



No to austerity! TURN ANGER INTO ACTION

Build for a 24-hour general strike

Striking Spanish civil servants interviewed on BBC Newsnight asked why the huge cash injection into Spanish banks is referred to as a bailout for Spain – workers would not see a penny!

They, like workers everywhere, will wonder why such amounts can't be found to prevent wage cuts, joblessness, evictions from their homes, loss of vital services and support, and on and on.

Even with Spain a favourite for the Euro 2012 football competition, a survey found 76% of Spaniards would favour an improvement in the economic situation over a victory.

Here in Britain it seems like the 'summer circus calendar' has been designed to distract angry workers and young people from ongoing austerity! But no amount of jubilees and sporting events will hide the fact that behind it all a burning anger is growing.

The sixth conference of the National Shop Stewards Network (NSSN) was a showcase for the rising number of workers' struggles taking place.

Over the summer we can expect to see workers taking action in a number of sectors on national, sectoral and local bases including doctors, civil servants and construction and transport workers, to name a few. That could be just the warm-up though, with a hot autumn to follow.

The NSSN conference, with hundreds of workers' representatives there, agreed a guide to action which advocates that the next step after the TUC's planned demonstration on 20 October should be a 24-hour general strike against austerity. This should involve workers in the public and the private sectors. Campaigning for this in every workplace, union branch and anti-cuts campaign is now a vital task.

But when workers strike, if they do not also have a political voice and an alternative to capitalism, they are fighting with one hand tied behind their backs. A standing ovation greeted this argument when Tony Mulhearn, Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition candidate in Liverpool's mayoral contest last month, spoke at the GMB union's manufacturing conference on 12 June. He argued for the building of a mass working class party to oppose all cuts and privatisation and for a socialist alternative.

If you also agree, as those trade union members did, get in touch and join the Socialist Party.



photo Paul Mattsson

the **Socialist**

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NSSN conference agrees call for one-day general strike against austerity

Helen Ridett

Lewisham Socialist Party

The sixth annual National Shop Stewards Network (NSSN) conference saw around 500 activists come together from across the trade union movement.

Rob Williams, NSSN chair, opened the first half of the conference which focused on the fightback against austerity. He gave an overview of the huge number of struggles NSSN activists have been involved in over the last year alone. As the government and bosses carry out brutal attacks against workers the NSSN is needed more than ever.

Mark Serwotka, general secretary of the PCS civil service union, gave a robust and inspiring speech about the events which unfolded around the public sector pensions dispute. In December, Mark was in bitter negotiations with those trade union leaders who wanted to accept the little improved 'offer' from the government following the two-million strong 30 November (N30) strike. Mark said he felt heartened by the chanting of activists lobbying the TUC building outside.

No cuts

Mark pointed out that cuts are not necessary, but the Labour Party and the heads of some unions are not willing to take a 'no cuts' position. "We need people bold enough to say that there should not be a single cut."



During Mark Serwotka's speech photos S Beishon

There will be many more PCS-led strikes as grassroots members, such as DVLA vehicle licensing workers and coastguards, fight back against the cuts they are facing. Mark supported the NSSN's intention of lobbying the TUC in September to call for more strike action on the scale of 30 November 2011 and greater.

Kevin Courtney, deputy general secretary of the NUT teachers' union, emphasised the need to build strong trade unionist networks on the ground and recognised the

NSSN as a serious organisation in this process.

He declared that defending pensions is still a crucial demand, and that it is possible for governments to make changes. For instance, president Hollande has just reduced France's pension age from 62 to 60!

The NUT is now working with the NASUWT following an agreement of "historic significance". Together the two unions represent 85% of teachers in England and Wales.

Padraig Mulholland, the Northern Ireland Public Service Alliance (Nipsa) union president, reminded us that without the hard work of union grassroots members there would have been no strike on N30. He called for a united, non-sectarian workers' struggle against the Con-Dem government.

BMA member, Dr Jackie Grunsell, pointed out that her union's recent ballot result reflects the real anger of doctors over the health and social care act. She anticipated that doctors are now more likely to unite with other health workers in the fight to reclaim our NHS, but that action short of strike action won't go far enough.

Rank and file workers

Then we heard a range of contributions from rank and file trade unionists. This included DWP members, health workers and teachers to name but a few. NSSN communications officer Suzanne Muna moved a NSSN Guide to Action (see box).

Martin Powell-Davies, teacher and NUT executive member, called on conference to build for one-day general strike action across the unions.

Several speakers made the point that the capitalist system is not working and called for the only other alternative, socialism, to rapturous applause from conference!

What is clear is that these workers all have the confidence to step up and be leaders in their workplaces and communities thanks to the strategies and tactics they have learnt from the NSSN.

Katrine Williams, NSSN vice-chair, opened the afternoon session which focused on workers' struggles. Alex Gordon president of the RMT transport union, gave a thunderous speech as he outlined various transport worker disputes. The

"This conference was more than just about speeches, this was a call to action. We call for full support for the TUC national demonstration on 20 October, but more than that we call on the TUC to announce a one day general strike of both public and private sectors. This is now the only way to combat the coalition's cuts to pensions, wages, jobs, services, privatisation of the NHS, etc. We call on all NSSN supporters to redouble their efforts over the coming months to build support for this strike around the country, at the same time this will build the NSSN and increase the effectiveness of rank and file trade unionism"

Terry Pearce, Bracknell

RMT in particular has been targeted by the bosses challenging successful strike ballots in the courts, as its strikes are very effective. In spite of these attacks there have been many victories, including the recent strike action by Heathrow Express work-

ers, which lead to victimised stewards being reinstated. The RMT are preparing to fight against a new wave of attacks on trade union laws by the EU commission.

PJ McParlin, chair of the POA prison officers' union, passionately laid into government plans to exploit prisoners as a source of cheap labour.

Student nurse Jacqui Berry reflected on the Youth Fight for Jobs campaign and the struggle against workfare, speaking of the need to unite trade unions and young people.

Unite member Ray Ludford condemned the lies behind the closure of the Remploi factories and outlined how disabled people will be left high and dry by this savage government attack.

Recent disputes

A construction electrician spoke in detail about the Besna dispute and movingly described how the rank and file workers led that struggle to victory. The NSSN supported this lengthy struggle against a vicious threat of a 35% wage cut.

Speakers from the floor gave valuable elaboration on recent workplace disputes, including on MMP in Bootle, Coryton refinery and Sheffield recycling centres.

PCS member Tony Mulhearn from the Liverpool 47, who was a Liverpool mayoral candidate for the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) last month, spoke of the importance of TUSC in encouraging workers to stand as anti-cuts candidates in elections.

Victimised union reps Honda Swindon convenor Paddy Brennan and Kevin Poulter from Ratcliffe power station also spoke. Both lost their jobs but, following action by the workers they represent and by NSSN supporters, have been reinstated.

A business section was introduced by NSSN secretary Linda Taaffe. Linda also appealed for finance donations to be sought widely from supporting trade unionists and trade unions. A new steering committee was elected for 2012-13.

The NSSN brings together trade unionists from the international labour movement and we heard from workers in Greece and Kazakhstan. We were humbled on hearing that our brothers and sisters in Kazakhstan risk their lives by organising themselves to fight back against the greed of the ruling family.

PCS assistant general secretary Chris Baugh closed the conference by reminding workers of our immense power when we are organised. He spoke of the need for an autumn offensive against the government's attacks and of uniting workers' struggles across the public and private sector in fighting all cuts.

We are in no doubt that there are huge battles ahead but the NSSN has armed us with the tactics and strategies to continue to organise workers and win battles.

Read more at www.shopstewards.net and www.socialistparty.org.uk/articles/14657

NSSN guide to action



Suzanne Muna moves the guide to action

Since last year's conference NSSN has been involved in an increasing number of workers' struggles, and, as the austerity cuts bite, we expect these struggles to intensify

- We encourage supporters to concentrate on organising local and regional NSSN Networks with events and meetings to help rank and file activists to build up reliable support networks

- We welcome the TUC national demonstration on 20 October and we will do everything we can to make this day a successful start to the next phase of an action-based campaign against austerity

- We advocate that the next step should be for the TUC to organise a one-day general strike, which includes both public and private sectors, against all cuts to pensions and wages, jobs, services, and housing; to stop privatisations of NHS, education and public services; and to stop the slavery of workfare

- To this end we call on trade unionists, campaigners, youth and pensioners to come to Brighton for TUC week

- To lobby delegates to press for a national strike

- To hold an NSSN fringe meeting to highlight this demand

Leveson: contradictions and a crisis of credibility

Ben Norman

Since the Leveson inquiry began in November politicians have taken turns to take the stand, profess a desire to defend press freedom and lament the power of the media tycoons they once courted, before being given the opportunity to re-write history.

This week the cast list featured the most senior politicians in Westminster, including David Cameron and Nick Clegg. The first to re-write their page of history however was former prime minister Gordon Brown.

