



Hospital jobs scandal

ACTION NOW TO SAVE THE NHS!



Lies about protecting the NHS helped the Tories get into government. Now the Con-Dems' destruction of the health service could trigger their downfall. Among health workers and the general public a seething anger is boiling up. Michael Griffiths writes about yet another attempt to make public service workers and users pay for the capitalist crisis.

Most NHS Trusts, like ours in Wakefield, are seeking to make more job cuts. The Royal College of Nursing has calculated that 61,000 jobs, including those of nurses, are under threat. 26,000 have gone in the last two years. Trained staff are unable to get a job, while those with a job are overworked and under huge pressure.

Now unemployed workers are being offered unpaid 'work experience' in hospitals. A pilot scheme at Sandwell and West Birmingham hospital trust has already taken place.

After a very short training programme, six unemployed people

worked unpaid for eight weeks, helping to feed patients and to clean wards.

This is a warning to the health unions as the trust is planning to extend the scheme.

Last year, Sandwell general hospital was one of the 20 hospitals condemned by the Care Quality Commission for their treatment and care of older patients. During a spot check, an incontinent patient was found to have remained unwashed for 90 minutes, despite calling for help.

So there is clearly a staff shortage - which the trust management seems to want to solve by taking on people to provide essential care for patients, but through working

for their dole. What a scandal in the 21st century! This is the thin end of a very dangerous wedge.

The policies of this government have already led to hundreds of thousands of public and private sector job losses with hundreds of thousands more in the pipeline. Workers everywhere now face attempts to crush their pay, terms and conditions and job security.

The trade union movement

should be organising the unemployed into the unions. These sham schemes should be actively resisted with a fight for investment in real jobs, real training and decent, trade union recognised pay rates and conditions for all workers.

But health workers are fighting back against these attacks. GMB members in the NHS have just voted by 96.5% to reject the proposed

changes to their pension scheme. Unite workers have also rejected these attacks and joined the strike on 10 May.

Now is the time to coordinate a vigorous campaign, including strike action and a trade union demo before the summer, to defend the NHS, defend health workers and throw out plans to extend the 'look after patients for your dole money' scheme.

photo Paul Mattsson

Back to work? How the system fails the unemployed

The latest figures from the Office for National Statistics show a slight fall in unemployment. But behind that headline are trends that indicate the impact of the Con-Dems' cuts. The TUC has pointed out that "the number of under-employed people, who are taking part-time and temporary jobs for a lack of permanent full-time work, has hit two million for the first time ever."

Workers are being hit with a double whammy of a falling number of full-time jobs and a 6% fall in real wages over the last two years. Women workers and single parents are hit with a treble whammy as public sector cuts have contributed to a situation where female unemployment has been rising fast and a lack of affordable childcare rules out many low-paid jobs. Natalie from Coventry writes about her experience of life behind the headlines.

Have you been looking for work? Hard isn't it? Time consuming and tiring; constantly trying to show all those employers you are the one for that too low paid, awful hours "perfect job". That is, where you will give your all just so you are able to get that job you desperately need!

I've recently encountered the world of returning to work after being on income support and child benefit for five years and have just discovered, as a single mum, how hard it really is and how sometimes it doesn't seem worth all the stress.

After months of applying for jobs, filling in application forms, writing cover letters and sending CVs I have finally got a job!

Well done I hear you say, all that effort has paid off - or has it?

I finally got a job I wanted for four months - Home Help - to look after and care for the elderly in the way they need and deserve.

But it is a 'zero hours' contract meaning the working hours are not fixed from one week to another. But as it's what I have wanted to do for so long - to give something back to the community - I accepted the job straight away, unknown to me the stresses that lay ahead.

I have a five year old son who has time off for school holidays. As I will be working 0-16 or more hours, the Jobcentre has told me I won't get any financial help with childcare whatsoever.

Consequently I have a job but can't take it as the system won't help me. I am upset, angry and confused. I thought the government wants to help people get off benefits and back into work, but this isn't the case if you don't fit the criteria.

How is this fair or even right? I have been told "to do what is best for me", which would be to get a job, feel helped, and not feel pressured into turning a job down; because this doesn't make any sense.

I've been advised to apply for a different job with hours that are for definite, but who's to say with all the other applicants I will stand a chance, let alone get an interview and then the job?

For this job, as a receptionist, I would need a childminder. But I don't understand why they will help me with the 16+ hours job and not help with the job where I would be doing less hours?

If I don't get the receptionist job I will be forced to return to benefits and be unemployed once again, competing with thousands of other people for the small number of jobs with those hours we all need to be able to get by on.

The system is totally backward and contradicts itself in so many ways. The government needs to stop punishing the poor and hard working. We need to be made to feel secure and praised for trying to better ourselves through the tough times.

Going back to work isn't easy; it is very hard and stressful, especially for single parents, and things need to change.

We need better working hours, and better pay is a must. Employers should be forced to pay a decent wage so we can afford the prices that keep rising, and they should take care of its employees.

Show us respect and care and the world would be a much happier place!



Female unemployment has been rising fast and a lack of affordable childcare rules out many low-paid jobs

photo Paul Mattsson

The Con-Dems point the finger of blame at those who can't find work but the figures speak for themselves. Around two thirds of local authorities have more than five claimants chasing every vacancy - going up to over 50! Meanwhile big businesses sit on huge cash piles refusing to invest in production. Socialists demand an immediate 50% levy on the £750 billion held by the major corporations in their bank vaults. This would provide enough money to invest in developing socially-useful industry, but also to massively expand much-needed public services. Investing in decent affordable childcare would both create jobs and help parents to work.

The housing crisis - action needed now

A chronic shortage of affordable housing is leading to 'social cleansing' in many areas of London. However, the failure of the government's housing policy is being challenged by a new campaign initiated by Youth Fight for Jobs (YFJ), backed by trade unionists, which lobbied the newly elected Greater London Assembly members and delivered the following letter.

Dear GLA member,
Young Londoners - Forced Out? is a campaign launched to take up the housing crisis faced by young people in London backed by the Unite Housing Workers branch and PCS London. We are campaigning in universities and workplaces across London against the unsustainable housing situation.

We are asking if you will stand up against the soaring rents and low pay that mean many young low-paid and unemployed Londoners will be forced out of the capital, and commit to supporting our ongoing campaign and backing our Five Point Programme:

- **Rents** - Cap rents at an affordable level with councils to check on it. No eviction of people that fall into arrears - for the council to step in. For council-run lettings agencies.

- **Olympics** - Stop landlords forcing people out of their homes. After the Olympics the housing built should be turned into genuinely affordable council housing and the infrastructure should be used to benefit all including the low-paid and young.

- **Pay and Jobs** - A living minimum wage for all - no lower youth rates. All housing and housing benefit cuts should be reversed. No age discrimination in benefit entitlement - young people don't have lower rent and bills so we shouldn't have lower benefits!

- **Building** - Invest in a mass programme of building high quality council housing to create jobs and alleviate the housing crisis. Reopen and renovate empty properties into affordable accommodation.

- **How we could pay for it** - Immediately stop the sell-off of council housing.

Councils should offer to bring 'Right to Buy' properties that people can no longer afford back in-house offering affordable rents. Banks must turn mortgages into affordable rents and offer cheap, no or low interest mortgages. If the banks refuse they should be fully nationalised with their resources used to meet social need.

Yours Sincerely,
Suzanne Beishon, Organiser,
Young Londoners - Forced Out?

For more information on our campaign see www.londonersforcedout.com or to get in touch contact londonfyfj@gmail.com or 07716610893

Mullivaikal 2012 - Solidarity with the Tamil people

Thousands of people gathered in Trafalgar Square for the Mullivaikal massacre commemoration on Saturday 19 May. This massacre in May 2009 marked the so-called end of the war on Tamils by the Sri Lankan armed forces, under orders from president Mahinda Rajapaksa and his regime.

It was a very emotional event; everyone present has been affected by the war and its aftermath.

The leaflet produced by Tamil Solidarity, to protest against the invitation to Rajapaksa to attend

the queen's diamond jubilee celebrations was very well received with enthusiasm especially among young people to get involved.

Martin Powell-Davies, on the executive of the National Union of Teachers, pointed out the important role that trade unions can play in informing people of the situation in Sri Lanka, and building support for the struggle of Tamil people.

Unlike the politicians under the influence of big business interests, trade unionists are the real allies of the Tamils because

their interests are like those of other working class people in Britain and internationally.

Martin got the biggest cheer of the day when he said a citizen's arrest should be made on Rajapaksa if he attends the jubilee.

Many speakers, including MPs from the main parties, strongly criticised the Sri Lankan regime, with one of the most common calls being that there should be an international investigation into war crimes.

Yet the political establishment - New Labour, Tory and Lib Dem -

have done nothing to bring the regime to account.

Manny Thain, Tamil Solidarity national secretary, questioned the politicians' claims of support for Tamil-speaking people.

Their words are fine enough, but they must be backed up by real solidarity and action on issues such as the deportation of Tamils back into the arms of the brutal regime, and the cancellation of Rajapaksa's visit to Britain.

People at the top only act when they are put under massive pressure

from below. An important part of the Tamil Solidarity campaign is to take the issues into the trade unions, universities and colleges, including the National Shop Stewards Network conference on 9 June.

The annual Mullivaikal commemoration is a way to mourn those who have died and disappeared. It is also a way to reunite and rededicate ourselves to the struggle for the rights of Tamil-speaking people including the right to self-determination.

Keerthikan, Tamil Solidarity

Con-Dems' hypocrisy over children's care

Nancy Taaffe

Walthamstow Socialist Party

Tory MP Elizabeth Truss has lamented the lack of quality, affordable childcare. She should know - her Con-Dem government have all but wiped out children's services in some parts of the country. And what's her solution? "Cut red tape" - the current Tory code for destroying workers' rights.

