



Hypocrites!

TORIES BASH BENEFITS, RICH LET OFF THE HOOK



A government of the rich, for the rich!

Dave Reid

David Cameron launched a scathing attack on comedian Jimmy Carr's million pound tax-dodging while leaving unscathed the billions of taxes avoided by his posh friends in big business.

Unsurprisingly, Cameron did not mention that he himself has benefited from the millions his father made in offshore tax havens.

And what about big bank Barclays which 'avoided' £3 billion of corporation tax in 2009 using some of its 249 subsidiary companies in offshore tax havens? Or Vodafone which was let off over £5 billion in unpaid taxes by the government? Or Boots which avoids paying £86 million per year so that it only pays 3% of its profits. The amounts are eye-watering.

The Carr episode actually shows that tax avoidance is common practice among the wealthy including many wealthy donors to Cameron's Tory party. Billionaire Philip Green was called in to advise the government on 'efficiency savings' while avoiding paying any tax on a £1.2 billion bonus!

Tory grandee and fundraiser Lord Ashcroft (given a peerage by Tony Blair's government in 2000), was a tax-exempt 'non-dom' who didn't pay a penny on his overseas earnings and holdings estimated at £1.1 billion.

Asked to comment on Ashcroft's tax status, Cameron said: "You have to respect people's

privacy and you have to respect the view that someone's tax status is a matter between them and the Revenue."

In this year's budget the government, while slashing benefits and public services to the poorest and most vulnerable people, actually cut taxes on the rich – the top rate of income tax and corporation tax on the profits of big business. That's the Tory way of reducing tax avoidance – cut the taxes on the rich!

And the government is cutting the very department that chases up the tax avoiders. On 25 June tens of thousands of workers at Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) went on strike against cuts to their department, privatisation and the reduction of tax inspectors (see page 4).

Their union, PCS (the Public and Commercial Services union), estimates £120 billion goes missing every year mainly from rich tax dodgers. Yet the government intends to cut 10,000 jobs at HMRC. Jobs axed at HMRC have already resulted in over a billion pounds being lost in tax revenue according to the House of Commons public accounts committee.

Labour's criticisms of the Tories are a bit rich – they allowed billions to be avoided as well. 30,000 jobs went at HMRC as a result of Labour's cutbacks.

Successive governments' policies make the tax regime for the rich leak like a sieve. If you can afford a good accountant there are thousands of ways for the wealthy to avoid tax. The

whole financial sector has become a tax avoidance mechanism.

That's why as well as beefing up HMRC and allowing its workers to get on with the job, the way to start ensuring that the rich pay the tax they have been assessed for is through public ownership and control of the banks and finance companies. Then, the pensions and public services we all depend upon can be fully funded.

Make the super-rich pay for the crisis – not the 99%!

On tax the Socialist Party's programme includes:

- Increase income tax on the super-rich, not the low-paid
- Increase the tax paid by big corporations, investing in HMRC to stop their evasions
- Introduce a 50% levy on the hoarded £750 billion lying idle in the bank accounts of big business, using money raised to invest in jobs and services
- For public ownership of the top 150 banks and companies that dominate the British economy. Compensation to be paid only on the basis of proven need
- Build a mass movement, including political representation, to fight for a socialist alternative to capitalism, based on democratic planning and public ownership of the wealth to meet the needs of all – not just the greedy super-rich 1%

See page 3 for our response to Cameron's onslaught on benefits

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The Socialist Party's fighting fund is on 99% - please help us reach our full target! Send or phone in donations and other payments by 3pm Friday 29 June. Telephone 020 8988 8777 or go to www.socialistparty.org.uk/donate



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Breadline Britain - living in poverty

A series in the Guardian, Breadline Britain, has outlined some shocking statistics about poverty. These figures have smashed apart the Tory propaganda about 'scroungers' and 'the job-shy'. Seven million adults are always one step away from extreme financial stress – even though they work. This has a wide variety of horrific consequences on our communities, some of which are commented on by Socialist Party members here.

In the eighth richest country in the world, there is no reason for poverty. There is £750 billion lying idle in the bank accounts of big business – they won't invest because they can't see a way to make a quick profit.

The Socialist Party calls for an immediate 50% levy on that money to enable mass investment into public services and socially useful job creation.

We also call for:

- No cuts! For mass trade union led struggle, including a 24-hour general strike and involving all those suffering under austerity, to stop all privatisation and attacks on jobs, services, pensions and living standards
- A decent rate of minimum wage, benefits and pensions, which reflects the real costs of living
- Decent, affordable housing. Immediately cap private rents and invest in a mass programme of publicly owned house building
- Share out the work to simultaneously end unemployment and long working hours, with no loss of pay
- A new mass workers' party to provide a political alternative, based on struggle, to the pro-big business parties

- Nationalise the banks under democratic control with compensation paid only on the basis of proven need
- A socialist alternative based on democratic planning of the resources of the planet to meet the needs of the overwhelming majority and the environment – not just the 1%



'Cliff edge' poverty blights millions

Breadline Britain particularly highlighted what the Guardian calls 'cliff edge' poverty. This describes those who manage to survive but are always at breaking point to the extent that they have no way to handle an unexpectedly large bill or a broken household appliance.

An increasing number of these people are working. The number of housing benefit claimants who are in work, for example, more than doubled between November 2008 and February 2012. And 58% of children in poverty have at least one parent in work. The Charity for Civil Servants, a hardship fund, used to give money mainly to retired and vulnerable civil servants. Now 85% of their funds go to those in work, mainly with young families.

Costs are going up, wages are frozen and benefits are being slashed. In the last five years, food prices have gone up 30.5% while the minimum wage has risen only



photo Paul Mattsson

12.1%.

The 'cliff edge' explains the rise in pay day loan companies, charity shops and food banks as people need a way to pay unexpected

costs. The problem was highlighted recently by the computer error at RBS, Ulster bank and NatWest meaning that millions of customers didn't have expected wages and

benefits transferred into their accounts.

Adele Guntrip, Hampshire Socialist Party, describes her experience.

"On Thursday 21 June I was a victim of the NatWest banking system crash. I woke up and went to get my tax credits that I rely on to feed my children - as we live hand to mouth, week to week - and discovered that I had no money.

I called the bank and was told they could not offer an emergency system as all accounts were down.

I spoke to two other people who were in panic as they had not received their money. One had no food and no electric and was reliant on the money they get every Thursday for sustenance. It was only through my advice to them that they realised the problem.

Every pensioner, every benefit claimant and everyone in receipt of tax credits who banks with any of the RBS owned banks, was without funds. If I did not have a partner who lent me the money I would not have been able to send my sons to school."

Teachers report children going hungry

"The Guardian revealed some quite shocking figures about teachers having to feed children. But this has been going on for a long time – it isn't anything new. Certainly in my school we are feeding the children ourselves - we have a number of children who regularly need to have a breakfast and a dinner because their families don't get benefits and they're not entitled to free school meals. We also regularly contribute to the food banks in Coventry and we have a number of parents who regularly have to use the food banks. I think in a wealthy country, we should be judging it on whether we can feed our kids and we can't – that needs to change, the only way that will change is with a redistribution of wealth across the board."

Nicky Downes
Primary school teacher, Coventry

Poverty and job worries hit mental health

A leaked memo from senior Jobcentre executives to staff warns of an increased risk of benefit claimants attempting suicide as a result of changes to sickness benefit.

The Con-Dems' vicious cuts to welfare include effectively forcing thousands of people who are eligible for disability benefits into the job market. Private companies such as Atos Origin are being paid millions to make assessments that will deny people much-needed financial support and services.

And, of course, these people are being forced to compete for jobs which don't exist in numbers to match demand. In 39 local authorities there are ten or more claimants for every Jobcentre vacancy available. But, as the Socialist has previously pointed out, not all these 'vacancies represent real jobs - many are duplicates, agencies, commission only or catalogue and leaflet distribution.

The memo emphasises the need for Jobcentre workers to have "utmost care and sensitivity" when dealing with "customers".

Oppose the cuts

Indeed, there is increasing evidence of mental health problems resulting from poverty. The mental health charity Mind reports that its infoline has seen a 100% increase in calls about personal finance and employment since the start of the recession. Since Work Capability Assessments were

brought in there has also been a 100% increase in calls about benefits.

The Lancet Medical Journal published a study last year showing that the steady downward trend in suicide rates across the EU immediately reversed in 2007 when the recession hit. Also, the increase was greatest where the financial crisis has been worse – 17% in Greece and 13% in Ireland.

Katrine Williams, Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) group vice president in the PCS civil servants' union, responds.

"PCS members in DWP want to deliver good quality services to the public. This is even more critical in difficult economic times when many more people need support.

PCS members are increasingly raising concerns about the impact of the welfare reforms on the public as they are dealing first hand with the consequences. Our members want to be trusted to deliver services and have enough time to give support and respect to people.

So PCS was surprised to find that our posters, including one (opposite) highlighting that the number of calls where our members are dealing with the issue of suicide have increased, were banned by management. We will continue to campaign for more staff and time to deal with the public properly.

Also, importantly, PCS has a good record of campaigning against the welfare reforms of this government and the previous New Labour one. PCS will work with anti-cuts campaigners, claimant organisations and other trade



The banned poster

unions to oppose the cuts which are decimating the welfare state and pushing people to the limit."

83%

Teachers report seeing children hungry in the mornings

40%

Some schools report as many as 4/10 first aid referrals last year were caused by a lack of breakfast

20%

Teachers say the increase in pupil hunger since the recession has been 'dramatic'

Government of rich ups war on welfare state...

Sarah Sachs-Eldridge

Cuts are now predicted to last to 2020. But Prime Minister David Cameron's speech on Monday 25 June mapped out the depth of that on-going suffering. The speech included little detail but spells out misery for millions, if implemented.

Without listing all aspects of the attack, some of the most vicious of 17 cruel proposals are: removing housing benefit from 16-24 year olds; restricting income support and child benefit to single mothers if they have three or more children and requiring lone parents of children as young as three attend Jobcentres (the current limit is five thanks to Labour cuts); making job-seekers work for their dole; banning school leavers from going straight on to benefit.