In office Brown equalled Tony Blair in epitomising New Labour, only with less media panache. As the architect of New Labour's pro-market policies he courted big business - indeed Rupert Murdoch claimed Brown to be the prime minister he felt closest to.

Brown also ran an obsessive media operation through spin doctors Charlie Whelan and Damien McBride, which ruthlessly briefed against political enemies, both inside and outside his own party.

Yet Brown's testimony portrayed a man bullied by the press, who knew nothing of the machinations of his press officers, and who felt bound by office to dine with Murdoch and Rebekah Brooks, whose own evidence he contradicted.

If this version of history lacked credibility it was no less dubious than the evidence of chancellor George Osborne who sneered his way through a testimony in which he dismissed conspiratorial ties between the Murdoch empire and the Tories as the imaginings of fantasists.

The chancellor claimed to have 'no view' on the Murdoch bid for BSkyB, the political furore over which still



Osbourne and Coulson

threatens to force Tory minister Jeremy Hunt from office. Osborne went on to casually defend his appointment of Andy Coulson, who was re-

If the evidence given by these politicians seems far from convincing, the fact they could present it unchallenged exposes the limitations of the inquiry

cently arrested for perjury in relation to the trial of Tommy Sheridan.

If the evidence given by these politicians seems far from convincing, the fact they could present it un-

challenged exposes the limitations of the inquiry. Osborne may scoff at conspiracy claims, yet his government exists in a world where corporate lobbying and political favours are the norm.

While conspiratorial criminal activity within News International has been revealed, what the inquiry truly casts light on is the collaboration of the ruling class. From media moguls to politicians, the judiciary and the highest ranks of the police force, the wealthy in society will always network and collude to advance and defend their interests.

The inquiry continues to lay bare the class realities of how the establishment operates and as David Cameron re-writes his own history on Thursday he will now struggle to hide the fact that his party governs on the orders of boardrooms and businessmen - not the ballot box.

The class divide in elderly care

Sue Powell

Tory communities minister, Eric Pickles, has called for an "end to the blame game", announcing his new tough approach towards problem families: apparently, its time for people to stop blaming others and accept responsibility for any difficulties they face.

However, the Con-Dems are not averse to playing this game themselves. They claimed the UK's ageing population was responsible for their Health and Social Care reforms. We are simply all 'living too long'.

Lib Dem Paul Burstow, minister for care, is also keen to blame others for care shortfalls - he accuses local councils, who unanimously cry: 'not our fault, we have no alternative.'

This year there will be a further £1 billion cut from councils' adult social services budgets. As a result, most care homes are considering increasing fees to paying residents to subsidise council beds. With less cash to pay for places, 60% of providers are thinking about reducing the proportion of beds available for council-funded residents.

The number of older people in England receiving council-funded

care has fallen by 11% in the last two years, despite an ageing population. An estimated 800,000 older people are being left without basic care - lonely, isolated and at risk. Many others lose their homes and savings due to soaring care bills.

Every year, thousands of people are forced to give up work to care for older or disabled relatives. Even if money can be scraped together, you'd think twice before committing a loved one to the care of a private provider. Privatisation has been disastrous and the examples of systemic neglect and abuse are too numerous to list.

System failure

Nine out of ten care providers claim government cuts force them into favouring wealthy pensioners. With health among the most affluent pensioners better than ever, their numbers account for an increasing number of people buying places in residential care. Meanwhile the poorest face savage cuts to council-funded beds and a lottery for decent, affordable care.

The system fails those in need of care and countless family carers, who are often pushed to break-

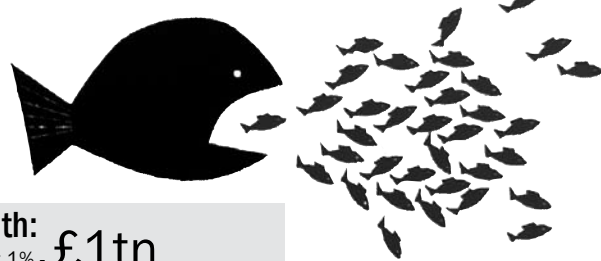


photo Paul Mattsson

ing point for a state allowance that leaves many impoverished. These people then become the next generation of elderly poor.

According to the rules of the blame game they should have 'made proper provision for the future'. Care provision is a lottery in which luck plays only a small part - money and class determine everything.

Them...



Wealth:

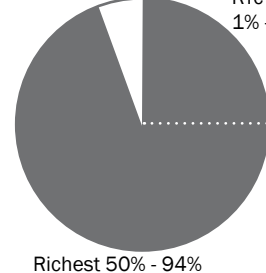
Richest 1% - £1tn

Richest 10% - £4tn

Division of UK wealth:

Poorest 50% - 6%

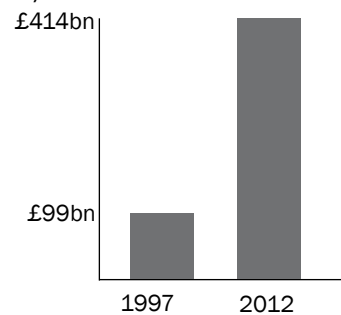
Richest 1% - 1/4



Ownership of the land:

0.3% own 69%

Wealth of the richest 1,000 individuals:

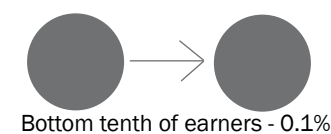


Incomes since 2008:

6% real terms drop in incomes of the population as a whole

£155bn increase in income for the richest 1,000

Pay rise January 2011-2012:



Weekly pay at FTSE 100 companies:

Chief executives - £84,615

Low-paid workers - £240

Top pay still on the rise

Yet another survey has shown that executive pay continues to soar. In 25% of FTSE 100 companies, executive pay has gone up by more than 41% in the

£20.9m

Barclay's chief executive Bob Diamond's pay 2011

last year. The highest paid chief executive is Barclay's Bob Diamond who got £20.9 million last year.

Despite this, business secretary Vince Cable thinks this is a good time to be watering down measures to limit pay. He has decided to scrap plans to force an annual binding vote on chief executive's pay because it would add too much 'bureaucracy'.

Every little helps

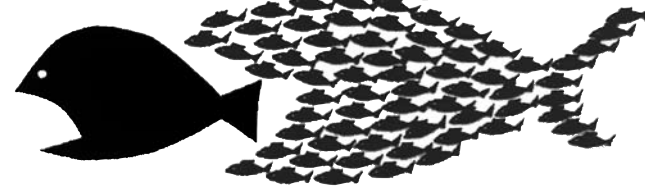
Apparently one sector is currently experiencing a surge of business - luxury concierge services. These concierges have to do... whatever they're told. They open doors, they greet friends, they book high-end restaurants, they 'make things happen'.

One company arranged a £250,000 shopping spree including closing a series of designer stores for more privacy for their client. Another regular request is to make clients' wives burst into tears of happiness. The cost? A £5,000 a month retainer plus all other associated costs.

Changing high streets

The number of pawnbrokers, payday loan lenders and betting shops on our high streets has increased by 25% since 2008. The number of vacant shops has trebled in the same period. The pawnbroking industry is now worth £500 million a year. Strapped-for-cash people are using jewellery and designer handbags as collateral for loans. And it seems people of a variety of backgrounds are turning towards this trend - there are now a series of companies aiming at people who are "asset rich but cash poor" allowing them to raise between £1,000 and £1 million using antiques, fine art, luxury wine and even yachts as security. Is this what Osborne means by 'all in this together'?

...& Us



What we saw

The Wacky Barber near Smithfield market in London has painted in its window: "If England had a striker like Bob Crow we'd win the Euros."



Join the fightback! Join the Socialists!

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Workers fight Coryton refinery closure

Dave Murray

If the government and the liquidators get their way, over 800 workers at Coryton oil refinery in Essex will be sacked as the plant is shut down on 19 June.

The refinery has been under a shadow since its Swiss owner, Petroplus, having loaded itself with debt, became insolvent in January, placing the facility in the hands of the receivers, Price Waterhouse Cooper.

PWC plan to sell the plant to the highest bidder, regardless of the effect of their decision on the workers.

In this case the highest bidder would appear to be a cover company for Shell, who intend to dismantle the refinery and replace it with a terminal - a facility for the importation of fuels employing a fraction of the numbers that currently work there.

This would leave Coryton workers without even the guarantee of basic redundancy pay - even though many have given decades of service.

Members of Unite at the refinery

are fighting back. On 11 June they mounted protests at the refinery gate and at the Vopak fuel depot, a supply hub for petrol stations across the region.

They marched into the centre of the local town (Corringham), where they were welcomed by the people there, who understand the blow that the closure will deal to their community.

Industry analysts and commentators speak ominously of "overcapacity" in the UK. It would be naïve to imagine that the closure of Coryton would settle the matter.

The Coryton closure is part of a "race to the bottom" in a global industry whose key players are among the most ruthless capitalists on the planet.

Even a successful campaign to save Coryton would be only a temporary victory.

