

# AUSTERITY REJECTED

**Build a mass workers' movement  
to stop all cuts and privatisation**

Elections across Europe have sounded a clear message: 'No to austerity'. In just over a year, ten governments in the eurozone have been kicked out as the opposition to the promise of unrelenting cuts grows. There was not an opportunity for workers in Britain to kick out the government but the coalition parties got a good kicking in the May elections. However, the task of building a mass movement that can defeat austerity, including a working class political voice, remains.

Peter Taaffe, Socialist Party general secretary, analyses the elections here and on the centre pages.

**T**he Con-Dem government suffered a crushing defeat in the May elections for local authorities and in the mayoral contests, apart from London.

The Tories lost a total of 405 seats, the Liberal Democrats lost 336 seats, while Labour gained 823 seats.

The share of the vote put Labour at 38%, the Tories at 31% and the Lib Dems at 16%. Cameron cannot dismiss these results, as he has tried to do, as an example of 'mid-term blues', something which all governments experience.

The tide of opposition to the coalition's policies - particularly its programme of austerity and accompanying cuts - has shattered the legitimacy of Cameron and his partner in crime, Clegg.

Cameron even saw Labour councillors elected in his own rural backyard of Chipping Norton, where even the local burghers rose up against the Tories against the arbitrary imposition of the building of an unwanted local road.

Equally, the shattered and discredited Liberal Democrats were humiliated when a penguin - Professor Pongo, the disguise of a local climate activist - defeated a Liberal Democrat candidate in Edinburgh!

This anti-government tsunami seemed to sweep all before it, touching all corners of Britain. In Wales, Labour gained and the Welsh nationalists of Plaid Cymru - despite selecting a radical leader recently - lost out.

A Scottish National Party 'surge' - where they expected to win a majority in Glasgow city council - never fully materialised. 'Murdochgate' probably politically damaged the SNP, with its leader, Alex Salmond, exposed as a collaborator - writing a regular column in the Scottish Sun - with the unspeakable Rupert Murdoch.

In the North, where the Tories are already an endangered species, the tide further eroded the few positions that they hold. In Liverpool, for instance, they came seventh in the mayoral contest!

But these results cannot be taken as an endorsement of New Labour, the main beneficiaries of an anti-government mood, or of leader Ed Miliband and his policies.

His personal ratings before the election stood at -41%! It was primarily a massive rejection of the Con-Dem government and especially of the savage cuts.

There was nothing in this election campaign of the enthusiasm witnessed in France where the left, particularly the Left Front of Mélenchon, fired up millions of working people with radical policies and a glimpse of changing society.

All that Miliband offers, at most, is a change of curtains: "The more things change, the more they remain the same."

**Continued on page 6 & 7**

photo Paul Mattsson



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# Health services at risk in Cardiff and Vale

Ross Saunders

Cardiff and Vale Health Board celebrated International Workers' Day by agreeing to slash another £67 million from the NHS services it provides.

The West Wing of Cardiff Royal Infirmary, which treats elderly patients, Rookwood Hospital, which houses specialist facilities for stroke sufferers, and Whitchurch Hospital, a mental health facility, have all been targeted for closure. Many smaller facilities out in the community will also shut unless the plans are stopped.

This latest round of cuts comes after an eye-watering plan to cut £87.7 million was demanded by the Assembly last year. Cardiff and Vale cut funding for diagnostics, when it is missing targets for the detection of cancer; closed the emergency poisons unit at Llandough, when it is missing targets for dealing with emergencies, and cut the budgets of surgery and many more departments.

The board has explicitly admitted that the reason they take too long to

deal with emergency patients is that there aren't enough staff or beds.

Even official figures say that 97% of bed space is occupied and that hospitals in the area are 110 beds short - that's before this year's cuts are carried out. Waiting times, already long, are being pushed up, leaving people to suffer in pain needlessly.

## Mass campaign needed

The staff left behind after the cuts are under enormous pressure. Stress levels are through the roof. Predictably, sickness has rocketed. The response of the board, however, isn't to make sure there are enough workers in place to do the job, but to bring in a draconian new sickness-management regime, that will be used to force people to come to work when they're ill... in a hospital!

The Welsh Assembly has the power to stop the cuts: it must use it! It is not good enough for ministers to criticise Tory cuts when they are announced in Westminster but then claim that the Assembly is "softening the blow" when it implements savage cuts here in Wales.



photo Bob Severn

Despite NHS facilities being over half a billion pounds short this year, First Minister Carwyn Jones claims there are no cuts in the NHS in Wales! The Assembly

must refuse to pass on the cuts to local health boards and instead coordinate the setting of budgets that meet the real needs for NHS services in the community.

To be successful this needs to be combined with a mass campaign of the trade unions and communities involving demonstrations and, if necessary, strike action.

## Good result for Socialist Students candidates in NUS elections

This year's NUS National Executive Committee elections saw Socialist Students candidates Edmund Schluessel and Lizi Grey both receive high votes, narrowly missing out. Both candidates stood on strong campaigning records as well as the programme and strategy of Socialist Students.

In his election speech, Edmund called for the NUS to launch a mass campaign to defend education. He argued that the autumn demo, which delegates had already voted for at the conference, should only be the start of a programme of mass action, linked to the struggles of workers and trade unions.

When Lizi spoke, she explained that it was the snatching away of EMA student payments and the tripling of tuition fees that first 'politicised' her. She joined the hundreds of thousands of young people who walked out of their schools, colleges and universities, dealing the first blows in the fight against the Con-Dem cuts coalition. Lizi expressed her disappointment at the NUS for



Lizi Grey on the Jarrow march for jobs photo Paul Mattsson

failing to lead this fight, and said that, if elected, she would use her position to try to ensure this mistake was not made again.

The election results reflected support for Socialist Students' programme as well as a conference with a more fighting mood than in previous years. Edmund's result was particularly close. He made it through to round 23 of 25 in the transferable voting system.

Edmund actually received more first preference votes than one of the winning candidates but lost out be-

cause other 'lefts' failed to transfer their votes to him.

The general make up of the NEC saw a slight shift to the left. Five left candidates were elected, one more than last year. However, the NEC remains dominated by Labour Students and generally right leaning independents. This means that pressure from below will be necessary to ensure that the actions delegates at NUS conference voted for are carried out.

**Claire Laker-Mansfield, Socialist Students national organiser**

## Privatisation pushes up transport costs in Yorkshire

7% and 8%. That's how much bus and train fares went up in West Yorkshire this January, following above inflation increases of 6% at the beginning of 2011 on trains and increases of up to 20% on buses in August 2010.

Fares for buses aren't regulated and instead are set by the various private operators across West Yorkshire. In October last year both Arriva and First had announced no plans to increase fares - a promise they've subsequently broken.

To achieve its aims in terms of controlling the soaring cost of fares and ensuring a more reliable integrated transport system, Metro (West Yorkshire public transport) will come into head-on collision with the interests of the private operating companies and more specifically, their profit margins.

Comments from Metro's consultation showed clear opposition to private sector profit-mongering in public transport, with comments such as: "Buses should be run as services, not businesses. The free-markets do not belong in public service."



Socialist Party members have received huge support while campaigning on these issues, with hundreds of people telling us how both bus and rail transport should be brought back into public ownership. We have collected thousands of signatures on a petition to this effect that we will be handing in to an upcoming meeting of the Integrated Transport Authority.

**Andy Smith**

## Care home closures in Sheffield

Sheffield City Council is planning to close all of the remaining elderly care homes in the city that are still council owned after years of privatisation of social care. 40 elderly care centres have been shut down in Sheffield in the last 15 years under Labour and Lib Dem councils.

Sevenfields resource centre in the Wisewood area of the city and Hazelhurst resource centre in Jordanthorpe both provide intermediate care (rehab) and residential care for elderly people and have been

earmarked for closure. The move will put 43 people out of work as the council says it wants to use private facilities instead. This will cost more money, provide a poorer service as private companies always do and offer worse pay and conditions for workers.

The council also plans to close Norbury resource centre in Norwood, Bolehill View resource centre in Crookes and Hurlfield View in Gleadless Common that all provide specialist care for people with dementia.

This is all part of the Labour council's cuts and privatisation agenda. The council's director of care and support communities, Eddie Sherwood, said the move would reduce costs and replace 'ageing' facilities while still providing beds outsourced to the private sector. It just shows how all three main parties are more concerned with giving our money to private companies than protecting jobs and services.

**Wyllie Hume, Sheffield Socialist Party**

## Police restrict anti-racist protesters in Luton

The streets of Luton were almost deserted as the far-right racist English Defence League (EDL) came to the town yet again. The counter demonstration of 2,000 gathered on the north side of the town centre while the EDL were on the south side.