With growing opposition to austerity why has he made this promise of pain, pain and more pain? Cameron is attempting to play the divide and rule game – picturing some who receive benefits as the 'undeserving work-shy poor', responsible for sucking billions out of the economy.

Lies and spin

On a similar theme the local councils' organisation has claimed that the cost of elderly care is responsible for likely further cuts in libraries and other services of up to 90%. In reality it is bank bailouts, and, fundamentally, the capitalist system that is behind the crisis.

Polly Toynbee in the Guardian explains how Cameron attempts to sew seeds of blame in his speech: "How knowingly he misled in al-



photo Paul Mattsson

most every example he gave, as he pitted 'those who work hard and do the right thing' against those on benefits, deliberately disguising that these are mainly the same people.

"Most of the poor drawing benefits are cleaners, carers, caterers – the 62% living below the poverty line, working hard yet needing benefits to survive."

While whipping up frustration with money spent on the housing benefit bill, a common theme for the Tories, and Lib Dems and Labour, he does not explain that £950 million of the £1 billion increase in housing benefit has been paid to low-paid workers as rents skyrocket and wages are frozen or cut.

It also appears that a Tory version of a beauty pageant is taking place in the party with candidates, such as Michael Gove, for future leadership roles flaunting their right-wing

credentials for the backbenchers to admire and assess.

Some have argued that this is the Tories' 'break for freedom' – an attempt to show their true colours, free from the shackles of Lib Dem softness. But it would be a huge mistake to imagine for a second that workers can rely on the Liberal Democrats to stop these savage attacks becoming fact.

New Labour cannot be trusted to fight these proposals either. So far they have promised to maintain the cuts in pensions and public services, been unable to commit to even restoring the 50p tax rate on the super-rich and failed to support trade union action against the cuts.

The need for a new mass workers' party has never been so urgent. See page 8 for news on the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition – an important step in this direction.

...Unions must respond in kind

Cameron's speech should be a like a red rag to a bull for the trade union movement. The Tories' gloves are off and the working class and all suffering cuts must respond in kind.

The Trades Union Congress (TUC) has called a national demonstration for Saturday 20 October. Every effort must be made to make it a huge display of organised rage against these cruel and unnecessary cuts.

The central slogan for that demo should be a clear rallying call to cut across any attempts to divide us: 'fight all the cuts'. But to reach out to the millions suffering austerity there must also be a programme – rent

caps not benefit caps, investment in house-building, jobs and services, an end to low pay, no more privatisation gifts to big business or bank bailouts – nationalise the banks. And solidarity with those fighting austerity internationally.

A demonstration is a rallying call – but to really express our opposition we need the 20th to be the preparation for a 24-hour general strike – with the promise of further action should the cuts continue. The National Shop Stewards Network will be lobbying the TUC in September to demand this.

Cameron and Co have no solu-

tions to a world in crisis other than to gouge the cost out of the 99%. Their policies promise joblessness, homelessness and spiralling poverty. Their propaganda is designed to sew division. Our movement has the potential power to answer them and to stop them – let's organise to do that.

NO TO AUSTERITY
We demand a 24-hour general strike
NSSN-organised lobby of the TUC
Sunday 9 September 1pm
Brighton
See www.shopstewards.net for updates and campaign material

Protest for affordable housing – join the Austerity Games

Claire Laker-Mansfield, Youth Fight for Jobs, said: "Cameron's latest comments on housing benefit for under 25s represent a cruel and vicious attack on young people. In particular, this will hit the most vulnerable.

"His crass comments, condemning young people who attempt to live as independent adults rather than with their parents throughout their early 20s, stink of an out of touch prime minister unable to understand the lives of those not lucky

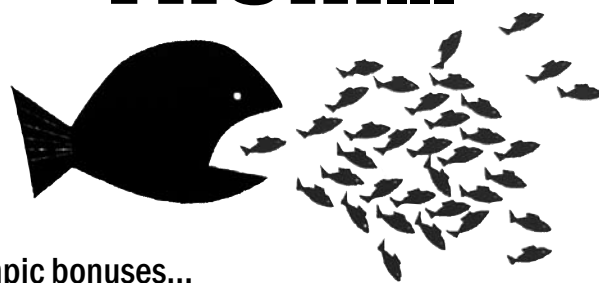
enough to have his own hyper-privileged background."

Youth Fight for Jobs will highlight the issue of unaffordable housing for young people in the 'property high jump' at the Austerity Games:

Austerity Games 2012
Monday 23 July, 2pm
Hackney Marshes, Homerton Road, London
#austeritygames
@youthfight4jobs
www.youthfightforjobs.com



Them...



Olympic bonuses...

The Financial Times expressed outrage at its calculation that transport workers in London could receive a cumulative £35 million in bonuses for working during the Olympics. But they conveniently failed to mention some other bonuses related to the Games – for example Jeremy Beeton, director general of the Government Olympic Executive, received £187,500. That's a bit of a difference from the bus workers who only want £500 each!

...and curfews

The real impact of the Olympics for those living in east London is becoming clear. Police in Waltham Forest have been granted extra powers to break up 'gatherings' of two or more people. Apparently this will only apply to those 'suspected' of 'anti-social' behaviour – who will then be banned from the area for 24 hours!

And if you're under 16 and out after 9pm, they don't even need the pretence that you might be doing something wrong. This is an attack on our democratic rights. Youth Fight for Jobs has called a protest at Leytonstone police station, Kirkdale Road, Leytonstone at 6pm, Friday 29 June.

A4e pseudo-science

You may remember A4e from such scandals as the £200-a-head nights out on the company credit card, the chief executive paying herself £8.6 million and of course the £200 million government contracts for 'getting people back to work'. Now the company is branching out and providing neuro-linguistic programming (NLP) to "change mindsets" of the unemployed so that they're more focused on getting a job. NLP is widely discredited by scientists. That doesn't surprise us, it doesn't seem very scientific to suggest that 'motivational techniques' can solve the problem of there being seven job-seekers for every one vacancy.

Affordable housing?

As reported opposite, in this spending review period the government is only spending £4.5 billion on afford-

able housing. But even that figure is a massive over-estimate. Much of this money goes to housing associations – such as the £20 million given to the One Housing Group last year – and what they count as 'affordable' might differ a bit from your own view.

One Housing Group has built a block of flats in Islington with each being sold for up to £705,000! To qualify for the part buy scheme, you have to earn £59,000 – the average wage in London is £33,850. So how much of this pitiful spending on affordable housing goes to housing that is actually affordable?

Rail fare hike

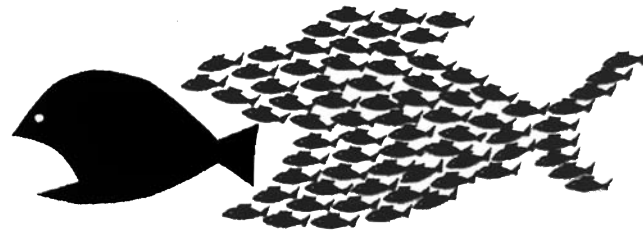
The government has announced rail fare increases of 3% above inflation – meaning at least a 6% (and up to 11%) increase on train travel costs next year. With wages for many either frozen or cut and travel costing as much as rent for some who have to commute to work, this could be the straw that breaks the camel's back. Apparently even the train companies think it's too much! A leaked document shows them discussing publicly opposing such an increase – somehow we doubt this philanthropic side will stretch to limiting the increase and taking a knock on their profits.

All in it together

Jobs are being slashed and services closed around the world – all a result of the banking collapse of 2008/9. We all have to take a hit to make up for mistakes of the bankers and speculators. Or so we're told. Despite the fact that many banks are suffering plummeting shares and mass job cuts for lower paid workers, top bankers have seen their pay rise 12% in a year – to an average of \$12.8 million. Five directors at Nationwide are now paid more than £1 million. Graham Beale, the chief executive, gets £2.25 million – about 80 times the average wage of a Nationwide worker!

A small dip in bonuses – to satisfy those pesky shareholders – has been more than made up for by an increase in salary. So, we are all in this together...unless you're a banker.

...& Us



Cameron talked of a "culture of entitlement" and of the privileges gained from the welfare system. But who's privileged?

- 18 out of 23 cabinet ministers are millionaires
- £65,738 - annual wages for an MP
- £4.5 million – cost to the public purse of ministerial salaries (on top of their MPs' wages)
- Cameron has repeatedly been rumoured to possess between £10 and £30 million
- £1.5 million – cost of the Camerons' home in South Kensington



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London bus workers show their strength

A London bus worker

The sleeping giant has woken up – on 22 June 20,000 London bus workers came out on strike over payments for extra pressure during the Olympics. The big turnout on the picket lines reflected the enthusiasm for this display of strength. In 1982 London bus workers struck in support of the nurses but the last strike you can compare was probably 1958.

Transport for London said 85% of drivers were on strike but claimed a third of routes were operating. But most Londoners didn't bother waiting for the few overcrowded buses driven by supervisors, agency staff and a minority of new drivers on probation who had been personally warned by management. These buses were mainly for show.

Unite the Union wrote to London Mayor Boris Johnson last September and tried to talk to the bus companies. But the bosses would not talk. Just before the strike Boris found £8.3 million towards a settlement and called on the private operating companies to make up the difference (another £5.7 million according to Unite.) Three firms obtained court injunctions to temporarily stop the action.

Other passenger transport workers are getting a bonus for the Olympics. We are determined to get ours. But it's not just about the £500. It's about standing up at last against a bullying management and privatisation.

Supervisors, controllers and office staff have been overwhelmingly



Strikers at Leyton bus garage photo Paul Mattsson

sympathetic to the bus drivers. That is despite – partly because of – the fact some were forced to drive buses on strike day. Nearly all of them were drivers in the past and are relieved to be out of it. They see management's bullying methods much more than drivers do. They see decent, hardworking drivers, some with a lifetime's service, treated poorly.

