

# FIGHT BACK AGAINST AUSTERITY



photo Paul Mattsson

**Linda Taaffe**  
secretary, National Shop Stewards  
Network (NSSN)

**T**he barrage of government attacks on living standards is relentless, with rich Tory boys lead the charge. Hardly a day goes by without announcements of new measures to make life even harder for some group of workers or young people. One week it is the disabled at Remploy. Next 'undeserving' families. But it is always the working class that is being made to pay for the capitalist crisis.

The Con-Dem coalition is firming up plans for regional pay in the public sector carving up the country into four different (low) pay areas. They also want to loosen the TUPE laws that currently give a modicum of protection to employees transferred out to private companies. Now 'Apprentice' style "you're fired" deregulation is being touted as the only way to enable businesses to grow! (see article on Beecroft report, page 2)

Given that this dreadful state

faces us after only around 8% of the cuts have been implemented, the big questions are: "Can workers' organisations be just as relentless in defending us from this onslaught? Is the Trades Union Congress capable of marshalling all our forces to halt the bosses' greed? What is it that trade unionists on the ground have got to do to turn the tide and stop these cuts?"

These, and other questions, will be at the forefront of the conference of the National Shop Stewards Network when hundreds of workers and young people from across the country will be gathering in London on 9 June (see advert right).

They will take stock of the battle so far. They will make plans about how trade unionists can be the driving force that can help forge a mighty roadblock and stop this millionaire Con-Dem juggernaut.

## Greek solidarity

Five years ago Greek workers experienced public spending cuts similar to those being implemented by the Con-Dem government today.

Many believed, and hoped, such cutbacks would be a temporary blip in the economic cycle. Things would get better soon, wouldn't they? Now they are on the verge of destitution.

If we in Britain put up a less than serious fight now against Cameron, Clegg and their business friends, then Greek conditions will undoubtedly be waiting for us too.

We hope to link up with Greek workers at the NSSN conference to hear first hand of their experiences, and what we can do to forge international solidarity. Also, along with leaders of some of our most militant unions, and rank and file fighters, will be Esenbek from Kazakhstan, where striking oil workers were ruthlessly attacked, and where worker and socialist activists are regularly jailed.

Trade unions are the organisations of the "99%". The NSSN was initiated by the RMT transport union to help revitalise trade unions from the bottom up.

So, if you are a young person facing a lifetime of joblessness or slave wages, come along. If you are a trade unionist wondering when

the unions are going to stand up together and be counted, come along. If you are a health worker, a teacher,

a transport worker, a postie... your place is at the NSSN conference on 9 June. All welcome.

## Come to the 9 June conference

**National Shop Stewards Network  
Sixth Annual Conference**

**Saturday 9 June, 11am-4pm,  
Friends Meeting House, Euston Road,  
London NW1 2BJ**

**Book your place now!  
[www.shopstewards.net](http://www.shopstewards.net)  
[info@shopstewards.net](mailto:info@shopstewards.net)**



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what we think

# Dismal prospects for Britain's economy

A few weeks ago the Bank of England was still insisting that the UK economy would not go into a 'double dip' recession. Then came the news that the much feared second dip has happened, with two successive quarters of falling GDP between October 2011 and March 2012.

More recently, the Office for National Statistics has increased its estimate of the decline in the first quarter of 2012, from 0.2% to 0.3%. The biggest part of this decline has been in the construction sector, as big, publicly funded projects (eg the Olympic site) have been completed.

Making matters worse, nearly all the economic indicators of what is to come are gloomy. This applies to recent figures or estimates on factory output, order books, retail sales, overall demand and much more. Household debt is still very high, suppressing consumer demand on an ongoing basis and small businesses are still unable to get enough credit. Some economists are now writing off the entire year - predicting a fall in GDP throughout 2012.

Sterling has increased in value as money flees from the euro, but the Con-Dem government has over-played blaming the eurozone for Britain's economic problems. Will Hutton pointed out in the Observer on 29 April that exports from the UK to Europe are 8.1% up on a year ago. It is exports to non-EU countries that are down. However there can be no doubt that the escalating eurozone crisis will hit Britain's economy hard, with "unquantifiable" consequences to use the words of Bank of England chiefs.

It is with this background that the head of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Christine Lagarde, arrived in London to pat chancellor George Osborne on the back for his 'deficit-cutting' austerity measures, but also to issue a dire warning about the state of the UK economy.

Despite the phenomenal £325 billion stimulus already injected into financial institutions, she argued for more of this Quantitative Easing (QE). She also called for a further reduction in interest rates, from their present low rate of 0.5% (though this certainly isn't the rate offered to mortgage holders, many of whom are suffering a sharp increase imposed by a number of banks this month).

## Government floundering

The Con-Dem coalition has no strategy to deal with this renewed onset of crisis, which is threatening its remaining credibility.

As public sector workers know well, it has pursued a rabidly anti-working class path, blatantly increasing the share of wealth that goes to the richest in society, through holding down public sector wages, increasing pension contributions, etc, while the rich have had corporation and income tax cuts.

After living through 24 years of near 3% growth during the 25 years up to 2007, it isn't an overnight process for everyone to recognise that we're now in an entirely different period - one of acute crises amidst prolonged stagnation.

However, for all those who have been toler-

ating a decline in living standards during the recession in the expectation that better times are just around the corner, the present economic prognosis will come as a painful and shocking realisation.

The vicious Con-Dems are determined to drive on with their austerity measures, despite the stifling effect on growth. However, they will feel compelled to vary the pace and depth of the cuts as the opposition movement develops, which has the potential to force the Con-Dems out altogether when enough steam is built up through protest action - especially strikes.

This week's partial reversals of the pasty tax and static caravan tax are further indications of the weakness, ineptitude and instability of the government and will give more impetus to the struggle against it.

What other government manoeuvres are coming? There could be more QE as pushed by the IMF, but this hasn't so far benefited ordinary people.

Also, Lib Dem leader Nick Clegg has hinted that the government may issue 'guarantees' to underwrite private sector investment into housing and infrastructure projects to stimulate the economy without increasing public debt.

But clearly this does place more taxpayers' money at risk of being sucked into private pockets, and in any case much of big business already has over £700 billion stashed away that could be invested if only it judged there to be profitable enough outlets.

Such measures could temporarily stimulate some specific sections of the economy,

but wouldn't be sufficient to fill the empty chasm that is the lack of demand overall - ie the lack of workers' ability to purchase the houses built, goods produced, etc.

When Business Secretary Vince Cable was interviewed by the Independent last Sunday he pleaded: "People are quite angry and obviously their living standards have fallen because of this crisis, but at the same time I don't think anybody has got any real alternatives".

