the Russian Revolution, Service himself comments that "the Labour Party held a celebration of the revolutionary events at the Albert Hall. 10,000 people attended and Ramsay MacDonald [then Labour leader] was the main speaker..."

"It was an occasion that nobody present would forget. The Romanovs were gone and freedom had arrived in Russia. There was talk of a brotherhood of the Russians and the British no longer poisoned by the existence of tsarist despotism." This was just one expression of the colossal enthusiasm and sympathy that the Russian revolution generated.

## Independent organisations

Lenin is described as a "killjoy" during his return to Russia in February 1917 and "less than gracious to the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries" because he told the truth. He correctly called on the working class to place no trust in the coalition government involving some workers' leaders – the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries – with the 'liberal' capitalists.

Marxists adopt the same position today in placing no trust in the governments which have arisen on the backs of the revolution in Tunisia or Egypt. Instead, we call on the masses to build their own independent organisations if they are to make a

'second revolution', a social revolution, which is the only way to satisfy their demands and consolidate the revolution.

Childishly, Service describes Trotsky and Lenin as "exceptional troublemakers". As if a revolution – demanding an understanding of the process of revolution at each stage and the political slogans and action which flow from this – could be led by mere "troublemakers"!

Yet Service allows himself to admit that, in the words of one observer, "Lenin and Trotsky are merely the spokesmen of the workers."

## Revolutionary wave

He is compelled to recognise that the Bolsheviks reflected in October 1917 the real mood of the masses. "Raymond Robins of the American Red Cross... concluded that the war was dead 'In the heart of the Russian soldier'."

The Bolsheviks triumphed because they were the only party, in reality, who were prepared to end the war, cancel all tsarist debts as well as the secret treaties of the tsarist regime, give "bread and freedom" and proclaim that Russia had initiated a new era of the socialist revolution. In so doing, they evoked a tremendous movement of the masses in Europe, which battered at the foundations of capitalism.

No, says Service, who states: "Much though Bolshevik doctrine pretended to scientific status, it was in fact rooted in blind faith and the Russian revolutionary tradition." But Lenin and Trotsky were proved right. The Russian revolution initiated – with some delay – a revolutionary wave which swept through Europe.

Despite the author's attempt to prove the opposite, the Bolsheviks almost succeeded, especially in 1919, a tumultuous year of revolution and counter revolution. It was the cowardly social-democratic parties, especially in Germany, that saved capitalism through a 'counter-revolution' in a democratic form



Leon Trotsky photo Marxist Internet Archive

– which meant that the trappings of parliamentary democracy were maintained.

But at the same time the most brutal methods, for instance in the Ruhr Civil War, were carried through to suppress the revolution. There was nothing 'utopian' in Lenin and Trotsky's expectation that Russia was the spark that would begin the European revolution.

By using their approach, we were able to foresee the outbreak of revolution in Egypt (see the CWI World Congress document on 'World Relations', November 2010).

Look at the 'contagious' effects of the Tunisian and Egyptian revolutions today; just like in Russia in 1917! They have had a worldwide effect, leaping from one country and from one continent to another, even resounding powerfully in the consciousness of the American working class, for instance in Wisconsin with the flying of the Egyptian flag.

## The spies

British spy Reilly plotted Trotsky's assassination at the 1918 May Day celebrations in Moscow: "This is just the moment to kill Trotsky and liquidate Bolshevism!" As if the assassination of individuals – even one as prominent and important as Lenin or Trotsky, which admittedly would have been a grievous loss – would have been sufficient to eliminate the social basis upon which they rested!

The methods of terrorism are as ineffective when applied to workers' state as they are under capitalism. A ruling class, or workers' force like the Bolsheviks in Russia, is ultimately capable of replacing from its ranks those who fall under the assassin's bullet.

Service's subplot of British spies, and the inevitable gossip surrounding them, reads more like a cheap detective novel than a serious historical account. Reilly and his cohorts behaving childishly and usually unsuccessfully. That is not to say that they and their masters were not vicious in their intent.

For instance, Winston Churchill, an inveterate opponent of Bolshevism, declared on 28 November 1918: "Russia is being reduced by the Bolsheviks to an animal form of Barbarism... Civilisation is being extinguished over gigantic areas, while Bolsheviks hop and caper like troupes of ferocious baboons amid the ruins of their cities and the corpses of their victims."

Over the war with Poland, for instance – which Service goes into at some length – it was the refusal of the London dockers to load ammunition and troops on the ship Jolly George which indicated the huge opposition that existed to British intervention.

The Labour Party itself was compelled to organise a 'council of action', an embryonic form of soviet rule, in opposition to the use of the Polish war as intervention against the Russian Revolution.

Service mentions this and similar examples – such as the revolt of the French troops intervening in Russia – but he refuses to draw all the conclusions because they would violate his arguments that the Russian revolution could have been defeated if the "Allies" had acted with sufficient resolution and in a coordinated manner.

The Times newspaper 60 years later was more accurate when commenting about Saddam Hussein's attack on Iran: "Never invade a revolution".

The fact that the 'Allies' did not successfully intervene was not an accident. The European continent was in chaos, with the ruling classes besieged by revolution and counter-revolution. Lenin and Trotsky manoeuvred very skilfully between the different imperialist powers in order to gain 'breathing space' and allow the European revolution to mature.