The strike has been a big push. But the £500 bonus is still to be won. More importantly an active branch urgently needs to be built in every garage.

Bus workers – especially young bus workers – must consciously reclaim the leadership of our union. The regional officials have helped initiate this campaign but only bus workers can win it.

Picket line reports

London Socialist Party members

100 strikers picketed the Lea Interchange bus depot, next door to the Olympic site in east London. Construction workers at the Olympic site beeped support as they passed. Of the 800 workers based at the depot, only four had gone in. The workers were determined to win this struggle but also wanted to talk about the Tories, the cuts, trade unions and the Labour Party.

The picket at Hackney central at lunchtime was really good – no buses on the road and a great atmosphere. "We've been waiting for this strike for ages" said pickets at Bow bus garage. "It's not just the Olympic bonus but last year they slashed our pay, we don't get overtime we won't be paid for breaks now. Some people have lost £3,400 a year."

One of the bus drivers explained how he had completed a test run for the Olympics on his route and it had taken an hour longer than it should. This is before all the extra traffic that is expected!

In south London 50 workers formed an angry picket line at Catford bus garage. Hardly any buses went out. The passing public gave loads of support, endless beeping horns were greeted by cheers from the pickets.

In the solid strike in Bromley, pickets jeered at the very few scab buses. Committee member Steve said: "What we need is all the unions out on the same day".

You could hear the main picket line at New Cross bus garage – they were singing local football team Millwall's old chant "No one likes us, we don't care". There were about 80 on the picket lines, of all ages, sexes and countries of origin. They got great public backing. Lorry, van and car drivers tooted support, largely disproving the words the pickets were singing!

One picket told us: "The basic salary of bus drivers is £24,000 which is nothing for London prices. Yet we're frontline workers when the Olympics comes. Tube workers get more than us because they fight for it and because the tube has been publicly owned while our money goes to shareholders."

Another picket explained that private bus companies like Go Ahead are still making big profits. "But," said another driver, "what about us donkeys that work hard to make their money? We get a small carrot on a long stick and we have to kick hard to get any of it."

The information screens at Croydon bus stops indicated no bus arrivals and illustrated that the strike has been a resounding success.

Revenue and customs Striking against cuts and privatisation

A PCS member working in Revenue and Customs (HMRC)

Public and Commercial Services union (PCS) members have again supported action to defend jobs and services in Revenue and Customs with a day's strike on 25 June. The latest revelations about the tax-dodging escapades of the rich and famous emphasise the damage being done through the government's agenda of cuts and privatisation in the very department that could close tax loopholes if properly resourced and staffed.

The PCS has launched the Tax Justice for All campaign in order to fight a further 10,000 jobs going in HMRC. 30,000 jobs have gone already.

Even by the estimate of the public accounts committee this has resulted in HMRC losing the ability to collect £1.1 billion in tax. This figure will only increase if the government and the department plough ahead with the cuts programme.

The union is also campaigning against the use of private companies



On the picket line in Shipley photo Iain Dalton

Teleperformance and Sitel in HMRC call centres. These multinationals are undercutting trade union pay and conditions by employing staff on inferior conditions and paying them at least £3,000 less than the average earned by HMRC workers. PCS are organising to recruit these workers and fight for improved conditions.

The campaign's demands include: protect and invest in jobs, end

the private sector involvement in HMRC, tax collection and a tax system in the interests of the millions, not the millionaires. End financial inequality by closing tax loopholes that allow the rich to avoid paying £120 billion in tax each year. Finally we support the TUC demonstration against austerity on 20 October.

• For reports from the picket lines see: www.socialistparty.org.uk

RMT conference prepares for battle

Jared Wood

Nasden RMT political officer and conference delegate

RMT delegates attending their annual conference have no illusions about the attacks they face across the industry and the fightback necessary to defeat them. In shipping, road freight, bus services and rail, members are united by the common attack by employers to protect profits at the

expense of pay, conditions, safety and services to the public.

Bob Crow, RMT general secretary, giving the annual report spelt it out clearly: "We are in the fight of our lives. On all these fronts the RMT is fighting back and will continue to do so. The shocking Beecroft report shows just how much further the bosses and the Tories want to go, with the right to hire and fire at will. We need to mobilise for the TUC demonstration on 20 October to en-

sure it becomes the springboard for the mass movement that can end the brutal austerity drive."

Over 40 delegates attended the large National Shop Stewards Network fringe meeting. The discussion was around the challenge we face to build the fight against all cuts and to campaign for a one-day general strike to unite the opposition and anger of the trade unions, youth, unemployed, pensioners and wider community.

Police wade in at Coryton protest

Dave Murray

Unite the union stepped up its campaign to save 850 jobs at Coryton oil refinery by calling a protest at the Vopak fuel terminal in Grays on 25 June. The terminal is a major distribution hub for forecourts across southeast England.

Seventy union members and supporters gathered near the gate, initially to put their case to tanker drivers on their way in. About an hour into the protest the police "allowed" the demonstration to muster in front of the gates for a "photo opportunity".

As we listened to speakers including a construction electrician, Steve Hedley from the RMT, Rob Williams of the NSSN and an Asturian miner, the police became increasingly agitated. It had dawned on them that while we stood at the gates no tankers could go in or out.

Their first action was to step up the pressure on the Unite branch chair to ask us to clear the gates, producing a Vopak manager who said we were trespassing – which would allow the police to invoke punitive laws related to aggravated trespass.

The bulk of the demonstration stood firm, insisting on hearing out the Spanish speaker. Meanwhile, dozens of fuel tankers were backing up on each side of the gates. Ashen-faced senior police officers started trotting around to organise a more physical response.

When that response came it was brutal, as a line of riot police inserted themselves between us and the gates by violent pushing and



Police wade in photo the Socialist

open-handed strikes. The police left us in no doubt that they were ready to step up the violence and we were forced away from the gate.

The arrest of three protesters followed, one of them an activist in the rank and file committee of the Sparks construction electricians. We demand that all those arrested are immediately released without charge and that these jobs and skills are not lost.

Though we only held the gates for 40 minutes, news has come in that at least one forecourt, the Tesco superstore at Hatfield, ran out of diesel that night – a glimpse of what could be achieved if Unite could deliver effective industrial action at Coryton and solidarity across the industry.

Sheffield recycling workers Support their indefinite strike action

Alistair Tice

“You mean there’ll be queues like this every day?” asks a driver as 30, 40, maybe 50 cars back up from the Dump-It site onto the main road. This is now the daily picture of ‘grotesque chaos’ caused by Sheffield’s Labour council feebly passing on the Con-Dem cuts in the already privatised household recycling service.

After already taking 15 days of strike action over the last month, the GMB members started an indefinite all-out strike on 23 June. They are fighting for their jobs and conditions, and for re-opening of the sites every day to provide a decent service.

Big multinational Veolia, that has a 35-year contract to run the city’s waste management services, wouldn’t take a cut in profits so forced down the tendering bid by sub-contractor Sova to operate the recycling centres.

In turn, Sova have cut the opening days and hours of the five Dump-It sites, sacking six workers and cutting the hours and pay of the remaining 30.

The workers only get the minimum wage as it is, under the proposed annualised-hours they’ll only get 22 hours a week in winter!

Everyone knows that the cuts in recycling will lead to more waste-dumping and fly-tipping.

Who’ll pay for that mess to be cleaned up? Won’t be Veolia, it’ll be council tax-payers. So much for the council ‘saving’ £500,000!

“This is privatisation for you,” says one queueing driver as he signs the union’s petition, “why should they (Veolia) pocket the profit, that money should go back to the community.”

Nearly everyone agrees with the

strikers, the security guards direct drivers to the petition. But it’ll take more than public opinion to win this strike.

Socialist Party members have been on the picket lines every day and helped raise money for the hardship fund.

We presented a petition to the last council meeting at which the Labour councillors were lambasted by the strikers.

The all-out strike needs to be as hard-hitting as possible. The Socialist Party has suggested that the GMB sets up a support group and appeals, not only for finance, but for supporters to help the strikers picket each site 24 hours a day in order to stop the full skips being emptied.

Because union drivers won’t cross the picket line, Sova has hired another haulage firm to strike-break, protests should be organised against them as well. A few managers and a few scabs can’t keep the sites going.

• **Please send messages of support (email: peter.davies@gmb.org.uk) 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.**

• **Sova strikers will be marching on the Rally for our Future – Defend Education and Public Services called by education unions NASUWT and NUT. Saturday 14 July, assemble 11.30am, Devonshire Green, Sheffield**

Open the books!

Sheffield claims to be the greenest city in the country. It won’t be able to for much longer if the Labour council’s cuts in environmental, waste-management and recycling services go ahead.

Instead of cuts, the council should be investing more in expanding recycling services which would not only encourage more environmentally friendly behaviour, but also save money in the long run.

Socialists believe that the way to encourage changes in behaviour is not through coercion or punitive charges and fines, but through education and providing the services and facilities to make recycling as easy as possible.

But Sheffield’s waste-management services were privatised eleven years ago. The then Lib Dem council signed a 30-year deal with Veolia which was then extended another five years when Labour got in. Veolia sub-contract the operation of the recycling centres every five years.

This year Veolia will cream off over £300,000 profit just by sub-contracting out at a lower tender price. On top of that they make more profit from selling on recyclable materials, £1 million, maybe more.

Exactly how much, nobody seems to know. The GMB put in a Freedom of Information request but there are still lots of unanswered questions. Under the cloak of ‘commercial confidentiality’, what many suspect is a dodgy deal is being covered up.



Lobbying the council photo Alistair Tice

The GMB learned that Sova Recycling Ltd were advised to reduce their tendering bid. At least two managers for Sova were working for the previous sub-contractors, South Yorkshire and North Notts Recycling. And Sova were only registered at Companies House in November last year, well after the tendering process started. This all smacks of an ‘insider deal’.