Instead of investing to expand much-needed services they want to increase the number of children one worker can take on.

In my London borough, Waltham Forest, where a Labour council is implementing the Tories' cuts, children and young people's services are being slashed.

From Aiming High for Disabled Children to community safety that prevents child deaths, social work to baby clinics, career services to the youth offending team, from community learning to children's centres - these are all being decimated. Who would want to grow up in Con-Dem Britain?

Recently the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) was approached to help a young mum who is witnessing the dismantling of the Chingford Hall Children's Centre on her estate.

The Labour council is cutting frontline jobs at children's centres across the borough, despite previous assurances their jobs were safe. It's not just jobs but expertise such as nutrition and speech development that will be lost.

The mum bravely stood on a chair at a mother and toddler session and



Campaigns are taking place across Britain to save children's services
photo Socialist Party

appealed to other mums to sign a petition and fight back against the loss of these treasured services in her area.

She collected 300 signatures by visiting other drop-in centres and leaving petitions at doctors' surgeries. Waltham Forest Anti-Cuts Union is helping her with an open air meeting in a local park to distribute yet more petitions and also mobilise for a borough-wide meeting on 7 June.

Chingford Hall is in the Tories' work and pensions minister (or should that be unemployment and

slashing pensions minister?) Iain Duncan Smith's constituency. So has IDS supported the campaign and called for a reversal of the cuts? Of course not!

The Tories bleat on about quality childcare while cutting and closing services in working class communities to pay the bankers' debt. Labour councils dutifully rubber stamp these cuts.

The tide is turning against austerity, not only in Greece and France but also in Britain where parents will resist the future being snatched away from our children.

Eurovision hosts are top of the charts for repression

Clare Doyle

Committee for a Workers' International

BBC's Panorama investigation - 'Eurovision's Dirty Secret' - looked at the 2012 host country Azerbaijan. It revealed the depths to which its ruling regime, based on massive oil wealth, will go in trying to crush any resistance and opposition to its dictatorial power. It should get 'nil points' for its human rights record!

Since a coup in 1992 the country has been run by the Aliyev family - first Heydar, followed by his son Ilham who, in 2009, won the presidency for life with a 90% referendum vote!

Ilham's daughters own multi-million dollar business dealing in things like telephone networks and gold-mining. Through a Panama-registered company his 15 year-old son has a major interest in a luxury hotel in Baku and a \$40 million stake in the prestigious 'Dubai Palm'.

Millions of dollars were spent on the hasty construction of a 'Crystal Hall' on the banks of the Caspian Sea for the Eurovision Song Contest final which has more viewers than any other non-sporting event in the world.



Engelbert: 'Nothing to do with me'

As undercover journalist, Paul Kenyon, showed, the slightest criticism of the regime can be punishable by years in prison. Journalists are followed, beaten up, imprisoned and sometimes killed. There are at least 70 political prisoners, although the regime denies there are any.

The 'parliament' has not one opposition MP. The Azerbaijan Popular Front party had its headquarters closed by the state. Its leader, Ali Karimli, is under 24-hour surveillance and its members are constantly harassed and persecuted.

Protests are brutally attacked. Homes are bulldozed while people

still live in them to make way for prestige building projects like those for the Eurovision festivities.

The programme challenged past and present Eurovision organisers and participants - including Sandie Shaw and Engelbert Humperdinck - about the competition's host country. They appeared to believe it had nothing to do with them!

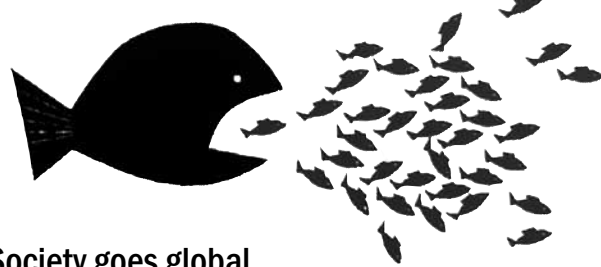
The singer for Azerbaijan's entry is Aliyev's son-in-law. His wife - an MP with a claimed 94% vote - chairs the country's Eurovision committee!

Armenia, Azerbaijan's 'long-time enemy', will not be participating in the contest this year. In 2009, Azerbaijani TV suddenly went blank during the Armenian team's entry! Kenyon interviewed an Azerbaijani who, after voting for Armenia, was taken in for interrogation.

A popular singer, Jamal, was imprisoned and tortured for insulting Aliyev. Now he has been ordered to get out of the country before the contest begins.

In its own words, the BBC's Panorama has "pulled back the curtain" on the Aliyev dictatorship. On 28 May, Panorama turns its attention to the anti-Semitism, racism and attacks on foreigners in Poland and Ukraine, hosts to the Euro 2012 football tournament.

Them...



Big Society goes global

I think I have misjudged David Cameron. When he talked about the Big Society I did not realise it stretched all the way to Greece. Whatever criticism I may have of the Big Society idea, I can't say it's not big.

Also it is widely reported that Greek governments cooked the books to obtain entry to the European Union. The people in charge must have been ministers of the Pasok or New Democracy parties, and yet David Cameron seems to be calling for Greek voters to choose these parties of liars and fiddlers.

Pete, Worcester

Deprived of life

Poverty can rob you of at least 20 years - it's official. Women in Toxteth, Liverpool - where 62% of children live in poverty - can expect to live to 74. Average life expectancy in affluent Comberton, Cambridgeshire, is 94. In Glasgow, men can expect to live to just 71.

And this is before the Con-Dems get to break up our NHS.

Putting the boot in

It's not all bad in the medical world though. Alliance Boots annual profits have increased by 10% to £693 million. So, more tax income for spending on public services? Probably not.

Boots has been based in Switzerland since a private equity takeover in 2007, paying just £60 million a year in tax. This represents part of £120 billion - a sum similar to the amount the Con-Dems want to slash from our public services - that goes unpaid in

More market solutions

Homelessness increased by 14% in 2011. House building starts fell 11% in three months.

The Con-Dems' answer? Massively expand affordable housing? Put a cap on private rents? Make nationalised banks provide affordable mortgages? Don't be silly. Cut the affordable housing budget by 60%, make social housing rents almost as high as market rates, slash housing benefits and scrap planning regulations.

Privatisation's a gas

The supporters of gas and electricity privatisation in the 80s said that competition would lead to cheap utility bills for customers - far better than public ownership and democratic control, then.

And what a result. With the average

120%

increase in average energy bills from £522 to £1,252 since 2004

household annual spend now at £1,252 - compared to £522 in 2004 - energy bills have gone up seven times faster than wages.

Now 400,000 more people in England alone are expected to be in fuel poverty by the end of the year, taking the total to 3.9 million according to the Department for Energy and Climate Change.

But don't worry, not everyone's losing out. The six biggest energy firms made annual profits of £15 billion.

10%

profits increase for Switzerland-based Alliance Boots

tax, mainly by the very rich every year. The government's solution to such tax dodging? Stop cutting tax office jobs? No. Reducing the corporation tax rate to 26%!

Boots chair Stefano Pessino thinks the UK's 'obsession' with tax is bad for business. Maybe big businesses' 'obsession' with tax avoidance is bad for the UK?

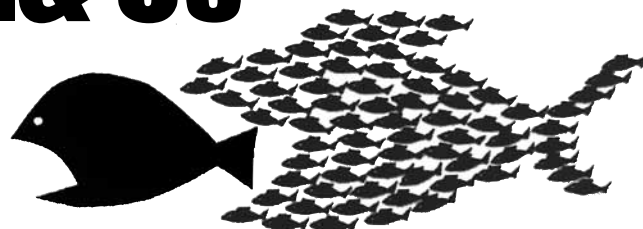
Equality in poverty

The government wants public and private sector workers to unite - in getting their pay cut.

From January to March 2012, workers became 2.9% worse off due to prices rising by 3.5%. Public sector workers are 3.2% poorer - even before increased pension contributions - and private sector workers 2.2%.

Maybe we should unite - for a general strike!

...& Us



What we heard

I sold 14 copies of the Socialist, with the headline 'Austerity Rejected' on the front page, by London Bridge on a Wednesday.

Most people I sold to were going to work in the city. Or, as one person stated when I asked what he does: "I'm just a city bod!"

Another 'city bod' commented: "You are in the wrong place to sell that paper mate."

I told him I'd sold ten in the last half hour to bank workers!
Martin Reynolds, Walthamstow



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Chester: Savage cuts leave workers with no choice but to strike

Anna Vickery
Chester Socialist Party

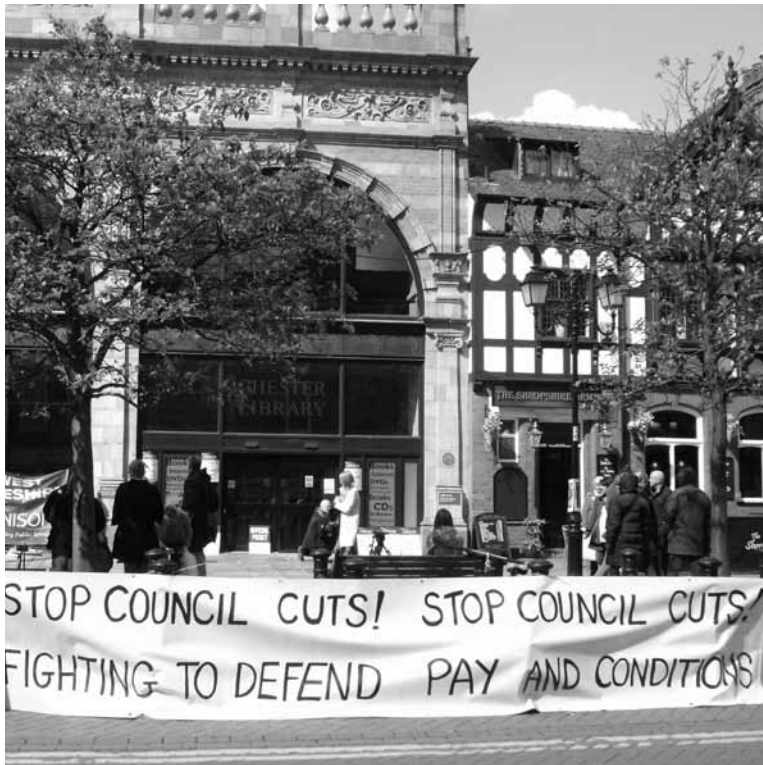
Staff from Cheshire West and Chester council were left with no choice but to take industrial action in protest over unfair changes to the terms and conditions of their contracts.

