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• Nationalise the top 150 banks and companies that dominate the British economy. Compensation to be paid only on the basis of proven need
• Fight for a socialist alternative to capitalism, based on democratic planning and public ownership of the wealth to meet the needs of all – not just the greedy super-rich 1%

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Jumping for jobs, hurdles against hardship... The Austerity Games highlight plight of young people

Suzanne Beishon
London Youth Fight for Jobs

As the world’s eyes focus on one of the greatest events in the sporting calendar, young people and trade unions across the country arrived on Hackney Marshes, east London, to compete in the alternative Austerity Games.

Council ban
Despite Hackney Council’s over-zealous banning of the games, closing the toilets and café and locking the park gates, the games were a huge success. The council’s attitude is just another example of what has been widely recognised as an official clampdown on protests and extreme levels of security and protection of corporate sponsorship for the London 2012 Games. The example of the bagel shop sweepings for getting into the Olympic spirit and arranging bagels in the shape of the Olympic rings, shows the lengths these drones will go to to protect the likes of Coca-Cola, Samsung and Visa.

Free from the corporate restraints of the nearby high security-fringed Olympic park, wearing and drinking anything of their choice, the Austerity athletes lined up to highlight the plight of young people in Britain today.

Through the eight events the athletes illustrated the key issues raised in the newYoung Fight for Jobs manifesto A Future for the 99% - like the so-called rental market with the Property High Jump.

The Student Debt Weightlifting showed the crippling situation young people are left with after university. The Job Jump long jump showed the increasingly common cycle of young unemployed people being forced into unpaid work experience just to be thrown back on the dole queue.

Alongside these were a number of events - Hardship Hurdles and Deficit Dispute for example - that challenged the way a global elite has been able to hide £13 trillion from the taxman while ordinary working people suffer.

Cheating bankers
The Tuss the TORY shot-put as well as the cheating and corrupt bankers team in their T-shirts - A Banker t-shirts added a light-hearted and satirical side to proceedings. In the Hardship Hurdles event one of the bankers literally brushed aside the hurdles representing unemploy-ment, the scraping of EMA, youth service cuts - such things present- ing no barrier to their success.

When the curtains come down on the closing ceremony of the Olym-pics and Paralympics in September they will leave behind a legacy of increased repression of democratic rights, private housing, expensive and out of reach facilities and a transport system taken to the brink.

Meanwhile, the class of the Auster-ity Games is just the start of a fightback of young people against this government’s brutal writing-off of a whole generation. Up and down the country young people will be organising regional launches of the Youth Fight for Jobs manifestos and campaigning to bring out the simmering anger and helplessness felt by young people in a coordinated, organised movement for a decent future.

www.youthfightforjobs.com
youthfightforjobs@gmail.com
020 8558 7947

Paul Callanan
Youth Fight for Jobs national organiser

BBC Three’s Free Speech series recently held a discussion on the Olym-pics Games. The main topic was on the question “what have the Olympics done for me?”

A poll of 500 young people carried out by the programme found that the Games made 71% of people proud to be British. But the most tell- ing figure is that 62% said the money would be better used elsewhere.

The fact that vicious cuts are be-ing made while an estimated £11 billion is being spent on the Olym-pics was a major theme of the discussion. In response to an audience member pointing out that the Olym-pics haven’t provided jobs for loc-al young people, Tasha Danvers, a bronze medallist at the 2008 Olympics, said “in reality that was never going to happen.”

The most inciteful contribution came from Symonne Brown, from the group Hastings Young People Empowered. He pointed to the fact that for many the Games were “an expression of inequality” and to “the contradiction between austerity and lavish games.”

He pointed out that most Lon-doners feel like “the Olympics are a corporate charity and we pay for them.” Many members of the audience took issue with the fact that the Games were supposed to promote health and fitness yet companies like McDonalds and Coca-Cola were official sponsors.

The response to all this from John Hayes, a minister in the Department for Education, was utterly pitiful, saying “how much does national pride cost?”

Even Tasha Danvers took issue with this line of argument when she responded “yes I was proud when I crossed the line, but at the end of the day I’ve still got to eat, I’ve still got to pay the rent. Pride doesn’t fill my belly, pride doesn’t pay my rent.”

