



the Socialist

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"We're all in this together", Chancellor George Osborne, 2010...

The time for "remorse and apology" by banks over their role in the financial crisis should end, Barclays ex-boss Bob Diamond, 2011...

Labour was "intensely relaxed about people getting filthy rich", former Labour spin doctor, Peter Mandelson...

"Dude. I owe you big time! Come over one day after work and I'm opening a bottle of Bollinger"

Barclays banker involved in Libor rate-setting...

We need "a light touch approach at the global and EU level", Ed Balls, as City Minister from 2005 to 2008...



THEIR SYSTEM, THEIR CRISIS!

KICK 'EM OUT!

NATIONALISE THE BANKS

BUILD A NEW MASS WORKERS' PARTY

ORGANISE A 24-HOUR GENERAL STRIKE

See page 2 for what we think



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the **Socialist**

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what we think

Jail the banksters! Nationalise the banks under popular democratic control

In 2008 the Socialist warned that: "the calls for regulation are like asking the bank robbers' gangs to keep a check on the bank robbers. What is urgently needed is popular control of the major banks and finance houses, not 'oversight' by unelected quangos and elected capitalist politicians, whose allegiance is to big business." Now the bank robbery has been exposed yet again.

Then, when Britain's banking system went into meltdown, the government spent £109 billion bailing it out. Since then, in one of the greatest con tricks in history, we've been told that it was excessive spending by the public sector and by working class people that was responsible for the crisis.

The only solution, we were told, was for us to accept horrendous cuts in our pay, living standards, and public services. So far, only 15% of the cuts have been carried out.

But this has already resulted in 350,000 public sector workers losing their jobs, huge attacks on public sector pensions, and tens of thousands of the most vulnerable in society being threatened with losing the pittance of benefits they were previously entitled to. As a result suicide is on the increase. Last weekend one desperate man in Birmingham tragically set himself on fire after his benefits were stopped.

Meanwhile, the bankers are still laughing all the way to the bank. The speculators' and banksters' bonuses have gone back to pre-crisis levels, not that they slipped so low. From day one the Con-Dem government has set out to give every assistance to its friends in the City of London. The toothless Vickers' commission, set up to investigate the banks, made only the most minimal proposals, with even these not being introduced until 2019.

Bankers' party

Cameron's 'veto' on the Euro treaty last December was in part an attempt to protect the City of London from even minimal regulation. No wonder. Hedge funds, financiers, and private equity provided 27% of Tory party funding in 2011. Overall the 'Square Mile' now provides a majority, 51%, of Tory party funding. The Tory party is one of the oldest and historically one of the most successful capitalist parties in the world. That it is now funded by the spivs in the City reflects the reality of British capitalism in the 21st century: where the shots are called not by manufacturing industry - so-called 'productive capitalism' - but by the short-term gamblers of the



financial markets.

Since the banks were bailed out they have singularly failed to carry out the tasks that we were told made them so indispensable. Mortgage lending is down 40% from pre-crisis levels, with banks demanding a 25% deposit. As a result a generation is condemned to short-term, insecure and expensive private lets.

Banks are currently refusing credit to over 40% of small and medium-sized businesses. And, as has been revealed, many of those who were given loans were also mis-sold expensive and risky financial instruments as a condition of the loan. Even the most basic task of managing individuals' bank accounts has proved beyond NatWest/RBS. Customers of its subsidiary Ulster Bank are still unable to access their bank accounts two weeks after the recent 'computer glitch' began.

And now this latest scandal lays bare how the banks have been fiddling to maximise their profits. The Libor rate (London inter-bank lending interest rate) is set by 16 banks daily submitting numbers for the cost of their borrowing. The middle eight figures are then used to set the rate. Barclays lied about their numbers for their own advantage.

There are vast sums of money involved in gambling on interest rates. The Bank of International Settlements estimates that total interest rate derivatives contracts totalled \$554 trillion (£357 trillion) in the first half of 2011, many times larger than the world's

entire output!

The fraud had a direct effect on the lives of millions of people. For example, the Libor rate is used to calculate the pricing of mortgages, credit card interest rates, savings accounts and more. Such is the scale of the scandal that Bob Diamond, CEO of Barclays, has finally been forced to resign on 3 July. But there is life after death! The chairman of Barclays, Marcus Aegis who resigned the day before, has now come back!

This farcical reshuffling of the chairs on Barclays' decks solves nothing. The bankers responsible for this fraud should be jailed. Every one of the financial spivs and speculators should be sacked - with not a penny in pay-offs. However this is not just a question of individuals.

Over the coming days it is likely to be revealed that many more banks were involved in fiddling the Libor rate. It seems clear that the Bank of England knew that this was taking place. Diamond's resignation is an attempt to prevent the full dirty mess being revealed.

Labour leader Ed Miliband has rightly attacked the government for failing to set up a public inquiry, instead appointing a few MPs to carry out what will undoubtedly be a white-wash.

We demand a public inquiry in the real sense of the word. That is an inquiry where all of the banks' books are opened to an investigation team made up of trade union representatives,

representatives of ordinary mortgage holders, pensioners, and young people.

However, New Labour has no solution to this crisis and is, along with the Con-Dems, culpable for it. In government New Labour continued the 'light touch' - ie non-existent - regulation of the financial system that had begun under Thatcher. In 2008 New Labour bailed out the banks while leaving the same banksters in charge. Since then they have colluded in the lie that it is public services and public sector workers that are responsible for the economic crisis.

Rotten system

The Socialist is clear - the banking system should be nationalised under democratic popular control. Only on this basis would it be possible to get rid of the spivs and speculators that are holding working class people to ransom. A genuinely nationalised banking sector would be run for the benefit of the majority, rather than for the super-rich.

Those struggling to pay their mortgage would have it converted to an affordable rent; small businesses could get cheap loans, and public works such as a massive house-building programme could be cheaply financed.

The need to build a mass party of working people which stands for this demand as part of a broader socialist programme has never been clearer. As the rotten heart of Britain's banking system is revealed to millions many will be drawing this conclusion.

We demand:

- A democratic workers' inquiry into the banking scandals, involving representatives of the trade unions, mortgage holders, pensioners and young people
- Jail the bankers responsible for this fraud. Kick out all the banksters, spivs, and speculators. No compensation or 'golden handshakes' for those who caused this crisis
- No more big-business loan sharks! Millions of people have been forced to get into debt just to survive. These debts to be written off
- Cheap mortgages and loans to be provided to individuals on a secure basis, with guaranteed low interest rates
- The major banks and building societies to be brought into democratic public ownership, with compensation paid on the basis of proven need

How would socialism be different?

The banking crisis is a crisis of the capitalist system. Capitalism means private ownership of the big corporations and banks that dominate the economy and the rich getting richer off of our hard work. And it is a system in crisis. In one year, in 2008, \$50 trillion of wealth was destroyed worldwide through economic crisis.

Nationalisation of the banking and finance sector, and the big corporations, could allow an elected and accountable socialist government to begin planning production for need and not for profit. Everyone could have a decent job with a living wage, high quality housing and free education.



Why a new mass workers' party?

Working class people are fighting back against the effects of capitalist crisis - taking strike action to defend working conditions and public services. But when it comes to elections they have no party that represents them. The Labour Party no longer speaks for working class people. Leader Ed Miliband has said he supports the government's austerity measures and says a future Labour government would not reverse one spending cut! We think a new mass party of the working class is needed. The Socialist Party alongside Bob Crow of the RMT transport union and other militant trade unionists, plays a key role in the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) which is an important step toward such a party. See: www.tusc.org.uk



What can you do?

If you agree - join us today. Our members are people like you: workers, young people, students and pensioners and all those suffering under austerity - not gaining from it. We fight for the interests of the working class - the vast majority in society - we fight for socialism.

And we are affiliated to the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI) which organises in more than 45 countries worldwide. We stand in solidarity with the workers and oppressed of the planet in the struggle for a socialist world.

See the back page for more of what we stand for.

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London buses: Drivers: "This is why we're in the union"

Paula Mitchell and Chris Newby

London bus workers have shown how determined they are to win their dispute. But as we go to press bus operating companies are still refusing to pay London bus workers a £500 bonus for working during the Olympics.

Apparently an offer of £500 was made to all bus workers but only if they worked all 29 days of the Olympics and Paralympics. This is both extremely dangerous and illegal, as Unite said in rejecting the offer, particularly given the massive increase in workload they will face during this period.

Another group of transport workers has won an Olympic bonus offer of £500 – workers on Boris' bike scheme organised in the RMT union.

London bus operators are sitting on over £2 billion of profit and are set to make even more with hundreds of thousands of extra passengers during the Olympics and Paralympics.