Members of Unite, Unison and GMB have described the changes as "savage cuts" and claimed that they will take "£4 million a year out of the pockets of council staff". On top of a three year pay freeze, council staff, 70% of whom earn less than £21,000 a year, have now been hit with pay cuts of up to 10%.

In order to enforce the new terms and conditions, the Tory-controlled council threatened its staff with dismissal if they failed to sign the contracts within 90 days.

Previous strikes

There was a three-hour strike on Valentine's Day as well as several rounds of strikes in early spring. For two successive Saturdays at the end of March library staff walked out and strike action successfully took place in Chester, Winsford, Northwich, Ellesmere Port and Neston.



Picketing at the main library in Chester photo Anna Vickery

Socialist Party members and anti-cuts activists joined council trade union members in leafleting and

collecting petition signatures on the picket lines. The response from the public was extremely positive, with

many people choosing not to cross the picket line, in support of the striking library staff.

The action continued over the Easter bank holiday weekend as staff from various council departments joined the strikes. Threats of High Court action were withdrawn, though the council did deploy managers (earning between £40,000 and £50,000 a year) to attempt to break the strikes.

Reports from Northwich Library on Saturday 7 April state that two managers were deployed that day to work alongside casual staff. However, upon arriving at the library, and following a discussion with the striking staff, the casual staff refused to cross the picket line and the two managers were left to run the library on their own. Chester and other libraries across Cheshire West were also picketed on 7 April and remained closed.

In the most recent action services that were affected included residential care, parking enforcement, libraries, markets and street cleaning.

Cheshire West and Chester councillors have called a meeting at the end of May to discuss the dispute. The mood among the striking staff remains angry and defiant.

In brief

Dockers strike

Dock workers at Tilbury went on a 48-hour strike on 21 May. This is after a 24-hour strike on 7 May, the first at Tilbury since 1989. The dispute is over the employers imposition of new contracts which would result in a £2,500 per year loss in wages. They want the workers to work when ships are ready for unloading, not to set shift patterns. The main cargo they deal with is reels of paper.

Bus workers' strike ballot



London bus workers want a fair deal photo Paul Mattsson

20,000 London bus workers are being balloted for action over the bus operators' refusal to pay a bonus for extra work during the Olympic Games. Their union, Unite has carried out a survey of nearly 3,000 passengers, revealing that 88% thought that the workers should get an Olympic payment in line with other transport workers in London.

Network Rail and Virgin Rail workers will get £500, Docklands Light Railway £900, TfL overground £600 and Unite members at London Underground £850.

More workplace news

See www.socialistparty.org.uk for more on these and other industrial reports.

Airport strike

The GMB has announced that ground staff at Stansted airport are to strike on 26-28 May and from 2-6 June. The dispute is over new rosters, which will hit pay. The workers are employed by Swissport, who claim that they are making the shift changes to save jobs.

Barristers to strike?

A poll of 1,600 barristers has found that nine out of ten are prepared to strike over proposed changes to the criminal justice system.

The government is trying to cut £350 million per year from the legal aid budget, currently at £2 billion per year. A parliamentary report has found that these cuts would mean 500,000 people per year not getting legal help and 45,000 fewer instances of legal representation.

On top of this, barristers' fees for criminal work were stagnant for 15 years under Labour, then cut by 13.5%. The Con-Dems are making a further cut of 11%.

3,500 barristers will have to be consulted before any action starts. M'learned friends have joined the police and doctors in showing serious opposition to the government's austerity agenda.

United struggle needed against train bosses

Interview with RMT assistant general secretary candidate

Steve Hedley is the London regional organiser of the transport union RMT. He was one of the trade unionists on the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition list in the London Assembly elections.

He is now standing for election as assistant general secretary of the RMT and he recently spoke to Sarah Sachs-Eldridge for the Socialist.

I believe London Underground (LUL) are recruiting a lot of new staff, after making cuts last year. What's really happening?

During the job cuts last year LUL got rid of 800 people, including a load of Customer Service Assistants (CSA). But they've had to do a u-turn on this. They've already recruited 300 new staff and we hear now that they're recruiting another 600. Our trainers have told us that they've been booked up solid just to do CSA courses. They've even run out of uniforms for them.

There were stations closing because they didn't have the staff to keep them open but with the Olympics they're panicking now.

What do CSAs do?

They work on the barrier to help people when they have trouble with

their tickets etc. They help disabled customers and people with kids and anybody who needs assistance. They're also there to help to evacuate the station. They need to be there for an emergency.

This is a recognition of what RMT said at the time about the job cuts being dangerous and unnecessary.

You're now standing for election as assistant general secretary of RMT, which is a national position. How is the campaign going and what are you campaigning on?

The campaign is going well. 44 branches have nominated me. I'm standing because, even though I think the RMT is the best union out there, there's always room for improvement.

I think there should be coordinated strike ballots throughout all the companies to fight the cuts.



Steve Hedley photo Paul Mattsson

This should be alongside a media campaign highlighting the danger to passengers of unsafe trains and unsafe tracks, lack of station staff and other health and safety issues. I think we should buy advertis-

ing space in newspapers to get this message across.

You've been travelling around the country. What have you found, speaking to RMT members?

Everywhere's the same. There's issues of contract labour being brought in. Companies want to save money by not taking on full-time workers. They're trying to casualise the industry. People are getting sacked for no reason and the train companies are trying to create a climate of fear.

We just can't stand by as a union and let our grades be picked off one at a time. We have to have a ballot across all the companies to stop this.

• The ballot opens on 28 May and it goes on for about six weeks. Any RMT member wanting to help Steve's campaign should contact him on: 07545 530526

Leadership shows weakness at CWU conference

Clive Walder and Gary Clark

The Communication Workers Union (CWU) conference met this year at a time of growing attacks on both postal and telecom workers. But the union leadership did not show confidence about leading a fightback. Things started well when executive (NEC) motions to move the telecoms industrial conference from annual to biennial and to reduce branch delegation sizes were both defeated.

Unfortunately a motion which would have allowed the union to support campaigning bodies fighting for the same policies as the CWU was defeated. All opposing speakers except one were prominent Labour Party activists who peddled the spu-

rious myth that only by remaining affiliated to Labour can the union influence it and gain political representation for CWU members.

Speakers in the debate described the three main parties as 'three cheeks of the same arse', and pointed to the Left Front's rise in France and George Galloway's win in Bradford.

The NEC, again showing no vision or leadership, opposed the changes, leaving the CWU tied to New Labour and therefore voiceless beyond Labour's 'Tory-lite' policies of 'slower cuts'.

The postal conference was against a background of looming privatisation. The national leadership failed to give a clear lead on how to win back members' conditions. Members have never failed to support the

union fully but now feel let down after the 2010 dispute.

Royal Mail chief executive Moya Greene addressed the conference. This is clearly part of the leadership's move towards partnership working.

A motion from the postal executive wanted a review, to be discussed at a special forum, to see what benefits would come from getting a seat on the Royal Mail board of directors. This would leave the union in a difficult position as they would be seen as part of the management.

At the telecoms conference an emergency motion condemning the executive for not leading a real pay campaign was moved. While not carried, support for it was higher than expected.

After a presentation showed how CWU members were angry about

bullying in BT, an executive motion on performance management was carried. This was only about continuing to talk to BT – a policy that has failed the members. Once again a sizeable number of branches placed little or no faith in the executive, led by the misnamed Left Activists Network.

In general the leaderships of both industrial groups and the NEC showed themselves not up to the tasks facing them. They rely too much on the employers' promises and have too much faith in what a New Labour government can deliver.

There is a need for strengthened workplace organisation and a combative leadership with a credible political strategy worthy of the members.

We stand 100% with the Greek workers

In Britain, as in every country of Europe, millions of working people are following events in Greece with baited breath. In part this is because of fear of what the deepening economic crisis in the eurozone could mean for workers in Britain. But it is not the only reason. It is also because workers are inspired by the defiance of the Greek population.

Seventeen general strikes have shaken Greece in the course of the last two years as Greek workers have refused to accept the mass impoverishment demanded of them. And now the Greek working and middle classes have shouted their defiance in the elections – shattering the electoral base of the previous establishment parties – Pasok and New Democracy – and voting for those who opposed austerity.

Syriza (Coalition of the Radical Left) was the biggest beneficiary of the anti-austerity mood in the recent Greek general election, increasing its vote from 4.6% to 16.78%.

Since then Syriza's principled stand, refusing to join a coalition that accepted more austerity and instead demanding a left government, has led to increasing support in opinion polls – as high as 26% – mostly topping the polls. This also shows the potential for left, anti-cuts candidates to make breakthroughs outside of Greece, including the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) in Britain.

