

Pay in your
Fighting Fund!
Phone 020 8988 8777
Quarter ends 2pm on
28 September
see page 10

the Socialist

www.socialistparty.org.uk

27 September - 3 October 2012

Issue 735

Price: £1 (Solidarity: £2)

ACTION AGAINST AUSTERITY

Hannah Sell
Socialist Party deputy general
secretary

A job that pays a living wage, pleasant and affordable housing, a comfortable retirement, a secure future for our children: none of that is on offer for the majority in Austerity Britain.

A new report by the Institute of Fiscal Studies predicts that even were Britain to enter a 'golden period of steady economic growth' the wages of the poorest half of Britain would continue to decline in real terms until at least 2020, leaving a typical low-income family 15% worse off than they are now.

Far from a 'golden period' the capitalist economic crisis is worsening. Cameron has told us to expect austerity to continue for the rest of the decade: growing unemployment, enforced part-time working and cuts to essential public services. More and more working families are being forced to rely on food banks just to feed their children.

Contrary to capitalist mythology, even the boom that ended in 2008 did not mean good times for all. It

is true that 'easy' credit for many disguised how bad things really were, but in reality workers' wages had stagnated for 30 years before this crisis began. Today the levels of inequality are the highest they have been since World War Two. And 'easy' credit has turned into a millstone of debt for millions.

Fight all cuts

The Socialist Party campaigns to stop all the attacks on living standards raining down. We are working to try and ensure that the trade union-led demonstration against austerity on 20 October, is hundreds of thousands strong. We are arguing that this should be a springboard for a 24-hour general strike against austerity. Such a determined fight-back would shake the government to its foundations and could force it to retreat.

The struggle against austerity, however, must be linked to the need for socialism. Labour leader Ed Miliband claims to stand for 'progressive capitalism' but there is nothing progressive about a system that means growing impoverishment for the majority.

Capitalism is a system based on inequality. The profits of the capitalists are based on the exploitation of the working class. Capitalism can go ahead for a while when those profits are invested in productive industry. The sickness of modern capitalism is epitomised by the £750 billion that the UK's major companies have lying in their bank vaults - refusing to invest them in jobs and production because they do not expect to make more profits from doing so.

Socialism offers the only permanently viable answer to this crisis. We argue for the major banks and corporations to be taken into democratic public ownership, under workers' control and management. This would allow society to organise a democratic plan of production to meet the needs of all. Truly decent living standards for all would be immediately achievable.

- Join the TUC march against austerity on 20 October in London. Assemble Embankment from 11am. March sets off at 1.30pm to rally at Hyde Park
- Support the call for a 24-hour general strike - see pages 6 and 7

Con-Dem priorities:

~~Jobs~~

~~NHS~~

~~Pensions~~

Profits for
the 1%



The paper of the Socialist Party. Issue 735.

The Socialist, PO Box 24697, London E11 1YD Registered as a newspaper at the Post Office. Published by Socialist Publications, printed by Newsfax International. ISSN 1366-9621

Afghanistan war: end this 'pointless waste of life'

The Afghanistan war has been a "pointless waste of lives and not worth the billions of pounds it has cost since it started eleven years ago" think 78% of the people in a new poll by the Mirror. Only 30% thought that the prime minister should stick with his plan to bring home the British troops by the end of 2014 rather than earlier.

This poll follows the 14 September Taliban attack on Camp Bastion in Helmand and the 15 September killing of two British soldiers by an Afghan policeman, also in Helmand. Camp Bastion is Nato's main base in Afghanistan, considered one of the most impenetrable military bases in the world, containing 30,000 troops and civilians. Yet just 15 Taliban fighters, dressed in US army uniforms, humiliated Nato by moving through radar, CCTV, an anti-blast wall and other defences to enter the camp, kill two personnel, wound nine and destroy £123 million worth of military aircraft.

As for the two 'insider' killings by the Afghan policeman, these were the latest in a steady stream of 'green on blue' attacks, now causing one in six Nato deaths. They are jeopardising Nato's entire strategy - to train Afghan forces to take over security when most of the foreign combat troops are withdrawn by 2015. Many joint training operations were suspended this month following the two insider killings.

432 UK troops have now been killed in Afghanistan since 2001 and a total of 3,187 across all the countries involved in Nato's International Security and Assistance Force (Isaf). For Afghan people the tragic death toll is much higher, tens of thousands of civilians and 'insurgents' are estimated to have died at the hands of the Isaf forces or from other consequences of the war.