And Transport for London top managers awarded themselves £80,000 in Olympic bonuses. But the bus drivers' campaign has been taken very seriously and support has been widely mobilised.

The strike on 22 June was followed with further protests by the bus workers, backed up by other trade unionists and campaigners. This was particularly to target the three companies which won injunctions



photo Paul Mattsson

against strike action and, crucially, to support drivers in those companies.

On Tuesday 26 June protests were held at seven garages and a bus MOT centre was blockaded. On Friday 29 June the same was done at five garages. For over an hour no buses moved at any of them!

In the words of one of the drivers: "This is fantastic, this is why we are in a union." The workers in the three companies who won the injunctions are re-balloting but in the meantime these protests build their confidence so they know they are not alone.

Socialist Party members participated in Putney and Edgware. In both places all the traffic was jammed – in Edgware even the police couldn't get through!

An inflatable rat – "TfL don't rat on drivers" – was joined by the National Shop Stewards Network banner



at Edgware, while protesters sang: "You won't get me – I'm part of the Union"

Unite has announced two more official strike days: 5 and 24 July.

Immolation horror - we demand jobs

It was revealed recently that the private companies running the Con-Dems' slave labour workfare schemes want even more unemployed people to have their benefits stopped as punishment for 'not looking hard enough for a job'.

This government has already tripled the number of this type of sanction but these vicious companies still aren't satisfied. But the workfare companies have referred three times as many people for sanctions than even the government is willing to carry out.

Unemployed people are already at breaking point. Many lost their jobs through government cuts or are school leavers or graduates. There are no jobs for them to find and yet they are constantly being made to jump through unrealistic hoops. Dave Younger reports on one desperate response.

An unemployed man set himself on fire recently outside a Birmingham Jobcentre after a row over his benefits being stopped. The fire was extinguished and the man taken to hospital.

Tragically self-immolation as a form of protest is increasing internationally. Recently a Congolese woman set herself alight in Belgium to protest against racism. The street vendor who sparked the Tunisian revolution did so by setting himself on fire.

Such individual actions do not, by themselves, bring social change and



Waltham Forest YFJ protested outside Leytonstone police station on 29 June to demand a new dispersal order zone in the area is lifted. The order allows police to break up 'groups' of two or more people and to take under-16s home if they are out after 9pm photo Sarah Wrack

are no substitute for the participation of the mass of the working class organised into action.

These tragic deeds reflect ordinary people's desperation in the face of oppression and attacks on their rights. When the basic necessities of life – a job, a home, a livelihood – are in scarce supply while the top 1% of earners enjoy tax-breaks and bonuses, it's not surprising that people will feel the strain and snap.

Youth Fight for Jobs (YFJ) calls for genuine job creation by carrying

out a programme of public works including house building and infrastructure improvements as well as massive investment into public services. Join YFJ highlighting this and other problems facing young people:

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

Olympic-watch

Tax haven in the city

The 'event of the summer' will be treated just like the tax havens of Jersey or the Virgin Islands. Olympic sponsors are being given temporary exemption from corporate tax. It could mean companies like Coca-Cola and McDonalds avoid paying up to £600 million in tax. Even the London Organising Committee has got itself a £100 million tax concession. Presumably the low-paid catering, security and stewarding staff can't expect the same treatment. This is yet another bailout for the super-rich.

will be on duty at peak times and the security team will include 23,000 officers including 13,500 military and 1,000 US diplomatic and FBI agents. Boats on the Thames that get too close to restricted areas will be caught in 'entanglement mechanisms'.

Even the air over east London is a no-go zone. And the military will be pre-authorised to shoot down anything that violates this order – presumably using the ground-to-air missiles planted on people's roofs across the capital. And all this for a snip at an estimated £1 billion.

Still waiting

Newham, the borough containing the Olympic Park, was promised the world when London won the Olympic bid back in 2005. Billions of pounds of public money have been spent within its borders and yet residents are still waiting to feel the effects.

A study by the London School of Economics has shown that the gap between household income in Newham and the rest of London grew between 2006 and 2011. Between 2005 and 2010 unemployment in Newham grew 44%.

Security operation

The Olympic Games are starting to look something like a James Bond film at best: An 5,000 volt electric fence will separate the area from the rest of London. 9,500 police officers

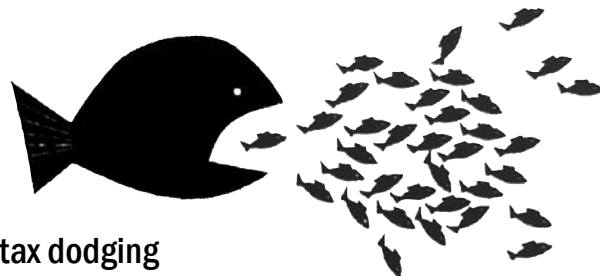
Housing legacy

People who live and work in the Olympic boroughs are putting up with a lot for the Olympics – a transport nightmare, price increases, long working hours. But when the Games are over, we've been told we'll be repaid in kind – five brand new neighbourhoods, 11,000 new properties built on the Olympic site in the next 20 years, and more than a third of them affordable.

But changes introduced by the Con-Dems mean that affordable can be anything up to 80% of market rate. So in Newham, one of the Olympic boroughs, an 'affordable' two bedroom property could be £762 a month.

A Newham housing worker was quoted in the Independent saying: "There are 32,000 people on the social housing waiting list here and we don't expect the Olympic Park to make a dent in that."

Them...



Tory tax dodging

"Morally repugnant" – that was David Cameron's description of tax avoidance in the midst of the Jimmy Carr scandal. But it has emerged that, on top of the Tories being funded by non-doms and many of their leaders being well versed in tax avoidance themselves, the party is encouraging supporters to make use of tax loopholes. The Conservative Party Foundation, led by figures like Tory treasurer Lord Fink, has been urging people to leave money to the party in their wills because this would reduce the inheritance tax their family has to pay. Last year this raised the party £260,494. Repugnant indeed.

doing too badly for himself since we last saw him. He made more than £20 million last year – mainly from offering his 'advice services' to governments in the Middle East and Kazakhstan. He's also paid £2.5 million a year by US investment bank JP Morgan.

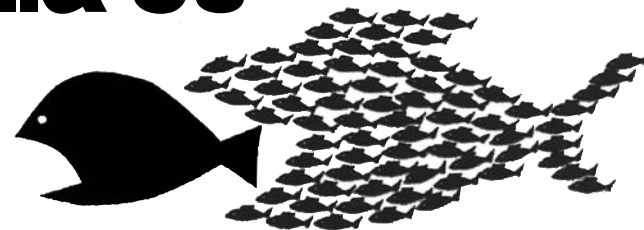
Keep it in the family

£170,000 – enough to buy a house for most of us. But for the royals it's just enough for redecorating. This is what Charles and Camilla paid to have their holiday cottages (yes that's plural) refurbished. The over-priced decorator? Camilla's sister, Annabel Elliot. No wonder Prince Charles' spending went up £723,000 last year.

Last year the royals cost us an extra £200,000. But don't worry, they say they are working hard to cut back on spending... by freezing their staff's pay which has been going on for three years. So much for we're all in this together.

Iain Dalton

...& Us



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PCS: historic vote to stand in elections

John McNally

PCS national vice-president,
personal capacity

Public and Commercial Services union (PCS) members have created history by being the first trade union not previously affiliated to the Labour Party to vote to stand candidates in national elections.

Members voted by an overwhelming 78.9% to support the proposal that the union should have the authority to stand or support candidates in national elections when doing so would help to defend members' jobs, pay, pensions and public services.

Members also voted by 81% to endorse the union's political campaign strategy. The turnout was 20%, which is very good for such a ballot.

In 1927, after the defeat of the general strike, civil service trade unions were banned from funding "political activity", including being affiliated to the Labour Party, which some of PCS's predecessor clerical unions were, and from the TUC. This position existed until 1946.

In 2005 PCS members voted for a political fund. This was a massive step forward in allowing the union to extend its campaign work.

The union also set up the Make Your Vote Count (MYVC) campaign in 2007 in order to raise our concerns with politicians standing for election. This was a very popular activity but had clear limitations. The brutal reality was that members' views could be safely ignored when the politician was elected.

In endorsing the union's political strategy, members have voted for such activities to continue but to be built upon too. This includes a role for a union constituency coordinator who will monitor and build political engagement and activity all the year round, not just at election time.