Once again thousands of police cordoned off the town centre and the counter demo was not allowed to follow its planned route to the town hall, but was forced to walk in a circle back to where it started.

Scuffles broke out as protesters tried to reach the town centre but soon petered out. Many of the coaches that were en route to the counter demo never got there as police closed off roads. At no time did the two sides even see each other - the police will claim a success but at what price?

The trade union movement must insist that counter demos are allowed to protest as planned and not be treated as an inconvenience.

**Steve Glennon**



# Water waste of money!

James Ivens

We are in drought. This is Thames Water’s message for South East England, appearing on giant billboard images of cracked, dry earth.

But Britain is a first world country. It is a rainy country! And since 1990 Thames Water has paid out £5 billion to shareholders. So why can’t they splash out on us?

The drought is a surprise to many in London who endured a soggy April. It must seem more incredible to flash flood victims in the South. And still more to residents of rain-rich Wales.

Water workers’ union GMB, however, saw it all coming. In a recent statement the union noted that reservoirs totalling 600 million gallons have been closed across the region. Most of the sites were sold off for lucrative property developments. And every year almost a quarter of the entire water supply leaks from the system. Despite this, more than half of all water companies are not required to reduce their leakages at all before 2015.

## No shortage of water

Meanwhile, the cost of piping water in from rainy regions means utility bosses are dragging their heels. Two months ago Thames Water announced plans involving old canals to avoid “having to build expensive pipes” and “additional pumping”. This is too little, too late.

GMB has called for more connection between Wales and the South East since at least 2006. Astonishingly, plans for this date back 140 years. “What is not in short supply is water” said the union in March, “but there is a shortage of structures” -

## Reservoirs of 600 million gallons have been closed in the South East

reservoirs, waterways and resource planning - “to get the water where it is needed.”

The cause of this absurd situation? Privatisation. Thames Water and its counterparts have made billions in profit since buying up the assets of regional water authorities in 1989. But rather than extending infrastructure or lowering prices, this surplus has been used to fill the trough for greedy executives and bloated shareholders.

The rest is being poured into the pockets of private contractors as they foist the massively disruptive Thames ‘super sewer’ on South Londoners. Colin Green, a professor of water economics, estimates the project will make Thames Water

£100 million a year.

The three main parties all say the answer lies in introducing a ‘market’ for water. But the profit motive is the problem! The avarice of utility bosses is such that John Elfed Jones, former head of Welsh Water, said in April that Wales should be flogging its rainfall “like oil”!

Socialists say that utilities should be brought into public ownership. And not on the partial terms of the shambolic bank bailouts. Water should be wholly owned by the state.

The industry should be controlled and managed democratically by workers. And regions should cooperate to meet the needs of all, not compete to enrich a few.

# MPs find Murdoch “not fit” to run media empire

Ben Norman

A select committee of MPs has declared Rupert Murdoch “not fit” to run an international company after concluding that he displayed “wilful blindness” to illegal phone hacking practices across his media empire.

The MPs, from the cross-party Culture Media and Sport select committee, concluded in their report that a culture of covering up criminal activity had “permeated from the top throughout the organisation” and that both Rupert and James Murdoch should take personal responsibility.

The committee also claimed that

former News International chairman Les Hinton was “complicit” in a cover-up while former News of the World Editor Colin Myler, and the head of the paper’s legal team Tom Crone, had deliberately misled parliament when they appeared before the committee. Both executives are expected to be recalled before MPs to apologise, a constitutional procedure that has not been used for almost half a century.

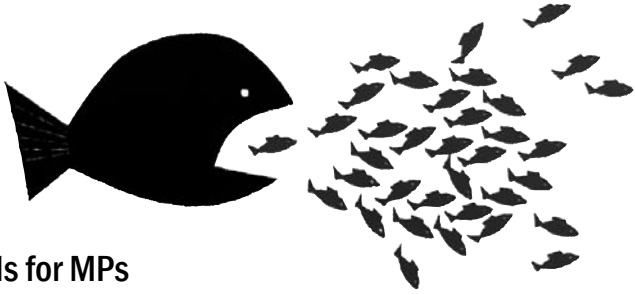
While the committee was damning of News International it was split on criticisms of Murdoch. In a reminder of the deep links between News International and the Tories, five Conservative MPs, led by Louise Mensch, refused to endorse any

direct criticism of Murdoch.

The report will have repercussions for the Murdoch empire beyond Britain. In the United States campaigners are now calling for the Federal Communications Commission to revoke the 27 Fox broadcasting licenses which News Corporation currently holds.

The report will put more pressure on Murdoch. However, a forced apology from former executives and empty rhetoric from MPs is not enough. A genuinely independent and democratically accountable inquiry, with trade union representation, is needed if the true extent of the cover up at News International is to be revealed.

# Them...



## iPads for MPs

Up to £660. That’s how much the gadget of the moment, the iPad, will set you back. Months of hard saving for most of us - but not if you’re an MP. 70 MPs have already claimed expenses for an iPad and now they’re all going to be given one free of charge! Any MP sitting on a select committee will get one immediately, and the rest will be asked to trade in an old laptop or PC in exchange for one. Good to know the exposure of the expenses scandal had such an effect on them!

## Pensioner debt

The number of pensioners in debt has more than doubled in the last year. There are 427,000 households where people over 70 are in financial difficulty. Combined with the number of tragedies every year where elderly people die because they can’t afford to heat their homes, you would hope that the government would act. But instead they are insisting on attacks on public sector pensions which will force even more pensioners into poverty by reducing the pension public sector workers receive.

## Fig trees

What would you get for £30,000? A university education? A deposit on a house? Replacing lost wages for a year you can’t work? Or one year’s rent for 12 fig trees? Portcullis House, the Westminster building used by MPs for meetings with constituents and other visitors, has been doing just that for the last eleven years - that’s £330,000 of our money... on fig trees.

## Build your own

Finally, a select committee of MPs has agreed with the Socialist. We are in the midst of a housing crisis, demand has outstripped supply of new-build houses for decades, 230,000 new households are forming each year but only 110,000 new houses were built in 2011. But did they come to the conclusion we have - that we need a mass house building programme of affordable publicly owned homes? No. Apparently the problem is that it is too difficult for people to build their own homes. Because of all those people currently struggling to find a house who have the time, money and skills to build their own. Obviously.

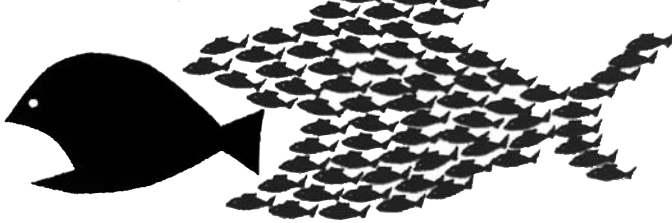
## Up, up and away

In light of the local election results, politicians are scrambling to assure the public of their capabilities and continuing commitment to ‘dealing with the deficit’. Despite all evidence to the contrary, they want us to believe that their policies will lead to economic growth and jobs. But the Centre for Economic and Business Research has said that unemployment will continue to rise in most areas of the country for at least the next five years. We can expect unemployment levels not seen for more than a decade. The coalition would probably claim a success even if growth didn’t return for another 50 years!

## Wet, wet, wet

Britain’s wettest April since records began led to a 5,000% rise in umbrella sales. But that was about all we were spending our money on in April - there was a 1.9% fall in household spending compared to the previous month and a 6.9% reduction on high street spending compared to April 2011.

# ...& Us



## What we heard

“I didn’t know whether a mayor would be a good thing or not, but Cameron was in favour and that was good enough for me. I voted against.”  
**A Nottingham resident at a Socialist Party campaign stall in Mansfield**



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# Greenwich libraries Workers show fighting back can win

**A library steward**

The two days of strike action already taken by Unite members in Greenwich, south London, have sent a clear message to Greenwich Leisure Limited (GLL), that we will not accept attacks. GLL has now taken over the library service.

The most likely attack would have been an attempt to drop council library workers' pay and conditions to the level of staff employed at GLL. But, in response to the campaign, GLL has now offered to come to an agreement that will confirm they will not do this.

In GLL's original bid to win the contract they said they would "harmonise" pay and conditions. So an agreement to stop this would be a tremendous victory for Unite members.

**Victory**

The stewards have agreed to suspend further strike action while negotiations take place. This is the correct action as the employer is in-

dicating that what they are likely to offer will be what the workers have been fighting for.

As part of the fight to defend the jobs, pay and working conditions of library workers we marched from Eltham library to Woolwich Library on 5 May. The route passed one of the Olympic venues on Woolwich Common.