As socialists we call for the public ownership of the fuel supply industry, under workers' control and management.

Then we could look seriously not just at securing the future of the workers in that industry but also at the wider issue of the effi-



Protesters gather at Coryton photo Martin Reynolds

cient, sustainable and ecologically sound development of the energy industry.

• See www.socialistparty.org.uk for a fuller version of this article and updates.

Striking against academies



On the picket line photo J Boyle

On 31 May NUT members at Alperton Community school in Brent went on strike against proposals to turn their school into an academy. Hank Roberts spoke to the Socialist from the picket line:

"The school governors have voted to support an academy but staff have rejected this in a ballot with a two-thirds majority against. Schools minister Gove wants to privatise our schools so they can be run for profit, not to provide education for all.

"Brent is run by a majority Labour council and the chair of the governors is a Labour Party member. I would expect the Labour council and all its members to oppose these moves. But the three main parties all support the introduction of academies so we can't expect any support from them.

"The Labour council has recently closed six libraries and the other week turned up in the middle of the night to avoid protesters and strip Kensal Green library of its books. They even mobilised the police just in case.

"I voted for the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) in the last elections. We need an alternative to the 'tweedle dee, tweedle dum and dummer' options we have now and it's important that it is based on trade unions. I support the idea of building a TUSC alternative."

John Boyle

Big support as Sheffield recycling workers stand firm

Alistair Tice

Dozens of cars tail-back up the tip site lane onto the main road, there's an accident waiting to happen! This is the scene every morning at the recycling centres in Sheffield, not because of the strikes by the 40 GMB members but because the opening hours have been cut by the Labour council and private contractors Veolia and Sova - which is exactly what the strike is all about.

The Sova workers at the five Dump-It sites have now taken ten days of strike action, with another three days strike due. They are fighting job losses and cuts in hours and pay as a result of the reduced opening of the recycling centres, part of the council budget cuts.

90% of the public are supportive as GMB members approach the queued up cars with a petition to the council and protest letters for drivers to sign. Even the security guards are sympathetic, one says he was a 'flying picket' during the miners' strike and still a union man. They direct drivers to sign the union petition!

Victory will require all-out strike action which most of the Sova workers realise but are worried about taking because of their financial hardship.



Picketing workers at the Beighton recycling centre photo Alistair Tice

Financial support is desperately needed so pickets were pleased to hear that part of the collection at the National Shop Stewards Network conference is being donated to them.

Sheffield Socialist Party members have visited the picket lines every strike day so far. Jim Rodgers, a GMB steward, spoke at a recent SP meet-

ing. "That's miles better than what they put in the Star (local paper)" said one striker about a report in the Socialist.

Please send messages of support and especially financial donations to: Peter Davies (Sova Strike Fund), GMB office, 188/190 Norfolk Street, Sheffield, S1 1SY. Please make cheques payable to GMB.

Kirklees: defending jobs and public services

Angie Waller,
personal capacity

Admin workers in Kirklees had a successful one-day strike on 30 May. 425 Unison members who are affected by the review of Kirklees council's business support function are taking the brunt of the council's cuts programme by being threatened with redundancy or having cuts in their pay.

Many workers who work alongside the admin staff refused to cross the picket lines and donated money to the hardship funds. Some joined the picket lines for the first time, showing their determination to fight

and sending a clear message to Kirklees council that they won't accept cuts in pay or redundancies.

Already 200 out of 750 jobs have been shed through deleting vacant posts and voluntary early retirements and now approximately 30 staff have been told their wages will be cut. Staffing levels are now dangerously low, yet the council's attitude is 'you're lucky to have a job', and 'if you don't like the job you're offered why don't you leave!' This shows pure contempt from a council who award their executives pay rises and are now creating more directors' jobs - 18 months after they claimed to have downsized the di-

rector level!

On 7 June the members met and agreed to step up the action by striking on 12-14 June. The union branch has asked the national union for agreement to ballot the whole branch as many members are affected.

Many members who we spoke to said that they want to support the admin workers by striking alongside them.

Please send donations and messages of support to: Kirklees Unison branch secretary, West Yorkshire House, New North Parade, Huddersfield HD1 5JP. Fax: 01484 450174.

In brief

PCS political ballot

Members of the Public and Commercial Services union have started voting in a ballot on the union's political campaigning strategy. This includes the proposal to stand or support candidates in national elections, where this will help to defend members' jobs and protect public services. This ballot follows a motion carried at the union's conference in 2009, and two branch consultation exercises have been carried out. The ballot closes on 29 June.

Jobcentre strike

Across Merseyside PCS members employed in jobcentres took strike action between 6-8 June. I visited one picket line where Fran Heathcote, DWP president, explained why her members were on strike to stop staff and office cuts. Steve Bramwell, PCS branch secretary said: "Management want to reduce staffing levels in jobcentres and in an area like Toxteth with high unemployment levels this will affect service provision and add to members' working conditions". PCS members across Merseyside are solid.

Rachel Potter Merseyside
Socialist Party

Blacklisting

The GMB union has produced a new report for its conference this week, which investigates the blacklisting of mainly construction workers by employers like Carillion. It was revealed earlier this year in an industrial tribunal that Carillion have blacklisted 224 workers all over the country. Among other demands the GMB and the Blacklist Support Group are calling on blacklisting companies to be removed from approved contractors lists for publicly funded projects. The report is available on the GMB website: www.gmb.org.uk On 12 June, Dave Smith, the worker involved in the tribunal, is giving evidence to a parliamentary investigation into blacklisting.

Metro strike

"Today there's not a single train running on Tyne and Wear Metro", one of the striking workers told us on 7 June as Metro workers from the RMT, Aslef and Unite staged a 24-hour strike over pay. A further strike is planned for 21 June. Also, Tyne and Wear Metro cleaners working for Churchill's began a 48 hour strike on 10 June. This is in support of a victimised worker and a 0% pay offer.

Elaine Brunskill

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.

Socialist Party website

For more on these issues and a report of the recent lecturers' union UCU conference, see our website: www.socialistparty.org.uk. Also please sign the petition calling on the Unison leaders to stop wasting members' money on witch-hunting socialists: <http://www.change.org/en-GB/petitions/general-secretary-unison-stop-the-witch-hunts-in-unison>.

My workfare nightmare

240 hours' work for no pay - then back on the unemployment scrapheap

Unemployed from Hull

After being unemployed for over eight months in Hull, one of the worst areas for unemployment in the country, I was put onto a 'voluntary' work experience scheme.

The Jobcentre had been mentioning the Work Experience scheme to me for a good few weeks when they phoned me up to put me forward for what they called a "brilliant opportunity". This amounted to a four to eight week placement at a Home Bargains store with a possible job at the end of the placement - if they chose to 'keep us on'.

Four-for-the-price-of-none

In the end I worked 30 hours a week for the full eight weeks (almost double the contracted hours we would have if we got the job) - six hours a day, Monday to Friday. Four of us started at the same time and another four started a month later.

This meant that the shop, which employed between 30 and 40 people, had seven (one participant got a job elsewhere) people working the contracted hours of 15 fully paid workers but receiving nothing from the employer!

Numerous members of staff

asked if we were part of the A4e programme which was recently shown to be nothing more than a money-making scam for the shareholders of the company. This indicates that the use of people forced onto benefits due to a lack of jobs is commonplace at the store I worked at.

'Experience'

Although the placement was supposed to be about gaining 'experience', within three or four weeks I was fully trained in pretty much all aspects of the work. After a month I and my fellow work experience colleagues were used as nothing but unpaid workers - not shadowing anyone but given the same responsibilities as members of staff.

I was also asked to do a 'stock take' while at the store but this was technically illegal as we had been told that we weren't permitted to work weekends or bank holidays. But we all realised that to challenge this probably would have resulted in us not getting work at the end of the placement.

The most galling thing about my time on work experience was that after the first week the store manager said that she would look at putting



Occupying a central London Tesco against workfare photo Suzanne Beishon

us on the payroll after we were till-trained. Well, by the end of the third week I was fully till-trained yet still I heard nothing about being kept on.

At the end of my eight weeks I was told that I wasn't getting the job. As annoying as this is, it was made worse by the fact that, as a result of the placement, I missed training opportunities that would have given me a much higher chance of

gaining employment.

These schemes are used, not to give training or experience, but to undercut those who are in paid employment using unpaid 'volunteers'. Because of this it is vital that the trade union movement, especially those that organise in retail and fast food, take up the issue of workfare and also of youth unemployment - which is now over one million.

A coordinated trade union fight-back which includes moves towards unionising un-unionised workplaces could see workfare further defeated and be a huge blow to the Con-Dems and their pro-big business agenda.

Youth Fight for Jobs is campaigning across the country against workfare and for genuine job creation as young people say: we won't be a lost generation!

From pillar to post: reassessment for ESA

Paul Harrison
Bristol

Last September I found myself on incapacity benefit. But just weeks later, the government's Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) told me I had to re-apply for Employment and Support Allowance (ESA).