The right-wing and fascist Golden Dawn won 21 MPs in the 6 May elections but has since seen its support plummet in the polls. This gives an indication of how support for the far right can be undermined when a credible left alternative emerges. But it is also a warning of what could emerge if Syriza does not lead a battle against austerity.

Blackmail

The capitalist classes of Europe are now cranking up the pressure on the Greek working class, trying to blackmail it into voting 'the right way' at the recall general election in June.

Typically Cameron has led the charge, crudely sending "a very clear message to the people of Greece: there is a choice – you can vote to stay in the euro, with all the commitments you made, or if you vote another way you're effectively voting to leave."

Cameron is attempting to turn the general election into a referendum on the euro. He is gambling on the fact that a majority of the Greek population still want to remain in the euro, fearing the prospect of being a small, isolated and impoverished country.

It was not the Greek people that made a "commitment" to endure endless misery. This was done by the previous government parties and, as a result, the Greek population punished them at the polls.

The policies demanded by the troika of the European Union, International Monetary Fund and European Central Bank, and implemented by Greek governments, have left sections of the Greek population destitute and the vast majority in terrible poverty.

The Greek economy has shrunk by 20% in four years, a catastrophe not seen in Europe since the 1930s. Public sector wages have fallen by 40%. The church is now feeding an average of 250,000 people each day as sections of the population literally face starvation.

As the pressure of the axe-men and women mounts on the Greek people to submit, the working class of Britain, along with workers across Europe, needs to send a resounding message to the Greek people: 'We stand 100% with your rejection of austerity. We support your struggle and will step up the battle to stop cuts and defend living conditions in our own countries, as the best means of assisting your struggle. If, as is overwhelmingly likely, the capitalist classes of Europe force you out of the eurozone, you will not be isolated – the workers of Europe stand in solidarity with you.'

What better support could workers in Britain give to workers in Greece than by bringing



down the hated Con-Dem government?

It is not only in Greece but across Europe that the working class has rejected austerity on the streets and at the ballot box. The defeat of Sarkozy in France and of Merkel's party in Germany's most populous state, the huge vote against the Con-Dem's in Britain's local elections, plus the local election results in Italy; are all electoral indications of a growing tidal wave of opposition to austerity.

The battle against austerity must be linked to struggle against capitalism – a system in a profound crisis. It is not the supposed past profligacy of the peoples of Greece, Spain, Ireland or Britain that has led to the current catastrophe but the economic crisis of capitalism, and the past and current profligacy of the financiers and speculators who dominate the economy.

The eurozone has become an austerity zone, where all the problems of the capitalist crisis are intensified. The Socialist always warned that the euro, a single currency for very different economies, would not work on a capitalist basis.

When the world economy was growing it could appear a success, but in a crisis it would become a terrible trap for the working classes of Europe.

The leaders of the eurozone, headed by German capitalism, are trying to overcome the crisis by driving the working class into the dirt.

Cameron is applying the same policy in Britain. But this is exacerbating the economic

crisis and is creating a gigantic revolt. It is fear of a deepening of the economic crisis and, above all, of the revolt that is coming,

It is not the supposed past profligacy of the peoples of Greece, Spain, Ireland or Britain that has led to the current catastrophe but the economic crisis of capitalism

that is forcing the leading representatives of capitalism, including Obama, to put pressure on German capitalism to move towards some measures to stimulate the eurozone's economies.

The economic crisis is not caused by a lack of profits for big business. The capitalists have huge piles of cash. The Wall Street Journal estimates that in the US, the eurozone, the UK and Japan, some \$7.75 trillion in cash, is sitting in the vaults of big business.

Because the capitalists refuse to invest this money, we call for an immediate 50% levy on it, in order for it to be used for a massive programme of investment in public work

and job creation. However, there is no prospect of capitalist governments carrying out this kind of serious stimulus, which would create howls of outrage, and opposition, from their big business backers.

Instead, even while the capitalist politicians begin to admit that austerity isn't working, they continue to hold up Greece as a bogeyman to frighten the working class of Europe into accepting more austerity! 'Submit to cuts in public services, wages, pensions and benefits or you'll end up like the Greeks', they shriek.

The fact that the huge cuts have enormously deepened the depression in the Greek economy is conveniently ignored!

The increased support for Syriza starts to give an answer to this rubbish. Syriza does not clearly call for a break with capitalism – but it does demand a moratorium on the debt, nationalisation of the banks, and an end to austerity. The answer to Cameron and Co's threats that Greek workers will be ejected from the euro if they vote for this plan is to declare that, if that is what is necessary to defend workers' interests in Greece, then so be it.

Workers' government

A workers' government would need to respond to ejection from the euro by immediately nationalising all banks and finance institutions and major companies.

It would need to introduce capital and credit controls to prevent a flight of capital from the country. It would cancel all debt repayment to the banks and financial institutions.

An emergency economic programme to reconstruct the country would need to be drawn up democratically as part of a socialist plan. This would enable the living standards of Greek working and middle classes, including help for small businesses, to be put first, instead of the demands of the 'troika'.

A government that implemented such a programme would be the antithesis of a bogeyman for workers across Europe. It would be an enormous inspiration to workers, including here in Britain. The road would be opened to defeating austerity once and for all – and the beginning of building a democratic socialist confederation of Europe.

**See also, article on www.socialistworld.net
Greece: Euro crisis deepens
Revolution and counter-revolution
Tony Saunois (CWI) with Andros Payiatis, Xekinima (CWI Greece)**

Build action toward a 24-hour general strike

The general strike in Spain also graphically demonstrated the growing determination to defeat austerity. Here in Britain, it is an indication of the enormous anger that exists that the Trades Union Congress (TUC) has called a national demonstration against austerity on 20 October, 2012.

We need to fight to make sure that this is on the same scale as the 750,000-strong TUC demonstration on 26 March, 2011. On that occasion, however, the leadership of the TUC saw the demo as no more than a means to 'let off steam', and to encourage trade unionists to vote Labour in the local elections shortly afterwards.

As a result there was no effective struggle against the avalanche of cuts that followed, many of them introduced by Labour councils. It was only as a result of pressure from below that the TUC was forced to call the magnificent one-day public sector strike in defence of pensions on 30 November, 2011.

Tragically, the leadership of the TUC did not use this as a springboard for further action, instead calling on unions to sign up to a rotten deal on pensions. However, a number of unions defied this call, and the pensions' battle is ongoing.

We now need to campaign to make sure that the mistakes of 2011 are not repeated and the 20 October demonstration builds towards action capable of defeating the government. It should be followed by a 24-hour general strike against austerity – involving public and private sector workers – and opposing all of the cuts workers are facing, including to our pensions.

Ireland: 31 May referendum

REJECT THE EU FISCAL COMPACT TREATY

Across Europe, in the face of growing resistance at the polls and on the streets, the capitalist class is ramping up its campaign to terrify people into accepting its ongoing austerity. In Ireland a 'yes' vote in the referendum on the EU fiscal treaty is pushed by the government and the bosses. Here Michael O'Brien explains why the Socialist Party in Ireland is campaigning for a no vote.

The 'austerity' treaty referendum is the dominant issue in Ireland's news media. The treaty which involves 25 out of the 27 EU members (Britain and the Czech Republic opted out) is the latest response by the European political establishment to the sovereign debt crisis.

The background to the referendum is the growing unpopularity of the government. Opinion polls show dissatisfaction with the government has swelled to 65%. The Financial Times reports that senior government ministers have faced verbal abuse on the campaign trail. The deputy finance minister was called "a waste of space" and "just a yes man".

But as Socialist Party TD Joe Higgins explains the establishment parties are "now holding an economic and political weapon to the heads of the Irish people to coerce them into voting 'Yes' to their austerity Treaty on 31 May."

Their arguments in favour of this treaty involve a re-writing of recent economic history. Apparently, the crisis we face is at root a crisis of public spending and governments, particularly in the 'peripheral' countries but not having balanced budgets.

The reality of course is that this is a crisis of capitalism and the particular form in which it began was in the banking and property sectors where the lending practices of banks across Europe fuelled property bubbles particularly in countries such as Ireland and Spain.

However both Ireland and Spain had 'balanced budgets' before this



The fiscal treaty is inextricably linked to the government's austerity measures including the hated household tax photo Socialist Party Ireland

crisis began. That has since changed because of the scale of private banking debt that has been taken on by governments.

The other side of the crisis is the collapse of private sector investment, a strike of capital which in Ireland has seen fixed capital formation decline by 65% since the crisis began raising unemployment in Ireland to 500,000 or 14% of the active population.

Like the second Lisbon Treaty referendum in 2009 the 'Yes' side (which apart from the government principally includes the Fianna Fáil 'opposition' and the employers' organisation IBEC) is again using a combination of carrot and stick with the electorate.

Vague promises of growth, stability and jobs are promised if a yes vote is achieved. This does not wash with the public. The Socialist Party and the United Left Alliance, which the SP is part of, has pointed out that over 100,000 fewer people are at work now compared to the time of the Lisbon Treaty. The figure would be higher

but for emigration.

Figures from the Central Statistics office show that more than 3,000 Irish people are leaving the country each month, the highest number since the Famine in the mid-19th century.

The absence of convincing positive reasons is acknowledged by a host of right wing economists and some opposition right wing TDs (MPs) who instead rely on the 'stick' argument. They say that without passing this treaty Ireland will be denied access to the only source of emergency fund-

ing available to it (the European Stabilisation Mechanism) in the event of a second bailout being required - which everybody apart from the government thinks is a near certainty.