There are many in the labour and trade union movement who have been, since the period of the last Labour government, in a state of wilful denial on the subject of political representation. These are mainly but not exclusively those in Labour affiliated unions,

Under the Tony Blair and Gordon Brown Labour governments all the



PCS members in Newcastle on strike against cuts photo Elaine Brunskill

foundations for the current government's shock and awe assault were laid, especially the looting of state assets through privatisation. In PCS over the past four or five years, mature, open democratic debate on the

subject of political representation and campaigning has taken place. This debate has not been restricted to activists, it has encompassed two union conferences and two major branch consultations. In fact even some who

do not agree with the proposal to stand candidates have openly agreed the process has been exemplary from the viewpoint of democracy.

What a contrast with those union leaders who effectively ban any real debate within their own unions on the issue, while making grandstanding speeches about how they will withhold money if the Labour leaders don't start to shape up?

This vote gives PCS another significant weapon in the fight against the government's cuts and privatisation programme. It is also a clear statement that there is an alternative to the austerity policies of the coalition government.

Given the urgent need for effective political representation for working people the ballot, which has agreed that PCS will only support candidates in "exceptional" circumstances, may in some senses seem a small step forward. But it is also a significant and historic development that will resonate way beyond PCS into the wider movement.

• See www.socialistparty.org.uk for a more detailed account of this historic vote.

RMT conference Vote for one-day general strike

Nick Chaffey, the Socialist and
Jared Wood, RMT Neasden, branch
delegate, personal capacity

"Coordinated action is the way forward, the mood is out there. The only way the government is going to listen is if we shut down the country", said general secretary Bob Crow in reply to the debate on the pensions battle.

The conference agenda was dominated by the impact of employers' attacks on the union membership. Signal workers debated attacks on safety regulations: "Anything that gets in the way of business is eroded. For the bosses, safety procedures and workers' rights get in the way."

Track workers, drivers and signalers all contributed to the debate. For the RMT this re-affirmed their central commitment to opposing the McNulty report and fighting for the renationalisation of the rail network. Here was evidence of how workers in industry are far better placed to tackle the real issues at work than the employers. A delegate from the RMT young members moved a resolution on pensions. RMT members in the Royal Fleet Auxiliary had been involved in the recent joint action on 10 May with PCS, POA and others.

Bob Crow explained that RMT must commit itself not only to the idea of a general strike but to build for one: "This has got to be built from the grass roots. Let's not just pass it but go back and build for a one-day general strike. There is nothing more contagious than courage."

He went on to lambast Labour for their failure to support picket lines and question what they will reverse when they next get in. The conference voted to support the National Shop Stewards Network (NSSN) campaign against cuts, taking a clear position against ALL austerity cuts and rejecting the argument that some cuts are inevitable.

A separate resolution was passed unanimously, supporting the further development of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC). RMT will continue to support candidates who support the

aims of the union and, as part of this strategy, will encourage branches and regions of the union to send delegates to the TUSC national conference in September.

Throughout the conference international guest speakers contributed to the debates. Particularly effective were the contributions from New York transport workers' leader and Esenbek from Kazakhstan whose speech was interrupted three times by applause. (See page 9 for an interview with Esenbek).

Esenbek received a standing ovation at the end and stated his gratitude for the work done by Bob Crow and RMT to defend him from state repression. His report of the atrocities taking place shocked many but all were inspired by his reports of the work of the union, especially the recent mine occupations which had won 100% pay rises for the workers.

As in any union there were debates about tactics and appeals against decisions from some areas. The conference showed anyone who cares to see, a democratic process at work and a union led by socialists. In this it represents the future direction of trade unions in Britain.

Its militancy and socialist leadership have an effect way beyond the boundaries of its activities. Increasingly it is the stand of RMT and others such as the PCS that is gaining the support of members generally and setting the agenda across the trade unions.

• **No to austerity**
• **We demand a general strike**
NSSN-organised lobby of the
TUC: Sunday 9 September 1pm

Assemble 1pm at the Level park, Union Road, Brighton BN2 for march at 1.30pm to Brighton (conference) Centre and rally
Speakers include PCS general secretary Mark Serwotka and Bob Crow

See www.shopstewards.net for updates and campaign material

Supporting Sheffield recycling workers



Socialist Party members protest against the strike-breakers photo Alistair Tice

Alistair Tice

We marched through the gates into the yard chanting "MHH-hear us say, Picket lines are here to stay!" MHH Contracting Ltd are a haulage company that have been hired by Veolia/Sova to break the Sova recycling workers' strike in Sheffield.

They have been contracted to empty skips at the Dump-It sites because the Veolia drivers, members of the GMB union, who normally do this work have refused to cross picket lines.

Because the striking GMB mem-

bers have been advised that it is illegal to secondary picket under the anti-trade union laws, Socialist Party members who have been supporting the Sova workers' fight against cuts in jobs, hours and pay, organised a protest picket against this strike-breaking company.

Protesters then started to demonstrate at the gates with banners opposing the recycling cuts and in support of the Sova strikers. We stopped three lorries from coming in before the police were called.

We were back over the weekend stopping MHH wagons. We talked to the drivers, who are sympathetic

but not in a union and frightened for their jobs.

If Veolia/Sova can't empty the skips, then the recycling centres that are being kept open by managers and scabs will be shut down within a few days. In any case the indefinite strike, now in its second week, is having a big effect, shutting down three of the five Dump-It sites.

The strikers' case will be reinforced when the GMB members, Socialist Party and strike supporters return to the Town Hall to put more pressure on the Labour council who made the cuts in the first place.

Essex FBU strikes back at bully boy management

Dave Murray

Since 2008 the Essex Fire Authority has been set on a course of aggressive confrontation with the union FBU, and of cuts in frontline services.

On 28 June this resulted in an eight-hour strike. Retained firefighters joined their full-time co-workers on well-attended picket lines on every station in Essex. The mood was determined, boosted by the constant hooting of passing motorists.

This dispute is not about pay or even budget cuts. The Fire Authority's budget has increased by £7 million since 2008, yet it has under-

spent £1.6 million on its frontline staffing budget, allowing the authority to build up reserves of £12 million.

If current plans are carried through there will have been a loss of 20% in frontline staffing and already emergency response times have increased by over a minute. This may not seem long if you are sitting in a boardroom, but if you are in a burning house it might just be the rest of your life.

The cuts in frontline services have gone alongside a belligerent attitude from the employer. The Fire Authority has withdrawn facilities for union meetings, and has attempted to discipline large numbers of firefighters

for speaking out about the attacks.

There is wild talk from fire officers of firefighters plotting to vandalise their own stations and equipment and Socialist Party agitators fomenting disorder. A "resilience team" has been recruited to break the strike and 12 secret locations have been prepared for it. Any firefighter using the "S" word will be disciplined.

Essex FBU has a proud record. Essex County Council, is solidly Tory, despite the recent jailing of its Leader, Lord Hanningfield, for expenses fiddling.

The success of the strike has already forced fire chiefs back into negotiation. The FBU must keep up the pressure until they get a clear win.

It's our NHS - let's fight for it!

Resist attempts to rip up health workers' rights

The Con-Dem health secretary, Andrew Lansley, has written to Unison saying that the government will now drive through its attacks on health workers' pensions - meaning they have to work longer and pay more for a smaller pension. The Con-Dems' attacks on health workers' pay, terms and conditions won't stop there - unless they are resisted.

A Unison health activist in the South West writes.

Leaked proposals describe how a consortium of 16 NHS organisations in the South West intends to break away from national collective bargaining in order to launch an unprecedented attack on health workers' pay and conditions.

It seems that most NHS health organisations, and therefore all major acute hospitals, in the South West have paid £10,000 to join the consortium. Other health organisations, such as social enterprises, are looking to establish a close relationship.

It is clearly a calculated attack on what the government and NHS bosses perceive to be a region where the Unison union is relatively weak.

The document outlines measures to reduce the wage bill from 68% of overall costs to 60%. These include pay cuts of up to 15%, an increased working week, a holiday entitlement reduction for those who receive extra through long service, reduced

payment for weekend working and changes to sickness pay. These proposals, if implemented, would be

The document sees health workers as a financial burden

the biggest ever onslaught on the living standards of health workers, with almost every benefit we've ever won abolished.

Not surprisingly, gone is the language of social partnership and working with the staff. Instead, we have a declaration of war on health workers and trade unions. They are, however, expecting resistance from the workforce, but have a strategy to force through their plans.

Ultimately, if all else fails, they intend to terminate the contracts of NHS staff and then re-engage them on new terms and conditions. We



Protests have taken place across Gloucestershire against NHS cuts photo Susie Walker

could see thousands of nurses and other health staff in the South West threatened with losing their jobs.

The document does not acknowledge the hard work and professionalism of NHS staff. Instead, we are seen as a financial burden that needs reducing. Of course, there is no mention of the costs incurred

through numerous boards of directors, senior managers, or PFI.