I was told I had been placed on work-related ESA and that the amount I receive would be the same as I received on incapacity benefit. They also told me to attend the Jobcentre Plus for a work-related interview, where I was put on the Work Programme.

Next I was passed to JobFit, who only exist at the end of a telephone. They called me and said I was to be transferred to an outfit called Seetec. Are you still with me?

On arrival claimants were lectured about not wearing hoodies or using mobile phones. They said they had no budget for training; my heart sank as I wanted to attend a course at my local college.

I was, however, given a "personal adviser". Don't hold your breath.

Within five weeks Seetec changed my personal adviser four times, leaving me feeling very stressed, and my doctor had to double my levels of medication.

Seetec wasn't a placement, rather a holding pen for job-ready employees who are looking for work that isn't there. Nobody at Seetec spoke to me about the barriers I might face in trying to re-enter the world of work. I was just dumped on a computer and told to look for a placement myself.

I understand the Con-Dem coalition has spent £5 billion on the Work Programme. For older workers like me, once you're on the adult Work Programme, companies like Seetec have you on their books for two years, during which time you cannot choose to leave.

So what did I learn? If you're on ESA and are pressured into volunteering for the no-work programme, don't bother. It's a con. Unscrupulous companies (and we've all heard about A4e) line their pockets from the Tories' £5 billion hand-out, while the poor are treated like pawns in this unsavoury game.

Youth Fight for Jobs national meeting: Organising the 'lost generation'

Helen Pattison

On 10 June 50 young trade unionists, unemployed people and students from all over the UK attended a national meeting of Youth Fight for Jobs (YFJ).

Speakers included Brandon Madsen from Minneapolis involved with the Occupy Homes campaign against home foreclosures. Occupy Homes has already seen victories by keeping some people in their homes.

With the Young Londoners Forced-Out Campaign recently launched by YFJ to highlight the housing problems facing young people in the capital, the discussion focused on the housing benefit cuts and the Olympics which are both going to be responsible for rising homelessness among young people.

Several people came into the discussion describing their personal

experiences of workfare and how these schemes destroy jobs and drive down the rights of workers as well as exploiting young people.

YFJ played a leading role organising protests outside many of the shops using workfare which won some small changes to the more oppressive aspects of one of the schemes.

During the afternoon session the meeting discussed organising the campaign, giving activists a chance to report back on some impressive campaigning in their areas.

Plans were made for the TUC demo in October where YFJ will be involved in organising a youth contingent, linking together the struggles of workers and young people in the fight for decent jobs and a future.

There was also in-depth discussion of the recently produced YFJ manifesto. A future for the 99% outlines what YFJ stands for as well

as campaigning tips. This will be launched at YFJ's 'Austerity Games' on 23 July.

Contact Youth Fight for Jobs

www.youthfightforjobs.com
youthfightforjobs@gmail.com
Twitter: @youthfight4jobs
Facebook: Youth Fight for Jobs
Phone: 020 8558 7947
Text: 07713 355616



Profiting from workfare

It looks like these private companies have made their pots of gold through the Con-Dems' workfare schemes:

Ingeus UK: Seven contracts worth £727m

A4e Ltd: Five contracts worth £438m

Working Links: Three contracts worth £308m

Avanta Enterprise: Three contracts worth £267m

Seetec: Three contracts worth £221m



Super-rich Beecroft targets workers' rights

Jeff Allen

While YFJ calls for investment in job creation to solve unemployment others have different solutions, seeing the crisis as an opportunity to push their anti-worker agenda.

Multi-millionaire 'venture capitalist' Adrian Beecroft wants Thatcherite ideas to operate throughout Britain's industry. His notorious report wants 'no fault' redundancies to be government policy.

In this rich man's dream, greedy bosses could sack any worker at their whim. With hardly any notice, no consulting with the unions and next to no compensation 'troublemakers' such as union workplace reps can be got rid of - if the working

class doesn't see his plans off.

Beecroft is a leader of the British Venture Capital Association and made his career out of slashing jobs and minimising big businesses' tax payments, according to the Independent.

Crooked career

Beecroft picked up much expertise in the 1970s and 80s at Boston Consulting Group, which includes fellow anti-worker, anti-union right wingers Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu and US Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney among its former employees.

Later Beecroft was a boss at Apax Partners, overseeing the company's massive expansion through private equity. Thousands of jobs were

culled as a result of buyouts involving Apax, including those of Yellow Pages owner Yell in 2003 and supermarket chain Somerfield in 2008.

Apax also helped the Guardian Media Group take over part of Emap publishing in 2008 to set up a new company in the Cayman Islands tax haven.

This 'socially responsible' career made Beecroft super-rich. His Hampstead mansion is now valued at £6.4 million. And for just a £625,000 donation to the Tories, he gets to advise the government on how to slash workers' rights.

The Con-Dem coalition has already started work on 17 of the 23 proposals in Beecroft's report. Trade unionists should fight Beecroft and all the other anti-worker laws.

SPAIN: BANK BAILOUT CAN'T STOP EURO DEATH-SPIRAL

Lynn Walsh
Socialism Today editor

As on a rickety rollercoaster, the euro train could shoot off the rails at any moment. Will it be triggered by the soaring loop of the Spanish banking crisis? Or the crazy corkscrew of the Greek crisis, which will undoubtedly be sharpened by the 17 June elections?

The euro engineers tinker with the structure. But they spend most of their time arguing over the best design for a more perfect eurozone system. The Spanish banking crisis is the latest glitch – but it certainly won't be the last.

In a costly, stopgap measure, the eurozone leaders have intervened to avert a collapse of the Spanish banking system. They have promised up to €100 billion to stabilise a number of banks which are effectively bankrupt.

The eurozone powers may have averted an immediate collapse of a number of Spanish banks, as well as preventing big losses to German and other banks that have loaned them millions. Yet already, 'financial markets' – the big financial speculators – are gambling on the viral spread of the banking crisis, for a start to Italy and Cyprus.

Mariano Rajoy, the right-wing Spanish prime minister, is claiming a 'victory'. He is denying that this is another bailout, similar to the earlier bailouts of Greece, Ireland and Portugal. Though the conditions are not as harsh, it is in reality another bailout. The details have not yet been revealed. The money is intended to prop up the banks, but it will be channelled through the Spanish government, which will be responsible for the debt.

Ultimately, it is Spanish workers who will be forced to pay off the banks' bad debts. As in Ireland, the Spanish banks have accumulated enormous bad debts from the property bubble that burst after the global financial crisis in 2007-08. Nobody knows the actual amount, but it is estimated bad loans amount to over €200 billion.

Scattered around the cities of Spain, there are a huge number of half-finished and empty apartment blocks, witnesses to the crazy prop-

erty bubble. At the same time, many Spanish families are facing eviction from their homes because they cannot afford to keep up their mortgage payments.

The Spanish government could not afford to bail out the whole banking sys-

George Osborne has attacked the eurozone crisis for 'killing' the recovery of the British economy... The prolonged stagnation of the eurozone economies is undoubtedly a factor in the continued recession in Britain... But our home-grown cuts, inflicted by the Con-Dem government, are the biggest factor in the double-dip recession here... The policy of savage austerity is undermining growth, which actually increases the burden of debt

tem. Last month it was forced to intervene to effectively take over Bankia, a bank formed from the amalgamation of seven regional savings banks, so-called cajas. These banks were at the centre of the speculative property boom. They were heavily involved in corruption: they paid huge salaries and benefits to their

top executives, while providing 'soft', low interest loans to local politicians.

Rajoy's government had to inject €4.5 billion into Bankia, but it is estimated that the bank requires another €19 billion to stay afloat. It is claimed that at least three other banks are in a similar situation.

The Spanish government could not find enough cash to prop up the banks. It currently has to pay an interest rate of over 6% on government bonds, issued to raise more funds. This compares with around 1.3% for German government bonds. In any case, most of the newly issued government bonds are actually being bought by Spanish banks. They can currently borrow money from the European Central Bank at about 1% interest rate. If they buy Spanish government bonds that pay 6%, they can clearly make a big profit.

But it is an absurd position where a government which is broke is borrowing from banks which are mostly broke. If the government defaults on its debts, the whole of the Spanish banking system would be wiped out.

This situation makes nonsense of Rajoy's claim that the Spanish government did not need a bailout. In reality, Rajoy was holding out for more favourable terms. Although all the details are not clear, it is evident that Spain has been offered a huge loan (from either the European Financial Stability Facility or the European Stability Mechanism) to stabilise the banks.

This loan has not been accompanied by the harsh conditions that, for instance, were imposed on Ireland as the price for €85 billion bailout of the Irish banks. Unlike Greece, Spain will not be subject to quarterly inspections by the troika – the European Central Bank, European Commission and the International Monetary Fund.

This concession by the German government and other eurozone leaders is partly recognition that Spain, the fourth largest eurozone economy, is 'too big to fail'. Moreover, they are fearful of undermining Rajoy as they need his government to contain the mass opposition.