The lesson that however, who inciden-tally don’t have worry about those things, would do well to learn.

Housing was also found to be a major concern among young people in the audience. Symonne point-ed out that according to a UN study the Olympics are the biggest cause of displacement in the world, due to sky-rocketing rents in the host cities. This was made much worse in Lon-don this year by the Tories’ attacks on housing benefits for under-35s.

The attitude of most of the audi-ence and most ordinary working class people in general was summed up by the response of one young woman to Hayes’ point about how sponsorship led to more investment in sport. She said “I don’t really care that much, I care about keeping hos-pitals open, having provisions for young people”.

The programme was a small taste of how people really feel about the Olympics. Clearly, at a time when austerity is being imposed on work-ing class people, when lives are be-ing destroyed as a result of attacks on our jobs and services, the Games are going to seem like a big extrava-gance.

As Symonne said towards the end of the programme “these should be a public games” rather than the “corporate hospitality” event that we have now.

Ian Pattisson
East London Socialist Party

Straight out of 1984, on the morning of last year’s Royal Wedding, protec-tors were pre-emptively arrested by the London Met police to prevent them organising anti-monarchy po- litical activity or attending republi-can festivities on the day. The police justified the arrests on trumped up grounds of “stolen bicycles”.

With similar attacks on demo-cratic rights during this year’s ju-bilee and now the Olympics, the protestors involved decided to take the London Met police to court for breach of their human rights. This month, out of touch, un-elected judges in the High Court have found against the arrested protesters, and in favour of the unjustifiable actions of the police.

Around £11 billion has been spent on the Olympics, and big business want nothing to get in the way of their mega-rich profiteering. For example, a dispersal zone has been introduced in Leytonstone, not far from the Olympics site, for the duration of the Games. The police can now order people to move on under the grounds of “stolen bicycles”.

Four graffiti artists were arrested for conspiracy to commit crimi-nal damage and despite not being charged were banned from being near any Olympic venue, owning spray paint or marker pens and using most public transport for the pe-riod of the Games.

Fiyafightback
The police will use pre-emptive ar-rests to intimidate working class and young people from fighting back against austerity.

On Saturday 28 July, as the Olym-pics start, Socialist Party members will join the Counter Olympics Net-work protest from 12 noon in Mile End Park, east London, which will feature events from the Youth Fight for Jobs ‘Austerity Games’.

Pre-emptive arrests: “straight out of 1984”
A sum of money the size of the US and Japanese Gross Domestic Product (GDP) together is being held in offshore tax havens. This enormous hoard could immediately pay off most of the deficits and debt that are being used to justify austerity, and create millions of jobs. Instead it sits in places like the Cayman Islands, making the tax dodgers that put it there even richer.

The report by James Henry for the Tax Justice Network, shows that between £13 trillion and £20 trillion has been lost from national economies so the super-rich can avoid paying tax.

It’s no exaggeration to say that we are ruled by the very people that are dodging tax. In Britain ‘Lord’ Ashcroft, who was treasurer of the Tory party for years and has donated more than £10 million to its coffers, has money isn’t quite easy enough to stop someone going into the Olympics based on what t shirt they’re wearing. They’d never>C turnout! But three years later, following the G20, we have always been told that capitalism may be unfair, but it is the best system available because it creates jobs and wealth. This report exposes the big lie that private prof its will be ploughed into creating more wealth. The money sitting in tax havens dwarfs even figures like the £750 billion currently sitting uninvested in the banks of big business in the UK.

However in this respect the report hasn’t undermined the ‘indebted poor countries’ have already paid off their „debts“ many times over. But because of the eco nomic power of imperialism and the legalised robbery of the finance industry, the interest alone has now ballooned to sums that would make a loan shark quail. A penny more should go to pay for those fake debts.

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One rule for us...

For the super-rich, money being spent on public services, it is the banksters, speculators and tax dodgers who get the cause of the massive debt burden being used to maintain austerity on the 99%.

But while Barclays and Bob Diam on are caught fiddling millions, or HSBC seems to be using their massive finances to help gun-run ning, money laundering and terror ism, they hardly receive a rap over the knuckles.