At least eight civilian women were slaughtered on 16 September by a Nato air strike in Afghanistan's eastern province of Laghman when they were simply collecting wood and nuts in a forest. In Logar province on 6 June, a Nato air attack killed up to 18 civilians who were celebrating a wedding. On that same day in June, two suicide bombers struck a market near the gates of a large military airbase in Kandahar killing 22 civilians and injuring dozens more.

Nato failure

Clearly, the Taliban are not being defeated. The large Nato force (presently 130,000-strong), over more than a decade - with the US alone spending \$100 billion a year on high-tech military weaponry and other Afghanistan war costs - has been unable to defeat a vastly poorer force of Taliban-led fighters estimated at less than 25,000.

The Taliban-led militias have a steady influx of new recruits outraged by Nato's destruction and the devastating US drone strikes that rain down over the border in Pakistan. They also gain from widespread



Striking school students in 2003 photo Sarah Sachs-Eldridge

condemnation from ordinary people of the weak, corrupt Afghan government led by Hamid Karzai. Recently the wave of anger among Muslims globally, fuelled by the provocative anti-Islam film made in the US, has also in Afghanistan added to the desire to fight the occupation.

The Guardian reported that a British officer in Helmand has expressed surprise at the Taliban's resilience: "I am constantly amazed by them", he said. "They are completely over-matched by us and the Afghan army. We keep killing them, but they keep coming back for more".

Realising that they're in an unwinnable war, last year the intervening imperialist powers felt compelled to lose some face by seeking negotiations with the Taliban. The Taliban leaders suspended the talks in March this year, demanding the release of five Afghan men held in Guantanamo Bay. But US representatives have recently met with counterparts from the Afghan and Pakistani governments to look at how to resume the talks.

Nominally, 75% of the Afghan population now lives in areas under Afghan government 'control'. But the fledgling Afghan army lacks equipment, resources and training. Furthermore, it is potentially unstable, as it is drawn from different ethnic sections of the population which are headed by rival tribal leaders

and warlords. The Taliban already control some areas, so given the weakness of the Kabul government, they are likely to expand on this when Nato withdraws - their main base being among Pashtuns who are 40% of the Afghan population.

The British commander of Task Force Helmand, Doug Chalmers, recognised this when he said that the local security forces were 'already reaching out to the insurgents' and 'local accommodations and agreements could follow'. "Our job is to enable the Afghans to enter the conversation from a position of strength", said Chalmers, indicating the extent of the failure of Nato's mission.

Imperialism's war aims

Many anti-war figureheads have pointed out that at no time since Tony Blair sent British troops into Helmand in 2006 have government ministers given a 'coherent explanation' of why they were sent. Britain's intelligence agencies had by then said there was no danger to Britain from any al-Qaida presence there.

As the Socialist has always argued, much of the answer lies in Afghanistan's geo-strategic importance for the imperialist powers, as it links the surrounding blocks of countries. Also, Afghanistan has untapped natural resources, estimated by the US govern-

ment to be worth over \$1 trillion. A number of western oil and mining companies are presently hovering in anticipation of the Afghan government passing legislation allowing them to exploit the oil, iron, copper and other resources.

The western powers viewed the reactionary Taliban regime then in power as an obstacle to their interests in the region, ironically, as its very existence was a product of US imperialism's sponsoring of Afghan mujahedeen groups in the 1980s that were fighting Soviet forces.

Brutality

Having gone in and imposed their brutality for eleven years, it's now near impossible for the Nato powers to withdraw while at the same time safeguarding their interests. The Guardian reported that "senior Tory MPs" as openly predicting that "British withdrawal will be followed by a civil war". A civil war could quickly escalate, involving the neighbouring countries as well. But the government knows that keeping the 9,500 British troops in Afghanistan is not preventing the present war and is increasingly untenable because of the level of opposition from ordinary people in Britain. The US government faces the same dilemma.

The recent shenanigans in parliament reflect the blind alley for British imperialism in this war. Defence secretary Philip Hammond struggled to explain changes in policy in response to the 'green on blue' attacks by Afghan forces. Dennis Skinner taunted him with: "Now that it has been revealed that the allies are unreliable, Karzai is useless and the Afghan forces are treacherous, it is time to get out!" Paul Flynn was suspended from parliament for a few days for declaring that ministers were lying about Afghanistan; "Lives have been lost to protect politicians' reputations", he justifiably asserted.

Cameron has felt compelled to promise a "review", but only after the US presidential election in November. The troops should be withdrawn immediately! Workers in Britain need investment into jobs and decent services, not war and occupation and the terrible loss of life it brings.