The rather strange design of the buildings resembles the world occupied by the Teletubbies. It was therefore no surprise when we stopped outside the venue and started chanting "Save Tinky Winky!".

This was not appreciated by the police and security guards looking after the venue.

They rushed to form a rather thin line of defence, so we wasted no time in calling on the security guards to join a trade union.

What has not been lost on the library workers is that while the money can be found for the fun and games of the Olympics, Greenwich council insists it has to cut and privatise.



Greenwich library workers have built public support photo Neil Cafferky

# Exposed: the dirty world of NHS privatisation

**A health worker**

A second report into 150 GMB members' complaints of bullying and discrimination at the Great Western Hospital in Swindon was published last week. Their employer, Carillion, operates the PFI contract at the hospital and conducted the investigation into the complaints.

In the report, Carillion agrees that there is evidence of bribery in Swindon but they have failed to acknowledge the blatant covering up of the bullying and discrimination.

To add insult to injury, Carillion have refused to meet with the GMB since publishing this report to discuss its findings and to end the culture of bullying. The union is consulting the workers now about what to do next.

At the start of this year the GMB submitted 109 complaints of bullying and discrimination. 90 mainly

domestic staff gave evidence, including of managers asking for jewellery in exchange for holiday and shifts that the workers were legally initialised to.

GMB members voted overwhelmingly to strike, which lead to 18 strike days, escalating to three 24-hour strikes in February. There was a three-day strike, a five-day strike and a seven-day strike in March and a march of 300 people in Swindon in support of the striking workers.

In their first investigation, Carillion said they would not uphold any of the 109 grievances filled by their staff. As a result the GMB filed discrimination claims on behalf of its members at the employment tribunal, bringing Semperian, the owners of Carillion into the dispute. Semperian is run from Jersey to allow investors to avoid paying tax on dividend income from running NHS hospitals.

Carillion is better known as a con-

struction company. Dave Smith, who exposed blacklisting by Carillion, heard about the dispute and the involvement of Liz Keates, the Carillion HR director involved in the scandal.

He came forward to the GMB and said that Ms Keates had previously managed Carillion's relationship with the Consulting Association which was responsible for blacklisting 3,200 construction workers and refusing them employment because of their involvement within trade unions.

The GMB have also had to call for an investigation into another company, Sky Blue Solutions, who provided agency workers during the strikes. This is completely illegal and carries a fine of £5,000 per worker per day. Demonstrations were held in Swindon and Bath where Sky Blue solutions are based.

Disgracefully Unison, the health union which is recognised by Ca-

rillion and has members at Great Western Hospital has not only refused to join the action in defence of their own members but have instructed their members regionally not to offer official support to the dispute, accusing the GMB of "pinching" their members.

It is a credit to the Unison members who have defied these instructions and continue to offer support. Unison banners were seen on the demonstration in support of the striking workers.

Semperian is worth an estimated £3.7 billion and maintains and runs schools, universities, prisons, hospitals, roads, train lines and much else. Every day the Tory government thinks of new ways to let private companies run our lives, yet this is the reality of privatisation. The Carillion workers are saying no. We should join them and fight against the Tories, privatisation and bullying bosses.

## Unison attacks TUSC candidate

In the Unison newsletter produced in Southampton for the local elections the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition and Unison members standing as candidates for TUSC were criticised.

Tim Cutter, Hampshire Unison branch secretary and a TUSC candidate in Southampton was named. Yet Tim has campaigned, with the full support of Hampshire Unison members, against all cuts and against giving support to the Labour Party carrying out attacks on Unison or any workers.

At no time has he or TUSC claimed to have any official support from Unison. Unison members are free to stand for any party of their choice. Many do and stand for the Lib Dems, Greens, Plaid, SNP and even the Conservatives.

TUSC candidates have the support of the RMT union, leading national trade union figures such as Bob Crow, RMT general secretary, Nina Franklin, National Union of Teachers (NUT) senior vice-president elect, Chris Baugh, PCS assistant general secretary, alongside thousands of trade union activists. Many Unison branch officers and

lay elected officers support TUSC in a personal capacity.

Building TUSC is an essential element in developing a powerful movement that can defeat the cuts, offer a clear alternative to the austerity agenda and move towards a trade union-based new mass workers' party.

The Socialist Party, also attacked by Unison, has played a prominent role in opposing all cuts in Southampton against Labour, Lib Dem and Tory councils. We do not accept the argument of lesser-evilism that: "Labour cuts are better than Tory cuts." The Socialist Party and TUSC supports the position of unions such as PCS, RMT and others that the cuts are not necessary, not inevitable and must be opposed.

In Southampton when the Labour Party last controlled the council, Labour was so unpopular that the official position of the Unison branch was to call on members not to pay into the affiliated political fund. Even now Labour talks of carrying through £34 million cuts to jobs and services over the next two years. This fully justified TUSC and the Socialist Party standing in the election on a programme of no cuts.

## Duncan Smith throws insults at Remploy workers

**Pat Atkinson**  
Unite LE 1111 branch

Tory Work and Pensions secretary Iain Duncan Smith has claimed that disabled Remploy workers are "not doing any work... just making cups of coffee". He wants to shut 36 factories across the country - axing 1,518 jobs - to save money and get more people into "proper jobs".

I recently attended a Remploy employees campaign meeting in London. 40 people from various unions, were there.

Speakers explained how Remploy had been run down by all governments. There were details about the top heavy management and the under-valuing of staff, who are being refused good quality training to do new work. Remploy workers are proud of doing "proper jobs" - skilled work, producing products and equipment for use in education, the health service and elsewhere.

But an example was given of the

local DWP using the Remploy factory for work experience for young people, while Remploy management were not replacing staff who retired or left the run-down site.

The national charities who had lined up with the previous New Labour government and now the Con-Dems to do reports in favour of closure of the factories were condemned. A word of caution was raised at any future joint activity with these organisations as they tend to be anti-trade union in practice.

I pledged the support of my Unite branch and demanded increased investment for Remploy, and an increase in working opportunities for the wider disability community.

All a government spokesperson could say in response to the anger at Duncan Smith's statement was that the best way to help disabled people into work was "not to hide them away in factories". So they just want to close the factories and hide the workers in dole queues instead.

### In brief

**Strike ballot**

Transport union RMT is balloting its members working for Churchills as cleaners on the Tyne and Wear Metro.

The ballot is for strike action and action short of a strike in a dispute over pay and conditions. Churchills have decided to offer no increase in basic pay whatsoever to the workers, many of whom are only being paid the minimum wage. The company is only offering a minimal and conditional increase in conditions of service.

The ballot will close on 22 May.

**Unison and pensions**

At the recent South West TUC AGM, Unison regional officer Joanna Kaye was defeated by Richard Capps of PCS in a three-way fight for the position of regional chair for the coming year and again when she stood for vice-chair.

This reflected the huge anger and bitterness among, especially public sector workers, at the role that the Unison leadership has played in the battle to defend pensions in the public sector.

The mood of anger was reflected from the conference floor. This was not so much in attacks on any particular union, but in calls to drive forward our fight to defend workers against the Tory attacks on trade unions and the working class in general.

A motion on localised [or regional] pay saw a mood to arrange an immediate meeting to organise a coordinated campaign on this most important of issues.

**Roger Thomas**

**Ello, ello, ello**

600 police from South Wales will be among those demanding an end to government cuts to their pay and conditions, when they march through London on 10 May.

Picking the same day for their demo when thousands of public sector workers in PCS, RMT, UCU, Unite and Nipsa are striking seems like that at least some police officers identify with other public sector workers fighting cuts. The Police Federation is also balloting its members to gauge support for fighting for trade union rights, including the right to strike.

**Ben Golightly**

**MoD firefighters**

Nearly 700 firefighters working for the defence ministry at about 35 military bases will be on strike over pensions and cuts on 10 May. Military flights are expected to be disrupted.

The members of Unite will be joining the thousands of fellow Unite members in government departments and other public sector workers on the picket lines.

**Rail strike**

East Midlands train drivers will be on strike on 8, 10, 15 and 17 May. The action is over plans to reduce pension fund contributions for both workers and the firm from July.

The driver's union Aslef are arguing to maintain the current contributions, so as not to "cheapen" the fund.

The train company are claiming that the change would not affect pension benefits.

There were strikes over this issue on 1 and 3 May. Negotiations are due to take place on 10 May.



# Election results: How did TUSC do?

**Clive Heemskerk**

TUSC national nominating officer

This year's elections were the second set of local polls contested by the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) since it was formed in early 2010. How did TUSC do?

It is hard to draw broad conclusions from a small sample. Elections took place in 128 councils in England, to fill 2,407 seats. TUSC stood 120 candidates, 5% of the seats, in 36 councils (28%). In Wales there were 14 TUSC candidates (out of the 1,224 seats vacant) in four of the 22 councils with elections.