However, that is precisely what the Socialist is putting forward: a real alternative. But it isn't one that the three main political parties want to see raised, because it contains demands that would seriously challenge the wealth-hoarding of their capitalist masters, together with their entire decaying system. For instance, we demand a higher income tax rate for the super-rich; a 50% levy on idle, stashed away company cash; and a real clampdown on the massive tax avoidance by the wealthy.

More feared by them still, we raise the need for a socialist government to take into public ownership the top companies and banks that dominate the British economy, so that they can be run under democratic working class control and management.

It would then be possible - when combined with other socialist measures - to rapidly reverse the increased insecurity and decline in living standards that working and middle class people are presently enduring, instead introducing a democratic socialist plan of production based on the interests of the overwhelming majority.

# Leveson Inquiry The offer the 'Godfather' couldn't refuse?

Ben Norman

This week the Leveson inquiry called the godfather of Rupert Murdoch's daughter to give testimony. In the stand sat Tony Blair, the man who occupied Downing Street for ten years, the man who ordered the occupation of Iraq, the man who embodied the shadowy relationship between media and government that the inquiry seeks to uncover.

It was a moment when the New Labour politicians who have sought to make political gains from Tory ties to Murdoch, were forced to remember their own party's unashamed courting of the media mogul.

Political pundits, always ready to reach for the easy cliché, were quick to fawn over Blair's powers of oratory. "Watch those hands," cried one on twitter, "those won three elections!"

Blair tried to dust off all of his old

media management tricks, reaching his rhetorical high point when declaring that the inquiry was a "sensible moment to protect our democratic freedoms."

Blair claimed that he had a "working relationship" with Murdoch as he tried to portray himself as a pragmatic Labour leader, forced to tone down his principles to win over a hostile media.

The irony of Blair's version of history is that in reality he led a government which relied on media spin to such a degree that Lance Price, a former No 10 Press Officer, described Rupert Murdoch as the "24th member of the Cabinet."

From the privatisation of health care to the invasion of Iraq it was a relationship that New Labour depended on.

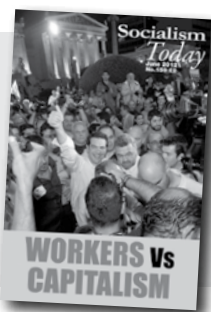
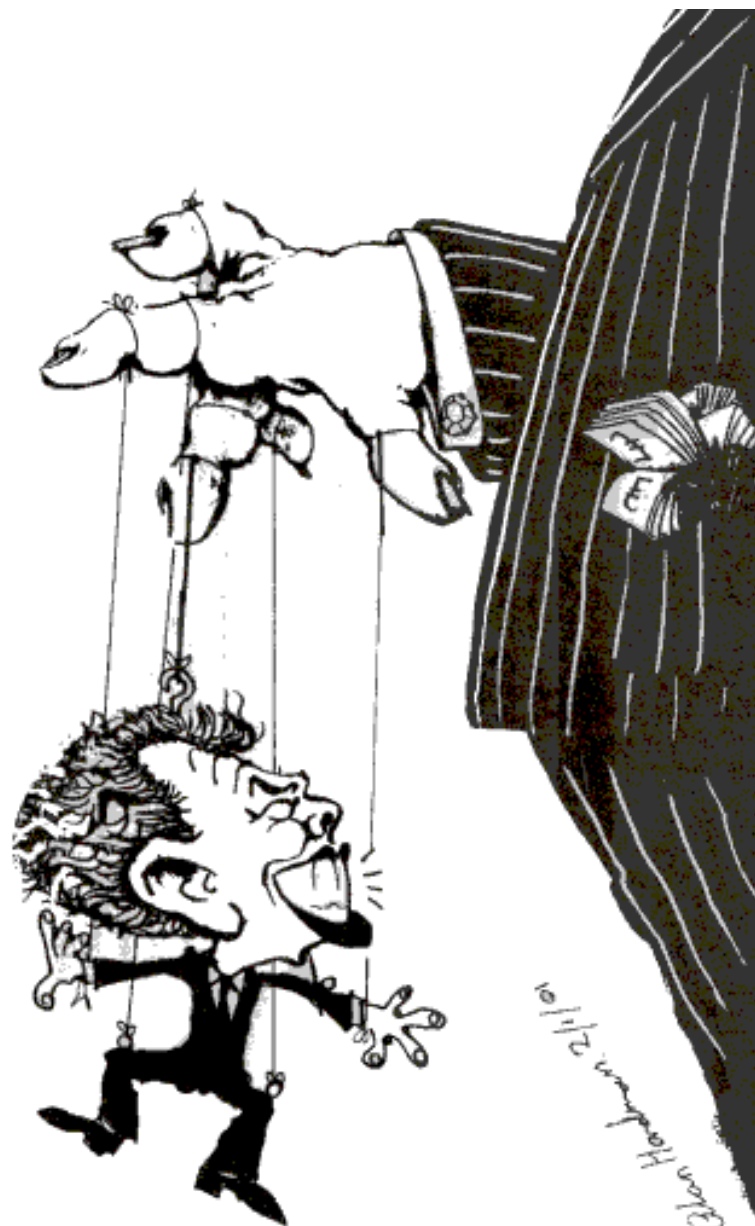
As Blair returns to be a consultant for JP Morgan, or support the brutal dictatorship in Kazakhstan or 'manage its communications' with the

publicity firm Portland, the inquiry turns its attention back to the Tories.

Culture secretary Jeremy Hunt will finally be called to explain his own relationship with the Murdoch empire. This includes the accusation that Hunt was in regular contact with News Corporation lobbyist Fred Michel while presiding over the company's failed bid to take over BSkyB.

The inquiry has already been presented with a cache of emails which reveal that Hunt's special advisor, Adam Smith, gave Michel insider information about the minister's handling of the bid. When called to give evidence last week Michel declared that he and his bosses were confident that the information given to them from Smith represented the views of the minister.

Smith has already been forced to resign, while pressure mounts on Jeremy Hunt to become the first major political casualty of the inquiry.



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# Rajapaksa visit to UK Bring this war criminal to justice

**Manny Thain**

Tamil Solidarity national secretary

Tamils are outraged that Sri Lankan president, Mahinda Rajapaksa, has been invited to the queen's diamond jubilee celebrations. His regime is responsible for a genocidal war against Tamil-speaking people in the north and east of Sri Lanka. At least 40,000 people were slaughtered in the final weeks before 'victory' was declared on 18 May 2009.

Tens of thousands were rounded up into prison camps, lacking adequate shelter, food and medical supplies, abused by the troops. The orders for these atrocities came from the very top – as numerous reports, including two Channel 4 TV documentaries, have shown.