This is why socialists call for ‘opening the books’. The accounts of these companies should be open to inspection by the trade unions and workers’ representatives. Let’s see where all the profits have gone, profits which could have kept the sites open and workers in jobs.

Socialists oppose this privatisation rip-off. We believe that all pri-

vatized services should be brought back under council ownership and control.

In fact the GMB proposed that the council submits an in-house bid at the start of the tendering process. They were told that the council did not have the necessary experience to run the sites. But it’s the workers who run the sites, know the job inside out, not councillors or management bureaucrats.

Under the current privatised and out-sourced set up, there are three tiers of management and supervision - the council, Veolia and Sova! If the service was brought back in-house and run under democratic workers’ control and management, not only would it be a better service, it would be cheaper as well.

Unison conference Delegates call for effective battle on pay

Jane James

Having declared that Unison has got the best public sector pension deal it could get, the union’s general secretary, Dave Prentis, is now moving on to the next campaign on “fair pay”.

Members will ask how serious the Unison leadership is about breaking the pay freeze, especially after the pensions ‘deal’ that means they have to work longer and pay more to get less pensions. Threats of strike action alone are not enough.

Prentis announced plans to organise action across the public sector, which would include strikes if the government does not stop the long term pay freeze. But a one-day strike was not enough to defeat the attack on pensions. Unison health members voted for further action but were denied it by the leadership.

Workers in the public sector have suffered two or even three years of a pay freeze, now to be followed by a 1% cap on pay rises.

A Unison survey has shown that 93% of members are struggling to keep up financially. Now the Con-Dems want to replace national pay bargaining with regional or local pay, with the aim of cutting wages further.



London N30 photo Paul Mattsson

Prentis also criticised Labour leader Ed Miliband and shadow chancellor Ed Balls for supporting pay restraint, but would not support severing the union’s links to the Labour Party.

Socialist Party members speaking in the debates received support when they attacked Labour councils for making Tory cuts.

Hundreds of delegates and visitors attended a “Reclaim the Union” fringe meeting where Glenn Kelly, one of the four Socialist Party mem-

bers witch-hunted and banned from office by the union leadership, addressed the meeting along with others under attack.

Those present marched back to the conference venue chanting against the leadership, determined to make sure Unison is accountable to its members.

The following day saw the debate on key rule changes, especially Rule I. The leadership insisted that new wording to that rule would ensure that members of the far-right, racist British National Party would be expelled from the union.

But delegates asked why 250 BNP members inside Unison had not been expelled already, while £60,000 had been spent on taking Socialist Party members to court!

In past years, delegates had voted down similar rule changes convinced they could be used by the leadership to attack socialists. But this year there was a mood to ensure the BNP members were kicked out. At the same time, many attendees gave support to Socialist Party delegates.

Over 60 delegates attended the Socialist Party fringe meeting, where the party’s general secretary Peter Taaffe and Kazakhstan trade union leader Esenbek Ukteshbaev spoke.

Stop the NHS massacre

It has been well documented that the National Health Service (NHS) is under attack and in England faces its total destruction through the Health and Social Care Act. But exactly what is happening, why and what can be done about it? Socialist Party health worker activists, including Terry Pearce of the Save Heatherwood Hospital campaign (personal capacity) investigate.



Andrew Lansley

What is happening to the NHS?
The future of the NHS hangs in the balance. Tory Health secretary Andrew Lansley's hated and discredited Health and Social Care Act threatens to accelerate the cuts and privatisations that are already crippling the NHS, to breaking point.

The government's privatisation and austerity agenda has already resulted in

£20bn
Cuts to health services have been dressed up as "efficiency savings"

ward closures and increased pressure on services and health workers around the country, as well as attacks on pay and pensions.

The coalition has spent £1.7 billion on re-organising the NHS. £20 billion cuts to health services have been dressed up as 'efficiency savings'. Doctors.net.uk, a professional networking site to which almost all British doctors belong, asked medics: "Have cuts to staff and/or services affected patient care in your departments, area or surgery during the last 12 months?"

Of the 664 doctors who responded 527 (79%) said yes. Among 440 hospital doctors, 359 had seen cuts, while 168 of 224 family doctors said the same. What the cuts really mean can be seen, for example, in South London. In Lewisham, almost £500,000 has been chopped from the budget for children's mental health services. In Lambeth, the Primary Care Trust has cut the number of patients eligible to receive free incontinence pads.



photos Paul Mattsson

How will accountability in the NHS change?
Clinical Consortium Groups (CCGs) which are GP-driven will become responsible in April 2013 for around £60 billion (about half) of the health budget. CCGs will be both commissioners and suppliers of health services - a clear conflict of interest.

They will be virtually unaccountable with the abolition of LINKS (elected, independent Community Health Watchdogs) to be replaced by Healthwatch, commissioned by Local Authorities and likely to be appointed or even run by private health companies.

In other words there will be no real independent accountability of either GPs or local authorities. There will be no way of calling GPs to account; antagonism between patients and doctors will grow as privatisation begins to creep into GPs' surgeries.

Also the Secretary of State for Health will no longer be ultimately responsible for the NHS - it will be the CCG in each area. This means that if the public are unhappy with the NHS, we can't vote against changes at the ballot box.

So, does it mean privatisation?
Basically, yes. Although CCGs do not come online until next April we are already seeing a glimpse of the future. A health centre in York was reported to have written to patients informing them of some services like minor operations that would no longer be available on the NHS and instead offered to carry out the procedures for "a fee". This is just the tip of the iceberg. As funding is cut and private involvement increases we will see much more of these arrangements.

The vultures of privatisation are circling. Hinchingbrooke Hospital in Cambridgeshire has already been taken over by a non-state provider. Circle

More than one in four Tory Lords and one in six Labour Lords, as well as a numebr of MPs from all three parties, have interests in private health companies or insurers.

Baroness Cumberlege of Newick, former Tory health secretary, who runs her own lobbying firm which works "extensively" with major pharmaceutical interests, has recorded votes on just 22 days this year. But she managed to vote on every occasion during the course of the Health Bill



photo Chris Newby

has become the first private company to take over a NHS hospital. The company has already registered its determination to expand its empire. This kind of arrangement will only become more commonplace.

The very principle of free treatment for all, funded by general taxation and publicly run, is at risk. The heart of the welfare state is threatened. The private sector will pick off the profitable bits of the NHS as the remainder of services suffer cuts and become fragmented.



But 75% of the population don't want the private sector in the NHS. Why is the government pushing ahead in the face of such huge opposition?
Privatisation paves the way for a decimation of wages and conditions of health workers and is being prepared for by cuts now. And it is part of the Tories' wider agenda of cutting the welfare state to the bone - making ordinary people pay for the economic crisis.

It is also because of the dilemma which confronts 'modern' capitalism, of restricted opportunities to invest profitably in Britain's depleted manufacturing sector. They therefore look hungrily to invest in privatised industries - not just health, but other sections as well. Even if this means a more expensive, less efficient, worse service - which it will - nevertheless it could be a profitable outlet for the £750 billion presently locked

up in the vaults of big business.

Another aspect of why the politicians are so determined to push ahead is that many of them stand to directly benefit from privatisation in the health service! In the House of Lords, their Lordships with interests in private healthcare came out of virtual retirement to record their support for the Health Bill.

More than one in four Tory Lords and

1/2
Up to 50% of beds in NHS hospitals could go to private patients

one in six Labour Lords, as well as a numebr of MPs from all three parties, have interests in private health companies or insurers. Baroness Cumberlege of Newick, former Tory health secretary, who runs her own lobbying firm which works "extensively" with major pharmaceutical interests, has recorded votes on just 22 days this year. But she managed to vote on every occasion during the course of the Health Bill.

What will the changes mean?
Services will suffer as cuts bite, even before the reforms come in. GPs are beginning to fear for the future. According to a poll of 814 GPs by the BBC, only 12% thought the reforms would improve things - down from 23% in 2011.

A combination of cuts to staff and services, together with fragmentation and privatisation will lead to a decline in the quality of service. In many areas, communities are facing closure of wards and hospitals, often leading to patients having to travel longer distances for treatment. The previous Labour government instigated the rot by massively expanding privatisation. This government threatens to go even further.

More and more treatment for minor ailments will no longer be available on

the NHS. There will be less resources to spend on high risk but essential diagnostic procedures. Up to 50% of beds in NHS hospitals could be turned over to private patients meaning longer waits and a second rate service for the rest of us.

Patients will be forced into the private sector. There is a clamour from the right-wing for charges to be introduced for visits to GPs. This is the slippery slope to a USA-style health service.



What is being done about it?
During the Health and Social Care Act's passage through parliament it faced vocal opposition from a variety of sources. Labour leader Ed Miliband opposed the bill but reassured big business that the NHS under Labour would continue "using the private sector where appropriate".

Andy Burnham, shadow health secretary, made similar points when he spoke at Unison's health conference. As its previous record shows, Labour has no opposition to the privatisation of the NHS.

There have been sizable demonstrations in support of local hospitals and services threatened with cuts and closures. Some campaign groups have focused on lobbying MPs and Lords. This can be a useful tactic to force politicians to feel the strength of opposition, but only as part of a much bigger movement. The priority must be a campaign that mobilises the mass anger at the destruc-

tion of the NHS. Central to that must be health workers themselves, and the trade unions they are organised in.

What can the unions do?
The TUC has called a national demonstration against the cuts on 20 October. This demonstration should also take up the demand to save the NHS. Last year's TUC demo (which brought 700,000 onto the streets of London in a massive show of strength against cuts) shows the authority the trade union movement has when it gives a lead.

That demonstration led the way to strike action in June and November 2011, and similarly a demo for the NHS must only be the start of a trade union-led campaign of industrial action. A well built for demo would bring all the local NHS campaigns together, but even more importantly, it would give confidence to NHS workers themselves to fight.