If these proposals are implemented in the South West, then health workers nationally, followed by all public sector workers, will face similar treatment.

Every reform, benefit, and right enjoyed by health workers has been

won through the struggles of trade unions over many years. To defend these gains, Unison in the South West, but also nationally, needs to launch a massive campaign, starting with a major regional demonstration of health workers in the South West as a step towards regional strike action.

Welsh Labour's health service 'redesign' means cuts!

Claire Job, a nurse for Abertawe Bro Morgannwg health board, spoke at the Wales Shop Stewards Network conference about the need to fight for the future of the NHS in Wales.

Devolution in Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland has effectively split the National Health Service into four. The Health and Social Care Act effectively replaces England's NHS with a health market.

In Wales, we risk thinking that because we do not yet face such privatisation as England, we're okay. But the NHS in Wales now faces greater financial pressures than any other area of the UK.

The seven health boards in Wales have to find £300 million of 'savings' (ie cuts), around 5% of their budgets on average, every year for the next three years.

In the last financial year, four of the health boards only met their targets because they were given additional funding from the Welsh government - but that's not going to happen any more.

The NHS in Wales has already carried out £290 million 'savings' in 2011-12 on top of the unprecedented £1 billion cut since 2005.

Wales' Labour government has

gone on a publicity offensive about the importance of redesigning health services in Wales. They say a better NHS is one where:

- We lose hundreds of hospital beds from every health board. But a recent Royal College of Nursing survey highlighted the growing practice of Wales patients being treated on trolleys in casualty corridors.
- The number of A&E/casualty units is reduced.
- Your local district general hospital is downgraded and centres of excellence are established.

Poverty and ill health

Rates of heart disease, respiratory illness and mental illness are high in parts of Wales, particularly in the South Wales Valleys. The links between poverty and ill health are well-documented and established.

Cardiff University has released a paper investigating the effects of the economic downturn on health. It concludes that there will be de-

terioration in health for those who become long-term unemployed or who enter into a cycle of low-paid, insecure employment.

A freeze on recruitment in many health boards leads to an over-reliance on agency nurses. This alone cost the NHS in Wales £50 million in the year up to April 2011.

The prospect of regional pay could have frightening effects on recruiting and retaining health professionals in Wales, with nurses and doctors migrating to higher paid localities. The impact of this on services and the delivery of health care in lower paid and deprived areas will be huge.

Health services in Wales are changing. Their shape will not reflect the needs of the people of Wales. Their shape will reflect the unprecedented cuts in NHS funding unless we can defeat them. We need to unite and fight.

See page 11 for a report of the conference

South London NHS Socialist councillors said: 'Axe PFI, not our NHS'

South London Healthcare NHS Trust, with a £150 million deficit, is facing 'special measures'. However, as shown by an excerpt from 'Our Record - Socialist councillors are different', Ian Page and Chris Flood, Lewisham Socialist Party councillors until May 2010, showed how this massive debt could have been avoided - by cancelling the Private Finance Initiative (PFI) schemes that now cost the Trust £61 million a year in interest alone.

"In spring 2008, South East London NHS started a 'consultation' on plans to 'reorganise' hospital services in the region, allegedly driven only by 'clinical needs'.

In reality the plans were about cutting public spending and getting the NHS ready for private companies to profit from our health services. The glossy leaflets said that South East London hospitals were operating at a £400,000 a week 'deficit'. But they didn't say that this is actually less than the extra weekly costs of PFI schemes.

One report, buried away among all the glossy publicity, let slip the real reason why Queen Mary Hospital would be hardest hit. Both Queen Elizabeth and Bromley hospitals were tied to massive PFI contract payments for between 30 and 35 years. Bromley had to pay out £12.2 million a year more than it would do if private companies weren't involved, and Queen Elizabeth £8.9 million more. Because they were locked into these contracts and Queen Mary wasn't, this made it easier - and more profitable - to close services at Queen Mary's and sell off the land!

One simple solution to the 'deficit' was to take the PFI companies into



Chris Flood campaigning in 2008 photo A Hill

public ownership and use the money saved to keep services open. Socialist Party councillors launched a petition opposing the plans' 'options', with the aim to build public pressure to push the council to use its legal powers to ensure that the hospitals had sufficient funds. Chris Flood presented a motion to the council's Healthier Communities Select Committee to 'refer back' the plans to the government, which councils are allowed to do.

Both New Labour and Liberal Democrat councillors opposed this call. In the end, however, public pressure won! In 2009, the proposal to reduce Lewisham Hospital's A&E opening hours or cut emergency surgery services was overturned. This shows the power of public campaigning - and the benefit of having Socialist Party councillors to put the case for public services."

The 'Our Record' pamphlet can be read online at: www.socialistparty.org.uk/txt/132.pdf

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Sexuality, austerity and socialism

In 78 countries, homosexual acts are still illegal. In five of these the maximum penalty is death. In Ukraine a law is currently being considered that would make it illegal to talk about lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans (LGBT) issues in the media. As internationalists, socialists oppose oppression around the globe. This year's London Pride event will be World Pride.

The Socialist Party and its LGBT group will be participating and putting forward the ideas outlined in the articles here. We will have a new pamphlet available - Sexuality, austerity and socialism - a collection of articles from the Socialist as well as some new ones (including longer versions of the extracts published here).

Greg Randall
Socialist Party LGBT group convenor

Many Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Queer (LGBTQ) people are looking for an alternative to the non-political scene that has been the backdrop to our lives for the past 15 to 20 years. Yes, much has been achieved - anti-discrimination laws, civil partnerships and adoption rights to name a few legal reforms - and social attitudes have changed for the better, but homophobia, biphobia and transphobia have not gone away.

Many LGBTQ people face discrimination on a daily basis, including being unable to come out for fear of family, workplace or social rejection. Passing laws banning discrimination does not end prejudice. Growing numbers of LGBTQ people, especially young people, are coming to the conclusion that legal reform is not enough. How can we win not just LGBTQ rights but also liberation?

The key issue in politics today is the austerity plan being imposed by the Con-Dem coalition against public services and the welfare state. This will hit all working and middle class people. Economists have said that as of spring 2012 only around 10% of the planned cuts have been implemented. There is much pain promised until well beyond the next election, scheduled for 2015. This applies whoever is in government, as Labour plans cuts too, but at a slower pace.

Cuts will hit LGBTQ people especially hard. There will be direct attacks on some services specifically used by us, such as youth groups and voluntary sector organisations. Galop, the police monitoring and liaison organisation, and Broken Rainbows, the LGBT domestic violence advice and support service have already been threatened with funding cuts, though this was fought off the first time it was attempted.

NHS

Plans to chop up and privatise the NHS will lead to a loss of expertise and specialist services used by LGBTQ people. If GPs are commissioning services they may not have the necessary knowledge or be accountable. This will particularly hit trans people looking for gender reassignment, which is already limited.

The abolition of incapacity benefit will have a massive effect on people living with HIV/AIDS, whatever their sexuality. Introducing 'individual budgets' to buy support services will be no good if appropriate services don't exist. Many sufferers will be forced on to Jobseeker's Allowance or could lose their benefits entirely.

Will there be direct attacks on our rights, like Section 28, the Thatcher government measure banning the "promotion of homosexuality" by local authorities? Section 28 was part of an act which forced local authorities to put council services out to be privatised and attacked jobs and conditions for local government workers.

The viciously homophobic propa-

ganda campaign around Section 28 was used to scapegoat LGBT workers and divert attention from the effects of Tory policy. Left-wing councils were accused of wasting money on lesbian and gay centres and groups.

Many in the LGBTQ communities remember Section 28 and hate the Tories for it. Have the Tories changed? Prime minister David Cameron and some other top Tories conspicuously claim to be 'gay-friendly'. The coalition leaders are looking towards some form of marriage equality but probably not giving differently sexed couples the right to enter into civil partnerships.

Socialists support marriage equality as a democratic right but Tories claim to support marriage equality to "strengthen the family". By this they mean that family members should do the caring work, often without financial support and on very meagre benefits, which should be done by social services and the NHS.

Cameron wants to "decontaminate the Tory brand" and gain the support of a layer of wealthy LGBT people. His record belies his claims. He opposed the repeal of Section 28, opposed equal adoption rights and the Tories sit, at his behest, with homophobic far-right parties in the European Parliament.

An open and direct attack on LGBTQ rights is less rather than more likely at present. With the LGBTQ communities being more visible and better organised than in the 80s, this would inevitably outrage and radicalise wider layers especially of young people.