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Save our factories! Remploy strike a big success

On 19 July, workers at Remploy factories across the country came out on strike to defend their workplaces and the 34 factories will be closed by the Con-Dem government. Labour government. Tories were closed by their own New Labour government. It has also been reported the Con-Dems were looking to sell to a private company. Workers held a meeting and then occupied the canteen for several hours. An official Remploy union convener, said: “I’ve been a union rep at the site for 32 years and we’ve never seen a strike, other than the Con-Dem government cuts.” All 25 of the GMB members at the Dundee factory were on strike. Thirty Remploy workers formed a confident picket line across two entrances of the biggest Remploy factory in London. Unite reps also offered full support from the whole trade union movement for Remploy workers.

The next strike is on 26 July. Open all Remploy factories open. Implement the Remploy unions’ plans to save the business. Full support from the whole trade union movement for Remploy workers. Open the books to disclose exactly how much the directors are being paid. For a government campaign to encourage public procurement of Remploy products. For a 24-hour general strike to stop the Con-Dem government cuts.

The Socialist is proud to get reports from workers in struggle all over the country. We can’t beat them to the paper but also want to be able to pass on these stories and new reports. www.socialistparty.org.uk

London bus worker

London bus workers have voted to accept the Olympics bonus deal offered by all companies operating buses in London.

There will be a minimum £500 for full-time workers and many will see £575-580 before tax for working normal duties through the Olympics and Paralympics period. London’s bus workers are better off than many in the private sector.

Huddersfield: Two workers were geeing each other out and came out to join the strike, greeted by cheers. In Portousham, Rosemary, who has worked at Remploy for 35 years said: “This is my life. If this place closes, would we get other work?”

Workers in Swansea explained that the plant could be profitable. In the alternative strategy developed by the Remploy trade unions, they estimate that the whole organisation could balance the books by 2017/18, while providing work for 2,000 disabled people.

Close to 40 people crowded outside the Port of Plymouth and there was a good mood in Aberdeen and the whole workforce in Merthyr picketed the gates. The picket line at Huddersfield was supported for the strike from the local community.

There was a brilliant mood on the picket lines in Abertillery and at Bridget, the site of the first Remploy factory in UK. In Glasgow, Springbank took action when they were informed they were part of a group that the Con-Dems were looking to sell to a private company.

Workers held a union meeting and then occupied the canteen for several hours. An official Remploy union convener, said: “I’ve been a union rep at the site for 32 years and we’ve never seen a strike, other than the Con-Dem government cuts.” All 25 of the GMB members at the Dundee factory were on strike.

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Outsourcing fails again

For publicly owned and run services!

The Olympics G4S security debacle has further increased public opposition to privatisation. But for G4S at present, its failure to deliver on its contract will merely dent the massive profits from this huge multinational. It has more business outside the UK than inside and has other contracts with the UK government that will expire in 2023.

Last year it received £759 million from the Con-Dem government for contracts that included electronic tagging of criminals and processing some benefits claims. The government is about to introduce security licenses that will hand even more work to large firms like G4S by pricing out in-house security provision.

Incredibly, support for G4S came from the general secretary of the GMB union, Paul Kenny, who is paid by G4S for paying its workers £8.50 an hour as it’s above the minimum wage and the London ‘living wage’.

But anyone would struggle to live on this in London. While at the same time G4S chief executive Nick Buckles has a wage of £830,000 and is said to be in line to be a millionaire within three years. The report exposes the folly of the departments setting basic requirements for public services during negotiations. As we go to press the government is re-running the 2004 Licence to Train and expect to maintain services to the public who go on strike at the start of the Olympics.

The Guardian also reported that London’s mayor, Boris Johnson, is among senior Tory figures urging the government to introduce a new minimum vote threshold for strike ballots. The Socialist has previously highlighted the hypocrisy of this - austerity chancellor George Osborne, for example, received only 37.6% of the electorate in May 2010. Other proposals, that must be resisted with the full strength of the trade union movement, include setting basic requirements for public services during strikes which would cover transport, hospitals, education and border control.