In Brussels, Rajoy predicted that pushing through labour reform as part of the austerity package would 'cost him a general strike'. Within 100 days of his election a mass strike took place, with strikes and protests ongoing among miners, students and other sections of Spanish society.

With or without troika 'conditions',

Rajoy's government has already begun to implement brutal austerity measures. Health, education and other social measures have been slashed. The 2012 budget includes cuts of €27 billion, with more to come next year. The government accepts that this will mean a further fall in gross domestic product, the third year of recession. This is reflected in unemployment of around 25%, with half of all young people out of work.

This is the first major intervention by the Troika since the anti-austerity votes in France and Greece in May. No doubt, behind the insistence that this not a bailout, are political fears by Spain's ruling class.

Writing in April the Financial Times commentator Martin Wolf said: "perhaps the most important point to have emerged is that the crisis is subject to growing political risks. The fall of the Dutch government and the victory of François Hollande in the first round of the French presidential election demonstrate this point. The street might overwhelm the establishment."

Global crisis

George Osborne, the Con-Dem chancellor, has attacked the eurozone crisis for 'killing' the recovery of the British economy. From outside the eurozone, Osborne and prime minister David Cameron have called for greater integration, without explaining how this will be achieved.

The prolonged stagnation of the eurozone economies is undoubtedly a factor in the continued recession in Britain. Continental Europe is the biggest market for British exports. But our home-grown cuts, inflicted by the Con-Dem government, are the biggest factor in the double-dip recession here. As in eurozone countries, the policy of savage austerity is undermining growth, which actually increases the burden of debt.

The global outlook for capitalism is dismal. Most of the advanced capitalist countries have not yet regained their pre-2007 peak levels of production. Workers' living standards everywhere have been drastically reduced. The International Labour Organisation estimates that the world economic downturn since 2007 has thrown an additional 60 million workers into unemployment.

The weak growth in the US, the world's biggest economy, is faltering. Between 10-15% of the export earnings of the top US companies come from Europe (50% in the case of cars), and these have been undermined by the European recession.

The Chinese economy, moreover, is slowing down. The government recently lowered interest rates and eased credit conditions in an attempt to stimulate growth. There is a huge accumulation of debt, especially from the property bubble that developed in recent years.

It is far from certain that the Chinese regime will be able to repeat the kind of state-backed stimulus package that they implemented after 2008. India is slowing and Brazil, highly dependent on commodity exports to China, is also slowing down.

There are all the makings of a perfect storm in the global economy. A sharpening of the eurozone crisis (perhaps triggered by the outcome of the Greek elections on 17 June), a new recession in the US, or a downturn and political crisis in China could bring another downturn. This could be even more serious than the 'great recession' that has followed the financial crisis of 2007/08.

The FT's Martin Wolf, recently wrote that "the west is in

The pain in Spain falls mainly on the working class

50%

Unemployment in Spain has soared to nearly 25% - the highest rate in the EU - and for young people under 25 the rate is above 50%

17%

Cuts will include freezing public sector workers' salaries and reducing departmental budgets by 16.9% including health and education

40%

Despite the Bankia bailout people lost 40% of their savings held there

38,000

Cuts in subsidies to the mining industry will threaten the livelihoods of around 8,000 miners and endanger another 30,000 jobs

22%

Last year there were 58,000 evictions in Spain - a 22% rise, an average of 159 evictions every day, with four in every five involving families with children

4 in 5

A recent poll showed that 78% of Spaniards had "little or no" confidence in Rajoy or his governing Popular Party

a contained depression; worse, forces for another downswing are building, above all in the eurozone. Meanwhile policy-makers are making huge errors."

By 'policy errors' Wolf means the continued implementation of savage austerity measures in the face of stagnation and even recession, instead of measures to promote growth. He rightly says that the

CAPITALISM IS CRISIS

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euro is, in some ways, similar to the gold standard between the two world wars: it imposes the huge burden of an overvalued currency on the weaker economies like Greece, Portugal, Spain, etc.

At the same time, stronger economies, in particular Germany, while benefiting from their position in the eurozone, have not been prepared to expand their economies and boost the market for other eurozone countries.

Wolf points to the uncertainty: "What would happen if a country left the eurozone? Nobody knows. Might even Germany consider exit? Nobody knows. What is the long-run strategy for exit from the crises? Nobody knows. Given such uncertainty, panic is, alas, rational... Before now, I had never really understood how the 1930s could happen. Now I do."



The Spanish Indignados movement inspired the US Occupy protests

The future of the eurozone?

Global stock markets rose following news that the eurozone would be bailing out the Spanish banks. This uplift will be short-lived. Wealthy depositors are still moving their funds out of banks in Spain, Greece, etc, to 'safe havens' such as Switzerland, the US and Britain. There has been a surge in the price of luxury housing in central London, as the super-rich from eurozone countries buy up assets in London.

The Spanish bank bailout will prove to be another temporary measure that will not resolve the underlying problems of either Spain or the eurozone. The German chancellor, Angela Merkel, is once again calling for 'more Europe', with 'step-by-step' moves towards fiscal and political union of countries using the euro.

However, if such steps could not be taken during a period of boom before the end of 2007, how will they be implemented in a period of stagnation or even slump? Rajoy himself illustrates the schizophrenic attitude of many eurozone leaders. Welcoming the new bailout funds, he has called for moves towards a political and fiscal union. Yet only a few weeks ago, he rejected the eurozone leaders' debt-reduction targets on the basis of defending 'national sovereignty'.

The architects of the European Union had the illusion that they could overcome the national boundaries of capitalism and bring about an integration of the European economies. But rather than achieving convergence, the euro has sharpened the differences between the national economies.

Anger and resentment at austerity policies have led to the growth of na-

tionalist forces and ultra-right trends, as for example in Greece with the resurgence of the neo-Nazi Golden Dawn party. Capitalism is increasingly based on the growth of the world market, yet at the same time it cannot overcome its national limitations. This is a basic contradiction of the capitalist system.

The capitalist crisis in Europe has been reflected in the massive movements of the working class that have been taking place, wave after wave. There have been massive public sector strikes, general strikes, mass occupations and protests.

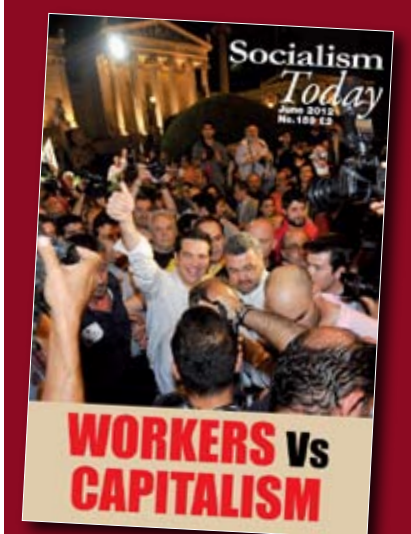
Deep anger

Millions and millions of workers reject the policies of capitalist austerity, which mean mass unemployment, poverty, and the destruction of welfare services built up over decades. There is deep anger at the bailing out of the banks, which means that ultimately the working class is paying for the speculative losses of the banks, which made huge profits from the property boom.

Workers are questioning the legitimacy of the capitalist system. What is required is a clear alternative. This means for a start, taking over the banks, not merely to subsidise their losses but to reorganise the banking system to act in the interests of society. This would be the first step towards a socialist planned economy, run under workers' democracy.

This should be approached on the basis of an international perspective, based on collaboration between workers throughout Europe and with the aim of building a European and global planned economy.

Socialism Today



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photo Paul Mattsson

Bolton Uni: Re-instate Shana Begum!

Hugh Caffrey
North West Socialist Party secretary

“Minta Minta Minta, Out Out Out!” and “V-C V-C V-C, Out Out Out!” echoed around the University of Bolton (UoB) on Monday as students denounced those responsible for undemocratically banning student union president Shana Begum.

Shana was re-elected with a big majority this year. In a disgraceful move, top management suspended her and imposed a close friend of the vice-chancellor, ‘chief operating officer’ Chris Minta.

Shana is clear why she’s been victimised: “In the past we’ve seen quiet presidents of the student union, but I see it as my job to represent students and lobby the university on their behalf.”

Shana urges everyone to: “bombard the vice-chancellor with

emails, contact your union and protest against this. If other universities notice that UoB can do this to me and just kick out student union presidents, what then?”

Socialist Students and Socialist Party members joined the demonstration and are organising support for Shana including in the local trade union movement.

No rules here

University management have apparently broken the law by imposing an unelected university governor onto the union which legally must be run autonomously by students.

Worryingly, Minta is branch secretary for the UCU lecturers’ union at the university! UCU members need to be asking some hard questions about this.

There have also been mischief-making complaints by racist trouble-

makers in the BNP. Shana is a single mother of Bangladeshi origin.

An extremely heavy police and private-security presence on campus was followed by the university closing down early ahead of Monday’s demonstration with no explanation given to students who questioned this.