Scapegoating

Probably the biggest current threat is that cuts can lead to scapegoating. Recession and austerity raises tension within society and some will look to blame and take out frustration on minorities. It is no coincidence that homophobic hate crime in the West End of London increased by 21% in the year to the end of February 2011. This area includes Soho and is promoted as the safest place for LGBTQ people in Britain with numerous bars and clubs.

Scapegoating will be encouraged, even if not openly, by elements in the Tory party. There were a number of attacks on gay rights and marriage equality by Tory MPs and journalists in the early months of 2011 just as the cuts started to bite. At some stage any capitalist government under pressure may resort to homophobia, biphobia and transphobia to divide workers. Capitalist politicians need a reservoir of reactionary ideas in society, which they can draw on if they are under threat.

Attacks against LGBTQ communities will lead to a fightback - just as a mass campaign opposed Section 28 and brought LGBTQ communities together against a common foe. This gave confidence, visibility and led to many of the advances of the past 20 or so years.

Capitalism diverted the mood of confidence down a commercial route and into the opening up of bars, venues and festivals. Pride events became depoliticised. LGBTQ people need somewhere to meet and socialise, but the commer-

cial scene excludes those who don't feel they 'fit in', can't afford to go out drinking or clubbing in an environment where prices can be very high or just live too far away from the scene. Many perceive the scene as trashy and over-sexualised. Outside big cities there may be no Queer or LGBT 'alternative' scene.

Action

Only working class action can create unity against prejudice and root out backward ideas. As the effect of cuts and the fightback against them grow in society as a whole, LGBTQ people will want a piece of the action. Strike action and mass demos will inspire and draw in whole layers of our communities.

The Socialist Party calls for a mass demonstration, organised by the trade unions, in particular their LGBT Groups, and LGBTQ community and campaigning organisations for full marriage equality and against the cuts. This could cut across any attempts to scapegoat LGBTQ people, make clear that we are not prepared to accept a legal reform, however important, as a sop from a government attacking our living standards and build unity with other workers and oppressed groups fighting attacks.

The Socialist Party's aim is the transformation of society, with the vast wealth of global society being democratically controlled by the currently disenfranchised 99%, not used for the super-wealthy 1% that capitalist governments work for. On this basis, services could be expanded, not cut, with human relationships being revolutionised for the better, including an end to oppression and prejudice. This is the only guarantee of LGBTQ liberation.

The Socialist Party calls for:

- The immediate introduction of equal marriage rights for same sex couples and the right for couples of different sexes to enter into civil partnership
- No penalisation of trans people in marriage proceedings
- Investment in job creation, decent housing and public services to reduce economic pressure on relationships
- A mass movement against the cuts, led by the trade unions and involving community campaigns, minority groups and young people
- Rebuilding a militant LGBTQ movement to fight for equality and genuine liberation for all
- Pride not profit: keep big business out of Pride events
- A new mass workers' party to offer real political representation for ordinary people, including all minorities

Growing numbers of LGBTQ people, especially young people, are coming to the conclusion that legal reform is not enough. How can we win not just LGBTQ rights but also liberation?



Sexuality, austerity and socialism
Produced by the Socialist and the Socialist Party LGBT group



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The issues discussed here will be some of many covered at Socialism 2012, a weekend of discussion and debate hosted by the Socialist Party on 3-4 November. See www.socialism2012.org.uk

LGBTQ youth: fighting for liberation and a future

Michael Johnson

Closures of youth services such as support groups for LGBTQ people were some of the first council cuts made. In Leeds a support group for young LGBTQ people experiencing homophobic bullying was merged with one for older gay people to save money. Meanwhile a hostel for young people who were forced out of their parents' homes was completely closed.

Worse, numerous council services were outsourced to charities and special interest religious groups like the Salvation Army, with a long history of homophobic policies such as throwing LGBTQ people out of homeless shelters. So much for David Cameron's Big Society!

More people are being forced to live in privately rented accommodation at the same time as rents are spiralling out of control. Drastic changes to housing benefit mean that people under 35 can only claim benefits for one room in a shared

2/3
young LGBT people at secondary schools have experienced homophobic bullying

house, benefits that usually don't even come close to paying their full rent. And now the Tories are threatening to stop housing benefit completely for under-25s!

So thousands of working class young people are being prevented from living on their own and are forced back to staying with their parents. More than one in five young people are unemployed, EMA student payments have been stripped away and university fees have been tripled to £9,000 a year. With this increasing likelihood of not being able to get a job (if they do it will be incredibly low paying) or attend university, any young LGBTQ person looking to move away from



Leeds Pride

a homophobic family or community will instead become increasingly trapped or at risk of joining the already disproportionate number of LGBTQ homeless.

Two thirds of young LGBTQ people at secondary schools have experienced homophobic bullying (in faith schools that rises to three in four). Sadly this means that a huge number of LGBTQ pupils don't feel able to be themselves at school, and worse do not feel safe at school.

It comes, unfortunately, as no surprise therefore that suicide among LGBTQ teens continues to rise: in the US it's estimated that between 30% and 40% of lesbian, gay and bisexual people have attempted suicide and LGBTQ youth aged between 15 and 24 years are four times more likely to attempt suicide than their heterosexual peers.

While there have been significant victories and reforms, especially in recent years, like the scrapping of Section 28 and the equalisation of the age of consent, we need to keep going further. The only way for the present attacks to be ended is by fighting back: it was by taking to the street during the Stonewall riots that significant gains towards LGBTQ equality were won and it was young people taking to the streets in 2010 that kick-started the fightback against the current attacks on the working class by the government.

The Socialist Party says:

- Reinstate Education Maintenance Allowance and scrap tuition fees to ensure no one is shut out of further or higher education because of costs
- Huge investment into youth services, including speciality groups and support for LGBTQ youth
- Defend the NHS! No to cuts and privatisation. Investment in LGBTQ health services
- A mass programme of publicly funded affordable house building and an end to attacks on housing benefit
- Decent education in all schools, workplaces and trade unions about LGBTQ issues as well as serious anti-bullying policies
- A socialist society based on planning for the needs of the majority rather than the short term profit of the tiny rich minority

Defend comprehensive education!

Former Emmanuel College student

Emmanuel College, Tyneside, was opened in 1991 and was a precursor to the Tories' 'free schools'. The school came under fire in 2002 by figures such as Richard Dawkins because of accusations that they taught creationism instead of science.

Although schools inspection body Ofsted claims that this is not the case, many former pupils of the school will recall readings from Genesis following on from lessons on Darwinism.

In their Equal Opportunities Policy they state that "all are created equally valuable in the sight of God and therefore that whilst differences are to be recognised disadvantage is to be worked against".

This policy covers race, gender, ability and socio-economic background and sets out to tackle any bullying, yet there is no acknowledgement of homophobic bullying.

This is most likely because they treat homosexuality as a disease akin to alcoholism and have told LGBTQ pupils that they can be 'cured'. In the past Emmanuel College has also worked with an organisation called Lovewise to teach sex education.

Lovewise is a pro-abstinence sex education group which is banned from teaching in all secular state schools in the area. When the group came in to speak to us their main tactics were the use of fear and graphic images rather than solid facts or giving us information on safe sex. Their basic solution was "you only get STIs if you have sex outside of marriage so do not fornicate".

The group have also been criticised for their homophobic teachings when it comes to HIV/AIDs - again taught using graphic images of people who were wasting away because of the disease and the organisers stressing that the people in the pictures were all gay men.

It is shocking that in the 21st cen-

ture these views can still be preached in schools and with the rise in unaccountable academy schools it is only likely that this situation will get worse.

Already other organisations such as the Society for the Protection of Unborn Children, the anti-abortion group, are being asked to come in to schools.

The Socialist Party says:

- No to academies and 'free schools' - bring all schools under local authority control
- Introduce a comprehensive, fact based programme of sex and relationships education to the national curriculum
- Free, publicly run, good quality education available at any age

[illegible]

Kazakhstan: Resisting state oppression, fighting for survival

Independent trade union leader appeals for international solidarity

Kazakhstan is the scene of mass struggle and state repression. The country's dictator, president Nursultan Nazarbayev, is terrified of explosions from social movements and the working class. There have been waves of repression against well-known activists in a vain attempt to stop the developing movements. The Socialist spoke to one of these activists, Esenbek Ukteshbayev, president of the independent trade union Zhanartu, during his recent visit to London.

"After Kazakhstan's independence from the former Soviet Union, the population said it was independence not of the country, but of the regime from its own people!

The regime used its power to take over the wealth of Kazakhstan, illegally privatising everything. It began to destroy industries and resources, energy, raw materials, to get control of them. Tens of billions of dollars were in their hands.