The CAHWT conference held on Saturday 19 May called for a rejection of the EU fiscal treaty. "Conference overwhelmingly endorsed motions calling for our campaign to be very active against this treaty and to make an appeal to the one million households who defied the government deadline for non-registration of the home tax to vote 'No'"

Ruth Coppinger, Socialist Party councillor in west Dublin

ing available to it (the European Stabilisation Mechanism) in the event of a second bailout being required - which everybody apart from the government thinks is a near certainty.

Therefore, we are told that Ireland and the other member states who are party to this treaty must (as required

by articles three and four of the treaty) implement savage additional cuts in the years ahead to bring our structural deficit to GDP ratio to 0.5%.

Ireland's estimated structural deficit for 2013 is 3.7% necessitating an additional €6 billion in cuts according to the Unite trade union. The corresponding total scale of additional cuts across Europe to meet these targets is estimated to be some €161 billion.

Articles five and seven empower the unelected European Commission and European Council to automatically place countries in effective administration if deficit targets are exceeded.

Taken together the treaty essentially seeks to enshrine austerity in the law and constitutions of the signatory countries and preclude for example any expansionary budgetary policy of government borrowing to fund job creating public works projects and reverse the economic decline.

As Socialist Party MEP Paul Murphy points out, this is a bankers' and bondholders' treaty. It is about putting the working people and unemployed of Europe on rations so that as much bank debt as possible is paid on the back of destroying public services, wages and working conditions.

One of the biggest ploys used by the 'yes' camp is to paint a picture that if the treaty is rejected then Ireland will be left isolated in Europe.

However, the rejection of austerity by working class voters in recent weeks in Greece, Italy, Germany and Britain, and the collapse of the Dutch government because of its inability to process €16 billion of austerity, demonstrate to working class people in Ireland that their rejection of the fiscal compact will be welcomed by tens of millions of their brothers and sisters across Europe.

The broadcasting rules during the referendum campaign have forced

the media to give 50% of time to the 'no' side which in the main is the Socialist Party/United Left Alliance and Sinn Féin.

Our representatives, unlike Sinn Féin, have dealt with the question of Ireland's borrowing requirements and funding needs in 2013 and beyond by calling for a cancellation of debt servicing, implementing wealth taxes and by raising the slogan of a socialist Europe as the only means of overcoming this crisis of capitalism.

The latest opinion poll claims the 'yes' side is on 37%, 'no' 24% and 'don't know' 37%. This is remarkable given the scale of scaremongering by the 'yes' side and the fact that they outspend the 'no' side by a factor of tens.

The FT accompanied Socialist Party MEP Paul Murphy as he campaigned in Dublin city centre and reported that "it is clear that working class voters are more likely to vote No than the middle classes".

Regardless of the outcome, the experience of the household tax shows that it is one thing to pass a law or effect a constitutional change on the basis of lies, fear and deception but it is another thing entirely to actually implement the cuts. We can look forward to stiff, active and sustained resistance to austerity in Ireland and across the continent in the months and years ahead.

See the Socialist Party (Ireland) website www.austeritytreaty.ie for detailed arguments against the fiscal compact treaty

The Socialist Party Ireland is the counterpart of the Socialist Party in England and Wales and is part of the socialist international organisation - the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI) - to which the Socialist Party is affiliated. www.socialistworld.net

Household tax: Building mass opposition to the Fine Gael/Labour government's austerity attacks

In July last year the Fine Gael/Labour governing coalition in the Republic of Ireland announced (as part of its agreement with the European Union/European Central Bank/International Monetary Fund 'troika'), that a new tier of local taxation would be introduced. It would begin with a €100 household tax, followed in 2013 by a fully-fledged property tax and in 2014 by an additional water tax - amounting to an overall annual charge of nearly €1,000 a household.

Since the Household Tax registration and payment deadline set by the Irish government passed on 31 March the Fine Gael/Labour administration has gone so quiet on the issue that campaign activists themselves, let alone the wider public could be forgiven for forgetting what has been achieved by the Campaign Against the Household and Water Taxes (CAHWT).

Applying the lessons and methods of previous non-payment campaigns such as the successful anti-water charges struggle of the mid-1990s in Dublin and the historic anti-Poll Tax campaign in Britain previous to that, a scale of non-payment and non-registration of some 50% of households has been built and maintained.

The amateur historians of the working class movement have already compared this scale of mass civil disobedience with the campaign of non-payment of Land Annuities to the British landlords in the 1930s and even the seminal struggle of Michael Davitt's Land League of the late 19th Century, the movement that gave birth to the very word 'boycott'.

Perhaps these comparisons are a little premature as big tests for the campaign lie ahead but already over the few months since this unjust tax was introduced meetings of unprecedented size in living memory have taken place in nearly every suburb, town and village on this issue.

Socialist Party members and others on the left have been in huge demand to address people around the country.

It is estimated that around 30,000 people attended meetings; several thousand have stepped forward to organise the campaign in their community, a very extensive network for a country of 4.5 million people. The scale of the campaign is all the more impressive in the eyes of people because of what preceded it in the four years since the crisis began in Ireland.

A common refrain by many Irish workers and unemployed over that time was 'the Irish are not like the Greeks or French' or whoever happened to be striking or demonstrating on our television screens at that particular moment. This was a narrative the media pundits were all too happy to promote.

It was modified to a degree by what they described as a 'riot at the ballot box' in February last year when Fian-na Fáil, after 14 years in government, suffered decimation on a scale similar to Pasok and New Democracy in Greece recently.

However in terms of active and sustained opposition to the austerity agenda the struggle had not risen above isolated local campaigns opposing specific cuts or the occasional large mobilisations by the Irish Congress of Trade Unions.

These demonstrations turned out to be exercises in 'letting off steam' by the union leaderships and therefore, by themselves, failed to stem the savaging of wages thereby fuelling a further demoralisation of workers.

For these reasons the government's announcement of the household tax and other taxes, was greeted by the media as a fait accompli.

From the point of view of the Socialist Party and most of the other forces who initiated the CAHWT in the months leading up to the intro-

Off message

Since 2008 we have been told that by accepting each round of cuts and impositions at budget time the conditions for economic growth were being prepared.

This is still the message from the government and it is wearing thin particularly given that Ireland is in its sixth consecutive year of economic decline as a result of the banking and construction collapse and the austerity policy response since then.

The government's relative quietness on the issue since the 31 March deadline passed can be attributed entirely to their desire to get the Fiscal Compact referendum passed on 31 May.

They are fearful of antagonising people at this immediate juncture by following up on their threat of court

action and fines for the hundreds of thousands who have not paid their household tax.

However CAHWT is under no illusions that, notwithstanding the government's current posture, we have to prepare for big battles post-referendum whatever the outcome, though the government will be more assertive if it achieves a yes vote.

CAHWT had a national conference recently. Scores of motions came in from suburban, city, town and village based campaigns from Wexford to Donegal. The battles in the months ahead will likely be the main focus.

Specifically, preparations will have to be made to respond to the intimidation from the local authorities who have indicated that they will initially try to shake out more money by issuing intimidating letters before resorting to court actions, where fines of between €1,000 and €2,500 have been provided for by the legislation.

The campaign has pledged that nobody will go to court alone. The initial cases will be vigorously defended by campaign solicitors and barristers and every effort made to pick apart the legislation and find whatever loopholes can be found to frustrate the government.

Thereafter, once the key lines of argument have been established, the campaign will strive to ensure that the

best defence possible is provided for people. More important however is that each court case is accompanied by mass protests.

The government hopes that the court cases will panic hundreds of thousands into payment. The intention of the campaign is to demonstrate that the courts cannot break non-payment.

A second front in the struggle will open up in the housing estates in the autumn as a mass programme of water meter installation begins to lay the basis for a water tax. This too will have to be resisted.

The government by the end of the year will also have to publish legislation detailing their valuation methodology for the full property tax which will replace the household tax which is an interim measure.

The contention of the campaign is that the combination of property and water taxes would by 2014 approach €1,000 a year for an average household. We have been able to cite recommendations by government economic advisors to back this up.

However the government by showing its hand on this issue will, alongside water meter installation and the dragging of ordinary workers, pensioners and unemployed people to court, set the scene for a massive escalation in the struggle.



Most working class people reject the EU 'austerity' treaty

More attacks on right to campaign

Salford Socialist Party members

We tried a campaign stall at a recently redeveloped Salford shopping centre. We were putting forward ideas to fight the destruction of the NHS and made a great start. A nurse gave £2.50 for a copy of the Socialist and quite a few others donated and bought the paper.

Then the security staff arrived: ‘Private property, bla, bla, bla etc’. So we moved forward beyond the bollards, and carried on. Then another security guard said we were still on company property - though it looked like the pavement to us! We refused to move this time. A third guard came and after a wrangle they said they would call the police.

We told them to go ahead and to stop harassing us, we’d see what the police said when they arrived.

One police officer came eventually and he went to see the security staff, for what seemed like a long time. We were thinking about packing up anyway but weren’t doing a runner just because he’d come, or let them think they’d won.



Campaigning in defence of the NHS photo the Socialist

So we carried on - cars hooting support, more signatures, more donations. When the officer returned he said he’d told security that we were on the pavement and weren’t causing an obstruction. They’d asked him to make us move to the other side of the street but he wasn’t

going to do that. How long were we planning to continue? “Another ten minutes after you’ve gone.”

“That’s fine, then, if you want to do a stall just ring us on the non-emergency number and let us know where you’ll be and for how long and then if they get onto us we can

say we know about it.” Result!

As he was leaving we said that we were opposed to job cuts and that we’d sold quite a few papers at the recent police protest in London.

He grinned and said it had given him great pleasure to see Tory home secretary Theresa May on TV squirming in front of the placards about 20% cuts.