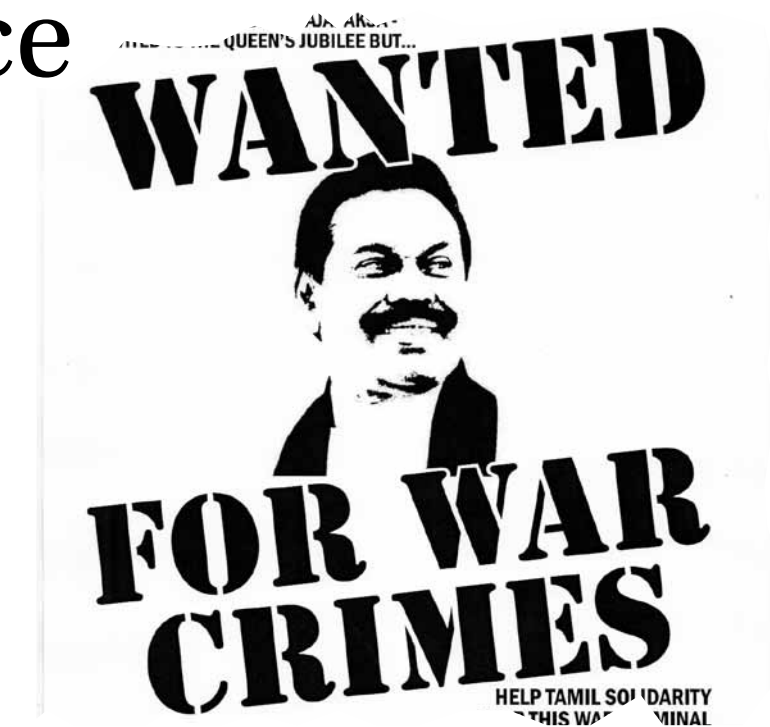
Yet Rajapaksa will wine and dine with Britain's royals and leading establishment figures. Coming only a fortnight after the emotional commemoration of the end of the war – known as Mullivaikal – it is another kick in the teeth to this long-suffering community.

A placard on the protest outside Downing Street on 26 May put it succinctly: 'Don't shake this murderer's bloody hands.' But the links between Sri Lankan rulers and British capitalism and its state run deep. Sri Lanka is due to host next year's Commonwealth summit, for example.

At the Mullivaikal event, politicians from the main parties promised support for Tamil-speaking people and demanded an international investigation into war crimes.

In practice, successive governments have backed the regime, or looked the other way when the genocide was taking place. This includes New Labour governments under Tony Blair and Gordon Brown, as well as today's Con-Dem coalition.

Not so long ago, Tory MP Liam Fox was defence secretary. His



dodgy connections with shady middlemen eventually forced him to resign. His close friendship with Rajapaksa, however, ensured that the interests of the Sri Lankan regime were reflected in Britain's foreign policy.

## Collusion

Rajapaksa is due to visit Britain for four days (3-6 June). He is booked to deliver a speech at the Mansion House, in the City of London, on 6 June, reinforcing the ties between his regime and big business.

The continual links between the military top-brass are further proof that it is business as usual between both countries. As are the ongoing deportations from Britain of Tamil-speaking people, back into the hands of the brutal regime. The next charter flight (from an undisclosed airport) is due on 31 May.

The situation throughout Sri Lanka is bleak. The massive arms expenditure has actually risen since the end of the war. Price rises, cutbacks in public services and attacks on trade union and left-wing activists affect all working-class and poor

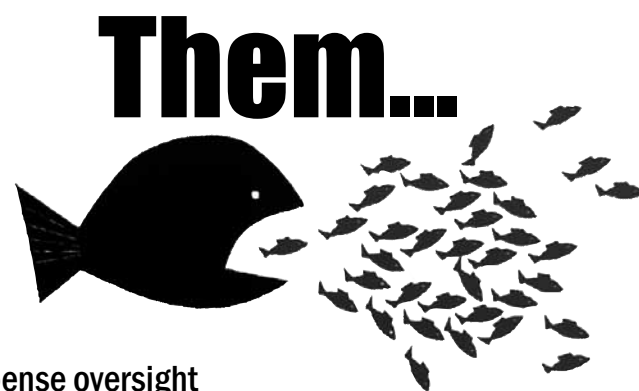
people on the island.

In the predominantly Tamil north and east, conditions are truly horrific. Land has been seized for military use. Tens of thousands of people remain unaccounted for. Workers are super-exploited in so-called free trade zones. The regime is developing Sinhala settlements to divide up the land – copying the Israeli state's carve-up of the Palestinian West Bank.

Tamil-speaking people internationally have a proud tradition of solidarity with their fellow Tamils in Sri Lanka. An important part of the struggle for self-determination is strengthening the links with the organised Sri Lankan working class. Gaining the support of the trade unions, with their huge potential power is now more vital than ever – as is increasing the participation of Tamil workers in union struggle in Britain.

Tamil Solidarity will be joining with others to protest against this visit, including outside the Mansion House on Wednesday 6 June from 9am. Join us there to give Rajapaksa the reception he really deserves.

see [www.tamilsolidarity.org](http://www.tamilsolidarity.org)



## Expense oversight

Baroness Warsi says it was all an oversight. Her Ladyship, Tory peer and vice-chair of the Conservative Party, allegedly took taxpayers' cash for expenses for hotels while sleeping at a friend's house as "her main London residence", seemingly for nothing.

Claiming money for overnight stays in London while staying at a friend's luxury pad for free was not unusual in the sleaze-filled days of Blair and Brown. But MPs and Lords of all parties now supposedly get closer investigation of expenses claims. Warsi is a Cameron-backing Tory and has spoken out in favour of his government's attacks on working class families who get housing benefit to help cope with high rents. What do you think Warsi would say if one of these families accused of irregularities called it 'an oversight'?

## Zuckered

Mark Zuckerberg, the billionaire boss of social network Facebook, is facing several lawsuits after a public sale of the company's shares nosedived, losing investors \$2.9 billion in the process.

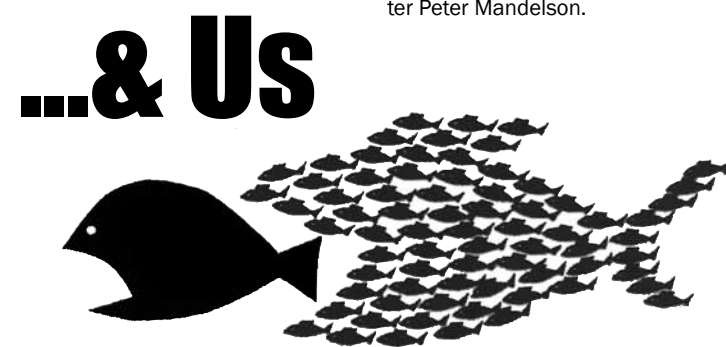
But while small investors got their fingers burned Zuckerberg, having been previously informed that the share value would decline, sold his stock early saving himself a cool \$174 million.