As we go to press the government is repeating the same argument for privatisation against the action. In the meantime please send the following message of support to: solidarity@g4s.com

Socialist Party
Summer Camp
Friday 24 - Monday 27 August, bank holiday weekend
Epping Forest, Essex. Political discussions in a relaxed atmosphere, fun for children and adults: Walks in the woods • Deer park • Cricket • Cycling (bikes for hire or bring your own) • Games • Barbecues • Camp fires • Tents for hire • Meals at a reasonable cost. Phone 020 8988 8777 for more details and to book your place. waged adult £50; unwaged adult £25; child £12; Family £100; Day visit: £10.

www.socialistparty.org.uk/whatson

You can also follow us on Twitter @Socialist_Party and on Facebook.

Solidarity with PCS members fighting to defend services! A dispute over job cuts and privatisation in the Home Office is likely to escalate into action on 26 July unless ministers begin meaningful negotiations.

In a vindication of the PCS union’s argument about cuts, a home affairs select committee report released last Sunday criticises the UK Border Agency - the largest agency in the Home Office - for failing to tackle a total casework backlog of 800,000, partly because of its “unaccountable structure”.

The report exposes the folly of the departments setting basic requirements for public services during negotiations and expect to maintain services to the public who go on strike at the start of the Olympics. The government is about to introduce a new minimum vote threshold for strike ballots. The Guardian also reported that London’s mayor, Boris Johnson, is among senior Tory figures urging the government to introduce a new minimum vote threshold for strike ballots. The Socialist has previously highlighted the hypocrisy of this - austerity chancellor George Osborne, for example, received only 37.6% of the electorate in May 2010. Other proposals, that must be resisted with the full strength of the trade union movement, include setting basic requirements for public services during strikes which would cover transport, hospitals, education and border control.

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Also send complaints to the Guardian: letters@guardian.co.uk and the BBC: http://www.bbc.co.uk/complaints/ complain-online/
Kazakhstan

Workers struggle against bloody, corrupt regime

Recently 400 socialists from across Europe and all around the world met in Berlin at the Summer School of the CWI. Ben Reifel reports from a well-attended commission on Kazakhstan and the struggles of the workers’ movement there.

“Today, the division between owners and workers has become obvious. The owners number no more than 100 people. [Kazakhstan’s industrial] economy has produced a united multi-ethnic group – a highly organised working class based in big industry. From the end of 2011, [this] has defined political and social life...

“But there are potential leaders – there are the Kazakhstani socialists, who have been working for many years on a professional basis, and now their time is coming.”

These are not the words of a Socialist Party, or the Committee for a Workers’ International, the world socialist organisation to which it is affiliated, but unambiguously of former Kazakh prime minister Aksakal Kudayev, interviewed in the Kazakh newspaper, ‘Novaya Gazeta’.

The regime is planning to raise the retirement age to 68, which is higher than the life expectancy in Kazakhstan.

Despite mass opposition in 2011, planning for mass revolt against the bloody, corrupt regime of President Nursultan Nazarbayev. In the face of this movement, the young Kar

The government pumps out propaganda, employing former Labour prime minister Tony Blair to advise and to rep

The working class is currently the decisive political force but there is no mass party which unites them.

Urgent action needed

Vadim Kurashkin threatens hunger strike protest

Vadim Kurashkin, a Roman Catholic priest, is now on hunger strike. In ten days he will start a hunger strike.

Vadim Kurashkin

Kurashkin has already been arrested six months ago on charges relating to his work with the Socialist Movement of Kazakhstan and has been dragged through a show trial.

The vicious sentences imposed were harsher. Either the system

The working class is currently the decisive political force but there is no mass party which unites them.

Workers struggle against bloody, corrupt regime

Police in Kazakhstan

In these waves of struggle, CWI members in principle urge the workers to increase their pressure, to disrupt production and to sabotage the mining companies.

Wages had been kept at the same level by employers for years, with workers forced to work in bloody factories and deep in debt. Every month, according to sources that support the regime, tens of thousands of workers are subjected to violence. Even more are forced to work in poverty, without decent wages or conditions.

The government, instead of trying to understand – either the system travelling 1,500 km to support the strike at the Zhanaozen coal mine.