He said that he was the only officer available on a Saturday morning from his station for an area the size of six wards; five years ago there would have been eight.

After he left one Socialist Party member made the point that there were more security staff in that one shopping centre than police officers for the whole of the surrounding area! The owners of private property look after their stuff, the public don’t count.

This is another instance that shows the need for trade unionists and anti-cuts activists to organise in defence of the right to campaign.

Socialist Party news

NHS anger

Sales of the Socialist outside the Bristol Royal Infirmary substantially increased to 33 last week. Our petitions were filled by health workers, patients and building site workers.

Discussions showed increased anger about all of the cuts, and disgust at the moves by Richard Branson’s Virgin to take money from frontline services for his shareholders.

In the last month, local campaigns have included a Bristol & District Anti-Cuts Alliance May Day march and rally for the NHS, and a march by Unite Health on the 10 May pension strike. With Greek people voting against austerity, the debate has moved from ‘is there an alternative’ to ‘what is the alternative’.

Mike Luff

Eastern day school

A mixture of long standing and newer members from the Eastern region of the Socialist Party got together in Cambridge on 29 May for the third regional day school of the year.

The morning’s discussion centred around Marxist philosophy, and in the afternoon we moved on to how to effectively build local branches of the Socialist Party.

We came away enthused with ideas on how to grow the many new branches across the region and consolidate the recent rise in support. It was a great opportunity to share experiences with both new and experienced members and gain confidence on how to build locally.

Oliver Fournier

Caring about working people

While doing our usual Saturday stall in Bedminster in Bristol a guy came up to us and asked if we were going to stand in the next elections because he wanted to vote for us. The sight of Tory leader David Cameron and Labour’s Ed Miliband joking around had convinced him all the main parties were the same and all worthy of his contempt. “It’s time to give you a chance,” he said, “you’re different, you’re honest and you actually care about working people.”

Tom Baldwin

Price of the Socialist

The Socialist cover price has now changed to £1 due to increased distribution and production costs. Subscription prices have also increased, details shown in the from below. Direct Debit subscribers will soon be contacted about this change

The Socialist gets no big business advertising revenue and relies on its readers and supporters for financial backing.

If this is the first time you’ve read the paper and you like what you read, why not subscribe so you can read it every week?

Building the electoral alternative in Brent

John Boyle

Just over a month ago I was thinking about how to campaign for the anti-cuts electoral alternative, the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC). I decided to put my energy into making something happen in my borough, Brent, rather than travelling to where more was already happening.

Once I realised that one of the London TUSC list candidates and member of Fire Brigades Union (FBU) lived in my borough I knew where to start so arranged to meet and planned from there.

With support from Socialist Party members from neighbouring boroughs we quickly put together a TUSC organising meeting with local trade unionists and other left activists.

A plan of activity was drawn up and we gathered people as we organised a TUSC public meeting. 16 people turned up to hear our alternative to austerity, including six new activists who had gathered around the campaign. One sixth form student spoke about his excitement at hearing what was said and the “pins” he was feeling as he spoke. The meeting raised over £100 for the campaign, including £40 from the FBU.

At the election TUSC got 878 votes in Brent. I know for certain that the small impact we made was significant as many people we came across while campaigning did not know of TUSC but after discussion went out to vote for us. The best however may still be to come.



FBU members protesting against cuts photo the Socialist

Socialist Party takes off in Brent

After the elections we organised a Socialist Party meeting to discuss recent elections throughout Europe. 12 people attended, six were new to the party, and we had a lively discussion about recent developments in France, Greece, building TUSC and the case for socialism.

One person agreed to join and another is thinking hard about joining while being understandably scepti-

cal of “joining a party”. All agreed to attend further meetings to build a left alternative to Labour in Brent.

The contact list is growing and we have the seeds of a new Socialist Party branch in Brent which could radically change the local political scene which has seen a Labour council - yes, a Labour council - closing down six libraries and cutting many other public services.

Stockland Green march for jobs

Stockland Green Against the Cuts (SGAC) organised a successful protest and march for youth jobs in Erdington, Birmingham, on 19 May.

Around 20 people assembled for a noisy demo, then marched down the busy high street before returning to the campaign stalls for a rally.

The protest, supported by the Socialist Party and Youth Fight for Jobs, demanded the reintroduction of EMA, an end to workfare and for the creation of decent jobs for young people.

The march passed some notorious workfare youth-exploiters including Greggs and Holland and Barrett. It also passed Erdington Jobcentre and local Labour MP Jack Dromey’s office. Labour has won control of the city council, but as Liverpool, Manchester and other towns have shown, that party is more than willing to do the Con-Dems’ dirty work and slash vital services.

Alongside trade union action well organised anti-cuts campaigns, which are rooted in the community, are key to defending working class people and our communities from cuts to services and jobs.

Ted Woodley



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SOCIALIST PARTY FIGHTING FUND

	£ target	£ received	April-June 2012				Deadline 29 June			
South West	1,400	1,279								
North West	1,200	918								
Yorkshire	2,900	2,017								
East Midlands	1,550	806								
Southern	1,200	595								
Northern	600	273								
Wales	2,300	1,005								
South East	750	318								
Eastern	1,200	486								
West Midlands	2,100	751								
London	6,100	1,630								
England & Wales	3,700	1,818								
TOTAL	25,000	11,895								

Our education under attack

'They refuse to help kids who need extra support'

Angry parents of children with special educational needs (SEN) met in New Cross, south London recently to start forming a campaign group. They all considered that their children's SEN difficulties were not being recognised or supported. Many were furious at schools and local education authorities (LEAs) for refusing to give their children 'statements of special needs'. Parents see this as part of wider education cuts. As the meeting coordinator Nicky said, they had all been fighting their own little wars but now need a united movement. Parents felt they needed a stronger voice in schools and LEAs as staff seemed under pressure to refuse or delay statements to children. Nicky spoke to the Socialist.

"I have two children with special needs; including profound hearing loss, severe attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and dyslexia. It takes such persistence to get something that should be an automatic right. To get my child the statement he needs, I had to get a private report done. This is disgusting in what's supposed to be a free education system. Can parents afford that?"

The kids need this support. The 'playing field' is not flat at the best of times but for a kid with any kind of special need, it's slanted beyond belief. Parents are being misled about what's happening, on how their kids are performing at school and what

could be done to help that child. And it's being led from central government who are cutting funding to LEAs.

By the time you get any help, you've turned into a rabid animal with saliva dripping down your chin! I applied for my son's statement in May last year and got a proposal for a statement this May that has no information in it.

LEAs are completely underfunded. But why aren't they, and the politicians who run them, screaming at central government about this and demanding funding? It's the drip-down effect and everyone's playing the same game, refusing to help kids who need extra support.

The LEAs are making the children pay for an underfunded system. If a child needs help, it is needed now not 12 months down the line when there are a whole lot of different problems happening.

Our group of parents are fed up with the whole system and won't stop fighting to put pressure on the schools and on the LEAs. We're not asking for our kids to have anything above what they should be having as their legal entitlement.

It's the child that's paying that price and you only really get one stab at education. If you don't get that right, that kid could end up as a lost cause ten years on. We mean to keep fighting for our kids."

Lincolnshire academies in crisis

Schools should be put back under community control

Academies are a major plank of the Con-Dems' education policy. They are outside local authority democracy and promised increased funding, at the expense of the remaining local authority schools. They don't have to follow the national curriculum nor teachers' national pay and working conditions agreements.

Lincolnshire Socialist Party member Nick Parker writes.

An academy chain that teaches over 5,000 children across Lincolnshire was thrown into crisis after the resignation of its chief executive Richard Gilliland.

Gilliland, who was paid over £200,000 a year, resigned amid allegations of corruption emerging from a government investigation into the academy chain's finances, and the report's subsequent cover-up. The content of the report, which has since been made public, is nothing short of explosive.

Gilliland ordered the purchase and development of a French chateau which was used for family holidays. School credit cards were used for the purchase of sex games and supplements, as well as iPads, a dishwasher and washing machine, horse riding lessons for his son, and much more!

The Priory Federation of Academies Trust, which runs several primary and secondary schools in the county, was set up in 2007 in the face of opposition from teaching unions and Lincolnshire Socialist Party. Alan Watkins-Groves, then assistant divisional secretary of Lincolnshire NUT, was criticised for opposing academies. He has since been completely vindicated.

At the time, Socialist Party mem-

bers supported him and warned that the New Labour-backed academy project undermined democratic accountability.

'Bury it'

The Tory MP for Lincoln, Karl McCartney, said the report should be buried after he read it.

While Labour's Lucy Rigby argued for the report to be made publicly available, in a question and answer session at the 2011 TUC congress, Labour leader Ed Miliband confirmed his support for academies. Academies were first set-up under Tony Blair's Labour government, paving the way for the current government's massive expansion of the scheme.

Instead of academies, the Socialist Party demands increased investment in comprehensive, local authority education.

Lincolnshire Socialist Party members call on the teaching unions, school students and everyone opposed to the sort of corruption that has emerged here to unite against academies.

We seek to bring a mass campaign to bring our schools back under local authority jurisdiction, with democratic control including by elected representatives of unions, students,

Striking against academies

Teachers at Downhills school in Haringey, north London, took their first day of strike action against the school becoming an academy on Tuesday 22 May.

As we go to press, NUT members at Kingsthorpe College, Northampton, are due to strike on Wednesday 23 May against the proposal to transfer their employment to the Collaborative Academies Trust, the 'non-profit' arm of Edison Learning.

NASUWT and NUT members in 15 primary schools in Birmingham, all threatened with being forced to become academies, are also being balloted for industrial action.