But the results say something. The BBC, followed by the other media, headlined 'growing support for Ukip' on the basis that it 'gained 13% of the vote in the seats where they stood'. Ukip stood in more seats (19%) but still TUSC council candidates averaged 6.2% 'where they stood' – but was this reported? Or the victory of two TUSC-backed candidates, Michael Lavalette in Preston and Peter Smith in Walsall?

The BBC has form. It broadcast a television national news item on April 25 on the prospect for smaller, 'fringe' parties in the local elections but completely excluded TUSC. It featured the English Democrats, who stood in 91 seats, and Respect – but did not explain how there could be a surge to George Galloway's party when it was contesting just 15 seats across four councils.

One thing is clear – TUSC got a

higher share of the vote than its share of media coverage! The official letter of complaint from TUSC to the BBC has still not been answered.

The total vote for all TUSC candidates was 43,671. This includes the votes in the Liverpool mayoral contest, and the more disappointing results in the London Assembly list elections (see separate reports).

In the council elections the TUSC candidates' 6.2% average vote was up from last year's 5.2%. But in 74 wards it is possible to make a more direct comparison with last year as TUSC stood there in 2011. In these 'comparator wards' TUSC's share of the vote rose, from 5.4% in 2011 to 6.8% this year.

## Improvement

In the council contests, the ratio of Labour voters to TUSC voters was nine. In other words, for every person who voted for TUSC (21,124), there were nine people who voted Labour (187,015). Last year the ratio was ten Labour voters to every one TUSC supporter.

TUSC candidates' contested 98 wards against Liberal Democrats. In the others – one quarter of the wards we stood in – one of the 'parties of government' was unable to field a candidate!

Where there was a clash, TUSC outpolled a Liberal Democrat candidate in one in five wards (22). Not a broad sample – but not insignificant. Last year the Lib Dems outpolled TUSC in seven out of eight contests.



Some of the London TUSC candidates photo Paul Mattsson

Not every area saw increased electoral support. Our average vote slipped from 3.3% to 3% in Southampton, while still polling 1,227 votes city-wide.

Southampton was a national Labour target – with two visits from party leader Ed Miliband – where Labour-affiliated unions poured in resources to defeat the Tory council.

A newsletter to Southampton Unison members carried an article headed 'Why Unison does not support the Trade Unionists and Socialists Against Cuts', stressing that "de-

spite the name of the coalition it is not endorsed in any way by Unison'.

But this attack shows the significance of TUSC. The Greens also stood ten candidates in Southampton. Where was the Unison material attacking them?

But the Greens are not seen as part of the labour movement and, with their acceptance that councils can do nothing but implement government cuts, are not a serious challenge to Labour-supporting trade union leaders.

The importance of TUSC's elec-

tion campaigns lie, above all, in their potential to act as a catalyst in the trade unions for the idea of independent working class political representation, given Labour's transformation into another party of capitalism.

With the support gained from militant trade unionists, and in the modest advances in the votes achieved, May's elections were another step forward in that task.

**A full breakdown of the results is available on the TUSC website at [www.tusc.org.uk](http://www.tusc.org.uk)**

## Coventry: Socialist campaigner Dave Nellist narrowly loses

**Lenny Shail**

Coventry Socialist Alternative election agent

For the 14 hours of election day in Coventry, rain fell almost without ceasing. Yet despite the terrible weather conditions Socialist Party supporters in St Michael's ward campaigned relentlessly in a hard fought battle to re-elect Dave Nellist, the sitting Socialist Party councillor.

Standing under the name of Socialist Alternative, as part of TUSC, Dave narrowly lost, receiving 1,469 votes to Labour's 1,673.

While it is disappointing to have lost Dave on the council, the Socialist Party can be proud of the very hard fought campaign of the last six months. We have continued to widen our support and deepen our roots across the ward.

Labour have benefited from the transient nature of the population in St Michael's, with a high number of students, misleading new voters that it is only a vote between Labour and the Tories.

'Leaders' of some communities also exerted enormous pressure for a Labour vote. A significant minority of voters from those communities defied the pressure and voted for Dave.

Notwithstanding these difficulties, St Michael's saw a different trend from most of the country.

### Labour's vote cut

Labour's majority of 1,200 in last year's vote was cut to 200. In the Charterhouse area of the ward, Dave received 70% of the vote. In the more populated Labour-strong area we increased our vote.



Dave Nellist at the pre-election rally photo Coventry SP

A lot of St Michael's voters will be upset that they have lost Dave, widely recognised as the only real

Labour hope they've dealt the fatal blow to the Socialist Party in Coventry, but instead we have growing support both in workplaces and elections

opposition councillor in the city. Many across Coventry will be both

puzzled and angry that Labour put more effort into defeating Dave than Tory councillors in marginal wards.

Labour hope they've dealt the fatal blow to the Socialist Party in Coventry, but instead we have growing support both in workplaces and elections.

Across the city our candidates received 3,614 votes, 5.6%, the third-highest.

Dave and the Socialist Party will be playing a leading role in fighting to defend jobs and public services, starting with supporting public sector picket lines on 10 May.

The basis has now been laid for going to three Socialist Party branches in the city, to continue building our strong base in the trade unions and among young people, and get back in the council chamber in the future.

## 4,792 mayoral vote for Liverpool 47 candidate

**Liverpool Socialist Party members**

In the Liverpool mayoral election, TUSC candidate Tony Mulhearn received 4,792 votes, 4.73%, beating the Tory candidate and just narrowly behind the Greens and Liberal Democrats. He came fifth out of 12 candidates.

This is a good result after a short campaign of just one month. Voters supporting Tony, including those at the sharp end of council cuts, went to the polling stations eager to express opposition to all cuts and privatisation.

The 57.7% for Joe Anderson, who was Labour's council leader until becoming the city's first elected mayor, reflected the desire of the electorate to hit back at the Con-Dem government.

Anderson has had blanket coverage in the local media for the last two years. The Liverpool Echo is described locally as a "Joe Anderson fanzine" and he has a constant platform on local radio to justify his cuts

policy, with the anti-cuts alternative virtually silenced.

In addition there were lies and distortion by other candidates during the campaign about the 1980s' record of Tony Mulhearn and the other 46 Liverpool councillors who stood up to the Tory Thatcher government at that time.

Although Liverpool's Labour council has carried out £141 million of cuts, it has only been in office for two years after 14 years of Liberal Democrat control, so there are still hopes that Labour will be different.

The Lib Dems have gone from running the council in 2010 to now receiving only 6,238 votes in the whole of Liverpool for mayor!

Tony got over twice the vote of right-wing reactionaries Ukip, with the three far-right racist candidates taking up three of the bottom four poll places.

Merseyside TUSC and the Socialist Party will continue to work with anti-cuts activists and trade unionists in the city to provide a fighting alternative to cuts.



Tony outside housing built by the Liverpool 47 council photo Harry Smith



# Legitimacy of Cameron and Clegg further shattered

**Peter Taaffe**  
Socialist Party general secretary

**Continued from page 1**  
Will newly-elected or strengthened Labour councils pursue a policy of resistance by refusing to implement the cuts? Up to now, they have unfortunately aped the Tories and Liberal Democrats by acting as transmission belts for the government's attacks on working-class people.

But if they were to take a stand - even at this late hour - in refusing to implement the eye-watering measures coming down the line, then the anti-cuts movement would be prepared to form a united front with them. If, however, they don't, their new-found 'popularity' will rapidly evaporate.

In reality, working people expressed on the doorstep, on television and in newspapers their complete exasperation with 'all the main parties', who are perceived to be 'all the same'.

This mood has not been dissipated by these elections. This is indicated by the turnout of 32%, the lowest for 12 years.

In other words, the worse the economic and social situation gets, the less the mass of the population is prepared to engage in politics.

### No alternative

If New Labour was really offering something new - a fighting anti-cuts programme allied to the idea of changing society - then working people would come out in their droves to support them.

But, in fact, the votes of all the main parties went down but New Labour just decreased less than the Tories or Lib Dems.

Previous Tory and Lib Dem voters did not swing over to New Labour but tended to abstain. The unavoidable fact is that 70% of the electorate are disengaged on a local level from politics.

They do not believe that what happens in these elections has a major bearing on their lives. This is a very dangerous situation for the capitalists.

The seeds of new riots are being sown. The poor, disenfranchised, jobless young people and working class generally are increasingly excluded from real democratic participation through their own mass party. They will then seek to express themselves by other means.

Where the main parties are indistinguishable from one another, it leads to 50% or more of the electorate refusing to vote.

The attempt to further railroad through mayors is another step in the direction of eroding what remains of local democracy.