When one is facing pressure, repression, political repression – the workers are fighting for the minimisation of exploitation and for recognition.

Social and industrial struggles are linkin

The Socialist Movement of Kazakhstan, and the two major trade unions, the CWI is able to help these struggles organise and bring them into the campaign against Nazarbayev’s regime.

This has torn the government at its root in the regime. Recent student demonstrations in the Kazakh capital are new, and the Karatula channel has been destroyed and/or destroyed again.

Nazarbayev has responded through mass repression. On December 5 (2011) it was a turning point for the struggle. After seven months of strike action, all workers organise
ted mass in order to provide a peaceful exit for the huge wave building up. In this city, the organisations had previously agreed to control presses in breads and demands for a peaceful exit.

The regime used the truncheon and tear gas as a threat to all those involved in the struggle. Vadim Kurashkin, a Roman Catholic priest, has been arrested and jailed since.

Kurashkin has been dragged through a show trial. Famous theatre director, Bolat Atabayev, murdered. His party ‘activists’ are paid to be demonstrators. Instead, the regime is dragging oil bosses and placing demands on the Kazakh ruling class claim only 17.

This has terrified the government and made for the huge anger building up. At this point, the regime is now attempting to effectively outmaneuver the trade unions. In this way, the struggle is moving ever further underground.

But the effect of this repression is wearing off. The Kazakh workers’ struggle sparked a new wave of industrial action. Wages had been kept at the same level by employers for years, with workers forced to work in bloody factories and deep in debt. Every month, according to sources that support the regime, tens of thousands of workers are subjected to violence.

The government is planning to raise the retirement age to 68, which is higher than the life expectancy in Kazakhstan.

Recent 400 socialists from across Europe and all around the world met in Berlin at the Summer School of the CWI. Ben Reifel reports from a well-attended commission on Kazakhstan and the struggles of the workers’ movement there.

“Today, the division between owners and workers has become obvious. The owners number no more than 100 people. [Kazakhstan’s industrial] economy has produced a united multi-ethnic group – a highly organised working class based in big industry.

Wages had been kept at the same level by employers for years, with workers forced to work in bloody factories and deep in debt. Every month, according to sources that support the regime, tens of thousands of workers are subjected to violence.

While wages are far too low in poverty, without decent wages or conditions. Even more are forced to work in poverty, without decent wages or conditions.

The government pumps out propaganda, employing former Labour prime minister Tony Blair to advise and to rep
gard, employing former Labour prime minister Tony Blair to advise and to rep
counter them. But workers people often tell each other that they won’t be fooled.

This has created huge disappointments. The overwhelming majority of the pop

Urgent action needed

Vadim Kurashkin threatens hunger strike protest

Vadim Kurashkin, a Roman Catholic priest, is now on hunger strike. In ten days he will start a hunger strike.

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Durham Miners’ Gala
Miliband - no friend of trade unionism

Elaine Brunskill

Ed Miliband spoke at the recent Durham Miners’ Gala. This is the first time in 23 years that a Labour Party leader has spoken at the ‘big meeting’. Last year Miliband was invited to speak, but declined as RMT meeting. Last year Miliband was in the first time in 23 years that a Labour

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Spain’s austerity government is facing revolt from below

Workers’ organisations must build for a 48-hour general strike

Hannah Sell
Socialist Party

Workers’ organisations must build for a 48-hour general strike of the economy under democratic working class control and management, to begin socialist planning and nationalise the banks under democratic working class control and to implement a programme of public investment to reverse the capitalist crisis. But the Spanish miners have shone a light and shown the whole of the working class the way to struggle.

Rajoy’s only response to the demands of the miners has been to mobilise national police and the civil guard which is a provocation to the mining communities. The politicians are living in denial. Even the main opposition, the Socialist Party, denied the miners’ march was large!

As the miners were demonstrating, Rajoy announced an increase in VAT of 3% and a reduction in unemployment pay to 50% of what unemployed workers have paid into the social security system. Rajoy said this should ‘encourage’ the unemployed to find work. But there are the million on the dole!

The battle lines are now clearer. The government is acting exclusively for big business.