## Tax dodger

The people of Greece were rightly outraged when International Monetary Fund (IMF) boss Christine Lagarde accused Greek people of dodging taxes. Alexis Tsipras, the leader of left-wing party Syriza pointed out that "Greek workers pay their taxes which are unbearable" and have seen their wages shrink. Perhaps Lagarde was confusing the Greek people with the Greek capitalists – or even with herself. As IMF director she gets a salary of £298,000 - tax free.

## Wedding bell blues

Tying the knot in this age of austerity is a major expense for couples, but that didn't deter London-socialite Rasha Said, a Tory party donor and daughter of a shady arms dealer. Her multi-million pound wedding, held at the Palace of Versailles, France, and attended by plenty of bigwig Tory party supporters, was one of the most expensive private weddings ever held. The celebration included a 15-foot high cake and a live performance by Robbie Williams. Guests were instructed: "If you want to buy us a gift we are registered at Harrods". Footing the bill was Rasha's billionaire father, a friend of Margaret Thatcher and former Labour minister Peter Mandelson.



## NHS under the Con-Dem cosh

The National Health Service (NHS) is at a tipping point. Massive government cutbacks - 'efficiency savings' - have led to a haemorrhage of health workers' jobs, A&E and ward closures, and are causing major concerns over patient care.

The implementation of the discredited Health and Social Care Act in England, together with the drive to make all hospitals self-governing Foundation Trusts by 2014, will accelerate privatisation of clinical services.

Already Hinchingsbrooke Hospital in Cambridgeshire has become the first privately run NHS hospital in a £1 billion contract with Circle Health. Virgin Care has taken over health care services in Surrey.

Other private vulture companies are licking their lips in anticipation of getting their claws onto the multi-billion pound health budget.

This is hardly surprising given

that the private health industry has stuffed £8.3 million into Tory party coffers since 2001.

Potentially standing in the way of this breakup of the NHS as a publicly owned national health service are the healthworkers, organised in the trade unions, and a variety of local community health campaigns.

But to be effective the trade unions must give a lead in fighting back to reverse the privatisation measures and cuts of the Con-Dem and previous Labour governments.

A massive weekend national NHS demo would be a start in boosting the confidence and morale of healthworkers and community campaigners alike.

This could serve as a springboard to an anti-austerity 24-hour general strike called by the trade unions as a warning shot against the government's privatisation and cuts juggernaut.

## Save Heatherwood Hospital campaign yielding results

A partial victory has been won by campaigners fighting to keep Heatherwood hospital near Bracknell, Berkshire, open, writes Terry Pearce, the chair of Defend Our Community Services.

He adds: "While there are more questions than answers, by mobilising public opinion we have forced the local NHS bosses to rethink their plan to close the hospital."

"Twelve months ago it was planned to close the hospital and sell the land off. With 20,000 names on our petition and following a series of marches, meetings, lobbies, etc, we have won round one."

"The fight continues to ensure that we have a NHS hospital on the site, with no PFI, privatisation or part privatisation."

## 'Revolt' in the Tories' back yard

**Alan Docherty**

Teesside Socialist Party

Over 2,000 people turned out in Northallerton for a march and rally, on Saturday 26 May, to protest about the proposed reduction of children's and maternity services at the Friarage Hospital. Overnight paediatric care and complicated births would be transferred to the James Cook Hospital in Middlesbrough some 22 miles away.

The rally marked the culmination of many months of consultations where hundreds of people turned up to meetings in village halls to voice their concerns to the South Tees NHS Trust.

The rally was addressed by Tory MP William Hague, who was well off message. It is likely that his intervention will result in some fudge where the Friarage will retain the bulk of the services under threat. The South Tees Trust will no doubt instead make cuts in less controversial areas.

Northallerton is one of the most affluent towns in England and at the

heart of Tory North Yorkshire. The campaign to keep services at the Friarage gained wide support. However, it was tightly controlled by Tory and 'Independent' councillors who have kept it 'non political'.

## Politics

The Socialist Party was able to inject some politics into the event. Hundreds of 'Hands Off Our NHS' leaflets were distributed at the rally.

These leaflets pointed out the transfer of some maternity and children's services from the Friarage was not unique to Northallerton and that the concentration of specialist services to larger hospitals was taking place at many places across the country.

The main motive behind this is the £20 billion of 'efficiency savings' imposed on the NHS by the Tory government.

The leaflets were well received. Especially from one elderly lady who asked for a bundle to give to her friends. "Yes you are right", she said. "I told them all it was to do with money!"



Join the fightback! Join the Socialists!

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# Needed: a socialist plan for the environment

Global warming is the overriding environmental issue facing the world. 20 years have passed since the United Nations' (UN) 'Earth Summit' in Rio de Janeiro highlighted the problem. However, the output of greenhouse gases that cause climate change has continued to escalate to a critical level that threatens environmental catastrophe. As emissions have rocketed, the gap between the green rhetoric of governments in the industrialised capitalist countries and their feeble policy response has become a chasm. Pete Dickenson, author of *Planning for the Planet – How Socialism Could Save the Environment*, writes.

## Global warming: threat critical

The devastating floods in Pakistan in 2010 and Hurricane Katrina in the USA in 2005 highlighted the possibility that climate change, manifested in extreme weather events, is with us now. This shattered any remaining complacency that it is a problem just for future generations. Meteorologist and former hurricane hunter Dr Jeff Masters argues that "it is quite possible that 2010 was the most extreme weather year globally since 1816"

Although some think these were isolated events unconnected to environmental changes, research after Katrina in particular made a strong case that the warming of the ocean was leading to more severe hurricanes. There is now sufficient evidence for climate scientists to call for extreme weather events to be considered as related to global warming until proved otherwise, rather than the other way round.

There is a wide range of predictions of possible temperature rises linked to global warming, because estimations depend on assumed sensitivity of the earth to rises in greenhouse gas concentrations. Sensitivity to greenhouse gases is not yet fully understood, but if the upper end of estimates, 13.3°C, proves to be true, it will be difficult for life to be sustained on the planet. Although this extreme outcome is statistically unlikely to happen, it is nevertheless a warning of the profound dan-

gers we face. A recent lower prediction that is much more likely, which would nevertheless still be devastating, is for a rise of 4°C by 2055 made by the UK Met Office, a leading authority in climate science.

The Stern Report into climate change, commissioned by the former New Labour government and then ignored, assuming a 2-3°C rise, also predicted more frequent droughts and floods. In addition, Stern warned of declining crop yields and fish stocks and from tens to hundreds of millions flooded out of their homes. Climate change will also increase deaths from malnutrition, heat stress and diseases such as malaria and dengue fever. In a nutshell, the effects of global warming will be devastating and borne mainly by the poor.