The Nazarbayev regime passed a reasonable constitution when the republic was established, but numerous regulations and amendments have been made to consolidate the regime's power.

Nazarbayev recently appointed himself 'leader of the nation' - a post even higher than the president. With this new position, he and his family circle are above the law. People can try and take them to court, but their wealth cannot be taken off them. Under this law the president could murder people and not be taken to court!

The regime broke up all the big workplaces into little workplaces to divide up workers, in reality to avoid revolution. But the mining, gas and oil industries weren't broken up because they were vital in bringing in a great amount of income for the ruling clique. In these spheres, the workforce represents a real threat to them.

Fightback

Workers in Kazakhstan are really fed up; they're tired of having wages that don't keep up with the rate of inflation. They don't have enough money for basic necessities. And workers have families dependent on them that they have to feed, clothe and educate, and the cost of utilities is going up all the time.

Pay has been at a standstill for a long time. It is a question of survival. Life's pressures have forced people to take action.

Of course the mass murder of workers that took place in Zhanaozen in December, when up to 100 people were killed by state forces and hundreds injured made people hesitate; there was a generalised fear after that. But necessity overcame that fear. Better to go down fighting than to give up and starve. They found they had a tremendous strength.

At first they tried to conduct talks with the employers but miserly amounts were offered to them. But



Esenbek Ukteshbayev talks to Kazakhstan cellist Alfia Nakipbekova on a Campaign Kazakhstan protest lobby outside the Kazakhstan embassy in London, last month photo D.Carr

workers began to organise action and show their determination to get results and were prepared to fight to the end.

In May of this year, miners at the Annensky copper mine near the city of Zhezkazgan, which is run by the London-listed company Kazakhmys, organised a sit-in strike over pay for three days. On the surface there were 1,000 people supporting them. Zhanartu organised solidarity support across the country.

During the sit-in management kept sending them messages: "Look, we can talk about this, how about a little bit now, a little bit later, maybe 20%, maybe 30%?" But the miners said "no, we're not moving until we get our full demands", and in the end they got their rise, a 100% pay rise! This victory is making people think, and everywhere people are beginning to raise their voices.

Only last week some energy workers, again with the help of Zhanartu activists, got a pay increase of 80%! They filmed a video about this strike which has gone around the whole country. In it they say that for many years they've been trying to get somewhere and that it was with the help of Zhanartu that they have been able to get this tremendous victory.

It's very dangerous to identify with our trade union, but knowing of the dangers, knowing of the repression, they still wanted to say it.

"Renaissance"

The name of our union is now like a red rag to a bull, the bosses and the authorities are scared. Our union's name means 'renaissance' or 'renewal', and this sends the message to the bosses that we're coming for them!

The authority of Zhanartu is growing daily. Even people who used to be working for the secret services, following us, beating us, smashing up our protests, when they retire they're being thrown on the scrap heap. They are also thrown out of their houses which are tied to their jobs, and even they are coming to us to help them with their demands for justice!

We started building links across the country by bringing together various leaders of trade unions

and workplace activists. Now new groups are coming to us, being attracted to us.

Representatives and even leaders of the official trade unions who are in the state federation of trade unions - the 'yellow unions' that work with the government - are saying that they want to work with us and want to bring their whole membership into our union. But they are really waiting for us to become a legally registered union.

Because of their fear, the government is putting huge obstacles in our way. We can't get state registration for Zhanartu, so we can't open bank accounts, collect membership dues or have formal membership.

However, we do exist as a trade union, and we are spreading our work among workforces. We are organising an international campaign through contacting international and national trade unions, to put pressure on the Kazakhstan government to allow Zhanartu to register.

Solidarity

Campaign Kazakhstan, with its international solidarity links, has a very important role to play. The very setting up of the campaign upset the employers and the regime in our country.

They very well understand that this campaign - involving socialists like Irish Socialist Party MEP, Paul Murphy, Socialist Party TD (MP), Joe Higgins, in Ireland, human rights activists in different countries including Russia, and famous musicians like the Kazakhstan cellist Alfia Nakipbekova - is exposing the regime's repression and exploitation of the country.

We organised a committee of Russian MPs and human rights activists to visit Kazakhstan. They met the families of people who had been killed in Zhanaozen, people who had been injured; and money that was collected by Campaign Kazakhstan was given to the families to assist with hospital and medical treatment. So it's not just an organisation for informing people but really does practical things.

We are constantly working to get solidarity for our struggle in different parts of the world. And that has an impact on the Kazakhstan government.

I'm really happy to have been on this visit. I was not only in Britain, but also in France and Geneva at the ILO [the United Nations agency, the International Labour organisation] and am now going to Germany and Belgium. Through discussions with trade unionists and activists I am collecting a great amount of information and ideas.

I have been able to meet leaders of the PCS [the main civil service

"Better to go down fighting than to give up and starve"

trade union in Britain]. The meeting went well. They are happy to contact the six international organisations that different sections of their union are involved in, including European-wide organisations.

I spoke at the RMT (transport union) conference where there was a tremendous response to what I had to say on Kazakhstan. It seems to be the start of a very friendly relationship.

In France we met representatives of the local organisations of the trade union - the CGT. One local organisation wanted to show the way by donating €100 a month, and to 'twin' with Zhanartu - so that any problem facing Zhanartu would be a problem of that CGT organisation.

I really want to express the gratitude of all our comrades. We're conducting the struggle in very difficult circumstances. Of course, it is not only in Kazakhstan that workers have problems and difficulties but in many countries and we bear that in mind too.

We hope that you will find time to spread information about the struggles of the working class in Kazakhstan, that you'll support us, and continue to give great strength to our comrades, participating as we do in a vital, common struggle."

Regular updates of workers' struggles in Kazakhstan and solidarity action can be read on Campaign Kazakhstan's website: www.campaignkazakhstan.org Trade union branches are encouraged to donate and affiliate to Campaign Kazakhstan.

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:



France set to join Europe's turmoil

Parliamentary election strengthens Socialist Party's rule.

Gauche Révolutionnaire, (CWI, France)



Paraguay: Fernando Lugo brought down in 'legal' coup d'etat

For a mass independent movement of workers and peasants to bring down fake regime.

William Prieto, Socialismo Revolucionario (CWI, Venezuela)



Hong Kong: Anniversary of return to China marked by mass demonstration

Twice as many people joined this year's protest over lack of democracy and gross inequality, compared to last year.

CWI

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.

"Entitlement" for them...

Listening to David (Flashman) Cameron's rant about the welfare state and a 'culture of entitlement' made me sick. These Eton-educated multi-million-heirs in his government think they were born to rule and live off the fat of the land, while much of the population live on or below the poverty line. That is their culture of entitlement, they are multi-millionaires and parasites and live off the backs of the poor, weak and vulnerable. They have no idea how the majority live, the 99%. They run the country with half-baked ideas (see the budget, pasty tax, etc). We the majority will not allow these incompetent people to destroy our welfare state. It's no good looking to the Labour Party to save us; they haven't said they will reverse any of the Tory cuts. What we need more than ever is a new, mass workers' party in the interests of the working class.

Anne Walder
Former Labour councillor and
Unite retired member.

...austerity for us

Barclays Bank's Bob Diamond who 'earned' £20.9 million last year, Rupert Murdoch, short sellers, hedge fund managers, private equity companies: what do these rip-off merchants have in common? They all advocate 'austerity',



a euphemism for making the workers pay for the crisis they caused. The latest revelations about Barclays reveal a cesspit of unscrupulous traders, unfettered and unrestrained, fiddling interest rates to get the next bottle of Bollinger or buy a more elaborate yacht. And it is not confined to a single bank. The chattering classes wring their hands in anguish. Cameron calls for 'tough' action; Ed Miliband calls for the full force of the law to apply. However, they are all determined to leave the banks in the hands of the privateers who don't serve the public good but are interested only in expanding their already obscene wealth. Public accountability is the answer. Take the banks into public ownership, a notion which 80% of the public support. This is a minimum that Labour should be calling for. Although as a now capitalist party that possibility is remote indeed.

Tony Mulhearn, Liverpool

Shades of grey?

Lawyers are scratching their heads. Can charges be brought against traders who fiddled the Libor interest rate. Labour in power were so keen on 'light touch' monitoring that they left the Libor rate

out of the regulations – so is it against the law to rig it? Funny how the law's grey area is all about taxes, insider trading and rate-fiddling! On TV a barrister said the Serious Fraud Office had known about the fiddling for some time (so why didn't Bob 'Geezer' Diamond know?) but didn't bring charges as it would be too expensive! Like all other government departments their budget's been cut, from £52 million to £35 million this year. But no expense is spared in prosecuting workers and claimants such as desperate people who claim benefit for three kids when they've only two, or tap directly into the mains without a meter. Can you see some official saying: 'It's not clear that any crime has been committed here. And if there has it would cost too much to pursue you through the courts.....' To paraphrase Gordon Gecko: 'grey is good'. It suits robbers and fraudsters just fine.