For the Afghan people, the interventions of the imperialist powers have been a very long nightmare. They must be allowed to determine their own future! Getting rid of foreign occupation is an urgent step for them, and then so is the task of building workers' organisations that can demand democratic rights, women's rights and an end to bloodshed and poverty. This would mean rejecting all the pro-capitalist leaders, whether Pashtun, Hazara, Tajik, Uzbek, Turkman or other, in order to build unity around a socialist programme that calls for a workers' and peasants' government. Such a government could take the country's natural resources and the major industries into public ownership for the benefit of all.

Cellist Alfia Nakipbekova speaks out:
"The real wealth of a country is its people, not the minerals beneath the ground"

Alfia, from Kazakhstan, has become widely known as a cellist who plays both classical and innovative new music. On Tuesday, 2 October, she is performing with her group, Cellorhythms, to help raise funds for the families and colleagues of the oil workers killed last December in Zhanaozen, Western Kazakhstan. Earlier this year Alfia was interviewed by Esenbek Ukteshbayev, president of the independent trade union federation in Kazakhstan - Zhanartu. We carry some of her comments:

I left Kazakhstan in 1981. By 1995, after the Soviet Union had collapsed, it was possible to return home. It seemed that at last there was hope of a great future for Kazakhstan. The window was wide open to life, to achieve things in all spheres - social, cultural, economic.

Unfortunately, later visits showed that Kazakhstan was becoming a Third World country, with slums, prisons, endless court cases and trials - a Kafkaesque nightmare.

The barbarous slaughter in Zhanaozen of 16 December, 2011, when unarmed striking workers and local residents were shot, represented the apogee of this nightmare.

A very meaningful quote, from a reader of the journal "Azattyk", expresses my deepest wishes for Kazakhstan: "Return

to the country the stolen billions and build factories and workshops, give financial support to every newborn child, give decent pensions and medical care to the population, feed school children free of charge, give land to farmers and interest-free loans, give support to the expats who return to their home land - and then everyone will begin writing odes and be proud of their country, and not be ashamed of being 'Borats'!"

To this I would add: "Free our noble heroes - the poet, national hero and martyr, Atabek Aron, the great heroine, Rosa Tuletaeva (one of the Zhanaozen leaders), and many courageous people, who are fighting against injustice and corruption, the true citizens of Kazakhstan - a country that can be an example to the whole world!"

CELLORHYTHMICS

Tuesday 2 October 7pm,
Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church,
235 Shaftesbury Avenue,
London WC2H 8EP

Solidarity concert tickets £10/£6
cellorhythmic4kaz.eventbrite.co.uk

Cellorhythms brings together the rhythmic elements of jazz, blues, world and funk, combined with exuberant virtuosity

Campaign
Kazakhstan
Campaign for democratic, social & workers rights in Kazakhstan

For the full interview, see:
campaignkazakhstan.org

Action needed to save NHS from privatisation

Tom Baldwin
Bristol Socialist Party

Jeremy Hunt, the new Tory health secretary, has been ridiculed for his belief in homeopathy. This is the idea that illness can be cured by a minuscule amount of what caused it. But when it comes to the NHS, the Tories are doing exactly the opposite. Privatisation is a cancer eating away at our health service and now the government is lining up a lethal dose.

If they are able to implement it, the Health and Social Care Act will spell the end of a publicly owned and run health service in England. With its provisions for health services to be bought from 'any willing provider' it paves the way for complete privatisation.

Warning

These private healthcare vultures put their profits first and patient care suffers. After cleaning services in the NHS were privatised the number of cleaners fell by half. The resulting problems led many trusts to take cleaning back in-house but the government has not heeded the warning.

The ill effects of previous privatisation measures are already being felt. The Private Finance Initiative (PFI) which ballooned under New Labour allows private companies to get their hands on NHS cash.

One such scheme, the expansion of Southmead hospital in Bristol, is costing taxpayers £2.1 billion over 30 years, more than three times what it cost to build. The cost of paying these debts is now driving other cuts.

It is one of the factors behind a proposed merger of NHS trusts that



photo Paul Mattsson

could see the A&E department at the Bristol Royal Infirmary close. This would be a disaster for the city, leaving half a million people with access to just one A&E, far from the city centre.

Twenty NHS trusts in the south

Proposals include lengthening the working week and stopping sick pay for the first three days of illness

west of England have now spent £10,000 of taxpayers' money each to form a consortium to attack the pay and conditions of their staff. Proposals include lengthening the working week and stopping sick pay for the first three days of illness.