Apart from global warming, the other significant dangers we face are pollution linked to nuclear power generation as well as from many other sources. Deforestation and desertification threaten the environment and the lives of the poorest on the planet, both phenomena being linked to global warming, as is accelerating species extinction. The oceans and the living organisms in them are under attack from many directions. This includes fish destruction and toxic pollution from various sources, not least oil spills, highlighted by the Deepwater Horizon disaster in the Gulf of Mexico in 2010.

Declining crop yields and fish stocks, millions flooded out of their homes, increased deaths from malnutrition, heat stress and diseases such as malaria and dengue fever. The effects of global warming will be devastating and borne mainly by the poor



Capitalist solutions for global warming are on thin ice

## Non-nuclear toxic contamination

Thousands of toxic substances produced by the world's chemical industries are released every year, which threaten the earth's air, land and sea. Some discharges hit the headlines, like oil spills or the leaks of radioactivity at Fukushima. However, the volume of contaminants released in less dramatic circumstances far exceeds these high profile cases and overall more damage is probably caused. These cases include industrial discharges, sea dumping, spillages and the effects of pesticides and synthetic fertilisers.

The release of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) must also be added to the list of potentially dangerous contaminants. Genetic engineering has the possibility to transform medicine and other aspects of our lives for the better, but its main application to date has been driven by agribusiness to generate quick returns. Since the long term effects when this happens are still not clear, they should not be deployed in agriculture until there is sufficient scientific knowledge to permit their safe use.

## Degradation of the natural world

Deforestation, destruction of sea life and species depletion are examples of the accelerating degradation of the natural world. The Amazonian rainforest has shrunk by 15%, the Indonesian rainforest 72%, caused by the encroachment of agricultural land for cattle grazing and particularly for soya and palm oil production.

It has been claimed that the biggest single threat to the marine ecosystem is from over-fishing. Modern factory ships, using sonar technology to detect shoals and massive trawling equipment that can reach the sea floor, are destroying whole populations of fish. 90% of large fish such as tuna, cod and halibut have been wiped out, which is causing a shift in the ocean ecosystem to one in which small plankton eating animals predominate, such as jelly-fish. Tens if not hundreds of thousands of jobs have been lost as the Newfoundland, North Sea and Baltic Sea fisheries have largely collapsed.

The attention of the big companies has

now turned to the Pacific, the only remaining area not yet fished out, but the same fate awaits this region as befell the North Sea, if the present profit driven approach is not fundamentally changed. Unless this happens, all that will remain on the menu before long may be jelly-fish and chips!

Deforestation and fisheries depletion are part of a wider picture of habitat destruction that is driving the reduction in biodiversity. 20,000 species a year are being lost according to Douglas Crawford-Browne, director of the Cambridge Centre for Climate Change Mitigation. He and most environmentalists blame this situation on 'human action', but in fact it is a very particular form of 'human action' that is in the dock: the pursuit of profit in a capitalist market economy.

The vast majority of the problems discussed here can be traced back to the detrimental activities of big business, particularly multinational corporations and their agents.

## How green will the capitalists go?

Like many previous summits, the 2011 UN sponsored climate change conference in Durban, South Africa, abjectly failed to reach an agreement to tackle global warming. The conference ended with just a hope that a new and as yet unspecified agreement to replace the Kyoto climate reduction treaty, which ends in 2012, would come into operation by the earliest in 2020. That is, no new deal will be in place before then.

But 2020 is also the deadline given by climate science for cutting greenhouse gases by 40% to avert a potential catastrophe. The wording agreed to form a legally binding basis for a future treaty was so vague as to be worthless. Recent follow-up talks in Bonn ended on 25 May with more disagreements and backtracking, putting even a vague treaty in doubt.

The failures of the Durban summit and its predecessor at Copenhagen in 2009, gatherings that were meant to correct the failings of Kyoto, showed the inability of the capitalist class to tackle global warming. In advance, the UN had called the Copenhagen conference the last chance to avoid catastrophic global warming. In the event it just revealed the deeply antagonistic relations between the big powers preventing agreement on climate change.

Directly applied carbon taxes, as many Greens advocate, could have a bigger impact than a Kyoto type system on greenhouse gas reductions. However carbon taxes would hit the poorest sections of society, since the poor spend a greater proportion of their incomes on fuel. This would especially be the case if taxes were implemented on a scale intended to have a serious impact on emissions. Such regressive measures

should be opposed by socialists.

Rather than backing the market-type system discussed at Copenhagen, many activists, seeing the urgency of the situation, are now calling for direct measures to be implemented to reduce greenhouse gases. These measures could include laws to establish a ceiling in emissions by a certain date, with any breach dealt with using criminal sanctions.

However, if the world's ruling classes opposed the largely cosmetic measures proposed at Copenhagen any new approach with real teeth would meet with even more determined resistance. The evidence is now clear that despite their protestations to the contrary, governments in Britain and internationally do not intend to take any meaningful action to tackle climate change.

The financial and economic crisis that began in 2007 has made it likely that even token measures, like the Kyoto treaty, will be opposed by most states. For instance the USA, the second highest emitter of carbon dioxide behind China, categorically refused to participate in an international treaty to reduce greenhouse gases, even when it was offered a system at Copenhagen that was full of loopholes. Environmental activists should join with socialists to fight the inaction of the capitalists and their governments. Political lessons must also be drawn from the 20 years that have been wasted by the capitalists in the battle against climate change.

Sustainable economic growth on a capitalist basis is not feasible, partly because the methods employed to achieve this are inadequate and flawed, but mainly because imperialist rivalry between nation states prevents the international co-operation needed.



Global warming could be solved by developing existing technology photo B Severn

## The socialist approach

At one level, addressing global warming is simple; no technological breakthrough is required. All that is called for is the wider adoption and further development of existing technology, such as wind, wave and solar power.

The key technical elements are:

- Rapid conversion to the use of renewable energy sources, such as wind, wave and solar power
- Big expansion of public transport
- Development of the rail network so that short and medium haul air travel can be reduced and then replaced
- Conversion of the car industry to using renewable energy sources
- More research into renewable energy, such as clean coal technology, and using materials not based on oil products

But only by eliminating the power of the big corporations can this programme be realised. This means nationalising the main industries that dominate the economy. This will need to be done throughout the world, encompassing the 147 multinational corporations that recent research has shown dominate the globe.

Since the operation of competitive markets degrades the environment, rejecting the market system is essential to tackle global warming. Doing this will require an alternative approach to organising production. Rational democratic planning is not just a viable alternative, it has huge inherent advantages over the market from the point of view of saving energy. For example, it could avoid the duplication of resources,

planned obsolescence, and wide-scale destruction followed by rebuilding of factories, plant and machinery in the capitalist slump/boom cycle.

Two related factors underlie nearly all environmental threats. They are the quest for profit by big corporations and at a more fundamental level, the inevitable tendency of competitive markets to degrade the environment. The task is urgent. It must involve the political rearmament of the workers' movement in Britain and internationally with a socialist programme.