Their only policy is to make the poor and working class pay for the capitalist crisis. But the Spanish miners have shown a light and shown the whole of the working class the way to struggle.

See www.socialistworld.net for the full version of this article
A leaked letter to doctors from a Coventry hospital chief executive has exposed the reality of allowing the private sector into the NHS. Outrageously BMI Meriden Hospital chief executive Brian Creaven ordered the delaying of NHS services in the hope that patients would pay to have private treatment. The hospital charges £8,500 for a hip replacement while the NHS cost is around £3,500.

Creaven wrote: “the lack of differentiation between NHS and private patients has had a negative effect on our private patient referrals” She demands that delays of up to eight weeks be implemented for NHS treatments!

Dave Nellist, former Coventry Socialists Party councillor (1998 - 2012), with a record of opposing all privatisation, comments: “BMI Meriden Hospital’s chief executive is just following the logic of a private company - that making profits comes first, second and third!”

Socialists in Coventry opposed privatisation through PFI in the 1990s when the new Walsgrave Hospital was being planned, and we opposed the incursion of a private, profit-making hospital (BMI Meriden) being planted right at the heart of Walsgrave.

The only way to make sure that clinical need is what determines speed of treatment is to take the profit motive completely out of the NHS, by taking over firms such as BMI Meriden, who have 70 hospitals across the country like the one in Coventry, and cancelling all PFI deals. Walsgrave Hospital is now one of the most expensive PFI deals in history; 15 years ago the capital cost of the rebuilt hospital was said to be £174 million - by the end of the 35-year contract the real cost will be over £3 billion!

Labour stopped opposing PFI 15 years ago. We need to build a new broad-based mass party, rooted in the organisations and communities of the working class, that can fight to return the NHS to the needs of ordinary people”.

Lives are being put at risk through privatisation photo Paul Mattsson

Virgin vultures swoop on vulnerable people’s services

Jim Thomson
Chair of Eater Anti-Cuts Alliance

Richard Branson's Virgin multinational won the bid to deliver NHS and social care services to young people in Devon. This profit-seeking company will run frontline services in a deal worth up to £130 million.

Private companies delivering care to vulnerable people is abhorrent, but this move could open the floodgates to the further slicing up of the NHS, with private companies able to pick and choose which service they will provide.

These companies could have little or no experience in healthcare. Privatisation simply transfers wealth from the state to big business, as has been shown by the G4S Olympic security scandal - with the taxpayer picking up the bill. So not only is privatisation of NHS services, like that in Devon, dangerous and disgusting, it is also ideological and unfair.

The situation is made even worse by the 19-trust pay cartel, South West Pay Consortium, which wants to drive down health wages across south-west England. The Consortium plans to smash nationally negotiated pay and conditions. Workers could face 15% pay cuts along with longer working hours and cuts to annual leave.

The coalition government is destroying all our public services and attacking the working class. We need to fight every cut, through community-based anti-cuts organisations, trade union industrial action and through a socialist, political alternative.

Say no to Virgin Healthcare! A protest in Leeds photo the Socialist

Kirkby campaigners get support

Karen Seymour

Kirkby Hospital in Nottinghamshire provides valuable care to, among others, dementia and stroke patients. Now it is proposed that these and other services are moved to other nearby hospitals.

A ‘consultation’ period runs until September. There were sharp exchanges of views at the well-attended meetings I went to. People can see this as more about helping Kings Mill Hospital, near Mansfield (a PFI project, where some services will relocate) pay off its debts, than improving patient care.

Those wanting the changes dress them up as ‘improvements’, not considering, for example, how people can afford the extra bus fares or extortionate car parking charges at the other site. Socialist Party campaigners in Kirkby met people who were very concerned that their well-regarded local hospital could have services cut. As one woman said to me: “There’ll be nothing left in Kirkby soon!”

Shouting for the support for the Socialist Party’s programme campaigns sold 42 papers and got backing for a protest demonstration we are organising for 9 August.

Olympic protest as South London Healthcare trust forced into administration

Queen Elizabeth hospital (QEH) in Woolwich is one of three hospitals in the South London Healthcare Trust that has been sent into administration due to massive Private Finance Initiative (PFI) repayment charges.