The health unions should then use that increased confidence to organise industrial action. This could ideally be linked with other public sector unions striking against austerity, to put as much pressure on the government as possible. The National Shop Stewards Network is campaigning for a one day general strike. This

12%
Doctors think the reforms will improve things

is the best way to defend the NHS - by showing that workers will fight.

The pension strike on 30 November included a new generation of NHS workers who had never taken industrial action on that scale before. Unfortunately the militant mood of members on the day has not been reflected since by the union leaderships. Nonetheless, the basis is there to build a fighting campaign among health workers.

The task facing us as trade unionists is

The task facing us as trade unionists is to turn the undoubted anger that exists within the NHS and in our communities into a force which can stop the Con-Dems in their tracks. A major part of this fight must be the building of strong, fighting union branch organisations and shop stewards committees within hospitals

How can health workers strengthen our unions at local level?

Adrian O'Malley, branch secretary of Unison, Mid Yorkshire Health Branch, Service Group Executive - Health Yorkshire and Humberside (personal capacity) talks about his own branch:

Our Unison branch has maintained, throughout the last 30 years, its monthly meetings structure and a functioning shop steward network. We have also managed to keep the local staff side going with monthly meetings of stewards from Unison, Royal College of Nursing, Unite, Society and college of Radiographers, Chartered Society of Physiotherapy, and the smaller unions.

This has not only enabled us to put up strong opposition to the Trust management when it has been needed but ensured that we had lively picket lines and a good turnout on the 30 November strike day despite the bullying of union members which was rife within the Trust.

Our branch had its best year's recruitment ever in 2011 which has continued

in 2012 as we face cuts of £24 million and attacks on our terms and conditions. We have also got eight new stewards who have become reps - not because they want to go on union 'jollies' but because they see the need to fight for their jobs and the NHS. Our local staff side has recently lodged two disputes and is committed to joint industrial action if necessary.

This is the task facing every NHS trade unionist - building shop stewards committees at branch level which are capable of fighting local Trust management.

With right wing union leaders who provide no national strategy the need for solidarity action from below has never been greater. We need to learn the lessons of 30 November and build a movement of shop stewards and activists that will stop the Con-Dems in their tracks.

Pressure from below forced them to call the 30 November strikes. If they don't respond to further pressure we must fight for a leadership that will.



Will the NHS be safe if we force the government to back down from the Health and Social Care Act?
We have already suffered over three decades of continuous underinvestment and privatisation in the health service. The previous Tory government of John Major introduced privatisation via the 'internal market' in the NHS, which New Labour intensified. They brought us the scandal of PFI, currently taking over £1.5 billion out of the NHS every year. Bigger hospitals were encouraged to become Foundation Trusts, acting as businesses, independent of NHS control.

All the latest attacks have to be stopped. We have to fight to regain what was lost in the past - but also for a completely publicly funded, democratically run NHS. Successive governments keep coming back for the NHS - to privatise, to cut, to destroy. It is clear that a political alternative is needed to represent all those fighting cuts and privatisation. The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition is an important step towards this.

This is a rich country - just the richest 1% own £1 trillion. It would be ludicrous to suggest that we can't provide good quality healthcare for all those who need it. But while profit for a tiny minority is put before the needs of the rest of us, we'll never achieve that.

Fundamentally we need a socialist NHS to provide for everyone's health needs - free at the point of use and under democratic control. That means restoring the NHS as a service - run and planned locally and nationally by democratic committees that include representatives of NHS workers and the local community.

Cash is needed to cancel the cuts and end the chronic underfunding that has undermined the NHS over years. Nationalising the pharmaceutical and medical supply industries under working class control and management could assist in this. Of course this would have to be combined with a wider socialist programme to end poverty and inequality - the biggest killers and causes of ill-health.

Read more about the fight to save the NHS in the National Shop Stewards Network's NHS bulletin - issue no. 1 out now. See www.shopstewards.net or email info@shopstewards.net

Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition Building the fight against all cuts



With growing numbers of people across Europe turning to anti-austerity alternatives at the ballot box, the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) national steering committee met in June to discuss contesting future elections here in Britain.

The steering committee contains leading trade unionists from unions including the PCS, POA, RMT and FBU, members of the Socialist Party and Socialist Workers Party, and independent socialists.

May 2013 will see elections for 35 non-metropolitan county councils and other authorities in England, and Anglesey council in Wales, with nearly 2,500 seats to be filled.

TUSC national chair Dave Nel-list, who was a county councillor in the 1980s before going on to be Coventry South East MP from 1983 to 1992, said: “The county council elections are vital for the 24 million people who use the key services these councils administer – from education, adult social services and libraries, to youth provision, planning and regeneration, highways and emergency services.

“These councils spend over £43 billion on public services, employing over 750,000 workers, and are facing a third year of savage cuts in

central government funding.

“With growing public opposition to austerity, in Britain as in Greece, Spain, France and elsewhere in Europe, there couldn’t be a more opportune time for the widest-ever election challenge to be organised on TUSC’s clear local elections policy platform of opposing all cuts in council jobs, services, pay and conditions; resisting the privatisation of council jobs and services or their transfer to half-way house ‘social enterprises’; and pushing councils to set budgets that meet the needs of local communities and to demand that the government makes up any funding shortfall.”

TUSC is appealing to trade unionists and anti-cuts campaigners to come forward as prospective candidates now for the 2013 elections. TUSC’s local elections policy will be debated at the TUSC supporters national conference on 22 September.

Bristol and Manchester

The steering committee agreed that there should be a TUSC candidate in the Bristol mayoral election on 15 November, following the vote in May’s referendum to establish a directly elected mayor.

Strong criticism was made of the ‘executive mayor’ system of running

councils, which actually erodes local democracy. It is easier for one person, elected every four years, to take unpopular decisions to favour big business interests and cut or pri-

Opposing all cuts:
www.tusc.org.uk

vatise services, than it is for support for such decisions to be won among a wider group of councillors who have to justify themselves to local electors.

But, it was felt, if a mayoral system is established the election provides a platform for a clear alternative to the pro-austerity establishment parties, as was shown in Liverpool in May, when the TUSC candidate polled 4,792 votes (4.73%), beating both the Tories and Ukip.

The steering committee also discussed the need for a trade union-rooted anti-austerity candidate in the parliamentary byelection in Manchester Central, where the sitting Labour MP Tony Lloyd is standing down to contest the police commissioner elections.

The TUSC steering committee wrote to Respect in May to discuss possible electoral collaboration in such contests. They still await a response.

From Athens to Coventry...



Syriza is now the main opposition group in the Greek parliament

In a post-Greek election editorial on the Europe-wide significance of the rise of Syriza (Coalition of the Radical Left), the Guardian compared it to the future of Britain being shaped by ‘elections to Coventry city council,’ given Greece’s relative size within the EU. Picking up this theme, Clive Heemskerk, TUSC national nominating officer, sent a brief letter printed below. The Guardian, continuing with its editorial theme of refusing to give any coverage to TUSC, did not print it. But the points, of course, are still valid.

Interesting that you chose “elections for Coventry city council” as your UK comparator for the relative significance of Greek voters within the EU (Greek elections: The replay that deepens the divide, 18 June), in more ways than your readers may at first appreciate. Coventry’s 2012 council elections saw the continued domination by the pro-austerity Labour and Conservative duopoly but third place this time, with 5.8% of the city-wide vote, went to the Socialist Party, part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC). TUSC doesn’t recognise itself as “a fringe coalition of malcontents”, your description of what Syriza was just three years ago. It has growing support in the trade unions with, for example, two trade union general secretaries, Bob Crow (RMT) and Steve Gillan (POA), serving on our national committee. But the point you make about Syriza’s “path from obscurity” remains. TUSC too can expect its anti-austerity message to gain an ever-wider response as what you refer to as the “lingering hopes” of Britain “remaining an island of [relative] economic tranquillity” fade.

2012 Coventry council election city-wide votes

Labour 32,414; Conservative 16,697; Socialist Party (part of TUSC) 3,614 – 5.8%; Green 2,985; Liberal Democrats 1,998; BNP 1,718; UKIP 1,457; Independents 1,234; Christian 106
Total votes: 62,223

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TUSC local campaigning

Labour takes Liverpool for granted

Socialist Party members in Liverpool have spent the last four weeks campaigning for council byelection TUSC candidates Chris McDermott and Lynne Wild.

The Riverside council seat, where Chris is standing, was made vacant when Labour’s council leader Joe Anderson became the city’s mayor. Lynne Wild is contesting the Allerton and Hunts Cross ward.

The Labour Party has not canvassed Riverside ward and has only distributed one leaflet – it seems it is taking the ward for granted. The other three parties standing have not produced a leaflet nor knocked on any doors.

TUSC has produced two leaflets and canvassed in the main working class parts of the ward. Many voters have welcomed the opportunity to discuss on the doorstep with us, the only group that stands against all cuts.

In May’s mayoral election, TUSC candidate Tony Mulhearn finished second highest in Riverside ward. With sales of the Socialist and voters displaying TUSC posters, the Socialist Party and TUSC are increasing their support in south Liverpool.

Rachel Potter

TUSC candidate forces byelection

Lincoln East will elect a new county councillor in the next two months after a successful byelection request, signed by two

residents of the ward, from Lincoln and District TUC president Nick Parker.

Tory councillor Sara Cliff quit the seat after being exposed for claiming £23,000 in allowances. Cliff attended just 19 meetings in over three years, the equivalent of £484 an hour!

Lincolnshire county council has cut over 1,000 jobs, shut eight elderly care homes, slashed 80% of Connexions youth service, and cut or privatised 31 day care centres.

Nick, who lives in the ward, has been selected as the TUSC byelection candidate. TUSC argues for the Con-Dem government to reverse its funding cuts to the local authority.

It opposes the council’s academy school programme, and calls for the authority to continue Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) payments to the county’s eligible sixth form and college students.

Stoke: We need homes, not new council HQ

On 26 July there will be a Stoke byelection for Springfields and Trent Vale ward, with Matthew Wright standing as the TUSC candidate.