Paul Gerrard, Salford

Fight 'classism'

On 25 June, the family and friends of Michael Thacker, a Coventry soldier killed in Afghanistan, were on their way to his funeral, stopped at the city centre Browns bar for a drink but were turned away. The media picked up the story and a 'Boycott Browns' Facebook group was set up. Most attention focused on the issue of discrimination against the armed forces and the suggestion that Ken Brown is 'unpatriotic'. Although the BNP and right-wing media use the Browns incident for their own purposes – to promote nationalism and militarism – socialists argue that the most important issue here is 'classism'. For years in Coventry, Browns has been refusing entry to anyone who doesn't have 'the right look'. It's hard to pin down exactly what that look is – bar-owner Brown won't say. But if you're seen as too working class you will be turned away. Class-ism, discrimination on the basis of perceived class inferiority such as haircut, clothing and accent, is common in capitalist society. Visual markers of class are less clear cut than markers of race or gender and capitalism has a vested interest in suppressing any idea that we live in a class-divided society. To end class-ism and the segregation of public spaces as at Browns we need to sweep away the rotten capitalist system which produces this hate and discrimination.

Jason Toynbee

Profitable undertaking

The Dispatches TV programme has exposed a well-known undertakers. They found evidence of a system so chaotic, that staff were failing to properly keep track of where bodies were. Funerals were run on an industrial scale. Bodies were not lying in a silk-lined coffin as their relatives thought but stacked in metal racks in warehouses. As one elderly woman's coffin is to be transported, staff are forced to take the lid off her coffin. As they squeeze it into the van, the sight of her exposed face just centimetres from the coffin above is really uncomfortable viewing. Co-operative Funeralcare last year made £52 million profits. Bosses told the Dispatches programme that as a business it needed to make money but surely not at the expense of bereaved people at their most vulnerable.

Alan Holdway, Stoke

Leicester: Police undermined opposition to racist march

Leicester Socialist Party

On 11 June, the Network for Police Monitoring (Netpol) held a well-attended meeting in Leicester introducing their report on the (mis) policing when the far-right English Defence League (EDL) marched through the city on 4 February.

Most Labour politicians were absent. The next day however, Labour mayor Sir Peter Soulsby told the Leicester Mercury: "Netpol don't speak for any local people I know." Soulsby was the man who rewarded the EDL for previous displays of extreme violence by letting them march through the city centre.

Chief Superintendent Rob Nixon boasted: "There were no arrests made as a direct result of the marches and no damage to property..." No mention was made of peaceful counter-protesters being beaten by the police with batons, or of a police dog ripping into human flesh. Damage to humans seems of less concern for him than damage to property!

The EDL were allowed freedom of the city while the police harassed Leicester people, physically stopping them moving around their city.

As the Netpol report makes clear: "The police were perceived as imposing a form of 'lockdown' as they effectively designated the entire city centre a 'no-go zone' for Muslim youth." So while the EDL were encouraged to express their racist, anti-Islamic "freedom of



On a previous anti-EDL protest in Leicester photo S Score

speech," every effort was made by the police and council to ensure that their opponents did not have the same opportunity.

20,000 leaflets were distributed in Leicester to "dissuade local people from engaging with or taking part in lawful marches and assemblies". Distributed "to all households of school age children" in Leicester these leaflets "gave a strong impression that attendance at this event could result in some form of police or criminal record."

Disturbingly, Netpol observed that the leaflet jointly written by the police and council reported: "There may be people who will try to get you involved in the event on 4 February. They are doing this for

themselves, not for you."

Netpol notes that council funding was also used to initiate events to distract youth from participating in counter EDL demonstrations. These concerted efforts to undermine political organising against the EDL is damning.

The Socialist Party believes we need genuine democratic control over the police by local communities.

This could prevent examples of policing that favours racist organisations and harasses local people, especially black and Asian youth. We also need a new working class party to challenge politicians such as Leicester's Labour mayor, who colludes with such policies.

Racist and hooligan EDL invades Dewsbury

The racist and hooligan EDL marched in the former mill town of Dewsbury on 30 June. Dewsbury has many different cultures within its borders.

The Labour leader of Kirklees council short-sightedly commented: "If we let the EDL march they will not come back again to the town." He has given the EDL confidence to return to our town, whenever they wish.

Dewsbury is starting to feel the pain of Con-Dem austerity measures. It is losing libraries, Surestart centres, with the local hospital A&E department under threat of closure and shops closing

down every month.

In this fragile period, letting the EDL march turned the busy market town of Dewsbury into a virtual ghost town. Shops either did not open for the day or closed early, hitting shop workers' pay, and shop owners' trade.

I've never seen as many police as I saw in Dewsbury to police around 450 EDL members. How many libraries, or Surestart centres could be kept open if they had that amount of money at their disposal?

The police made the small counter-demonstration (organised by the UAF) congregate far out of town, not letting them march into

the town centre until after the EDL had encamped there. People on the counter demonstration were so far away they could not show their opposition to the EDL taking over the town for the day.

Socialist Party members refused to be kettled by the police. We took up positions nearer the EDL to challenge their pernicious ideas and counter their arguments with leaflets and in discussions with the passing public.

The local trade union movement must ensure that this racist hooligan group's arguments no longer go unchallenged.

Huddersfield Socialist Party

Book review

Various Pets Alive and Dead



Derek Macmillan reviews: Various Pets Alive and Dead by Marina Lewycka. ISBN: 9781905490912

This book, by the author of "Two Caravans", tells two parallel stories about a 1970s hippy commune and the adventures of two of its children in the 21st century. Much of the humour comes from ridiculing some of the more ultra-left views current in the 1970s, then contrasting the morality of the parents with the immoral world in which Serge - one of the children - has become embroiled.

I don't intend to ruin the plot but the banking world is summarised for Serge thus: "Imagine gambling in a casino. Every time you win, you keep. And every time you lose, a kind-hearted donkey called Joe

Public comes along with a sack of gold and pays off your debts ... He just has to keep the government onside by keeping them running scared."

Drawn into this world because of the easy money, Serge develops a whole new meaning for the term "fictitious capital." The parts of the financial plot which seem most bizarre, like making money out of a downturn, are the parts which are most accurate.

In the hippy commune, the attempts to explain the role of marriage - or the "pastry arky of the domestos fear" - to young children are a salutary warning about fitting your language to your audience.

Marina Lewycka does not spare anybody, left or right, from her comic ridicule. This is a thoroughly good read.

Wales NSSN conference Building up the rank and file trade union leadership

Dave Reid

Seventy trade unionists in ten unions from all over Wales, mainly reps and shops stewards, gathered in Cardiff at the annual conference of the Wales Shop Stewards Network on 30 June.

Katrine Williams, chair of PCS Wales, opened the conference. She hailed the historic result of the ballot of PCS members announced on 29 June. 79% have voted in favour of supporting candidates in national elections who oppose all cuts.

Les Woodward, national trade union convenor of Rempoy, whose workers face the complete closure of all 54 factories, explained why they had been picked on. It is because: "there is not one hedge-fund manager amongst them, not one venture capitalist, not one banker and as far as I am aware not one of them has been found guilty of dirty dealing in the financial sector. If they were then the government would have bailed them out."

Cerith Griffiths, chair of FBU Wales, condemned Labour leaders: "there is no difference between Tory and Labour".

Owen Herbert, South Wales and South West representative on the RMT council of executives, explained how the McNulty Report aimed to cut rail workers on stations and trains, putting vulnerable people at risk. He disagreed with the idea that the trade union movement just had to get Labour back to pre-



The Swansea rally on 30 November public sector strike photo SP Wales

vent the cuts. "That won't work - Ed Miliband and Ed Balls say slower cuts, but we have to stop all the cuts."

John Hancock, from the prison officers' POA executive, described how the POA has been threatened with an injunction by the government if it did not promise that there would be no repeat of the protest action when prison officers walked

out on 10 May. But, he said: "We can paper the walls with injunctions so one more won't make a difference."

He promised if Barclays chief executive Bob Diamond is arrested or imprisoned, as he should be, for the fraud perpetrated at his bank then "I'm sure we can find him a place at Cardiff or Swansea prisons".