But QEH is also in the middle of the Olympics - all around the hospital are temporary constructions ready for the shooting competitions.

While the eyes of the world are on the Games, local campaigners will be protesting at the threats to the hospital.

They are demanding that all the hospitals remain open with no cuts and that the PFI deals are cancelled.

• Demonstration Saturday 4 August 11am, Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Stadium Road, London, SE18 4QL.

Virgin vultures swoop on vulnerable people’s services

Leicester: not one cut in the NHS

Andrew Walton
Union rep (personal capacity)

“My daughter wouldn’t be here if it wasn’t for the heart unit at Glenfield Hospital.” Leicester Socialist Party members were told while campaigning against the closure of the local children’s heart unit. The government wants to cut Britain’s specialist heart units from eleven to seven. Acutely ill children would have to travel miles to their nearest surgical centre (in our case Birmingham - a 40 mile trip). They also want to get rid of a blood oxygenating treatment service for children.

Experts warned that lives will be lost as a result. A children’s intensive care consultant warned we could also lose the surgery service for adult-born with heart problems. These services are used by people across the East Midlands and beyond.

The charity, Heart Link, opposes this closure but its campaign has been based on saving Leicester’s unit at the cost of other centres. The Socialist Party opposes closure of children’s heart units. These vital services should be fully funded by the government, and should not have to rely on charitable donations.

Unison, the main trade union at Leicester’s hospitals, has organised a protest but now needs to build support for action among health workers and in the wider community, if necessary, to save surgical centres under threat.

People are disgusted at these cuts. In an expression of support for the Socialist Party’s position 40 copies of the Socialist were sold at a campaign stall.

Despite its limitations, the campaign to keep Leicester, Leeds and London Royal Brompton units open may possibly win a reprieve. Public pressure may force the government to refer the decision to an independent review body. Fighting for services can win concessions in the short term. But our longer-term message is that no cuts in the NHS are acceptable.
1972: dockers face down the Tory government

"Britain came within inches of a general strike”

Roger Thomas

“A rise Ye Workers” read the banner as five London dockers were carried shoulder high from Pentonville Prison in London. The date was 26 July 1972. Five days earlier the “Pentonville Five”, Con Clancy, Tony Merrick, Bernie Steer, Vic Turner and Del Denning had been imprisoned for defying the Tory government’s anti-union laws.

Edward Heath’s Tory government suffered a crushing defeat brought about by strikes which swept the country. Britain came within inches of a general strike which might well have recalled that of France in 1968. Heath’s government was humbled and its attempt to use the courts to control workers’ activity shattered by mass defiance.

Industrial Relations Act The dockers’ fight revolved around the Industrial Relations Act, a key part of the Heath government’s plans to control not just wages but, through the National Industrial Relations Court (NIRC), the activity of the unions and individual workers. The NIRC had the power to fine workers and unions.

Dockers were locked in a fight for jobs and against the effects of commercial interests who transferred many dock jobs inland to be done by workers on lower pay. Between 1966 and 1972, 20,000 dockers’ jobs had been lost. This struggle and the government’s attempt to undermine the dock labour scheme led to the development of the National Port Shop Stewards Committee. Action consisted of unofficial strikes and picketing of the container depots.

On 26 January a one-day unofficial strike was supported by 25,000 and on 7 March, 14,000 London dockers struck. The main dockers’ union, the TGWU, was on the front line against NIRC and its members’ actions. The TGWU had refused to register. The TUC policy was for non-registration with the NIRC court and non-attendance at hearings. But this policy was coming under strain especially as dockers were individually risking fines or loss of funds. The TUC felt that it could not continue to support the TGWU, which could not itself risk the consequences of an attack on its own funds and those of other member unions.

TGWU members expected the national leadership to launch a national strike but they continued to drag their heels.

Strikes Meanwhile on 1 May, Southampton dockers struck against fines while Preston and Merseyside dockers struck to celebrate May Day.

The National Port of Stewards extended the action to two transport firms in each port. In Hull, they led to another court case which Walter Cunningham, chair of the Hull Stewards, refused to attend. A meeting in Hull saw him refuse to pay the fine, risking jail.