Demonstrate on Monday 18 June, 5pm, outside Chancellor’s Mall, followed by public meeting: “How Bolton Students Can Save Our Union”, 6pm, location TBC

Messages of protest to vice-chancellor Dr George Holmes: 01204 903 001; g.e.holmes@bolton.ac.uk; Vice-Chancellor’s office, University of Bolton, Deane Road, Bolton, BL3 5AB Messages of support to: 07596 460 178; presidentshana@hotmail.co.uk



At the protest photo Hugh Caffrey

Greece comes to Southampton

Pete
Southampton Socialist Party

Southampton University saw 30-plus people cram into the Nuffield Theatre on Thursday 7 June. Students, trade unionists and unemployed people came to hear speeches from Nick Sakellaropoulos, fresh from the struggles in Greece, and Josh Asker from Socialist Students.

The speeches were interspersed with videos from the Irish Socialist Party of their campaign for a ‘no’ vote in EU treaty referendum, making the meeting a truly interna-

tional event!

Contributions from others in the room varied from raising points about the trade union movement in Britain to asking what the collapse of the euro would mean.

There was also a first hand account of how hard life has become in Greece, including how young people will salvage what they can from rubbish bins for food before burning the rest to keep warm.

Socialist Party members emphasised the need for solidarity with the Greek working class and to build an international mass movement. Nearly £50 was donated by attendees.



West Lancs Against Cuts

Phil Rawsthorne
Socialist Party and West Lancs Against the Cuts

Socialist Party members in West Lancashire have teamed up with others in their local community, in order to fight back against the savage austerity attacks implemented by a ruthless Tory-controlled council.

West Lancs Against the Cuts (WLAC) met for the first time on Wednesday 6 June. Lots of good

ideas were put forward about an action plan to combat attacks on services for the sick, disabled and elderly.

Talks were heard on A4e, foundation trusts and the neglect of Skelmersdale by the borough council.

A demo is planned for Wednesday 27 June at 11am outside the local benefits office, targeting both workfare and DWP’s treatment of local disabled people.

The next WLAC meeting is planned for Wednesday 4 July.

Building the Socialist Party

Why I joined: Labour Party’s failed us

Dave Rees
West Midlands

After being a Labour Party member on two occasions - 1983-92 and from September 2010 until a month ago - and also a former Militant (the Socialist Party’s predecessor) supporter, I have decided to join a real socialist party!

I was hoping that Labour may

change under Ed Miliband but how mistaken I was.

Ordinary working class people are being failed by the Labour Party. I was so angry at the way it wasn’t arguing against the attacks on public sector workers I had to leave.

I looked around at the socialist parties out there, reading what each stood for, and the only one I could honestly say I felt was speak-

ing the language I understood was the Socialist Party so I have decided to join.

I have also taken out a subscription for the Socialist and Socialism Today.

I would urge any socialist, trade unionist, shop steward, rep or worker to join the Socialist Party to build an alternative to the turncoat Labour Party. Keep up the good fight!

Leicester launches Saturday Forums

Kerry Feetham
Leicester Socialist Party chair

I’m a relatively new Socialist Party member who joined last summer.

As I got more involved, and got to know the regular branch meeting attendees, I realised that we had members who found it difficult to attend the branch’s evening meetings with the issues of travel and childcare.

Myself and branch secretary Helen Gadsby got our heads together and dreamt up the monthly “Saturday Forum” with great support from our branch. This was to enable members who wanted to be involved, a voice, but in a more informal discussion group and setting.

We have typically chosen a pub, but with childcare provision from fellow members.

So far this has been a great suc-

cess, with meeting introductions from East Midlands region organisers Becci Heagney and Steve Score including “How a socialist society would work” and “How to build a socialist society”.

A simple idea has turned into a really useful forum for exchanging ideas, learning, and knowledge building in the branch. By making meetings more accessible we have a new sense of collectivism and vitality.

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Southern	1,200	755								
South East	750	398								
Northern	600	311								
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London	6,100	2,457								
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Wisconsin Recall: Democrats paved the way for Walker's victory

A mass party of the working class is urgently needed in the USA

George Martin Fell Brown and Richard Payton,
Socialist Alternative, USA

A little over a year ago, the working people of Wisconsin made history when they took to the streets in protest against the union-busting agenda of the right-wing Republican governor Scott Walker. Walker's infamous Act 10 froze wages, increased state workers' pension and health contributions and stripped workers of their union collective bargaining rights.

The mass popular uprising that shook the state in February and March of 2011 gave way to a massive recall campaign in which Walker became only the third governor in US history to face a recall.

On 5 June 2012 a footnote was added to the pages of history when Walker became the first governor to survive a recall election, defeating his Democrat opponent Tom Barrett 54% to 46%, a wider margin than his initial election victory in 2010.

Many activists around the state are understandably disheartened by the fact that what began last year as a powerful mass movement involving rallies of tens of thousands, occupations and sick-outs, has in the end led to Walker remaining in office. The right will undoubtedly take the election results as a mandate for further attacks on working people.

The blame for this lies with the leadership of the trade unions and the politicians of the Democratic party, who diverted a mass movement of the working class into an electoral battle between the two parties of big business. To prevent future defeats, it is vital that workers learn the lessons of the Wisconsin recall and break from the two-party system.

The popular energy present last spring, both in Madison and all over the state, carried the potential for real, progressive change. Many of the protesters involved were experiencing their first taste of direct political activity, and countless Wisconsinites threw themselves into the grassroots, on-the-ground work of the recall campaign.

At the time, the recall, which would not have been even a possibility without the protests of February and March, was presented by the union leadership and state Democratic politicians as the only way forward for the movement. These activists' enthusiasm and zeal is evidenced by the nearly one million signatures supporting the recall of the governor gathered around the state in just a few months.

No alternative

Of course, Walker's attacks on workers, students, women, the poor and the elderly are terrible, and he deserves to be removed from office for them. However, the Democratic party and its candidate, Tom Barrett, failed to provide any real alternative.

As mayor of Milwaukee, Barrett himself made use of Walker's infamous anti-labour Act 10 to extract concessions from municipal workers under his control. On the campaign trail Barrett put forward virtually no argument in the face of Walker's austerity programme,



The mass workers' protests in February and March 2011 held the possibility of victory in its hands

instead stating that he wouldn't increase taxes on big business and the rich. Essentially, Barrett turned his back on the mass movement that made his re-match against Walker possible in the first place.

To top it all off, while Walker was receiving countless unimaginably large donations from various right-wing foundations and tycoons

What we need is a new political party that refuses to take corporate money, is democratically controlled by its members, and fights determinedly for the interests of the working class majority

around the country, the Democratic National Committee refused to put any resources whatsoever into the recall effort.

Some commentators defended Barrett's right-wing politics as necessary to win over moderate "swing voters." For instance, former Madison Mayor Dave Cieslewicz endorsed Barrett, arguing: "A candidate beholden to big unions is no more appealing to independent voters than one who answers to the Koch brothers." [The Koch brothers control the second largest, multi-billion dollar, privately-owned US company]

But Barrett's embrace of austerity and "shared sacrifice" served to legitimise Walker's agenda. Accepting that public sector workers needed to pay for the crisis only reinforced the right-wing propaganda that unions are only interested in taking their members' money and funding Democrats. This played a key role in allowing Walker to win the election even after the winter protests.

In the heat of the February and

March 2011 protests, the workers of Wisconsin held the possibility of imminent victory in their hands. Tens of thousands of people converged on Madison to march and rally, but weeks of protests had shown that Walker was not going to back down just in the face of demonstrations.

The idea of strike action was widely discussed within the movement. A one-day public sector general strike, combined with a solid occupation of the Capitol, mass demonstrations, direct action and student walkouts could have been an inspiring launch pad for a serious strategy to defeat Walker.

However, even when faced with the dismantling of public sector unions in Wisconsin, the state-level union leadership continually shied away from strike action, diverting the movement into the 'safe' channel of the recall.

Recall strategy

Socialist Alternative warned at the time that the recall strategy was not as "safe" as the union leaders made it out to be. We said: "It will not be enough to stop Walker and his corporate offensive. A recall will take months, a year or more (nor is there any guarantee of victory). But that won't stop the immediate impact of this disastrous bill as public sector unions now face the danger of being dismantled in the coming weeks."

Unfortunately, our warning proved correct. While the unions devoted countless resources to the Democratic Party, union membership has declined in the face of Walker's legislation.

Since the passage of Act 10, state-wide membership in the American Federation of Teachers has declined from 17,000 to 11,000 and state-wide membership in the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees has declined from 62,818 to 28,745.

This crisis would still exist even if Barrett had won. Now, more than ever, the labour movement needs to rebuild its membership and stop the attacks coming from Democrats and Republicans alike. It's up to the rank and file to organise on the shop

floor in every workplace to challenge their own leadership as well as the right-wing politicians.

Ultimately, for labour to succeed it needs to break from the two-party system. While the Democratic and Republican Parties may not be exact clones, they both represent the interests of big business and can't be relied on as allies of working people.