Nine out of the ten cities that held referenda for mayors rejected them. Only Bristol was in favour. Clearly, it was a fear that the same thing could have happened in Liverpool that prompted the Labour majority there to undemocratically dispense with a referendum and go straight for an election.

This was a pre-emptive move, a kind of dictatorial coup, to give power to one man who would be better able to ride roughshod over opposition.

With only a month to prepare, Tony Mulhearn (the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition candidate) nevertheless conducted a very effective mayoral campaign in Liverpool, which touched the most combative and advanced layers of the working class, securing a very creditable vote upon which a new

campaign of mass opposition to the cuts can develop.

Labour's council leader Joe Anderson, who rammed through the mayoral contest without popular endorsement, received the near unanimity of the local press and media who, in the main, disgracefully excluded Tony Mulhearn from even being heard.

The lack of enthusiasm for this contest was indicated by the poor turnout, whereas the authors of the contest predicted a big participation by the electorate.

Nevertheless, Joe Anderson, it is claimed, didn't just receive a good vote but a 'coronation'. Gordon Brown also received the same kind of accolade when he was elected unopposed as Labour leader and prime minister. He was defeated in his first election as leader.

History has a way of concentrating power in the hands of one individual - this time through the semi-dictatorial Joe Anderson - only then to set in motion the forces of disintegration.

In Liverpool, this will come from the powerful movement of working people - which will echo the magnificent movement of the Liverpool City Council in the 1980s - this time concentrating on defending what has been gained and preventing the city from being plunged further into misery and decay.

However, the struggle locally will this time not be against the Tories and Liberals but primarily against a 'Labour' council trying to bulldoze through Tory cuts.

### London mayor

The only crumb of comfort which Cameron can take from these elections was in the London mayoral contest, where Boris Johnson - consistently 6% ahead in the opinion polls - just snatched victory from Ken Livingstone when second preference votes were redistributed, by 51.53% to 48.47%.

But even this is somewhat of a double-edged sword for Cameron. Johnson's victory was due to a mixture of calculated buffoonery and evasiveness which allowed him incredibly to present himself as 'different', more 'human' than the Tory party itself.

Also, he conducted a dishonest campaign with the help of the capitalist media bias which covered up his pro-cuts position.

The spotlight was turned on Ken Livingstone for alleged tax evasion - which he never really rebutted effectively - but Johnson was never seriously challenged about his millionaire lifestyle.

This 'man of the people', according to his biographer, is "obsessed with making money". In addition to a mayoral salary of £144,000 and his lucrative TV work, he "earns" £250,000 a year from the Daily Telegraph, which he describes as "chickenfeed".

When it was suggested to him that he donate 20% of his vast income to charity, he reportedly replied: "It's outrageous, I've been raped".

If anything, he is to the right of Cameron and Osborne and yet he was allowed to present himself as a 'populist'.

He criticised the government for not giving more tax cuts to the rich, suggesting a 40p tax rate rather than the 45p implemented by Osborne.

Yet Osborne's concession to the rich in the recent budget provoked mass outrage and contributed heavily to the Tories' defeat in this election.

However, Livingstone, trapped in the New Labour 'straitjacket' did not fight an effective, radical campaign which could have aroused working people to



The Con-Dem government is set on its undeviating course of carrying through its programme of cuts photo Paul Mattsson



Ken Livingstone (left) was trapped in a New Labour 'straitjacket' while Boris Johnson (right) portrayed himself as different to the Tory party photo Paul Mattsson

come out and vote for him.

When he was expelled from New Labour, this was seen as a positive advantage by Londoners. Allied to a campaign on fares and other radical measures, he triumphed.

This time, even his proposals for reducing fares and restoring EMA were muffled. This was because voters were sceptical about whether he would be prepared to carry them out, precisely because he was back in the New Labour fold. Miliband and Balls accept the Tory cuts.

Cameron thinks he can use Johnson's narrow victory to burnish the image of the Tory party and allow him to ride back to power at the next election, either in tandem with the Liberal Democrats or by winning separately.

However, on the back of his London 'triumph', Johnson is now a potential rival for fellow Etonian Cameron's crown, the leadership of the Tory party itself.

Moreover, the Tory right has a new champion and one who appears to be more successful than Cameron himself.

Their dream is that 'clear blue water' - the adoption of uncompromising right-wing policies - can be established with Johnson at the helm.

The advance of Ukip, which scored 13% in the elections - elbowing aside the far-right BNP in the election with its mixture of anti-EU and anti-immigrant propaganda - would then be outflanked by a new right-wing Tory party.

Traditional right-wing Tory policies would regain them popularity, especially with Boris Johnson installed in the Tory party leadership.

To this end, Johnson probably intends to re-enter parliament in 2015, even if this means he combines the role of mayor and parliamentary candidate or MP if a general election is held before then.

In any event, a new round of Tory infighting - which plagued their governments in the past, particularly that of John Major - is likely to break out again and could even result in a split. The economic and social situation of Britain will further the process.

### Economic crisis

The main factor in the defeat of the Tories and their allies the Liberal Democrats - who face complete extinction - in this election is the deteriorating economic and social situation.

The government is besieged by mounting difficulties. On top of the enduring depression, in April the economy was declared to have gone into the long-expected and dreaded 'double dip' recession - two quarters of falling output when the economy has still not returned to its size of before the previous recession, the first time this has happened since 1975.

This means, according to the Guardian, that "the economy is now in its longest depression for 100 years, with little sign of regaining its previous record output before 2014".

The British economy is haemorrhaging jobs. In its wake comes unprecedented social deprivation. Teachers have raised the alarm over malnutrition in the schools with more than one in four teachers saying "they regularly saw children walking miles to school as they cannot afford transport."

"A further two thirds claim they often saw pupils with holes in their shoes... A marked increase in depression and emotional problems, joblessness, took its toll on family life" (Independent).

George Orwell's famous book 'The

Road to Wigan Pier', a chronicle of the soul-destroying problem of poverty in the 1930s, is back in vogue with comparisons drawn in the Daily Mirror between the situation then and now.

The chief constable of Gloucestershire police resigned because budget cuts were "pushing his force towards a cliff edge".

Even Liberal Democrats like Lord Oakeshott have declared that it would be "madness" to carry through further cuts, even a further 5%.

The system he supports - capitalism - based as it is on production for profit rather than social need, deems it necessary to carry through austerity - indeed 'eternal' austerity - in pursuit of defending the system.

And the government, with 'slasher' Osborne in the vanguard, is set on an undeviating course of carrying through their programme of cuts, only 10% of which have been already implemented, right up to the next general election and beyond.

How is the government going to be stopped? How is it possible to persuade New Labour to resist the cuts not just in words but in deeds? They are indeed the local agency of the cuts.

With much weeping and wringing of hands, they are nevertheless carrying out the cuts. How is it possible to influence New Labour to take a stand? By passively sitting in dormant Labour parties complaining?

The Labour Party is increasingly composed solely of a 'salarial' of paid councillors who have none of the vocation to defend local communities of old. They are seemingly unmoved by appeals to resist the cuts.

### TUSC

Only when they are challenged electorally will they sit up and take notice. This is why TUSC, the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition, stood in these elections and performed creditably in some areas (see www.tusc.org.uk and May 2012 local and mayoral elections).

In Coventry, Dave Nellist was unfortunately defeated where, shamefully, Labour apparatchiks devoted most, if not all, of their resources in concentrating on defeating him, while allowing the Tories a free run elsewhere.

They may think that by defeating Dave that TUSC and the Socialist Party will just melt away. This was the perception of right-wing Labour when they expelled the leaders of Militant from the Labour Party in 1983: 'cut off the head and the body will die'.

In fact, we went from strength to strength. TUSC, building the foundations of a new mass party of the working class, is here to stay.

We challenged across-the-board in the London Assembly election and we freely admit our result was modest.

So were the first efforts of the pioneers of the Labour Party. That did not discourage them from building what was then a new mass party of the working class.

Blair and right-wing Labour have destroyed that party, transforming it into another pro-capitalist party like the Democratic Party in the US.

The success of New Labour is comparable to the success of the Liberals in 1906. This represented a high watermark of the Liberals, but also the beginning of its decline.

No time must be lost in seeking all opportunities to build an independent mass party of the working class in Britain. These are the real lessons of the 2012 local and mayoral elections.

The government is besieged by mounting difficulties. On top of the enduring depression, in April the economy was declared to have gone into the long-expected and dreaded 'double dip' recession



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# France: A weekend that shocked Europe

## Rejection of austerity in Eurozone’s second biggest economy

**Robert Bechert**  
Committee for a Workers’  
International (CWI)

Sarkozy’s downfall, alongside the crushing defeat of the pro-austerity parties in Greece, was a real turning point. Not only did he head the eighth European government to be defeated in the last year, the French and Greek elections were the most open rejection of austerity so far.