As a first step, this will require the creation of new mass workers' parties to replace the discredited former workers' organisations. These parties, such as the Labour Party in Britain, have totally failed over decades to implement programmes to reverse the degradation of the planet.

By taking no meaningful action for the past 20 years, the representatives of the capitalist market system have created a situation where some of the effects of global warming are irreversible. Regardless of future events, this is a historical indictment, in its consequences possibly ranking alongside capitalism's greatest crimes, such as the imperialist wars of the 20th century.

To avoid the worst effects of climate change, decisive action needs to be taken now, but there is no sign of this happening due to the rivalries between the main industrial powers. It falls on the shoulders of the international workers' movement to implement a programme that can tackle climate change - replacing capitalism with a democratic socialist system.

## The danger of nuclear power

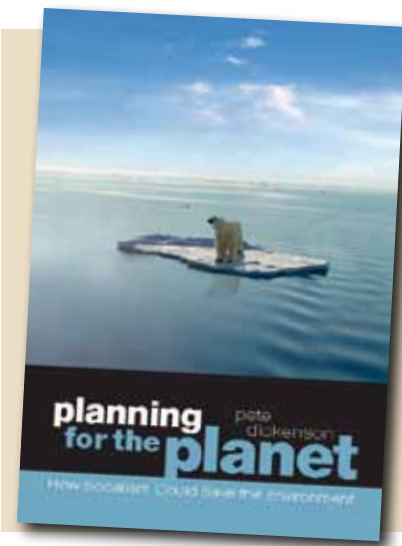
When the scale nine earthquake struck just off the coast of the Japanese city of Sendai on Friday 11 March 2011, the seismic shock was immediately registered by the sensors at the Fukushima 1 nuclear plant, which is situated on the coast, south of the epicentre of the quake. The reactors were shut down as a 'precautionary measure'. Dozens of pro-nuclear experts then kept assuring TV viewers that 'everything was under control'. Unfortunately, the earthquake was followed by a tsunami, which easily overcame the coastal defences around the plant and inundated the reactor buildings, putting the diesel generators out of action.

Fukushima 1 had six reactors, three of which were operational at the time of the earthquake. There was a meltdown of the nuclear fuel in reactors 1, 2 and 3. The buildings housing the reactors 1 and 3 were destroyed by hydrogen explosions, as steam was vented into these areas from the containment vessels. The resulting radioactive fallout was the worst since the 1986 Chernobyl catastrophe.

There was a scandalous lack of data made available by the private operator, the Tokyo Electric Power Company. This organisation had, in the late 1980s and 1990s, been found to have systematically falsified records of safety problems at its nuclear reactors. It also admitted being unaware that its Kashiwazaki Kariwa facility was built immediately above an active fault line, where four tectonic plates converged. When an earthquake hit that nuclear plant in 2007 it was put out of action for two years.

Nine months after the Fukushima disaster, the Japanese government finally announced that significant radioactive leakages had been stopped, although it would take 40 years to clean up and decommission the plant.

In the long term, storing the toxic waste produced by nuclear power generation is even more of a problem than coping with a disaster like Fukushima. This is because the waste will be radioactive for 100,000 years and no completely safe method of storing it has yet been devised.



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# Fight the bosses' Beecroft report

Kevin Parslow

Adrian Beecroft is a 'venture capitalist' investing money where he thinks he can make huge profits. One of the companies he finances is Wonga, the 'pay-day loan company' that charges extortionate interest to those unfortunate enough to have to utilise its services.

His Beecroft report extends his extreme Thatcherite ideas to the whole of the country's workforce. Not content with Britain having some of the most anti-working class employment legislation in Europe, Beecroft wants to see the government implementing the idea of 'no fault' dismissals. This really means 'no rights'.

With very little notice, no consultation and minimal compensation, workers that any boss did not like could be sacked at a whim. This, of course, could include trade union

workplace reps. What a cheap and nasty way of getting rid of 'trouble-makers'!

Beecroft claims this would create more jobs. The only jobs it might create are low-wage jobs with bosses acting like dictators! He was assisted in the drafting of the report by David Cameron's former adviser, Steve Hilton, now departed to Stanford University in California.

Liberal Dem business secretary Vince Cable wants to kick the report into the long grass, at least the most contentious bits. Beecroft said that Cable was a 'socialist' for opposing its recommendations! Yet the Lib Dems have collaborated with adverse changes to workers' rights in the last two years, including the extension of the period of employment, from a year to two years, before a worker has full employment rights.

If the government tries to implement any of this report, the TUC and



Workers need more employment rights not less photo S Beishon

individual trade unions should call conferences as preparation for protests and industrial action against it. This should be linked to the campaign to end all the anti-trade union and anti-worker laws.

# PCS shows real unity for fighting the cuts

Rob Williams

This year's PCS conference showed that the civil service union will continue to play a leading role in resisting the government's attacks on working-class people by reaching out to all those prepared to fight alongside the trade union movement.

PCS general secretary Mark Serwotka spoke about the pension battle's highest moment so far on 30 November (N30) and the lowest, on 19 December at the TUC's public services liaison group (PSLG).

N30 saw the biggest single day of strike action for 85 years as two million public-sector workers opposed working longer, paying more and getting less for their pensions.

At the PSLG, unions like Unison broke up the strike coalition by signing the government's 'Heads of Agreement', little different to what was on 'offer' before N30.

At the PCS Left Unity fringe meeting, Mark thanked the National Shop Stewards Network (NSSN) for its part in organising the lobby of



A Tyneside PCS picket on 30 November photo Socialist Party

the PSLG meeting in opposition to the agreement.

In moving the emergency motion on the pensions dispute, Mark soberly weighed up the tactics needed. But as he reminded delegates: "We may debate the necessary tactics but at least today we're all agreed on the need to fight."

Conference overwhelmingly agreed with taking action alongside other unions and looking to broaden the strike alliance of 10 May (M10). This included backing

the national executive's motion to continue working closely with the Unite union.

Mark especially praised the unofficial M10 action by prison officers in the POA union. He warned against PCS being isolated and believed that the wider action on M10 justified the decision to postpone the strike on 28 March. This allowed Unite health members to be involved along with the UCU, ISU, NIPSA and POA unions, and even coincided with the massive police

march!

The mood at the conference was confident but sober, a reflection of being through the first stage of the Con-Dems' onslaught, although an estimated 85% of the cuts are yet to be implemented.

PCS's exposé of the £120 billion evasion and avoidance of tax was highlighted by official reports that 2,500 public sector executives have done deals with HMRC to avoid paying PAYE tax, saving £10,000s from their tax bill. It was also shown that sacking tax office workers had led to over £1 billion not being collected!

A Greek civil service union leader's call for a European general strike against austerity was met with rapturous applause.