Read more at electmartin1.blogspot.co.uk

parents and the local community. The rotten core of the academy system has been laid bare for all to see.



A 'fat cat' supports the Downhills strike against the north London school becoming an academy photo Martin Powell-Davies

Don't want to teach at 68? Make your voice heard!

Local Associations for National Action Conference

Saturday 16 June, 11am - 3.30pm

The Quaker Meeting House, 22 School Lane, Liverpool L1 3BT

This event is our chance to plan how we are going to make sure teacher unions maintain the momentum of the pensions campaign - and escalate and extend our action to cover other issues too.

Conference delegates need to be elected by their Local Association - but visitors will be welcome too.

Contact: classroom.teacher@yahoo.co.uk

Youth Fight for Jobs Northern Ireland launched in Belfast

Neil Moore

Almost one in five 18-24 years olds in Northern Ireland are not in education, training nor employment. However, the launch of Youth Fight for Jobs Northern Ireland (YFJNI) on Saturday 12 May brought together trade unionists and young people from both sides of the sectarian

divide, to fight for jobs, homes and free education.

The gig and rally in Belfast featured live music from local acts such as Desperate Breakfast and Belfast hip-hop group Mindesigns.

'Steps to workfare'

Tiarnán Millar, from the youth committee of NIPSA, Northern Ireland's

biggest trade union, said how his mother worked in a local department store for 14 years. She was given one week's notice to be replaced by three young people forced to work for their dole on the 'Steps to Work' scheme.

Ian Pattison, an organiser for YFJ in England and Wales said how the trebling of university fees and scrapping of EMA in England has

cut off many working class young people from further and higher education.

Mental health

Ann Orr, a young call centre worker and CWU trade union member stated how the economic crisis was affecting young workers' mental health, especially those who have

no choice but to go on temporary contracts under terrible conditions in call centres. This has seen a skyrocketing rate of severe depression with some young workers taking their own lives.

We shouldn't have to pay for a crisis caused by mega-rich bankers and speculators.

See more at: www.youthfightforjobs.com

the Socialist postbag

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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.

More on Liverpool mayor

A ward by ward breakdown of Liverpool's mayoral results in 2012 by social scientist Stuart Wilks-Heeg provides encouraging news to supporters of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC). It shows that in Liverpool, the Greens and Liberals are essentially a 'one ward pony'. In some wards the Liberals poll as low as 0.5% and the Greens 2% (in 14 of 30 wards!).

Tony Mulhearn's vote was fairly evenly spread across the city - between 8.6% and 2% (only in one ward!). If there was a vote for 'mayor of North Liverpool' Tony Mulhearn would be the official opposition. Our four-week campaign focused on the city centre and in a few working class areas. Our vote reflects this work.

Although second preference votes have not been counted, those at the count reported seeing many Labour and Green first preferences with an X next to Tony Mulhearn - TUSC.

Wilks-Heeg says: "The pattern of support for Mulhearn in the mayoral election is quite remarkable...Given the absence of any other credible alternative, it is at least worth considering whether the main electoral challenge to Labour in Liverpool over the next decade could come from the left, perhaps in the form of a red-green alliance."

Alec Price

Respect for principle?

The article in last week's Socialist, 'Why I joined the Socialist Party' by Ravi Patel was very interesting. An approved Tory Party council candidate in 2001, Ravi's personal experiences, combined with events like the 2008 financial crisis, led him to see through pro-capitalist propaganda and understand the ideological case for socialism. He is welcome as a Socialist Party member.

What a contrast though to a recent item on the Respect party website headed 'Leading Tory joins Respect in Bradford'. This reported that Qurban Malik, described as "an active Conservative for many years", former deputy chairman of the Bradford Conservative Party, and the Tory candidate "in Manningham ward in the recent local elections" - yes, in May 2012, standing against Respect! - was "the latest recruit to Respect".

Had he undergone an ideological conversion? No. "Respect", said Mr Malik, "has shown it has huge support in Bradford from an electorate desperate for change and a positive vision for Bradford's future".

A 'vision' which, presumably until now, he was unaware was not being offered by the Tories. Wasn't it Marx (Groucho) who said, 'these are my principles. If you don't like them I have others'?

This may be unfair on Qurban Malik. But the Respect statement says nothing else about him. Yet the real tragedy is that Respect has been here before. Most of the 12 councillors it won in Tower Hamlets in 2006 eventually left to join Labour - although one went to the Tories!

Without roots in working class organisations, especially the unions, or a clear socialist ideological basis to the party, what is to stop Respect's Bradford breakthrough ending up as farce?

Howard Clarke, East London

Escaping the 'haircut'

Capitalist politicians are demanding that the Greek people keep suffering the draconian austerity measures imposed on them - and insist there is no reneging on the bailout treaty signed by the discredited New Democracy and

Pasok parties.

But not everyone in the world of high finance is prepared to take a 'haircut' on Greece's debt. Vulture fund tycoon Kenneth Dart is reported to hold a large slice of the 5% of privately-owned debt not subject to renegotiation under the terms of the bailout deal. Consequently, the offshore billionaire scooped 90% of the €436 million paid out to bondholders by the Greek government last week. A tidy sum which could have been used to shore up Greece's collapsing public services.

Simon Carter

Arab spring, Bahrain winter

Even before her diamond jubilee gig, the Queen invited reigning kings and queens from across the world to a birthday lunch at Windsor Castle and dinner at Buck House on 18 May. That's a lot of monarchs!

The crowned head that might have been lying the most uneasily was that of the King of Bahrain. This feudal survivor of the Arab Spring plunged his small Gulf state into a Bahrain winter of bloodshed and mass imprisonment, helped by the British government.

Britain sold £13.3 million worth more arms to Bahrain in post-Arab Spring 2011 than in 2010 - that's 51% more. As the King directly controls Bahrain's police, army and security services, this will have been used mostly for shooting pro-democracy protesters.

In 2011, the Foreign Office banned the shipment of British riot shields to Bahrain, saying it could be used for "internal repression". But they didn't stop British firms sending "small arms ammunition", gun silencers and parts for pistols and sniper rifles to this feudal dictatorship - surely intended for internal repression? But it did mean extra profits for the Merchants of Death.

Keith Whitehead

Fight education cuts

Warwick Business School near Coventry plans to axe 36 out of 63 posts in support services on its Masters courses, just as its fees increased to £20,000 (double what they were recently). Similar job cuts loom in other departments. As well as making workers redundant in a recession this will add to existing staff's workloads and reduce the quality of support for students.

The University and College Union (UCU) rightly accused Warwick of profiteering. Socialists have always said that the introduction of fees alongside cuts and privatisation in education leads to a 'race to the bottom'.

We need a united movement of workers and students to oppose compulsory redundancies. Socialist Party members will be supporting a 'yes' vote to mandate UCU to take action.

Will Smith

Driven Cameron

In answering press allegations of being 'too chillaxed', David Cameron claims he's 'driven like Thatcher' as he looks to make 'radical' employment reforms so bosses can hire and fire as they like. Hopefully he's missed a word out, and instead will be driven out like Thatcher. Maggie resigned as prime minister after her flagship poll tax was scrapped due to organised mass non-payment, led by Militant, forerunner of the Socialist Party. Now we need a general strike against austerity to axe Cameron and his Con-Dem government.

Jeff Allen

AEI Cables

"Thrown out in disgraceful circumstances"

A worker and trade unionist who was sacked at AEI Cables in Birtley, Tyne and Wear in 2011 sent us this report on what happened last year. He writes as part of the committee of 'Shafted by AEI'. Reports on the appalling sackings were printed in the Socialist at the time.



The 'Shafted by AEI' workers brought their banner to the Jarrow march against unemployment photo Paul Mattsson

I am ashamed to admit that I have never been particularly politically active; having been in steady employment for over three decades. I believed that voting Labour every four years was all I needed to do.

However, after being thrown out of work, along with more than 100 colleagues in the most disgraceful circumstances, I feel the need to stand up and be counted. Having come across your paper at the Newcastle May Day rally, I thought you may be interested in our story.

AEI Cables Ltd is an electric cable manufacturer, one of Birtley's major employers. It was established in 1929 and was taken over by Paramount Communications Ltd of India in 2007.

On 26 May 2011, AEI Cables Ltd informed the workforce of their intention to make around 100 redundancies, to claim insolvency and to apply for a Company Voluntary Arrangement (CVA). Next day without consultation or notice 126 employees, most with well over 30 years' service, were informed, either in person or by letter, that their contract had been terminated by AEI with immediate effect.

The first two employees to go were the GMB union local branch chair and the union branch secretary. The management later congratulated

themselves on TV news for having saved the remaining 189 jobs.

In the eight months before this announcement, these union representatives repeatedly asked why temporary workers employed by AEI were being trained on key jobs while full-time employees were doing menial tasks such as sweeping up. No answer was forthcoming.

Each of the 126 workers made redundant was informed that, due to the company's insolvency, no redundancy payment would be made. Instead, redundant employees were advised to apply to the government Insolvency Service. The taxpayer has thus taken on the bill for all these redundancies as well as for the 90 days statutory notice payment these workers received. AEI Cables paid nothing.

Minimum payment

All we redundant workers got was the government-defined minimum. The enhanced redundancy agreements in place at AEI from previous pay and conditions negotiations were no longer applicable.

24 temporary employees were retained at the time of the redundancies. Employees with long service and decades of experience were chosen for redundancy before these workers.

Each person involved appealed against the redundancy and asked what selection criteria had been used. The company refused to consider any appeal, citing the CVA and the need for swift action to save the company, and claiming that the whole process had been carried out in less than 72 hours. But they said, even if correct redundancy procedure had been followed, those same employees would still have been selected.