With the national unofficial campaign extended, London dock stewards had selected Daggan Cold Storage and UK Cold Storage to picket. However, few drivers were honouring the ban. It was therefore decided to picket the docks directly.

Picketing began at Chobham Farm in Stratford, east London, where lorries turned away from the port had been diverted. A mass picket of 1,000 started on 6 June. Soon the number of lorries crossing the picket line were reduced and the company offered to do a deal with the union to take on registered dockers. A few days later the three non-dockers who were paid considerably less. The stewards insisted there should be no job losses among the existing workers.

The Chobham Farm drivers and Between 1966 and 1972, 20,000 dockers’ jobs had been lost.

warehousemen - also in TGWU - didn’t believe this and went to the NIRC for an order to stop the dockers picketing. The court ordered, naming the port stewards and three dockers but not the TGWU.

Unjust! The Court of Appeal, anxious to try to uphold the legal system’s increasingly fragile claim to impartiality, overturned an earlier NIRC judgement and reversed the fines on the union saying that a union wasn’t responsible for its stewards’ actions and that it was unjust for the union to be penalised simply because it was not registered.

Government minister Robert Carr called the decision “a tribunal below the waterline and effectively destroyed government policy.”  The TGWU, now took out an order against the three picketers, threatening them with imprisonment for contempt of court if they refused to attend the court by 16 June. The national stewards met and called for indefinite strike action if any of the three were imprisoned. Strikers broke out across the country involving 35,000 dockers. These were joined by car workers at Longbridge. On the Friday the stewards joined the mass picket at Chobham Farm to await the court official who was to make the arrests. But no arrests took place.

The TUC turned the Court of Appeal’s decision to the Court of Appeal to have the orders set aside on a technicality for lack of evidence to justify imprisonment.

Judge Dennis explained “we were influenced by the state of the country, by the realisation that there would be a general strike, which would paralyse the whole nation.”

The decision was rushed through at the start of the summer recess by a ruling class in terror at the prospect of a developing general strike.

The release was met by jubilant scenes. The next day the official national dock strike began. The Industrial Relations Act had been defeated by mass action that forced a reluctant TUC to threaten a one-day general strike - though only when it became clear that the dockers’ militancy had won and the Pentonville Five would be released.

There are many lessons that can be learned from this militant episode in the class war from 40 years ago.

Arrests They ignored the order and continued picketing. The dockers were convinced that the government was now on the road to confrontation. The company returned to court and on 21 July Donaldson issued warrants for the arrest of five dockers for contempt of court. After the decision there were immediate stoppages of work in London and a mass picket at Midland Cold Storage. Four of the dockers were arrested that day and placed in Pentonville Prison. The fifth, Vic Turner, appeared in the picket line at the prison the next day.

The dockers shifted picketing to the prison itself. Strikes broke out in Liverpool, Manchester and Hull with other scheme ports joining by Monday. 48,000 dockers were estimated to be on strike.

From the prison, delegates were sent out to argue for solidarity action with other workers on lower pay. But this was never purged that contempt.

The decision was rushed through at the start of the summer recess by a ruling class in terror at the prospect of a developing general strike.

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Judge Dennis explained “we were influenced by the state of the country, by the realisation that there would be a general strike, which would paralyse the whole nation.”

This merely delayed the inevitable by a couple of weeks. At Chobham Farm a deal was signed to take on registered dockers while the existing workforce were given alternative jobs.

TheTGWU for an order to stop the dockers' militancy had won and the Pentonville Five would be released.

On 26 July the Law Lords overturned the Court of Appeal’s decision and ruled that the TGWU was after all responsible for the actions of its members.

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The demo outside the prison the day before the dockers' release

Bernie Steer addresses the crowds against police brutality.

The demo outside the prison the day before the dockers' release

Bernie Steer addresses the crowds on his release from prison photos TUC library collections
SAVE OUR JOBS: WE NEED A 24-HOUR GENERAL STRIKE

Lobby the TUC in Brighton on 9 September

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 privatization 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, tems, 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 companies and the banking system that finance them. Compensation to be paid only on the basis of proven need.
• 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.

SOCIALLY AND INTERNATIONAL

• 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!