Claire Job, a nurse member of

Unison, called on trade union activists in Wales to unite to defend the NHS in Wales. She said the NHS is heading for a 'perfect storm' of attacks in Wales which would result, by 2014-15, in Wales having the lowest spending per head of the population of any nation in the UK.

Health boards in Wales have to find savings of 5% of their budgets on average, every year for the next three years. Already £1 billion has been cut since 2005.

Ronnie Job declared that the Wales Shop Stewards Network represented the rank and file leadership of the Welsh trade union movement.

He believed that as the Wales TUC is holding a small, tamed conference in 2013 only able to discuss motions approved by the General Council then the WSSN should step into the gap and call a more representative conference immediately afterwards.

A statement of aims was agreed to:
• Mobilise for the NSSN lobby of the TUC on 9 September in Brighton

• Mobilise maximum support across Wales for the national TUC demonstration in London on 20 October, as a step to a 24-hour general strike

• Build for a Wales demonstration against cuts, which is now Wales TUC policy

• Mobilise opposition to NHS cuts and work to coordinate campaigns

In brief

Construction victory

On 26 and 27 June, around 40 Balfour Beatty construction workers went on strike with the intention of making the company stick to earlier promises that workers could expect a four-day weekend in return for working 17 consecutive 12 hour days.

The vast majority of workers on the northern section of the Beaulieu-Denny electricity transmission project in Scotland are living away from home, many having up to ten hour commutes to their homes in England, Wales and Ireland. Under the current arrangements they are given Friday to travel, but must travel back to work on Sunday.

On 20 June, gangs on the northern section downed tools. Management said if they returned to work, an answer to the workers' demands would be given on 25 June.

But no response came. On 26 June the workers, 90% of whom were not union members, struck once more effectively bringing production to a standstill.

A democratic decision was then taken by the workers that they should withhold their labour for a second consecutive day. Messages of support came flooding in, including one from Janice Godrich, national president of the PCS. Workers ignored the order to return to work, and later heard they had secured at least a partial victory. The significance of this victory is that Balfour Beatty has been awarded many similar contracts in the Highlands and it is vital that any erosion of workers' conditions is nipped in the bud. Workers in the public and private sector, unionised or ununionised, should take heart from this victory.

Leicester

RF Brookes workers in Leicester, members of BFAWU, the bakery workers' union, have been taking discontinuous strike action in recent weeks against a vicious management who have announced 190 redundancies.

At the same time, the firm is reneging on the previously agreed redundancy package.

Some workers, if they lose their jobs, also stand to lose thousands of pounds compensation as a result.

The factory was recently taken over by a food production company called "2 Sisters" which employs 20,000 people worldwide. The money grabbing character of the company is shown by the fact that 2 Sisters boss Baljinder Boparan, according to the Financial Times, was among the 289 involved in an 'aggressive' tax avoidance scheme.

It now appears that the company is increasing the redundancies to around 350 workers, leaving perhaps 60 engineers behind - effectively closing the factory. The Socialist Party has fully supported the action taken so far, but we think, given the new situation, it is worth considering occupying the factory in order to prevent management from removing machinery. On that basis an appeal could be made to workers in other factories in the group for solidarity action. Bloodsucking bosses like these have to be stopped!

Steve Score

Website

For more industrial coverage see www.socialistparty.org.uk

Unite needs fighting socialist policies

Kevin Parslow

Unite has recently led or participated in a number of prominent disputes: as well as the public sector pensions' dispute, Unite has been involved in the sparks' protests, Coryton and the London bus workers.

This has been assisted by the election of a left general secretary and executive council (EC). So it could have been expected that the union's 2012 policy conference would affirm socialist policies. Instead, there were signs that the old right wing, defeated but not routed, are regrouping. Conference reflected these contradictory forces.

Unite has developed more left-wing policies in recent years. For example, conference supported nationalisation of the banks and nationalising without compensation hospitals built and funded by PFI schemes.

In manufacturing, despite a number of important defensive battles, the loss of jobs and factories has continued. But delegates voted for 'balanced' statements from the executive on Trident and the arms industry, and on nuclear energy. These did not make the case for alternative uses of skills or a plan of production of goods that people genuinely need and are safe. Resolutions opposing Trident and nuclear energy were both superseded by the statements.

Despite the turmoil in the eurozone, conference voted against a motion calling for a referendum on EU membership and for one sup-

porting the bosses' market! On the Labour Party, Unite will continue its strategy of working to 'change from within' with its radical policies. The aim is to recruit 5,000 Unite members to the party by the end of the year.

A resolution calling for the withholding of a proportion of the affiliation fees from Labour until it fights for the repeal of the anti-trade union laws was defeated.

Labour leader Ed Miliband's speech was met with only polite applause, while victimised electrician Steve Acheson received a standing ovation for his long struggle against his and other workers' blacklisting!

Miliband called for the 'full force of the law' to be brought down on the heads of the bankers involved in the interest rate setting scandal. But he won only lukewarm applause when he called for negotiations rather than strikes in the London bus workers' dispute.

EC overturned

But the EC was overturned when its proposals for dealing with financial packages for retiring and redundant officers were defeated in favour of a composite calling for stricter controls. This was in the wake of the scandal involving ex-joint general secretary Derek Simpson's massive and controversial pay-off.

Socialist Party members will continue to campaign for officers to be elected and subject to accountability, and to receive no more than the wages of the mem-



During the recent Coryton dispute photo the Socialist

bers they represent.

A resolution calling for the union to support the National Shop Stewards Network (NSSN) was remitted. 25 delegates and visitors attended the first ever NSSN meeting at a Unite conference. At it, Kingsley Abrams, a supporter of the strategy of sending activists into the Labour Party, spoke of his disappointment that the union had not been able to prevent his suspension from the Lambeth Labour group for advocating Unite policy!

The United Left in the union

should work out a clear socialist programme, and Socialist Party members will play a role in that process. Delegations to this conference were elected on the basis of committees almost three years old and may not have accurately reflected those workers who have been in struggle.

Socialists who have recently been elected reps and branch officers must attend the Regional Industrial Sector conferences due in September to elect committees that reflect the union's fighting ranks.

Boot out the private 'vultures'

SAVE OUR NHS



Healthworkers and NHS campaigners march against the government's health legislation. Last week Socialist Party members staged a protest outside the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Woolwich calling for PFI to be scrapped and the health Trust's 'debt' cancelled photo Paul Mattsson

A Unison health worker activist

The outrageous decision by the Tories to allow South London Healthcare NHS Trust, with a £69 million 'deficit' to go bust, contrasts markedly with the treatment of the banks. A relatively paltry £290 million fine has been levied on mega-profitable Barclays bank for rigging interest rates, adversely affecting millions of people.

So while bankers get bailouts, health workers and patients get to pay for them through grotesque acts of vandalism such as this!

These events demand a resolve from the trade union leaders that

they will mobilise the '99%' - the majority population - in defence of living conditions through national strike action against this weak, discredited feral over-class and its government of millionaires.

The Trust, saddled with a costly Private Finance Initiative (PFI) deal, is threatened with administration, being broken up and "dissolved", with its services being axed altogether and others being provided by the private sector. This represents a nightmare for service users and health workers alike. Furthermore, it takes place under legislation brought in by a Labour government in 2009!

The Trust hospitals include Princess Royal University Hospital in Orpington, Queen Mary's Hospital

in Sidcup and Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Woolwich. 20 other Trusts, half of which are in or around London, are also considered financially unstable in their current form ie underfunded and bankrupted by PFI schemes.

Back in 2006 Barclays bank and 'vulture' capitalists 3i fleeced the public purse of tens of millions of pounds in their PFI build of the Norfolk and Norwich Hospital.

Fightback

The Con-Dems' Health and Social Care Act aims to denationalise the NHS and, combined with £20 billion of cuts over the next three years will, if unchallenged, see the decimation

of both health services and the hard-won pay and conditions of health service workers.

Health unions like Unison must urgently organise strike action on a national scale to stop this.

We can have no truck with Labour who accelerated PFI in the NHS when in government. Unison must demand these costly PFI payments stop, that the debts are written off and that all private health facilities, including PFIs, are brought back within the NHS, and are democratically run and fully funded.

Workers and service users must link up to oppose, by every means necessary, this transfer of wealth and resources from our NHS to greedy profiteering multinationals!

● **For national strike action against health cuts. No to all cuts, defend pensions!**

● **Kick out private contractors. Nationalise all privatised services with compensation only on the basis of proven need. Reintegrate all outsourced services back into the NHS**

● **Nationalise under democratic workers' control and management the banks and finance institutions and the pharmaceutical and medical supply industries**

● **For a fully funded and democratically run NHS**

It's our NHS – let's fight for it. See feature page 5

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!