During the recall election, Socialist Alternative called for the labour movement and activist groups to run independent, pro-worker candidates. If all the effort that unions and activists put behind Barrett had gone to a candidate who genuinely represented the interests of workers, the outcome could have been different.

A candidate who unequivocally defended the interests of all working people, public and private sector, union and non-union, would have been able to win over "swing voters" far more easily than Barrett's slogan of "Scott Walker is too extreme for Wisconsin." Even if Walker still won the recall election, this political independence would have put the unions in a much better position to resist his attacks.

What we need is a new political party that refuses to take corporate money, is democratically controlled by its members, and fights determinedly for the interests of the working class majority on the issues of jobs, wages, benefits, health care, social programmes, housing, war, discrimination, and the environment.

In the past, workers have created parties like this in countries around the world. There are now two corporate parties in the US. Why shouldn't we, as working people, have one of our own?

●The Battle of Wisconsin History and lessons from the working-class revolt of 2011

Pamphlet by George Martin Fell Brown

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

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

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Vincent Kolo, chinaworker



Serbia: Low voter turnout for presidential elections

Stagnating economy and joblessness lead to growing working class anger.

Paul Kershaw, Socialist Party (CWI England and Wales)

Not a penny more off our pensions and not a day longer at work!

No to local government pensions deal

It's been seven months since the magnificent strike on 30 November in defence of public sector pensions. Seven months with members being kept in the dark. On 31 May the deal that has been stuck at the top of the unions was announced. It is now to be subject to ballots in the different local government unions.

The proposal will affect 4.6 million working and retired workers. So we must be sure that we are not being robbed again, like we were in 2006, when £1 billion was taken off our pensions.

The long and short of this deal is "work longer, get less, pay more". The local government scheme is not in financial difficulty. This is just another attempt by the government to steal money from the pockets of public sector workers.

Any concessions that have been won are because of strike action and the employers' fear of another 30 November.

If the union leaders think this is a good deal achieved through negotiation, imagine what could be won if we fight alongside all the other union members still fighting to protect their pensions?



Union members march on 30 November - time to oppose the rotten pensions deal photo Paul Mattsson

Details of the pensions proposals unpicked...

We are told that this deal means:

***For those under the age of 55 your normal retirement age will rise in line with the new state pension age - 67, 68 and then 70.**

This means many will have to work two, three and even five years longer.

***Pensions will only be uprated with the lower CPI inflation rate rather than the higher RPI rate.**

This measure alone has stolen billions off the current pensioners and those yet to retire.

***The final salary scheme is to be replaced with a career average scheme.**

We earn 1/60th of our salary in pension each year, the accrual rate. The final pension is 1/60th of our final salary multiplied by length of service.

In 2006 we fought to keep this

scheme and opposed the career average scheme, so why is it now being attacked by the union leaderships as only benefiting the higher paid?

The union officials are now claiming that the career average scheme is better, because it has a better accrual rate of 1/49th and will be uprated by the CPI inflation rate.

Most workers end up earning far more in their last years of working than when they first started. They will be rightly suspicious that taking their average salary over their whole career can be better than using their final salary.

Some of the examples the unions give seem to show we would be no worse off and in some cases better off with a 1/49th and CPI uprating but are we being given the whole picture?

Some months ago the unions said that in order to be better off or no worse off than under the final salary scheme we would need to get an uprating level of not just the inflation rate but inflation plus 2.5%. The reason for this is that history has shown over the long run pay rises are generally 2.5% higher than the inflation rate.

Despite this we are now being sold an uprating level of just the CPI inflation rate, 3% at the moment.

If we were given examples of CPI plus 2.5% it would expose the career average scheme as leaving many more workers worse off.

Our union leaders clearly don't believe that we will be able to secure anything other than pay rises at or below inflation rate for the next 20 years.

***They say that no one will face**

an increase in contribution rates other than workers earning more than £43,000.

We know in other schemes workers are being asked to pay more so many will be pleased by this concession. However some workers earning less than £20,000 will pay more. Let's not forget we've been paying more for the last four years and had no pay rise for three of those.

***Part-time staff will now pay contributions based on their actual earnings, not the full time equivalent.**

This is an improvement as it was always unfair for part-time staff to have to pay a contribution rate based on the full-time equivalent earnings.

***Staff transferring to the private sector can remain in the pension scheme as a right from April 2014.**

This is an improvement, as at the moment private companies are only required to come up with a "broadly comparable scheme". It's not clear who will pay for this - the councils or the profit making companies.

***There will now be a 50/50 option.**

Effectively you can pay half the monthly contribution rate and get half the benefits. In other words, save now lose later. But the reason we are struggling is because we've had no pay rises for three years.

***The future costs of the scheme are yet to be resolved.**

This is a recipe for "vote now, pay more later". In the health service they ended up with a deal where the employers were protected from increases and all the increased costs now fall on the shoulders of the workers.

Threat from far-right in Greece: Time to build defence committees

Amalia Loizidou

'While the economy is going down the pan, Greek politicians are fighting'. That's how the British media presented the attack on two female left-wing MPs by a MP from the neo-nazi group Golden Dawn during a Greek TV debate.

They want to play down the danger of fascism or want to present these criminal, fascist gangs as just another political view.

Unfortunately Golden Dawn does not just write down racist ideas on a piece of paper. These thugs have no hesitation in physically attacking anyone whose face, preferences, opinions or struggles they don't like.

After Golden Dawn got 7% in the elections on 6 May, attacks against

migrants have increased across Greece, so have threats against gay people ("you're next"). So have their "parades" on scooters waving their flags.

They did not hesitate to attack the media workers' strike in late May, doing Nazi salutes and other rude gestures involving middle fingers.

So no, it wasn't just politicians unable to control themselves slapping each other. It was a person whose ideology is one of hatred of anything that he doesn't agree with.

This man threw water over a female MP from the left wing Syriza group and when an MP from the Communist KKE stood up in her defence he didn't hesitate to go and punch a woman that could have been his mother, bruising her face!

So "manly" were his actions that he then went into hiding so he wouldn't be arrested and prosecuted.

This neo-nazi was due to be on trial on 11 June but he didn't turn up. He was accused of being involved in an attack against a university teacher.

This is who these people are. And if these are their actions when they are on camera, one can imagine what is happening in the alleys of Athens and elsewhere in Greece. A day after this attack, another Golden Dawn candidate was arrested for assault in a northern Greek town.

Greece's working class needs to fight these right-wing thugs and the threat they pose. There is an urgent need for the building of defence committees and a powerful socialist left alternative.



There is an urgent need to build a socialist alternative in Greece

Tamil protest scores victory as Rajapaksa cancels speech

Sarah Sachs-Eldridge

'Rajapaksa can't attend the meeting because the police can't guarantee his safety'. That was the attempt to explain away the Sri Lankan president and war criminal's no-show at the Mansion House in the City of London on Wednesday 6 June.

Of course the real reason, obvious to anyone in the area, was the thousands of protesters, almost entirely Tamil, who gathered on the pavement outside. Many young people and families with children attended.

A Tamil Solidarity spokesperson quoted by the ITV News website explained what motivated the protest: "This butcher and his dictatorial regime is still brutally repressing the Tamil-speaking people and trampling democratic rights.

"Britain has enough war criminals without Rajapaksa, with the blood of hundreds of thousands on his hands, 40,000 in the last weeks of the war alone, being invited for the Jubilee."

Tamil Solidarity campaigners made a big impact on the event. Our striking placards, posters and leaflets were enthusiastically snatched up and distributed.

But this successful event also confirmed what Tamil Solidarity has been arguing for some time - that capitalist politicians cannot be trusted to act on behalf of oppressed people or their supporters.

It is the protests of ordinary peo-



Anti-Rajapaksa protesters blocked the streets in central London photo S Sachs-Eldridge

ple that can have success. We argue that the campaign, injected now with a new confidence to fight back, must be escalated.

The idea of reaching out to other young people, workers and trade unionists in Britain proved very attractive, especially to young people on the demo.

Tamil Solidarity ran a stall at the National Shop Stewards Network conference on Saturday 9 June and this event was also advertised on every leaflet.

Having scored one victory the protest went on the streets where thousands more joined it with Tamil people having travelled overnight from France, Switzerland, Germany and other European countries. It

headed for the Commonwealth Secretariat building on Pall Mall.

This marked the highpoint of a very good week of protests, starting with an angry 'welcoming party' at the airport forcing the President to sneak into Britain.

Tory MPs plan a visit to Sri Lanka. Deportations of Tamils from Britain to Sri Lanka are ongoing, with the horrendous torture suffered by some exposed in the Guardian.

And the aggression of the Sri Lankan government towards the Tamil-speaking people and all voices of dissent, including increased militarisation and settlement-building in Tamil areas shows that there is a huge amount to fight against. But struggle is back on the agenda.