Local MPs and union leaders have been approached since the redundancies but show reluctance to become involved, or to offer other than minimal help or guidance.

AEI Cables Ltd is still trading, and continues to take on temporary workers, performing tasks previously carried out by the redundant workers. On the local news, a temporary worker was shown being trained to run the machine previously operated by the now redundant GMB union branch chairman.

It seems any company can now terminate the contract of any employees, at any time, without notice or consultation, and without being liable for any redundancy payments - and expect the British taxpayer to fund all such payments. It seems a Company Voluntary Arrangement supersedes British employment law.

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Rochdale: far right attempts to exploit tragedy of abuse

Paul Gerrard and Mike Forster

The conviction of nine Rochdale men on 10 May for child sex offences has been seized upon by far-right groups. The racist British National Party (BNP) organised regular provocative demonstrations both at the Crown Court in Liverpool and in Heywood, a small town in Rochdale, where the offences were committed and where violence and vandalism against Asian taxi drivers has prevented many from working. Now the English Defence League (EDL) has joined in with plans for a demonstration in Rochdale in June.

BNP leader Nick Griffin is an MEP for the North West and clearly sees this as a chance to revive the flagging fortunes of the BNP, who have no councillors in Rochdale and lost their last seats in Burnley this month. His ham-fisted intervention at the trial, tweeting the verdict before it was announced, nearly caused a mistrial and is now being used by one of the defendants as the basis for an appeal.

Press hysteria

These were vile crimes committed against dozens of vulnerable girls and deserve to be punished. But the hysteria in the press about the ethnic background of the men involved has allowed the far right to fan the flames of racism, while obscuring important issues about the police, the legal and care systems.

Tory politicians have reinforced this. Tim Loughton, the Children's Minister, claims the case "raises troubling questions about the attitude of the perpetrators, all but one of whom were from Pakistani backgrounds, towards white girls". Baroness Warsi poured more fuel on the fire with her claim that "there is a small minority of Pakistani men who believe that white girls are fair game".

The outstanding fact is that 95% of sex offenders on the Greater Manchester register are white. Similarly, West Yorkshire police figures show that 47 out of 53 arrests for grooming offences in the last three years were of white people. Yet the white ethnicity of the perpetrators is never commented on.

Care system scandal

As Nazir Afzal, the recently appointed North West regional head of the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) put it: "It's not race that defines (the perpetrators). It's their attitude to women and young girls that defines them. It's about men wanting to exert their power over young women."

None of the men convicted had been born or educated in this country, and they came from regions where reactionary, feudal views about women are commonly held. Of course the vast majority of Asian men vehemently dissociate themselves from such views.

A major aspect of the scandal is how young and vulnerable girls from dysfunctional families, many of them in care or on the fringes of it, were exposed to sexual predators of whatever ethnic background. Having been horrifically abused they were abandoned by the legal and care systems.

In video footage shown in court a police officer is seen yawning loudly as a young woman breaks down in tears while recounting the abuse she suffered. Physical evidence was ig-

The trade union movement must take the initiative with a campaign opposing cuts and privatisation, and for socialist measures which promote education, youth facilities and supportive care which could undercut the far right

nored; the CPS failed to prosecute for years while the abuse and the identity of the abusers were known. The CPS has admitted that of the 17,000 reported cases of sexual offences involving children aged under 16 years only 4,000 went to trial last year.

The care system itself puts young women at risk. According to Anne-Marie Carrie of children's charity Barnardo's a recent study found that sexual exploitation was an issue of concern for almost two thirds of girls in residential care, and that half of them only became at risk of such abuse after they entered care.

One victim in this case, originally from Essex, was placed in care at age 12, and from 2008 had three placements in privately run children's homes across the UK before ending up in Rochdale. All the homes were run by the Continuum group and her 'care' cost Essex county council £250,000 per year. She was the sole resident of a home employing six staff yet she ran away 19 times in three months for periods up to two weeks.

Staff were unqualified for residential social work accord-

ing to an Ofsted report in February 2010, yet nothing had been done to improve staff training a year later. Continuum made a tidy operating profit of £2.7 million on a turnover of £29.2 million according to its recent accounts.

Racist trap

Labour is hopelessly divided over this case, with local Labour MP Stefan Danczuk falling into the racist trap by simply blaming a 'sub-culture of Asian men' for the exploitation. And of course Labour does not oppose privatisation and Labour councils have made vicious cuts to services across the board.

This case is only the tip of the iceberg. Sex abuse is endemic in a society which promotes inequality at every level. The agencies put in place to safeguard the most vulnerable stand condemned.

The Independent Police Complaints Commission has launched yet another inquiry into the Manchester Police who have retrospectively apologised and said things would be done differently now. Expect another hand-wringing whitewash.

The trade union movement in Greater Manchester and nationally must take the initiative with a campaign opposing cuts and privatisation in social care, and for socialist measures which promote education, youth facilities and supportive care with fully trained staff which could undercut the far right.

Youth Fight for Jobs demands investment in youth services, jobs and a future for all young people
photo Paul Mattsson



Profit hungry 'Big Oil' backs climate change deniers Stop big business wrecking the environment

Pete Mason

April may have been the wettest April in the UK for 250 years, March the warmest ever recorded in the US, and May so far the coldest in the UK since records began over 300 years ago.

Global temperatures are increasing rapidly. 15,000 daily warm temperature records were broken in March 2012 in the USA, an astonishing achievement. Yet top corporations are still funding climate change denial.

As the earth's atmosphere gets hotter, it draws up more moisture. And as the climate changes then extreme weather events, such as drought and floods, will increase, threatening the lives and livelihoods of millions of people particularly in the poorest countries.

Crop yields will also be adversely affected, pushing up food prices and hitting not only the world's poorest but also millions of recession-hit families in the advanced capitalist countries.

Across the UK the question will be repeated: Why are we not doing anything about this real-life disaster movie?

In the USA, whose industrial capitalist class are among the chief villains of the plot, a clue surfaced in a recent billboard campaign by the Heartland Institute, a conservative think tank. Featuring Ted Kaczynski, the infamous Unabomber and mass murderer Charles Manson,

the slogan announced: "I still believe in global warming. Do you?"

Kaczynski in fact made no reference to global warming, Manson is not known for any views on climate change. Yet, defending perhaps the most extreme public expression of climate change denial seen in the US, the Heartland Institute states: "The people who still believe in man-made global warming are mostly on the radical fringe of society. This is why the most prominent advocates of global warming aren't scientists. They are murderers, tyrants, and madmen."

None of this is true, of course. So who is behind the Heartlands Institute? In its exposé, the Climate Progress website lists AT&T and General Motors, Microsoft and many other public corporations which have donated money or provided resources to Heartland, "including Eli Lilly & Co., GlaxoSmithKline, Nucor, Pfizer, and Time Warner Cable." (6 May 2012)

These are huge corporations which have governments dangling by a thousand strings. The five biggest oil companies totalled \$33billion in profits in the first three months of this year, and the Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) received on average a 55% pay increase in 2010-2011.

ExxonMobile, a well-known funder of institutions which attempt to discredit climate change research, paid only 13% effective federal tax rate in 2011. ConocoPhillips paid 18% and Chevron 19%. Yet these companies have

persuaded the dotting US Congress to vote down a bill which would have blocked \$24 billion in tax breaks to 'Big Oil' over the coming decade. (Climate Progress, 2 May 2012)

Clearly the main obstacle to an environmentally friendly, sustainable plan of production is the profit-driven capitalist system - a system that exploits both the environment and the majority of the population in order to enrich a tiny minority at the top of society. To stop climate change we need 'system change' - a change to a democratic, socialist plan of production on an international scale.

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• All strike together to defend public sector pensions - like we did on N30!

The public sector strike on 30 November against cuts in pay, working conditions and pensions shows what can be done. Workers are prepared to fight for their rights and to defend their hard-won conditions. The government is weak, a united battle can force them to retreat.

• Defend national pay!

The government's latest plan is for regional pay in the civil service. This will mean workers in the poorest areas being forced to endure a lengthy pay freeze. If the government gets away with this, it will try to force pay cuts on all other workers.

• Stop the Con-Dem cuts!

• Defend the NHS!

• Support the Remploy workers!

The government is using spurious arguments to close what could be financially successful factories, where disabled workers can contrib-



United on 30 November - the demo in London photo Paul Mattsson

ute to society and be part of the trade union movement.

Hear how these closures are being fought and how you can get involved.

• Find out how the Sparks beat the Besna attacks!

Through a long campaign of action, ultimately getting the trade unions officially involved, the big construction companies' attacks on

pay and conditions were stopped.

There are important lessons for every trade union activist to learn from this struggle, which scored a victory in difficult circumstances.

• Workers fight back in the private sector - Unilever... Stagecoach... oil tanker drivers... MMP...

Hear speakers from these disputes and learn from their experiences

Working together makes us strong

"Communication between members of different unions is very important, particularly in view of the government's divide and rule tactics. Look at the magnificent show of workers' unity on 30 November."

With activists in different trade unions working together, the stronger we can organise and fight the austerity measures condemning people to poverty. Unity and solidarity is the only way to defeat these measures.

As a relatively new Unison shop steward, I have been supported by a more experienced Unite rep. She has shared regular updates from Unite on the pensions issue with me. In turn she has also seen the problems faced in a less militant branch!

Due to the complete blackout of information from Unison, this communication has been crucial.

It has kept Unison members informed and aware of both the government's and union leadership's lack of action and the continued activity of the members of other unions who have refused to give up the fight to defend their rights and conditions at work.

We urge everybody to think seriously about joining a union and then put the pressure on trade union leaders to do more."

Helen, Unison shop steward and Kerry, Unite shop steward

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!