The NSSN fringe meeting and stall generated a lot of interest in the 9 June NSSN conference. 70 delegates attended the Socialist Party meeting to hear SP general secretary Peter Taaffe and newly elected PCS DWP-group president Fran Heathcote. Three delegates joined the SP and over 120 copies of the Socialist were sold with over £1,200 raised in fighting fund.

# Wales TUC conference censures Unison's critics

Ronnie Job  
Socialist Party Wales

At this year's Wales TUC Conference in Llandudno, Swansea Trades Council delegate Alec Thraves was first asked to apologise and then, when he refused, formally censured following a complaint from Unison.

Alec's misdemeanour was, while supporting a PCS motion over further pensions strike action, saying that thousands of Unison members were frustrated they weren't on strike on 10 May because their "well-paid", "pension secure" lead-

ership did not give them that opportunity.

While some delegates were committed to fighting all cuts, including cuts by the Wales Labour government, others wanted to manage the cuts more 'humanely' than the Tories.

Cardiff Trades Council's amendment to the Living Wage resolution, calling for £8 an hour with no exceptions, was defeated. As was Swansea Trades Council's amendment to a resolution on increased powers for the Welsh government, calling for no increases in taxation for low-paid workers and instead for taxes to be

targeted at big business, profiteering landlords and the rich. But both received significant support from the more left unions, particularly PCS.

Remployconvenor Les Woodward moved a Swansea Trades Council resolution against cuts, demanding support for continued strike action on pensions. Bob Crow, seconding, laid the blame for the crisis on capitalism. It was unanimously passed but the General Council qualified their support by refusing to commit to a demo in Cardiff.

In the debate on a RMT motion on trade union rights, mover Bob Crow and other speakers made

the point that Labour had left the Tories' anti-trade union legislation intact despite 13 years of majority government and threatened POA members with prison for taking strike action.

The General Council forced through on the card vote of the biggest unions - Unison, Unite and GMB - a reorganisation meaning only having a full three day conference every other year; and a one-day affair with only 'important' resolutions in between. This conference was itself the first since the November 2010 emergency one-day meeting!

## In brief

**Power station walkout**  
600 construction workers walked out of Ratcliffe-on-Soar power station on 29 May in protest against the suspension of Unite health and safety rep Jason Poulter. Those walking out included electricians, pipe fitters, welders and scaffolders. As we go to press, night-shift workers are also due to down tools.

The walkout was planned by a recent national meeting of rank and file sparks, and was supported by members of the National Shop Stewards Network and the Socialist Party. Also at the protest was expelled Ucat member Mick Dooley.

Jason was suspended by management six weeks ago for carrying out trade union duties, an action that workers believe was taken in revenge for their success in defeating the Building Engineering Services National Agreement (Besna) which would have reduced pay and attacked terms and conditions.

**Rob Williams, NSSN chair**

**Dump the cuts!**  
Around 40 GMB members at five "Dump It" recycling centres in Sheffield took three days strike action, from 26 to 28 May, against the Labour council's drastic cuts to recycling services.

The £500,000 'savings' are in addition to ending free collection of green waste and cutting general waste collections to fortnightly. Waste services, privatised ten years ago by a Lib Dem council, are run by Veolia. Veolia have now sub-contracted the centres to SOVA Recycling Ltd, a supposed 'charity'.

GMB found out that SOVA's original contract bid was £1 million, but they were 'advised' to cut their bid to £600,000.

However, Veolia still received £941,000 from the council, pocketing over £300,000 in the process. The GMB also calculates that the private operators 'make' a further £900,000 a year from selling on recycled materials.

Seven workers still face redundancy while everyone else faces cuts in hours, bonuses and pay. While one recycling centre would stay open seven days a week, the other four face weekday closures. All will have reduced opening hours. With these cuts due from 4 June, further prolonged strike action from this weekend is planned.

**Alistair Tice**

**TfL Olympic ballot**  
An RMT ballot for industrial action is underway in Transport for London. This concerns management's failure to offer any Olympics recognition to 'core' staff, and their derisory offer to 'non-core' staff when 'volunteering' for special Olympics duties.

**A TfL worker**

**Vote Steve Hedley**  
Steve Hedley, the London regional organiser of the transport union RMT, is standing for assistant general secretary of the RMT. The ballot opened on 28 May, lasting about six weeks. Any RMT member wanting to help Steve's campaign should contact him on 07545 530526.

See issue 719 of the Socialist for more.

Read more at  
[www.socialistparty.org.uk](http://www.socialistparty.org.uk)

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# Monarchy - not just a 'harmless relic'

The government will be hoping that the Jubilee flotilla of 1,000 ships on the river Thames will serve as a useful distraction while it pushes through more swingeing cuts. But, as Becci Heagney explains, the Diamond Jubilee is more than just a diversion. Behind the pomp and circumstance, the existence of the monarchy poses a potential threat to the fight against austerity and more.

**A**cross the country Jubilee fever is said to be 'rising'. But last year a Guardian/ICM poll found that 49% of people were more excited about an extra day off than seeing Will and Kate get hitched. And when looked at closely, 'Jubilee fever' isn't as hot as the government and Queen would like.

In 1977, for the Silver Jubilee, over 100,000 street parties were held. So far in London there are only around 1,800 street closures planned. Barking and Dagenham, a borough with one of the highest unemployment and poverty rates in London, has the lowest number with only five parties arranged. Working class people have nothing in common with the lifestyles of the royal family; the Queen alone has 'personal wealth' estimated at £1.15 billion.

When the Queen came to power in 1952, she was the 'head of the Commonwealth' and clinging to the remnants of the British Empire. Now Jamaica, celebrating its 50th year of independence this year, is considering severing all ties with the British monarchy and replacing the Queen as head of state with a Jamaican president instead.

The majority of people view the Queen as a harmless tourist attraction. The Royal Family are often treated as characters in a soap opera or like any other celebrity by the press. They have been mired in scandal over recent years with various family members and staff giving away secrets to undercover reporters, one royal dressing up as a Nazi and the Queen's own husband making a seemingly constant stream of

bigoted racist public comments.

There have been attempts to 'modernise' the monarchy in the hope of reviving support for it. These include boasting the progressiveness of Kate Middleton - a commoner! - marrying Prince William. Kate's parents own a business which is estimated to be worth £30 million and she was sent to private schools, so hers is not the most 'common' background.

An Ipsos Mori poll in 2011 showed that 44% of people think that the royal family is "out-of-touch with ordinary people". And a recent Guardian/ICM poll showed that young people are more likely to think that Britain would be better off without a monarchy. But the Queen is far from merely being a tourist attraction or a celebrity.