Up and down the country, Labour councils are implementing the Con-Dem government’s cuts, with Stoke-on-Trent city council being no exception. After carrying out cuts of £35 million last year, and another £24 million this year, services in Stoke have been decimated.

If elected, Matthew will vote against all cuts. £40 million has been borrowed for a new council HQ. This money should

instead be used for building affordable council homes for the 3,000-plus people on waiting lists, as well as protecting vital local services. He will also call on the council to use its powers to ‘call in’ for scrutiny the changes to the NHS, as well as to reinstate EMA.

Liat Norris

Warwickshire: ‘Lights out’ puts lives at risk

“Warwickshire County Council has already made massive cuts to the services we all use, and there have been considerable job losses as a result,” said Rugby TUSC spokesperson Pete McLaren.

“We have seen the virtual wipe out of all youth provision in Warwickshire, along with the closures of fire stations, care homes and libraries. Bus services have been severely cut back.

“Now we hear that the county council is prepared to put lives at risk by switching off most of its street lights between midnight and 5.30am.

“There is much less money available from the county council for voluntary and community groups – the so called Big Society that the Tories and Lib Dems so recently championed. Local organisations which have lost out include a homeless charity, the Race Equality Partnership, local sports groups and clubs for young people.”

Rugby TUSC intends to coordinate an anti-cuts electoral challenge across Warwickshire in the 2013 county council elections.

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SOCIALIST PARTY FIGHTING FUND

	£ target	£ received	April-June 2012				Deadline 29 June			
North West	1,200	2,095								
West Midlands	2,100	2,607								
South West	1,400	1,605								
East Midlands	1,550	1,711								
Yorkshire	2,900	2,768								
Wales	2,300	2,147								
Eastern	1,200	983								
Southern	1,200	858								
South East	750	424								
Northern	600	332								
London	6,100	3,314								
England & Wales	3,700	5,817								
TOTAL	25,000	24,668								

Spain: New epicentre of crisis in Europe

Danny Byrne, CWI

Spain is becoming the new epicentre of the capitalist crisis in the eurozone. The country's massive banking crisis, has led to the right-wing Rajoy government accepting a humiliating €100 billion European Union/International Monetary Fund (EU/IMF) bailout.

Added and connected to the banking disaster are a plethora of social, regional, national and political crises, each one threatening to explode at any moment. As a Wall Street Journal editorial widely quoted in the Spanish capitalist press put it, the problems of Spain's prime minister are "massive and simultaneous" (El Pais, 4 June 2012).

The government's brutal austerity measures have had the same effect in Spain as elsewhere – they have dragged the economy further towards a depressionary spiral. Mass unemployment is steadily worsening (over 50% of youth are unemployed) against a backdrop of grinding poverty. Those who only a few years ago enjoyed regular and seemingly stable work are now seen rummaging in dustbins for food.

This blatant contradiction – between Spanish capitalism which struggles to remain in the 'premier league' and its impoverished working class – is set to be the determining factor in shaping forthcoming events.

To get a glimpse of the intensity of the new class battles one need look no further than the militant struggle of the miners in the north of Spain where an indefinite strike is underway in Asturias and León. There the miners have erected flaming barricades on motorways and railway lines around the country and defended them with homemade rocket launchers, in some towns successfully driving out the police.

The last two months have ushered



Asturian miners and their families demonstrate against massive job cuts

in the most intense period of working class struggle since the beginning of the economic crisis.

The massive general strike on 29 March and the numerous millions-strong mobilisations around it were followed by over one million people marching on May Day and then by another million marching in cities across the country on 12 May to celebrate the anniversary of the Indignados (social justice) movement. On 22 May, there was an 80% solid strike of the entire education sector.

These mobilisations, despite the limitations imposed from above by the movement's 'leaders', show it is impossible for capitalism to implement its plan of impoverishment without raising an outcry from the working class and youth.

Bailout

The speed of the latest banking crisis, with the trigger of the collapse and nationalisation of Bankia (the

fourth largest bank in Spain), has been breathtaking. Only a few days after Bankia's chairman vowed that the firm was capable of solving its own financing problems, it was already in need of an emergency nationalisation.

The public cost of this 'nationalisation' and recapitalisation then went in another few days from €4 billion to almost €25 billion. The pathetic unpreparedness of Spanish capitalism for the advent of this crisis is revealed by the fact that their Fund for Orderly Bank Re-structuring contained barely more than €5 billion at the time of the Bankia collapse.

The bailout of Bankia alone is set to send public debt up to 90% of GDP (total output), above previous estimates. The €100 billion in fresh debt now being borne by the public purse will send this figure shooting further upwards.

This is being billed as a 'soft' bailout, limited to the financial sector and without a Troika (EU/IMF and European Central Bank) austerity programme attached.

However, the conditions put forward by the European Commission for a mere one year delay of Spain's 3% deficit limit target, that include an acceleration of pension attacks, a hardening of the labour reform (making it easier to sack workers)

The last two months have ushered in the most intense period of working class struggle since the beginning of the economic crisis

and deteriorations to the unemployment pay system, give a small example of the "sacrifices" which will be demanded.

This bailout will be paid out in tranches (differentially structured instalments), with the threat of funds being withheld if the government "misbehaves".

A banks-only bailout does nothing to resolve the fundamental problems of Spain's economy – not least the looming economic disasters in autonomous regions, for example, which the Spanish state would be equally incapable of responding to.

Thus, while the initial bank rescue figure may seem "manageable" to European and Spanish capitalism, it could be a mere attempt at a 'quick fix' which touches only the tip of the iceberg that is the deep crisis of Eu-

rope's fourth largest economy.

The reality is that this bailout is motivated by capitalist governments needing to bend over backwards to the super-rich speculators, who through their idle savings and investments have the banks and economy by the throat.

Flight of capital

The 20 biggest Spanish companies have reserves of over €40 billion, which are not being invested due to the depth of the world crisis that the profit system is passing through.

The government's brutal austerity measures have had the same effect in Spain as elsewhere – a depressionary spiral

In order to put this money to work, a revolutionary restructuring of the economy where the main companies and industries are run under democratic public ownership would be necessary.

It would then be possible to halt the flight of capital and invest Spain's wealth in an emergency anti-crisis programme to create jobs and public works.

The €29 billion destined to be thrown into the black hole of Spanish debt payments this year alone – not to mention the billions paid to buy off property developers' bad debts in the banks – could instead be put to social use.

The condition of the Spanish economy screams the need for such policies, which could transform the situation in Spain and throughout Europe.

But only a working class government operating on the basis of socialist policies would be capable of carrying out this programme in a thorough and consistent way.

The adoption of such alternative policies in Spain or another European country would in today's globally integrated economy be only the first step, one crucial part of an international struggle for a working class alternative to the capitalist euro and EU.

The 'national question in Spain' and also 'the Left and workers' struggles' are issues addressed in the full version of this article, available on www.socialistworld.net

The Committee for a Workers' International

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

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

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

www.socialistworld.net

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



Quebec: Interview with student strike organiser

Students striking for three months against tuition fees hike.

Joshua Koritz, first published in Justice, paper of Socialist Alternative (CWI supporters in the USA)



Belgium: United left election lists launched successfully

International left speakers address public launch rally.

LSP/PSL (CWI, Belgium) reporters



Important victory for campaigners for internet freedom in Europe

International Trade Committee in European parliament rejects ACTA.

Tanja Niemeier, LSP/PSL (CWI Belgium)

Miners evoke fighting traditions

As part of its savage austerity measures the right-wing Popular Party government of Mariano Rajoy has slashed subsidies to the coal industry leading to thousands of job losses. In response, 8,000 miners in the autonomous areas of Asturias, León and Aragon launched an indefinite strike.

Emy A Castela writes about the miners' struggles.

The struggle to defend the coalmining industry is not only a fight for jobs, a living wage, pension, and decent working conditions – it is also a fight for survival.

The ultra-conservative government has sentenced to death a part of Spain. Many more indirect jobs will also be lost and the mining areas will become ghost towns.

Since 1990, millions of euros in assistance earmarked for Spain's mining areas (the number of miners has fallen from 45,000 workers to 8,000 today) have instead gone into the pockets of the mine owners or into the hands of mine-

ors. The mining areas and their inhabitants have not seen a single euro in assistance.

In León, mining is in the hands of a single person – Victorino Alonso. He has used such aid to expand his empire, buying mines in Ukraine and Asturias.

Fighting tradition

The struggle for the defence of mining in Asturias and León has a long history.

In 1934 during the Bienio Negro (two black years) workers' organisations in Asturias and Catalunya rebelled against the reactionary government of the second republic. In Asturias it became an insurrectionary movement. Eventually the government sent in the army, led by Franco, to crush the uprising.

In 1962 the oppressed Asturian miners, faced with a wage freeze, went on strike for two months under the fascist regime of general Franco – where being a trade unionist was illegal and could mean 20 years in prison – and won wage increases.

Today, the people of the mining areas have no choice but to fight for their livelihoods, for their survival and, above all, for the future of their families."

the Socialist postbag

Do you have something to say?

Send your news, views and criticism in not more than 150 words to Socialist Postbag, PO Box 24697, London E11 1YD, or phone 020 8988 8771, email: editors@socialistparty.org.uk. We reserve the right to shorten letters. Don't forget to give your name, address and phone number. Confidentiality will be respected if requested.

Unaccountable decisions

There has long been a crisis of political representation for the working class with the move of the Labour Party to be a big business party. Now there are moves to further restrict representation and accountability. Worcestershire county council is to consider partnerships with Staffordshire and Shropshire county councils to save money. This would make holding anyone to account for the provision of services all but impossible. I asked the leader of Worcestershire county council a question last year at a council meeting. This was difficult enough as meetings start at 10am and you have to ask your question in person. It took a month to get a reply. How could I hold anyone to account in another county if the service I wanted to ask about was run from there? This looks like an attempt to insulate our so-called representatives from any scrutiny while they implement the cuts.

Pete McNally, Worcester

Euro-mania?