Following the massive struggle over pensions in 2010, many French workers, youth and other layers turned their attention to preventing Sarkozy’s re-election.

All the polls show that many did not vote for Francois Hollande of the Socialist Party (PS) for his policies, but mainly in order to oust the arrogant, rude “bling-bling” Sarkozy.

Nevertheless Hollande’s victory has created big hopes and expectations, not just in France but internationally that the tide is beginning to turn against the assault on living standards.

**Hopes for future**

Hollande had to reflect the growing anti-austerity and anti-rich pressure from below, making some limited promises and presenting himself as an anti-austerity and pro-growth candidate.

His programme includes a number of pledges including increasing the minimum wage, creating 150,000 youth “jobs of the future”, hiring 60,000 new teachers and 5,000 police.

But can Hollande deliver what millions are hoping for and demanding?

Hollande’s narrow victory was the first Socialist Party presidential success since 1988. But despite the PS’s name, this is not a victory for socialism in the sense of breaking with capitalism. The PS is a party that seeks to work within capitalism.

Alongside his promised improvements Hollande also has a deficit reduction plan similar to Sarkozy’s. Both Hollande and Sarkozy’s economic plans are based upon a 1.7% growth next year, something which

is looking increasingly unrealistic, something that will increase the markets’ pressure on Hollande.

Hollande is also proposing to introduce a constitutional requirement for the government to have a balanced budget and to eliminate the budget deficit by 2017, one year later than Sarkozy planned to.

Hollande seeks to do this by saving €100 billion a year through a mixture of tax increases and spending cuts, although he has not said what will be cut.

Nevertheless his victory will have strengthened the confidence of French workers, youth and other oppressed layers by showing that the right can be defeated.

This can lead to a reawakening of the French tradition of mass movements starting from below that

Hollande told the crowds that: “You are much more than a people who want change. You are already a movement that is rising across all of Europe and maybe the world.” True, but can Hollande deliver what millions are hoping for and demanding?

could force Hollande to go further than he initially planned.

Hollande and his government will face enormous pressure from markets to resist opposition to cuts and to demands for increased living standards.

But at the same time there are growing divisions among governments and capitalists over what to do. Even ratings agencies reflect this as they simultaneously demand cuts and complain that not enough is being done to stimulate the economic growth which is needed to pay back the debt.

Merkel and the German government is still standing tough, both on Hollande’s call for the fiscal treaty to be re-negotiated and on Greece, but could be forced to accept some measures that attempt to alleviate the crisis.

Of all the leaders of major countries in office at the start of this

crisis, only Merkel remains and it is far from certain that the present German government will survive beyond the next election due in September 2014. Thus the day after Hollande’s victory Merkel spoke of the “two sides of same coin - progress is only achievable via solid finances plus growth.”

As one German commentator wrote, that while “so far there are no realistic alternatives on the table to consolidating national budgets by making spending cuts. Hollande will have to recognize this fact within a few short weeks.

“France’s new leader will get a stimulus package as an addition and supplement to the already signed fiscal pact, but that will be all. This concession has already been established by Germany’s chancellor, Luxembourg leader and euro group president, Jean-Claude Juncker, and

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the President of the European Central Bank, Mario Draghi.”

The twin pressures of the ongoing economic crisis and pressure from below will put Hollande to the test. While not challenging capitalism Hollande can be pushed in conflicting directions, being forced to give concessions and to carry through attacks.

**History**

After the experiences of the PS in office during the 1981-1995 Mitterrand presidency and the 1997-2002 Jospin government many workers in France do not trust the PS, hence the enthusiastic support in the first round of this election for Mélenchon, the Left Front (FdG) candidate, and the hundreds of thousands who voted to the left of both the PS and FdG.

This was also the basis for the large votes in 2002 and 2007 for Trotskyist parties to the left of Jospin’s ‘Gauche Plurielle’ (“Plural left”, the PS and Communist party).

Now in this stormy period Hollande will be put to the test and because his government will base itself on capitalism it is inevitable that, over a period of time, a process similar to that under the Jospin government will unfold.

This will see both a radicalisation to the left creating the chance to create a new force committed to breaking with capitalism but also opportunities for the far-right National Front to use a mixture of populism, racism and nationalism to build upon the support it has already amassed.

A new stage has opened both in France and Europe.

**More on [www.socialistworld.net](http://www.socialistworld.net)**

# London elections - TUSC: A marker for future struggles

**Paula Mitchell**  
London Socialist Party secretary

“I hadn’t heard of you before, but I saw Trade Unionist on the ballot paper and I voted for it - I had to, I’m a worker.”

These words of a porter at University College Hospital in central London on election day summed up the response TUSC campaigners had experienced on a daily basis.

The TUSC vote for the London Assembly (17,686 votes - 0.8%) undoubtedly will disappoint many TUSC supporters who hoped for better.

But it in no way reflects the response campaigners received from workplaces all over London during the campaign.

Socialist Party members visited hospitals, council workplaces, job centres, fire stations, tube stations, talking to workers about TUSC and the need for political representation for working class people.

Overwhelmingly we received a positive response: “They’re all the

same, we can’t trust Labour anymore, it’s about time trade unionists stood in elections.”

Everywhere we went, workers took piles of the TUSC postcards to distribute themselves.

Unlike the Labour Party which turns its back on workers in struggle, we ensured the TUSC banner was present on every protest to bring our support. When there were strikes we visited picket lines - indeed, our candidates were among the organisers of the action!

The achievement of the London campaign was the backing and involvement of serious trade union forces.

This was the result of months of discussion, initiated by TUSC supporters in the RMT in London. The election list in London was backed by the transport union RMT, London Fire Brigades Union, and the general secretaries of both these unions and the POA prison officers’ union - Bob Crow, Matt Wrack and Steve Gillan. These three unions all distributed the TUSC material themselves.

RMT president Alex Gordon headed the list, which included the Assistant General Secretary of the POA Joe Simpson, London organiser of the RMT Steve Hedley, and national executive members of the FBU (Ian Leahair), teachers union NUT (Martin Powell-Davies) and Unison (April Ashley).

The impressive list included firefighters, teachers, health workers, anti-cuts campaigners, construction activists, unemployed, and anti-racist and disability campaigners.

**Media blackout**

But, scandalously, there was a near blackout of the campaign in the mainstream press. We received a derisory two second flash on BBC London news.

In our view, this was quite deliberate. Bob Crow is one of the most well-known political figures in London after Boris Johnson and Ken Livingstone.

It is a conscious decision by big business representatives and their

media cronies.

They want to eliminate the voice that clearly and persistently says: “There is an alternative, ordinary working class people should not have to pay for this crisis.”

What it did mean, however, was that we were likely to get a low vote. All the work we did could only scratch the surface in a city the size of London.

Additionally we were squeezed in the polarisation between Johnson and Livingstone for mayor, with trade unions campaigning and many workers voting for Livingstone through gritted teeth to try to oust Johnson.

TUSC did not stand for mayor, and many people, disappointed by Livingstone, seized on the Greens for an alternative mayoral candidate.

There was also the desire to punish the Tories by unseating their constituency assembly members, such as the hated Brian Coleman in Barnet, the architect of attacks on the fire service, where both the FBU and RMT backed the Labour candi-

date against him. Inevitably, this led to a focus on voting Labour.

TUSC only stood for the list part of the election, which was a form of proportional representation so that only 5% of the vote was needed to win an assembly seat.

This means that the argument commonly used by our opponents about a ‘wasted vote’ did not apply. But in the absence of publicity, many people would not have realised this.

Wally Kennedy, who organised the TUSC campaign in Hillingdon, including a meeting of nearly 70 local workers and anti-cuts campaigners, said to local TUSC supporters after the results: “Nearly 70% of the electorate did not vote on Thursday. The reality is that the vast majority of working class people have not yet spoken.

“The TUSC campaign, ignored by the media, hasn’t yet managed to reach millions of working people. Those who didn’t vote are our potential supporters.”

**For full election results see [www.tusc.org.uk](http://www.tusc.org.uk)**



the Socialist postbag

Do you have something to say?

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Murdoch and the moguls

Rupert Murdoch in his evidence to the Leveson inquiry said he had never asked a British prime minister for anything. There's probably some truth in that - politicians, Tories and particularly Labour ones, have been so desperate for his support that he could probably just tell them what to do. With his cosy relationship with the last Labour government and Blair in particular, Murdoch would have had plenty of opportunity at their many shared social gatherings. To have a genuinely 'free press' it is necessary to take the means of production of the media out of the hands of the few rich media moguls and put them under the control and management of the working class.