## One rule for them...

When some public sector trade unions called one day of strike action in June 2011 Tory MPs denounced them as threatening economic recovery. More recently the governor of the Bank of England, Mervyn King, warned that the June Jubilee bank holiday could hit Britain's ailing economy, with estimates that GDP could be hit by 0.5%. Nonetheless David Cameron calls for "the mother of all parties". Why this seeming contradiction?

Generally the monarchy's role is in reinforcing feelings of deference towards our ruling class 'betters'. But there is a more serious side. She is a completely unelected head of state, so is only in that position by birth. She is supposed to be 'politically neutral' because she is a 'con-



**All legislative bills need royal assent**

stitutional monarch' and we have a Prime Minister who has effective political power.

However, all legislative bills need to be granted with a 'royal assent' before they can become law so need to be approved by the Queen. This means she has the power to veto any decision made by an elected government.

The Queen does not disagree with the laws that are being passed by the Con-Dems or previous cuts-making Labour governments because they support and maintain capitalist society. But, if a government was trying to pass laws that were a threat to this order, the Queen could refuse to agree.

So the monarchy is not 'above' politics but in fact, holds significant political power. The Queen is head of the armed forces and police. MPs, senior government officers and judges swear allegiance to the Crown, not to parliament.

These powers could potentially be used to attempt to mobilise the armed forces against future mass movements and strikes. A foretaste of this was seen when 'emergency powers' were invoked by the Queen in 2000 during the lorry drivers' fuel protests.

Over the coming years, there will be an increase in the number of protests and strikes as the government tries to force through its austerity measures and the working class fights back. It is possible that 'emergency powers' of the monarch could be used to help the capitalist class repress this.

## There by appointments

The monarch formally appoints the prime minister and can do this even when no political party wins a majority in an election, as with the present Tory prime minister. In 1931 when Labour leader Ramsay MacDonald resigned as prime minister,

Royal accounting:

**£1.15bn**

estimate of the Queen's 'personal wealth'

**£52,000**

cost every time the Royal Train is used

The Queen is the biggest landowner on the planet

She owns:

**£10bn**

art collection

**£100m**

stamp collection

**£7m**

cars

King George V appointed him as head of the 'national government' in coalition with the Tories and Liberals to push through attacks on the working class.

Similarly, the monarch also has the power to dissolve parliament. In 1975, the Queen's representative in Australia, Governor-General Kerr, dismissed Labour's Gough Whitlam as prime minister and appointed Malcolm Fraser, the right wing leader of the Liberal Party, as caretaker prime minister.

All this shows that the ruling class can at times turn to the 'reserve' powers of the monarchy to take action against the working class and socialist movements. They may not use them often but might not hesitate to do so at a time of crisis for them.

However, they need a social base of support for the Queen to allow these powers to remain in place, which is why she is portrayed as harmless, beneficial and someone who deserves respect.

Capitalism is currently in its worst crisis in 80 years. In order to save their system, big business and their representatives in government are hammering the working class and are attempting to force back the gains we have won such as the NHS.

With the Diamond Jubilee celebrations this year, the government is attempting to rally support for the royal family - the embodiment of class and privilege - to help to defend their profit driven system which is run for the benefit of the 1%.

The monarchy and the House of Lords are relics of feudalism and should be abolished. Their existence is undemocratic and they are used to justify the growing class divisions in society. Under a socialist society, there would be no place for these parasitical, ancient symbols of privilege.

## How much money do they get?



photo Paul Mattsson

**T**he Crown Estate property portfolio includes a big slice of a very rich pie - property in the West End of London, Ascot racecourse, a 12-nautical mile perimeter around all of Britain's coastline and much more.

For the past 250 years all Crown Estate profits have been paid to the Treasury which then pays the royal family an annual grant, currently £30 million. That's on top of the £150 million cost of security. Under a new formula starting next year, the monarch is estimated to get around £37.5 million, a big increase in royal funding in a time of austerity for most of us.





On 23 May, NUT members were on strike to stop Kingsthorpe College in Northampton becoming an academy. Socialist Party member Nick Doyle spoke to Gordon White, NUT county secretary:



“The transfer from local authority control was announced a month ago. Consultation with the union, staff, parents and students only happened after the decision had already been taken to transfer the school to Edison academy trust.

“Edison was booted out of schools in the United States for costing more than the public school system, despite claiming they would be cheaper and still make a profit.

“They also claimed that they would improve educational standards, but failed to do so. Yet this profit-motivated provider is good enough for Tory education secretary Michael Gove.

“If this really was a consultation period, why haven’t the governors met with the union before the strike took place? The aim of the strike is for the governors to withdraw the application and to consider other

options; they are not being forced into this.

“The union will gauge the support of its members before deciding the next step, but so far the membership have been prepared to stand up to privatisations.”

There is no evidence that becoming an Academy can improve schools but there is widespread belief that Michael Gove wants to privatise all schools, use Academies to attack pay and conditions for staff and allow Academy providers to make profits out of schools.

The fight must continue, not just for the staff of Kingsthorpe College but for all of us, not just to defend our schools and our NHS but all public services against cuts and privatisation which will reduce services and working conditions for those employed in them.

We can’t afford to lose this fight. We must stand united to defeat this government and its friends who want to make even more profit, whilst making us pay for their crisis!

# KEEP THE PROFITEERS OFF OUR SCHOOLS

## Action to defend education

**Phil Clarke**

Secretary, Lewes, Eastbourne and Wealden NUT

On 24 May, National Union of Teachers (NUT) members took determined and solid strike action against cuts to teachers’ and lecturers’ jobs at Sussex Downs College.

There was no evidence that any classes ran at Park College, the Eastbourne campus organised by the NUT. Public support was very much on display. One driver pulled over to hand out boxes of ice lollies bought for the pickets!

No Park members now face compulsory redundancy, but while some still face reductions in hours action will continue.

Sussex Downs College is making a 10% reduction in staffing as funding cuts and the scrapping of EMA have lead to fewer students and less money.

This means fewer teachers teaching more hours while students get less lesson time. The NUT, supported by Nasuwt, has made it clear that these cuts will be fought.

The only disappointment was that the strike was not across every one of the college’s campuses. We hope the strike can give UCU members, who organise the other campuses, confidence to join the action.

### Teachers conference

The NUT and Nasuwt teaching unions, that together represent 85% of teachers in England and Wales, made a declaration on 28 May over joint action against the Con-Dem government’s attacks on education.

The statement raised the key issues of teachers’ working conditions, workload, pensions, pay and jobs.

An NUT ballot to widen action to include other key issues as well as pensions opens on 25 June.

**● Union members can help make sure that the full potential of the declaration is realised by coming to the Local Associations for National Action Conference: Saturday 16 June, 11am-3.30pm, Quaker Meeting House, 22 School Lane, Liverpool L1 3BT**  
**Contact: [classroom.teacher@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:classroom.teacher@yahoo.co.uk)**

### 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!