In Euro 2012 Socialist Party member John Reid's predictions in his book 'Reclaim the Game' have been proved correct. There has been a lack of investment in young footballing talent, not just in the Premiership in England, but across Europe, and 20 years later, the result is the poor display we've seen



this month in Poland and Ukraine. I've thought about going to see England play at every major football tournament since I started watching football during the World Cup in 1998. I've never been, I've never been able to afford it. This year, with the recession and the cuts hitting working class people hard, it wasn't even an option. With a much

smaller pool of England fans going to see our team play live, there wasn't as much buzz around the country this year. Also few people, myself included, expected England to win. But I think there were other reasons for lower levels of enthusiasm among would-be fans. Racism plagued pre-tournament reports. Former England central defender, Sol Campbell, gave this warning to England fans planning to travel to Poland and Ukraine, "stay at home, watch it on TV. Don't even risk it".

**Ian Pattison
East London Socialist Party**

Sell the Socialist!

I was selling the Socialist outside Coventry's bus station and got talking to one of our supporters from St Michaels



ward. When one of his mates came past we got into a discussion about the cuts, particularly the housing situation. He had a flat with the housing association but 'had a bad year'. The guy had a partner, a job. He lost these which caused depression, he shut himself away. He built up rent arrears and they evicted him. He did everything he could to pull himself together and tried to get himself back on track. He's sofa surfing, and will go in to a hostel. He is trying to get his own flat again but he can't find anywhere because of his rent arrears, even though he wants to pay these arrears back. We both agree this is the tip of the iceberg, discuss when people are going to fight back and how. He has a paper and will keep an eye out for us in the future. We sold four copies of the Socialist which proves that you should never be afraid to whip them out at any opportunity. Get into the habit of selling our paper - it is our most effective weapon!

P Dee, Coventry

Radio review

Life in a 'forgotten' area

Becci Heagney

A recent 'Thinking Allowed' programme on BBC Radio 4 interviewed Lisa McKenzie, a Nottingham University sociologist, on the alienation felt by working class people in St Ann's, a Nottingham council estate.

McKenzie has lived on the estate for the past 20 years. She carried out this research because she's "always been aware of inequality" and was worried about its effect on 'forgotten' areas such as St Ann's.

She described growing up in a family who were involved in strike action and protests in the 1980s. She had moved to St Ann's as a single mother with a mixed race child, something that wasn't 'accepted' in other parts of Nottingham.

St Ann's is one of Nottingham's most deprived areas. Rebuilt in 1968 in a slum clearance programme, these mainly grey concrete boxes have problems with damp. As McKenzie says: "it isn't very pretty". Estate residents describe themselves as 'sufferers' and say that 'others couldn't stand to live here for a day'.

Unemployment is over 9% and much higher among young people, particularly young black men. In riots last August, the police were attacked, the local police station was petrol bombed, and cars and bins set on fire, causing anger in the community. McKenzie says young people in St Ann's are almost constantly being 'stop-and-searched' by the police.



Young people in St Ann's are routinely stopped and searched

Studies done in the 1960s in the same area reported that most people talked about 'getting out', having faith in the idea of social mobility. Today a whole generation feels that they are 'being kept down' by the rich and that there is no way out for them.

Most young people in the area want to work but cannot find jobs. Some try to go into education but often give up because 'there are too many hoops to jump through'.

For decades, areas like this have been left to rot by the three main parties. As a result, McKenzie describes the desperation of people looking for answers and finding them in 'conspiracy theories' on the internet.

There is a crying need for a new mass workers' party and campaigns such as Youth Fight for Jobs for people living in areas like St Ann's to organise in and fight for decent jobs, homes and services.

Cuts ignore immense needs

Jane Ellwood

After the 1950s, a network of child and adolescent services, staffed by highly trained, skilful social workers, specialist teachers, psychiatrists, psychotherapists and psychologists, was gradually established in specialist centres.

As a consultant child psychotherapist I have seen how a child or young person can have their life transformed by the chance to be heard by someone who can make sense of what's going on, or by family therapy or group work, art or music therapy.

Unfortunately Labour-controlled Waltham Forest council, among

many others, seems to be dismantling this vital service in the name of Tory and Lib Dem-imposed cuts. The borough's 5-19 year olds have had services hit with an axe.

Educational welfare has been cut from 24 to five posts. Behavioural support will be scrapped, community safety will lose five posts.

The careers service will be cut by a third, the youth offending team by a half. The Connexions Team will be decimated. The youth service will be cut and will rely on volunteers. Social work teams that help children and families will suffer cuts and face an increased workload.

It makes sense to work with children and young people rather than leaving them to withdraw into un-

happiness, depression or mental illness. Or, as often happens with boys, become truants with all the risks of street life not to mention the sense of failure and lack of achievement that these young people are burdened with.

Why would anyone in their senses cut back on help to this section of the community? The alternative is vastly more expensive - a life on benefit, in and out of hospital or prison.

I mention the cost because that seems to be the measure by which Waltham Forest council judges services, not the immense need, nor the long term benefits to the young person, their family and to society, which are also immense.

Obituary: Brian Hibbard, Flying Picket

On 18 June the left mourned the death of Brian Hibbard. An actor throughout his career he is probably most fondly remembered as part of the Flying Pickets group, whose version of Only You spent six weeks at the top of the charts in 1983.

Hibbard met his band mates touring with John McGrath's 7:84 theatre group, so called because at the time the top 7% of the UK population controlled 84% of the wealth.

They then transferred the art of acapella - creating music with only the use of your voice - to the pop music scene, playing in places the working class would go to to seek entertainment.

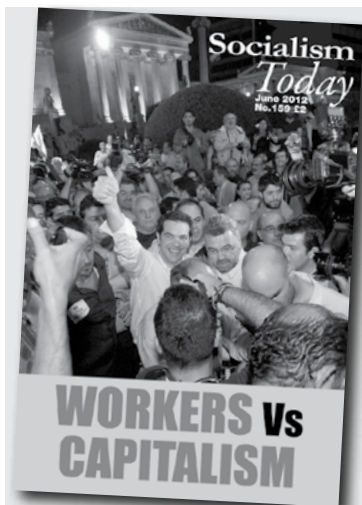
Margaret Thatcher, trying to gain some cheap publicity even claimed

Only You was her favourite record - she had no clue as to the band's name or their political leanings.

In the 1984-5 miners' strike Hibbard and the band were very vocal in their support. They joined picket lines in certain disputes, picketing Drax Power Station despite orders from the record label they were signed to not to do so. They also put on benefit shows for the miners to help them through the financial hardships they were suffering in the bitterly long dispute.

In 2000 Hibbard was diagnosed with prostate cancer, which finally took his life. He is survived by his wife, Caroline and their children: Lily, Hafwen and Cai.

Matthew Leek

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Unite conference 'The renaissance of trade unionism'

Kevin Parslow

Unite London and Eastern delegate, personal capacity

The first day of Unite's 2012 policy conference was dominated by general secretary Len McCluskey's address.

Speaking of the "renaissance of trade unionism", Len highlighted key disputes for Unite over the last two years. In particular, he mentioned the BA cabin crew, the construction electricians, the pensions' battle, and the current London bus workers' dispute.

Len warned London mayor Boris Johnson and the bus companies to come up with the money or there would be further action, including during the Olympics themselves, if necessary.

He condemned the use of unelected judges to try to stop strikes. If the bosses and the government forced unions to go outside the law, they should: "Beware what you wish for, for you will rue the day."

He confirmed that union officers had signed no 'repudiation letters' of unofficial action in the

last six months.

He also announced there was a £25 million dispute fund, "another clear sign that this union means business".

On union mergers, particularly with PCS, he said he was not in favour of them purely for merg-

Len explained that Unite was not a political party but had "political responsibility"

ers' sake but to strengthen workers rights and power.

Len explained that Unite was not a political party but had "political responsibility". He even mentioned how Marx had talked about "the conquest of political power".

Unite is the Labour Party's biggest funder, donating around £3 million a year.

Len said he shared the frustration that the last Labour government took union members' money



From left to right: Unite's Len McCluskey, Unison's Dave Prentis, Labour's Ed Balls photo Paul Mattsson

but treated them with disdain, and that the party needs to adopt a "radical alternative" to win the next election.

He described Labour leader Ed Miliband as a "decent man" and

claimed that Labour has started to change. But he admitted that it had not gone far or strongly enough. Workers facing cuts from Labour councils will certainly not have noticed much change.

And New Labour's pro-big business leaders are unlikely to implement Unite's first policy resolution of the conference, which included the demand for nationalisation of the banks.

Miliband speech: no answer to the race to the bottom

"I have heard stories from my Doncaster constituency where East European migrants arrived to work in a local chicken factory for long hours at less than the minimum wage while sleeping 19 to 20 to a house. That is not good either for the migrants or the people who used to do these jobs. It is certainly not good enough for one of the world's richest economies."

This extract from Labour leader Ed Miliband's speech on immigration shows that he has been forced to very belatedly recognise that big businesses in Britain have used super-exploited migrant workers to lower wages. His proposals to prosecute more employers who pay less than the minimum wage are welcome. But there have only been seven prosecutions since it was introduced 13 years ago, and for the first ten years of New Labour

government not a single successful prosecution took place!

But the real character of Miliband's speech was revealed by his pledge to 'look at' migrant workers' entitlement to benefits. In fact many migrant workers are currently not entitled to benefits at all and even those that are can only claim after they have worked in Britain for a year. A central reason that migrant workers can be used by the bosses to undercut wages is because they have no safety net, facing literal starvation if they don't work. Cutting the few benefits they are entitled to will only make this worse.

Unite all workers

If Miliband was serious about stopping the race to the bottom he would not be calling for benefit cuts but for all workers - both non-migrants and

migrants - to join a trade union and organise together to win decent pay and conditions. Instead Miliband, like Blair and Brown before him, has opposed workers striking to defend

For more campaigning reports and analysis go to www.socialistparty.org.uk

their living conditions and has made no pledge to repeal Britain's vicious anti-trade union laws.