**Ben Golightly, Swansea**

Cheerleading Tories

Tory MP Louise Mensch seems desperate to replace Jeremy Hunt as top cheerleader for the Murdoch empire. Her appearances on news programmes defending Rupert Murdoch's position as head of News Corporation made her look like an unpaid PR woman trying to salvage her rich client's reputation. The decision to insist on not dropping the Leveson report's contentious sentence [about Murdoch not being a fit person to run a company - Eds] was a wise move as this forced the Conservatives to vote against it. The Tories' backing of the Murdochs would have been more hidden if the sentence had been removed. The Conservatives on the committee were engaged in a damage-limitation exercise for the Murdochs while trying not to appear as being in their corner. But if you are not 'wilfully blind' or indeed wilfully stupid, they are clearly failing at this. The whole façade is ultimately designed to ensure Rupert gets what Rupert wants, a majority stake in BSkyB. As long as this happens at the end of the process, the Tories will have done their job.

**Shaun Fitzsimmons, Nottingham**

Something fishy in Oysters

The hard pressed travelling public are used to overcrowded, expensive and delayed rail journeys operated by the privately-owned train operating companies (TOCs). Now it seems the TOCs are rubbing salt into our wounds. The TSSA rail union obtained figures

On top of this bare-faced robbery, the Boris Johnson-run Transport for London (TfL) has also been substantially ripping-off rail and tube passengers. Last year TfL refunded just £11 million of the £66 million it had levied on pay-as-you-go Oyster card holders for "incomplete" journeys ie from overcharging. This overcharging is likely to reach record highs during the Olympic games. I guess not having a games' ticket has its compensation!

**Simon Carter, east London**

Empire loyalist Mail

"Another nail in the coffin of the country's proud traditions," screams Daily Mail reporter Ian Drury at the Queen's advisers' suggestion of removing the word 'empire' from the honours system. Poet Benjamin Zephaniah, when he turned down an OBE - Order of the British Empire - in 2003, said that the word empire "Reminds me of slavery, reminds me of thousands of years of brutality, it reminds me of how my fore-

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mothers were raped and my forefathers brutalised". What an excellent tradition that the Mail's 'Defence Correspondent' (defending the empire?) wants to protect against "politically-correct meddling"! The Mail's also having a 'Spring Clean for the Queen' - perhaps we should instead clean out this feudal relic? Maybe the Queen and her hubby - fitting in with the Con-Dems' attack on under-occupancy of council housing - could also downsize from their three multi-bedroom palaces - perhaps to a one-bedroom flat in Stoke?

**Jeff Allen, Loughton**

Take back our Assets

A report by the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority has a nasty shock for the government which is hell-bent on privatising emergency services. The report says that the company running London's fleet of fire engines that can tackle blazes in high rise buildings has "crippling financial problems". The private AssetCo owns London's 500 appliances and 50,000 pieces of essential safety kit. The report says that they have not "yet achieved a maintenance and repair regime which brings downtime within acceptable levels". As a Londoner living in a high rise building, I agree with Fire Brigade union general secretary Matt Wrack that London Fire Brigade should follow Lincolnshire's lead in taking these vital safety assets out of the debt-ridden AssetCo's hands and back into public ownership. We need a high quality, fully provided and fully public fire service.

**Keith Whitehead**

from the transport department which shows that of the £184 million shelled out by Network Rail to the TOCs for delays in services, only £15 million was paid in compensation to passengers.

Turning anger into action



photo Paul Mattsson

I am a young mother with two beautiful children and have decided to join the Socialist party. I was brought up by my family with socialist views and ideas. My family are socialists and my granddad Pat Wall was a left-wing MP. As I became a mum I began struggling more and more financially, especially with the vicious cuts on working tax credit and child tax credit. In April 2011, a month before giving birth to my second baby, the baby element of child tax credit was completely abolished. It annoyed me that babies and children should be punished all because of the bankers' greed and Cameron's alliance with the super-rich. I work as a part time recruitment consultant and one of the things my job entails is daily searching of the job boards and the job centre website. One thing I noticed was that the telesales call centre and receptionist vacancies had now turned into 'apprenticeships'. Nick Clegg has the audacity to claim he created apprenticeships for the benefit of young people. The

truth is all he did is replace these minimum wage jobs with an even lower wage (hidden behind this so-called apprenticeship), reducing wages to exploit young school leavers so that big business can receive cheap labour. I could go on forever about what angers me about the current government and capitalism just like we all could. I am happy to have joined the Socialist Party and hope in the next elections a socialist candidate in Keighley will be standing so that I can vote for them.

**Charlotte Wall**

Film review: 'Cocaine Unwrapped' The failing 'war on drugs'

Paul Heron

Cocaine Unwrapped, a documentary film directed by Rachel Seifert, went on general release from 5 May. It looks at one drug, cocaine, and its impact in two worlds - the relatively wealthy west, and poor areas of the southern hemisphere. It tells several stories, travelling to London, Baltimore USA, Colombia, Bolivia, Ecuador and Mexico. It examines the simple coca leaf, its production and transformation to cocaine. It looks at drug mules, prisons, poverty, death squads, gang crime and its political impact. It is an eye-opening account of the devastating repercussions of the 'war on drugs'. It is a human story, showing individual users in London saying how the drug helps them enjoy a night out while in Baltimore, it portrays the city's industrial devastation and the rise in unemployment. We are shown around the neighbourhoods where dealing drugs is a way out for many of the poorest. In South America, 140,000 members of Colombia's police are fighting the 'war on drugs,' backed up with paramilitary force and billions of dollars of US 'aid'. Small farmers in the Tumaco region found their crops of chocolate, bananas and yucca plants are destroyed as indiscriminate aerial spraying of herbicide occurs regularly. As local community leaders ex-

plain, spraying causes ill-health, economic stagnation and mass migration. Even the reactionary former president of Colombia, Cesar Gavira, has to outline the social damage this 'war on drugs' causes: "It destroys the lives of people who are not criminals and who are just trying to survive." In Bolivia before 2005, governments waged a war against coca growers. In 2005 the election of Evo Morales and the Movement for Socialism (MAS) showed the anger of workers, peasants and the landless at the effects of neoliberal policies. As the film shows the Morales government allowed limited growth of the coca leaf, monitored by the growers themselves through the trade unions, and supported the farmers' right to diversify into other crops. The coca leaf in its natural form is just a leaf that can be made into, among other things, herbal tea and creams for skin disorders. The US government is trying to stop these changes in approach happening. Tragically Morales and MAS now increasingly implement neoliberal policies, including openly backing the landowners in one of the world's most unequal countries for land ownership. 100 families own 25 million hectares, five times more than the entire indigenous population combined. Morales' failure to challenge this now threatens to destroy all improvements. The film moves to Mexico, focusing on Ciudad Juarez, a town where

violence escalated in recent years - it shows 50 freshly dug graves ready for fresh bodies as the war between the army, the gangs, and inter-gang rivalry escalates further. A 'war' in Mexico against drugs was used as a smokescreen to hide abuse of the democratic process. Like George W Bush, Mexico's current President Calderon was elected after a suspect election. As Bush used the 'war on terror', Calderon used the 'war on drugs' as a smoke-screen with devastating effect. Calderon destabilised the illegal trade, sparking the escalating war, the intervention of the army, abuses of human rights and corruption in local and national government. Film director Alejandro González Iñárritu specialises in films where seemingly unrelated stories inevitably crash and collide, such as Amores Perros and 21 Grams. Cocaine Unwrapped takes a similar format, showing stories of the casual user, the drug mule, the displaced and the poverty. Director Rachel Seifert accounts for the drug's environmental and human costs in South America and the seemingly illogical way that the 'war on drugs' is conducted. The unfolding tragedies make up a network of miscommunication, violence, and cyclical poverty that feeds on the demand for and illegality of cocaine. Cocaine Unwrapped has no answers but holds a mirror up to the effects of the 'war on drugs.'

**See www.cocaineunwrapped.com**



# Greece: Political earthquake sees pro-austerity parties' support collapse

Left presented with big opportunities

Following the recent elections in Greece, which saw two out of three voters vote against pro-austerity parties and a big swing to left parties, Niall Mulholland spoke to Andros Payiatsos, from Xekinima (CWI in Greece).

**What do the election results represent?**

The parliamentary election results in Greece were a political earthquake, a crushing repudiation of the pro-austerity parties and the 'Troika' (International Monetary Fund, European Union and European Central Bank). This follows years of austerity measures that have led to a collapse in living standards, 51% youth unemployment and mass poverty.