None of this Service is capable of understanding. This is shown when he writes: "The spread of communism that had been the dream of Lenin and Trotsky was fulfilled as Stalin communized the entire eastern half of Europe."

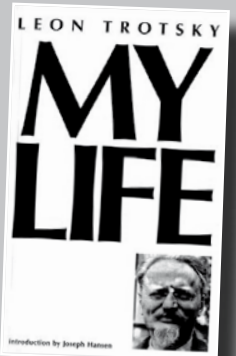
## Stalinism

A river of blood separates the democratic workers' state associated with Bolshevism and the bureaucratic dictatorial regime of Stalin. The whole purpose of Service's book and a small army of historians like him is to associate genuine Bolshevism with the lack of democracy, rule by a greedy bureaucracy, etc, summed up by Stalinism.

If Stalinism and Bolshevism were twins, why then was it necessary for Stalin to wipe out the remnants of the Bolsheviks in the 1930s purge trials? Because, among other things, the Spanish revolution threatened to reignite a political revolution against the bureaucracy.

Lenin and Trotsky called for action

## Read Trotsky



## My Life by Leon Trotsky

Trotsky's autobiography provides an incredible historical account, an exciting read and an answer to Service's distortions. It is a must-read!

£25, not including p&p



## The Transitional Programme by Trotsky

With an introduction by Peter Taaffe

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by the European workers themselves to join the Russian workers in a great confederation of socialist states, organised on democratic lines.

Stalin, on the other hand, presided over the extension of the planned economy of Russia to Eastern Europe, but from the beginning these states were dominated by a greedy, totalitarian bureaucratic caste which had nothing in common with the origins of Bolshevism.

This book reveals nothing new and covers the same perversion of historical truth as Service's earlier books. Service writes on behalf of the ruling classes who, 95 years after it took place, still fear the revolution and its lessons for today.

We, for our part, will do everything to inform the new generation about the real lessons of the 1917 Russian Revolution, still the single greatest event in human history.

**Spies & Commissars: Bolshevik Russia and the West by Robert Service, Macmillan, 2011, £25**

## Socialism Today



The Socialist Party's magazine February 2012 issue includes:

- Dithering in Durban
- Pensions fight continues
- 'The year of all risks'

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## SELL-OFF SETBACK!

# WE CAN SAVE OUR NHS



photo Susie Walker

- Gloucestershire campaign wins High Court ruling
- National trade union fightback now needed

### Chris Moore

Gloucestershire Socialist Party and Stroud Against the Cuts coordinator

“What a result, fantastic news,” said one email from a local NHS worker after Gloucestershire anti-cuts campaigners won a High Court victory against NHS privatisation.

Plans to transfer over 3,000 NHS staff, nine community hospitals,

ten health clinics, district nursing, health visitors and many other services to a Social Enterprise Trust (SET) or Community Interest Company (CIC) have been scuppered. This is the first time such a legal victory against NHS privatisation has been achieved.

### County-wide campaign

A huge campaign across the county, including a demonstration of over 500 in Stroud, one public meeting of 350 and two others of over 100, petitions, protests and

continual leafleting of workplaces, town and city centres and sporting events, laid the basis for the legal challenge.

A 76-year old former railway worker, Michael Lloyd, supported by Stroud Against the Cuts, launched a Judicial Review against NHS Gloucestershire primary care trust's decision to outsource its £80 million a year contract to a private body.

Throughout the whole process NHS management have tried to claim that keeping services within the NHS was not an option. Staff

were given no opportunity to oppose the transfer. There was no public consultation.

Services were due to be transferred in October 2011, but now they have been forced to start a new consultation process, including the option for services to remain in the NHS. Staff and the public will get the opportunity to have their say.

### Staff consultation

Health trade unions must demand genuine staff consultation, with

the outcome binding on management. Elsewhere staff, when asked, have overwhelmingly rejected such proposals.

A mass campaign to pressure management is now needed. The trade unions must take a lead on this, including threatening strike action if necessary.

This should be part of a national strategy to fight all NHS privatisation and cuts. As a matter of urgency, unions should call and campaign for a national demonstration.

**Continued on page 7**

### What we stand for

The Socialist Party fights for socialism – a democratic society run for the needs of all and not the profits of a few. We also oppose every cut, fighting in our day-to-day campaigning for every possible improvement for working class people. The organised working class has the potential power to stop the cuts and transform society.

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 socialist international that organises in over 40 countries.

#### Our demands include:

#### PUBLIC SERVICES

- No to ALL cuts in jobs, public services and benefits. Defend our pensions.
- 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.

#### 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.
- Reject 'Workfare'. 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. Support the National Shop Stewards Network.

- A maximum 35-hour week with no loss of pay.

#### 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! Support the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition as an important step towards this.

#### SOCIALISM AND INTERNATIONALISM

- No to imperialist wars and occupations. Withdraw the troops immediately from Afghanistan!
- Tax the super-rich! For a socialist government to take into public ownership the top 150 companies and the banking system 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' neoliberal European Union! For a socialist Europe and a socialist world!