Miliband is in danger of following the line of Cameron and the Tories who are using immigration to distract from the responsibility of big business, the finance industry and the politicians for the economic crisis and the attacks on the working class in the name of austerity.

Block on Progress?

Bob Severn

Britain's three biggest unions, GMB, Unite and Unison, have all questioned the role of the Progress group inside the Labour Party.

Progress follows on from capitalist New Labour 'modernisers' like Tony Blair and Peter Mandelson. While claiming to be 'radical and progressive', its website's lead article on 26 June was "Let's stop voting against the government".

Even right-wing Unison leader Dave Prentis has called Progress an "intolerable think tank".

But while the press has given the impression that these union leaders want to ban Progress from Labour, this isn't quite true.

GMB general secretary Paul Kenny said: "The questions about Progress, about its aims and its funding remain to be answered. This has nothing to do about expelling individuals or suppressing debate."

Likewise, Unite leader Len McCluskey - who says Labour can be reclaimed - said that the financial backing of Progress raises concerns but is not calling for it to be banned.

However, if Len is serious about reclaiming Labour as a party for working people - and not the bosses - then that should include driving out all the Blairites, including Progress.

This should be alongside readmission of left, militant fighters, democracy at all levels of the party including allowing socialist views, and a campaign against all cuts.

A reasonable timescale should be set for achieving these demands. Workers can't wait forever while Labour lets cuts go through! If his project fails, Len should come to the conclusion that Unite should back anti-cuts election candidates instead. Union members' money should not fund politicians that support cuts!

TUSC Against Cuts - see page 8

Kazakh embassy protest to free Atabayev

Ken Douglas

Campaign Kazakhstan held a demonstration outside the London Kazakhstan embassy on 21 June to demand the immediate release of Bolat Atabayev.

Bolat Atabayev, a famous and popular independent theatre director and performer who openly spoke out against the dictatorship in Kazakhstan, was arrested on 15 June. He has been charged with 'inciting social discord' in Zhanaozen where the massacre of striking oil-workers and their supporters took place in December.

With him was a young journalist, Zhanbolat Mamaia. Both of them are being sent by road from Almaty to Aktau to stand trial, a journey of over 3,000 kilometres.

The conditions of the journey, the heat and the discomfort, could kill Bolat. His relatives fear for his health because he suffers from insulin-dependent diabetes, needing



photo Ben Robinson

medicine every day. His brother was stopped from giving him the medicine needed for the journey by the police.

Alfia Nakipbekova, the celebrated Kazakh cellist, also joined the protesters, playing her cello outside the embassy. We also received support from a passing Tobias Menzies, actor in the films Atonement and Casino Royale.

The protest was joined by Esen-

bek Ukteshbaev, leader of the independent Kazakhstan trade union Zhanartu.

Alfia Nakipbekova and Campaign Kazakhstan supporters went in to talk to embassy staff and hand in a letter. The protest demanded the immediate release of Bolat and Zhanbolat, and all political prisoners including recently sentenced oil workers (see www.campaignkazakhstan.org for more info).

Unison backs Tamil Solidarity

Senan

Tamil Solidarity international coordinator

The recent Unison conference overwhelmingly supported the resolution to affiliate to the Tamil Solidarity campaign. A historic step forward for building international working class solidarity, this is believed to be the first time the struggle of the Tamils has been discussed by a national trade union conference.

The resolution urges Unison branches to invite a speaker from Tamil Solidarity to address meetings and Unison members should get in touch with the campaign to arrange this.

On Saturday 23 June, Tamil Solidarity held a meeting aimed at young people who had been active in the recent protests against the visit by Sri Lankan president Rajapaksa. With the blood of thousands of Tamil-speaking people on his hands, Rajapaksa's invite to the

Jubilee aroused huge anger. Protests were successful in forcing him to cancel a speaking engagement with British big business.

The excellent meeting discussed the world context of the struggle for Tamil rights in Sri Lanka, with reports of building Tamil Solidarity in Malaysia and Tamil Nadu, India. Further action was planned including a meeting against the land grab on 30 June, linking up with other campaigns and participation of a Tamil Solidarity team in Youth Fight for Jobs' Austerity Games for the Olympics.

Please contact Tamil Solidarity: www.tamilsolidarity.org; info@tamilsolidarity.org; 07908 050 217

**walesshop
stewardsnetwork**
Conference - Saturday 30 June,
10am-3pm
Temple of Peace, King Edward
VII Avenue, Cardiff

EMERGENCY STOP NHS CUTS!

Roger Shrivess

The Con-Dems have the National Health Service in their sights – but now we can see clearly their brutal intentions! Tory health minister Andrew Lansley is putting the South London Healthcare NHS Trust into the hands of a government ‘special administrator’.

Already there are open threats to jobs and services at the trust’s three hospitals, Queen Elizabeth at Woolwich, Queen Mary’s in Sidcup and Princess Royal at Bromley.

The media headlines say the trust is losing £1 million a week and has run up deficits of more than £150 million over the past three years. But that deficit is caused by privatisation – especially the Private Finance Initiative (PFI) scheme for building hospitals which makes rich businesses even richer at our expense.

PFI schemes in this trust area alone now cost £61 million per year in interest payments, far more than the hospitals’ losses and PFI repayments are due to last another 20 years! These charges put private profit before local people’s health.

This open threat is also a warning to other health authorities – over 20 are already in serious debt due to PFI. The Con-Dems want to bail out the banks but not the hospitals, for us it’s austerity and attacks on services. That’s why we must fight back.

PFI, introduced by the Tories but accelerated by Labour, means that NHS organisations will eventually pay over £50 billion for buildings worth £11 billion. Princess Royal hospital, built under a PFI contract will cost the NHS

£1.2 billion, more than ten times its real value.

In order to boost the profits of the 1%, especially the speculators and private health shareholders, the government expects local people (the 99%) to pay with cancelled operations, lower levels of service and a massacre of jobs and workers’ conditions.

Onay Kasab, a Unite activist in Greenwich, told the Socialist: “The news comes as no surprise to those of us fighting against privatisation of services in this area. We correctly pointed out that PFI (Profit from Illness) would lead to massive profits for private companies, while services were put at risk and we would be left to pick up the pieces from the resultant debts.

“From the beginning, before the PFI companies began ripping us off, we said that PFI is a money laundering exercise letting public money go into the coffers of private companies via a convoluted route. Now is the time to demand a halt and reversal of the privatisation of the health service.”

NHS users and workers must organise a fightback to ensure that resistance becomes reality. Delegates to the British Medical Association (BMA) conference voted this week for a campaign to repeal Lansley’s Health and Social Care Act. Other unions have policies demanding a fight against cuts and privatisation.

Socialists will be fighting to build a mass struggle, led by the trade unions, with protest marches and strikes, to save the NHS and the other services being attacked by this government. No to austerity, no to NHS cuts!

See also Stop the NHS massacre, pages 6-7



What we stand for

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

As capitalism dominates the globe, the struggle for genuine socialism must be international. The Socialist Party is part of the Committee for a Workers’ International (CWI), a socialist international that organises in over 40 countries.

Our demands include:
PUBLIC SERVICES

- No to ALL cuts in jobs, public services and benefits. Defend our pensions.
- No to privatisation and the Private Finance Initiative (PFI). Renationalise all privatised utilities and services, with compensation paid only on the basis of proven need.
- Fully fund all services and run them under accountable, democratic committees that include representatives of service workers and users.
- Free, publicly run, good quality education,

available to all at any age. Abolish university tuition fees now and introduce a living grant. No to academies and ‘Free schools’!

- A socialist NHS to provide for everyone’s health needs – free at the point of use and under democratic control. Kick out private contractors!
- Keep council housing publicly owned. For a massive building programme of publicly owned housing, on an environmentally sustainable basis, to provide good quality homes with low rents.

WORK AND INCOME

- Trade union struggle to increase the minimum wage to £8 an hour without exemptions as an immediate step towards £10 an hour. For an annual increase in the minimum wage linked to average earnings.
- All workers, including part-timers, temps, casual and migrant workers to have trade union rates of pay, employment protection, and sickness and holiday rights from day one of employment.
- An immediate 50% increase in the state retirement pension, as a step towards a living pension.
- Reject ‘Workfare’. For the right to decent benefits, education, training, or a job, without compulsion.
- Scrap the anti-trade union laws! For fighting

trade unions, democratically controlled by their members. Full-time union officials to be regularly elected and receive no more than a worker’s wage. Support the National Shop Stewards Network.

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

ENVIRONMENT

- Major research and investment into replacing fossil fuels with renewable energy and into ending the problems of early obsolescence and unrecycled waste.
- Public ownership of the energy generating industries. No to nuclear power. No to Trident.
- A democratically planned, low fare, publicly owned transport system, as part of an overall plan against environmental pollution.

RIGHTS

- Oppose discrimination on the grounds of race, sex, disability, sexuality, age, and all other forms of prejudice.
- Repeal all laws that trample over civil liberties. For the right to protest! End police harassment.
- Defend abortion rights. For a woman’s right to choose when and whether to have children.
- For the right to asylum. No to racist immigration laws.

NEW WORKERS’ PARTY

- For a new mass workers’ party drawing together workers, young people and activists from workplace, community, environmental and anti-war campaigns, to provide a fighting, political alternative to the pro-big business parties.
- Trade unions to disaffiliate from the Labour Party now and aid the building of a new workers’ party! Support the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition as an important step towards this.

SOCIALISM AND INTERNATIONALISM

- No to imperialist wars and occupations. Withdraw the troops immediately from Afghanistan!
- Tax the super-rich! For a socialist government to take into public ownership the top 150 companies and the banking system that dominate the British economy, and run them under democratic working class control and management. Compensation to be paid only on the basis of proven need.
- A democratic socialist plan of production based on the interests of the overwhelming majority of people, and in a way that safeguards the environment.
- No to the bosses’ neoliberal European Union! For a socialist Europe and a socialist world!