The outgoing government coalition parties suffered a massive collapse in support. The traditional conservative party, New Democracy, fell from just over 33% in 2009 to 18.85% (108 MPs, which includes the 50 seat bonus received by the first party, according to Greek electoral law).

Pasok, the traditional social democratic party, crashed from 43.9% in the last elections to 13.2% (41 seats). In the past three decades, the combined vote of the two "ruling" parties varied between 75% and 85% of the vote.

The biggest gains went to the broad left, Syriza (Coalition of the Radical Left), which rose from 4.6% to 16.78% (52 seats). The communist party (KKE) won 8.48% (26 MPs). The Democratic Left, which split from Syriza in 2010 on a more right-wing path, but which also attacked austerity cuts, won 6.1%.

This major swing to the left by Greek voters shows the huge potential for a bold socialist alternative to the capitalist crisis and austerity cuts.

However, serving as a warning to

the workers' movement, the neo-fascist Golden Dawn, exploiting the anti-cuts mood and issues over immigration, picked up 6.97%. For the first time, this far-right party entered parliament, with 21 MPs. The Independent Greeks, a recent right-wing nationalist split from New Democracy, also entered parliament, with 10.6% (33 MPs).

Abstention was much higher than predicted, at a record 35%, and 'blank' and invalid votes stood at 2.4%.

**Why did Syriza gain so many votes?**

Syriza gained support over the last two weeks of the election campaign mainly by appealing for a 'Left government' against the Troika's 'memorandum'.

The supporters of Xekinima pioneered the call for a Left 'united front' and for a vote for the parties of the left, over the last months. Unlike Syriza leaders, Xekinima did not call for a 'renegotiation' of the crushing austerity measures, but for a Left government to carry out a programme to defend working people and all those suffering under austere-

ity. This would include repudiating the debt, stopping all cuts, nationalising the main banks and industries, under democratic workers' control and management, and fighting for a socialist Europe, as opposed to the bosses' EU - breaking with the dictate of the Troika and capitalism, in general.

The other main forces on the Left in Greece, KKE and Antarsya (the Anti-capitalist Left Cooperation), both took a sectarian attitude and rejected Syriza's 'left unity' proposal. Yet if the left had formed an electoral bloc, they would probably now be in a position to form a government!

The KKE and Antarsya paid for their approach in the polls. Their votes remain stagnant: the KKE rose by just 1% and Antarsya finished on 1.19%, with no MPs.

**Can a new government be formed?** New Democracy's leader, Antonis Samaras, announced that his party had failed in its bid to create a "national salvation" government.

If Syriza fails to form a government, the initiative goes to Pasok, and if that fails, to the Greek president, who can try to assemble

a coalition.

Given the unambiguous anti-austerity verdict of the electorate, no parties entering a coalition government can do so without at least pledging to renegotiate the 'memorandum' with the Troika.

The Troika may be prepared to renegotiate over aspects of the memorandum and to make some minor concessions. But the Troika will not agree to end its central demands for huge debt repayments from Greece, which can only come at the cost of yet more enormous cuts to welfare, jobs and living standards.

The question of Greek membership of the eurozone and even the EU will, most probably, quickly be placed on the agenda.

Failure to form a new government would eventually lead to new elections. The ruling class has additional reasons to dread this prospect, as most probably it will lead to Syriza becoming the largest party.

**What must the left do now?**

Xekinima (CWI Greece) supports the call by Syriza for a 'left government' coalition but it must be a government fully committed

to opposing all austerity cuts and the bosses' EU, rejecting the debt repayments and carrying out pro-worker policies, not 'renegotiating' for 'milder' cuts and 'more generous' loan repayments, which still means a lowering of Greek living standards.

The Syriza leadership must oppose any coalition or cooperation with the bosses' parties, which would be a disastrous trap.

If an attempt is made to form yet another cuts-making coalition, based around Pasok and ND, the left and workers' movement needs to organise mass opposition, including general strikes and workplace occupations, to stop such attempts, which have no mandate.

If new elections take place in June, the left parties will have a great opportunity to win a majority. This requires the left parties adopting socialist policies. It also means a strong united front of the left and workers' movement against the threat of the neo-fascist and far right.

If the left fails to offer a viable socialist alternative, the far right can partially fill the space and grow, and the ruling class will also seek to deploy more authoritarian measures against the workers' movement resisting cuts.

**More on [www.socialistworld.net](http://www.socialistworld.net)**

**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)**

## Con-Dems battered in Scottish local elections

### Step up the fight against SNP and Labour cutting councils

**Matt Dobson**  
Socialist Party Scotland

Both the Scottish National Party (SNP) and Labour declared victory in the Scottish local government elections. Labour polled closer than expected to the SNP with 31.5% of the national share of the vote against the SNP's 32.7%.

The SNP has the most councillors across the country with 424, up 57 on its 2007 result. Labour increased its representation by 58, to 394 council seats.

A section of workers returned to Labour to punish the Con-Dems. Where the SNP have been in power for the last four years in coalitions

with the Liberals - in Aberdeen, Fife and Edinburgh - carrying out brutal cuts and privatisation, Labour made some of its biggest gains.

SNP leader Alex Salmond had given the impression that winning Glasgow would be key in the campaign for independence. Labour won it with 44 seats to the SNP's 27. Labour is now the largest party in the capital, Edinburgh, as well as Aberdeen.

Doubts about independence, a growing feeling that the SNP are not resisting cuts and the exposure of Salmond's close relationship with Rupert Murdoch, benefitted Labour.

The Scottish Tories, under a new leader, continue to travel further

into electoral oblivion. The Lib Dems lost 80 seats, over half of their councillors.

With only six Scottish councils having an overall majority, negotiations will take place over coalitions to run the remaining 26 councils. These may involve SNP and Labour and also the Green Party, which now has 14 councillors. None of these councils will defy the cuts.

**Anti-cuts coalition**

The Scottish Anti-Cuts Coalition (SACC) stood 38 candidates in ten local authority areas.

Those standing included trade unionists, socialists, community campaigners and Youth Fight for

Jobs activists. 3,200 people gave SACC candidates their first preference vote. But significantly SACC also gained more than 4,500 second preferences and 10,000 third preferences.

SACC beat the Lib Dems in some wards in Dundee, Glasgow and Renfrewshire. In Glasgow our candidates often polled ahead of 'Glasgow First', a splinter from Labour of well-known councillors from the previous administration who tried to pose as anti-cuts despite voting for cuts weeks earlier!

12 Socialist Party Scotland members stood as SACC candidates, gaining respectable votes that can be built on. Gail Sheridan, standing as Solidarity in Craigton, Glas-

gow (under the SACC constitution parties can stand under their own name) polled a very creditable 5.8% - the biggest left vote in Glasgow - beating the Greens and the Lib Dems.

There was a near media blackout of the SACC campaign but at the hustings our candidates received the most applause for exposing the other parties' craven capitulation to the cuts.

For Socialist Party Scotland, SACC's campaign and result give a platform for building political representation for the working class in Scotland and a mass campaign against austerity.

**More on [SPS website - www.socialistpartyscotland.org.uk](http://SPSwebsite-www.socialistpartyscotland.org.uk)**



## We all need to strike together again COME TO THE NSSN CONFERENCE!

**Rob Williams**  
Chair, National Shop Stewards  
Network (NSSN)

There are many reasons to come to the NSSN conference this year. Whether it's to find out how the Sparks beat the construction bosses' Besna contract and the 35% cut to their wages or just to meet other activists, branch reps and union rank and file members.

Meeting and discussing with them means you can get up to speed on how they've dealt with issues like the ones you're facing at work.

But I suppose the most urgent issue is the public sector pension dispute. Last September the NSSN got 700 union activists to lobby the TUC. Then the two million-strong N30 strike was called.

But the problem was that after the strike, unions like Unison and the GMB pulled the

rug from under the movement's feet. But as well as half a million workers out on strike on 10 May there is further action possible in June, plus Unison members in the NHS rejecting the government's pensions deal.

This is on top of the Con-Dems' election rout. So everything's up for grabs - we need to pile the pressure on the trade union leaders now. We demand a national trade union-led Saturday demonstration against austerity before the summer.

I appeal to all those who want to push this battle forward against this weak and divided cabinet of millionaires - help us make this the biggest NSSN conference so far.

This will send a message to the TUC and the right-wing union leaders, like Unison general secretary Prentis, that we all need to strike together again, like we did on N30. It really could make a difference.

**NATIONAL SHOP STEWARDS NETWORK 6TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE**  
**SATURDAY 9 JUNE 11AM-4PM,**  
**FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE LONDON NW1 2BJ**  
**WWW.SHOPSTEWARDS.NET**  
**INFO@SHOPSTEWARDS.NET**

Marching in London on N30 photo Paul Mattsson

### 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 un-recycled 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!