If you would like to join Tamil Solidarity or find out more about the campaign and the background to this protest please see www.tamilsolidarity.org

Come to the Tamil Solidarity meeting

Saturday 23 June, ULU, Malet Street, London WC1E 7HY

3-4pm young people discuss and plan action

4-5pm Where now for Eelam struggle - What's the role for the diaspora?

Open meeting with reports from Malaysia and Tamil Nadu

Kazakhstan: Oil workers jailed by rotten regime

Last December armed police fired on and killed up to 70 striking oil workers who were peacefully protesting in the Kazakhstan city of Zhanaozen.

Yet instead of charging the interior minister, who gave the order to open fire, 37 oil workers and supporters were put on trial for "organising and participating in mass unrest".

Only three of the 37 have been cleared of all charges. 21 of those on trial were sentenced to either two or three years in prison, with the sentence suspended or, in a couple of cases, subject to amnesty. 13 activists, however, received actual prison sentences ranging from three years to, in the case of Roza Tuletaeva, seven years.

Brutality

Roza, a mother of three children, was one of the leading activists in the oil strike. During the trial she related how she nearly suffocated when bags were put over her head during interrogation and she was beaten with iron rods.

To avoid blame being directed at the regime itself, the general prosecutor picked out a number of scapegoats from the local authorities and police to put on trial. Undoubtedly guilty of the crimes for which they were charged, they nevertheless have served the role of letting higher up figures off the hook.

Kazakhstan is a police state ruled by president Nursultan Nazarbayev and his cronies, who have looted the country to grow rich and

buy international allies such as 'consultant' Tony Blair, while the majority live in poverty.

It is now reported that another wave of arrests and torture is taking place. Up to 15 more activists from the oil strike, along with leaders of the opposition political party Alga, are expected to be put on trial for "inciting social discontent" with a possible sentence of up to 12 years imprisonment.

Trade union activists from the OzenMunaiGaz company are being called in for questioning, in an attempt to intimidate them from organising a new strike. Following questioning, one 51 year old activist committed suicide.

However, local trade union activists report that the workers are still determined to protest, whether outside the city mayor's office or by preparing new strikes in the region. According to one of the local leaders, the next trial is being prepared, not to take revenge for the last strike, but to try and prevent the next one.

See www.campaignkazakhstan.org for more reports

Workers leader found dead

●On 5 June Takhir Mukhamedzyanov, leader of the opposition Socialist Movement Kazakhstan, was found dead in his flat. His death is surrounded by suspicion. Not least because Takhir recently received threats from "persons unknown" that they would 'get rid of him'.

Read obituary on www.socialistworld.net

Olympic's sponsor exploits workers

Multinational sportswear corporation and Olympics sponsor Adidas owes its workers in Indonesia, who it paid as little as 45 pence an hour, \$1.8 million (£1.2 million) in unpaid wages.

In January 2011 the owner of the PT Kizone factory, which made Adidas products, fled. This resulted in the factory being closed and the 2,800-strong workforce, mostly women with dependent children, laid-off without being paid a penny.

Adidas, which has handsomely profited from these workers' labour - £559 million profit in 2011 - claims it is not liable for the unpaid wages and compensation.

Many of these low-paid workers have since lost their homes and are facing massive debts. Meanwhile, Adidas is spending hundreds of millions of dollars on sponsoring

events such as the London 2012 Olympics and the Euro 2012 football championships in order to promote its profitable brand.

Sacked PT Kizone workers have been demonstrating outside the German and British embassies in Jakarta, Indonesia. They are demanding that Adidas respect their rights and pay them the money they are owed.

Meanwhile protesters from social justice campaign groups have staged demonstrations outside Adidas stores in cities across Britain, Denmark, Spain and Austria in solidarity with the Indonesian workers.

Adidas's behaviour is one of many examples of the parasitic and exploitative nature of the capitalist mode of production in the pursuit of profit.

Dave Younger

International day of support for political prisoners in Iran

On 20 June protests will be held across the world to demand an end to the imprisonment, torture and execution of innocent trade unionists, students and youth in Iran.

Many are imprisoned for such crimes as 'propaganda against the Islamic regime' ie the free expression of opinions, or for organising trade unions (illegal in Iran), or for taking part in activities of religious or ethnic minorities.

Some have languished on death row for years. Not that the regime is afraid of carrying out executions; Iran carries out more executions than any other state apart from Chi-

na and Saudi Arabia.

Currently, dozens of trade unionists and hundreds of political activists are imprisoned. The imprisoned worker activists include Reza Shahabi, a leader of the Union of Workers of Tehran and Suburbs United Bus Company and Abdolreza Ghanbari, a teacher, who has been sentenced to death and who is in imminent danger of execution.

We demand the release of all political prisoners. Down with the despot Ahmadinajad and the theocratic regime, for a socialist Iran in a socialist federation of the Middle East.

Paul Gerrard

Fast news

Turkey: Lift strike ban

Preparations for a strike by the Civil Aviation Union (Hava-İş) after the breakdown in collective bargaining talks at Turkish Airlines (THY), have been attacked by the AKP government through the inclusion of aviation services in a strike ban.

Aviation workers showed their reaction to the ban with a one-day strike. Following this action 350 workers were sacked. The sacked workers and their union are continuing their struggle. We call on aviation workers and all workers in Europe to show solidarity with their brothers and sisters in Turkey.

The AKP government had moved with unprecedented haste to ban aviation workers' strikes by means of an additional clause to the 'Collective Bargaining, Strike and Lock-out Act'. This change took effect on 3 June. Clearly the government has acted wholly in the interests of the airline.

Day-Mer (Turkish and Kurdish Community Centre)

Letters of protest to:

Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Prime Minister Republic of Turkey
receptayyip.erdogan@basbakanlik.gov.tr

Messages of support to:

Civil Aviation Union, havais@havais.org.tr

Kemal Ulker, Civil Aviation Union, kemalulker@havais.org.tr

Stop the deportation

Leeds University student Roseline Akhalu suffers from acute kidney disease and risks death from not being able to buy expensive medication if the British government is successful in deporting her to her native Nigeria.

Roseline came to Leeds on a student visa in 2004 to do a Masters degree. In 2005 she unexpectedly developed end-stage renal failure and remained on dialysis until receiving a kidney transplant at St James Hospital in 2009.

If deported to Nigeria she would not have access to immunosuppressant drugs which she must take for the rest of her life, as only the well-off can afford them. Roseline's renal specialist Dr James Tattershall says: "Deportation will be a death sentence."

An online campaign and petition have been launched by Roseline's supporters to fight for her right to remain in the United Kingdom. Sign the petition: <http://www.gopetition.com/petitions/stop-the-deportation-of-transplant-patient-roseline-ak.html>

Pinochet protest

Riot police using tear gas and water cannon attacked anti-Pinochet protesters in the Chilean capital Santiago last Sunday. It was the biggest protest against the former dictator since 2006 and coincided with the screening of a documentary on general Pinochet's life which airbrushes out the dictator's murderous rule.

Pinochet, with the backing of the US state department, overthrew the elected left-wing presidency of Salvador Allende in September 1973. In the ensuing bloodbath over 3,000 left-wingers were executed and thousands more tortured, imprisoned and exiled. Former Tory prime minister Margaret Thatcher was an adoring fan of Pinochet's neoliberal politics and in July 2000 Labour's home secretary Jack Straw allowed Pinochet, who was facing extradition to Spain on torture charges, to flee from Britain back to Chile.

Olympics - a fair deal for transport workers

LONDON BUS WORKERS STRIKE TOGETHER

A London bus worker

Bus workers across London have voted overwhelmingly for strike action. Dates are to be announced.

Other passenger transport workers in the capital are getting an Olympic bonus. Why not bus workers? Do the bosses think we are a soft touch?

Our union Unite expects 800,000 extra passengers to travel on buses during the Olympic Games. We are asking for a £500 bonus for the extra pressure we're undoubtedly going to face. Every day we already have to deal with frustrated passengers and tolerate road rage on congested streets. It will be many times worse during the Olympics.

Other workers are getting between £500 and £900. And Unite has revealed that seven London transport bosses stand to get an Olympic bonus of £80,000 each. In May a survey revealed 88% of passengers agree with us getting a bonus.

The count last week indicated 94% voted to strike – on the same 38% turnout as when London mayor

Boris Johnson got in to office.

Unless Transport for London and the big profitable bus firms pay up, this will be our first London-wide strike for decades. Success can begin to transform the mood of bus workers. We desperately need to build a reputation like tube workers for strong trade unionism.

Other disputes

Transport for London RMT members in Travel Information Centres, Customer Contact Centres and Lost Property Offices have voted more than three to two for strike action and more than three to one for action short of a strike.

This is to demand payment for the extra work during the Olympics and in protest at the ban on annual leave during the games. Strike action and an overtime ban are now likely.

The RMT has also just secured an agreement for Heathrow Express workers of a £700 bonus for the extra pressure during the Olympics. This also gives the opportunity to earn additional payments on a voluntary basis with no threat to annual leave or enforced extension of hours.



London bus workers lobby City Hall photo Suzanne Beishon

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!