Patients as well as staff will suffer if this attempt is successful. Imagine being treated by a snuffling, sneezing nurse because they can't afford to take the time off work. Privatisation is both a cause and consequence of this attack. Breaking trade union national bargaining will make the NHS more appealing for companies that want to take over and further drive down pay.

Members of NHS trade unions have been lobbying trust boards against this. This campaigning now needs to be stepped up and industrial action should be considered as part of the wider struggle against austerity.

The Socialist Party is campaigning for an indicative ballot for regional strike action and a regional demo in the south west as urgent steps and for support for the TUC motion for a general strike.

Tom is a prospective Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition candidate in November's Bristol mayoral election. See page 12.

Murdoch empire: a whole barrel of bad apples

Jim McFarlane
Socialist Party Scotland

The media regulator Ofcom have bizarrely concluded that BSkyB is a "fit and proper" company to hold a broadcasting licence.

Ofcom carried out an investigation into the broadcaster in the wake of the phone hacking scandal that forced the closure of the News of the World newspaper. Under the Broadcasting Act 1990 Ofcom have a duty to ensure that broadcasting licences are "fit and proper".

There have been numerous allegations that senior executives at News International must have known about the widespread use of phone hacking so it is hard to understand how Ofcom can reach the conclusions they have.

They have severely criticised James Murdoch for his role. They concluded that his conduct at the newspaper group repeatedly fell short of the conduct expected of him as a chief executive officer and chairman.

Ofcom said "We consider James Murdoch's conduct, including his failure to initiate action on his own account on a number of occasions, to be both difficult to comprehend and ill-judged."

"We consider that the events... raise questions regarding James Murdoch's competence in the handling of these matters, and his attitude towards the possibility of wrongdoing in the companies for which he was responsible."

Systemic

This investigation tries to again blame the systemic wrongdoing of the Murdoch-led companies on the failure of one individual. The reality is that these organisations acted as if they were beyond reproach. The influence they exercised over governments and politicians meant that leading politicians up to senior levels of government, including prime ministers, either ignored or failed to act against the interests of the Murdoch empire.

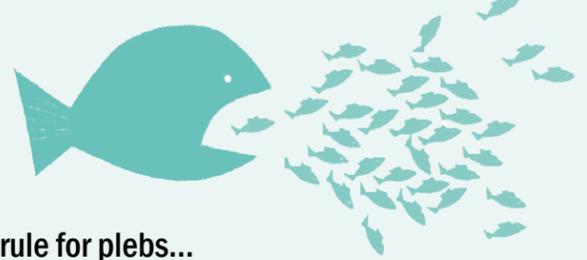
The anger and revulsion felt by

millions of people over the phone hacking scandal has pushed Rupert Murdoch and his son to issue apologies over some of the worst cases that have been exposed but these are just crocodile tears. This show of contrition is just that, a show with no real acceptance of guilt of serious malpractices.

Numerous staff of News International are now facing serious criminal charges. The range of individuals include Andy Coulson, David Cameron's former spin doctor, as well as a number of senior staff at the Scottish News of the World who were involved in the sleazy stories used against Tommy Sheridan and the subsequent perjury trial. Until those cases are concluded it is hard to see how Ofcom could have reached the decisions that it has.

Only a full trade union-led public investigation could be trusted to find out what exactly went on and to put in place a democratic form of regulation for the media industry that ensures that the rich and powerful cannot be allowed to dominate news provision.

Them...



One rule for plebs...

Andrew Mitchell, the government chief whip who ranted at the police officer outside Downing Street has so far resisted calls to resign, but his lack of punishment puts into stark contrast the very different treatment the rich receive from the police compared to the rest of us. Only last year 18 year old Ricky Gemmell was sentenced to four months in youth custody for 'ranting and swearing' at a policeman in Manchester.

Ben Norman

Busk for jobs

All politicians are desperate to appear to have the solution to youth unemployment: low-paid apprenticeships, unpaid work experience, private sector investment. But Tory MP Damian Collins has a unique addition to the ideas - busking. At a Channel 4 Battlefront youth unemployment event, he said that it's better for young people to leave school at 16 and work rather than stay in further education.

When challenged that many young people can't afford to travel to look for jobs, he recounted a story of an old colleague busking to raise his train fare. Presumably not a problem for Collins who attended the private boarding school, Belmont Abbey and graduated from St Benet's Hall, Oxford.

Whitewash

Tony Blair has extended the period of his contract as advisor to the government of Kazakhstan to two years - running to a total fee of £16 million. Apparently Blair's business will advise on public procurement, regulatory reform, decentralisation and green growth.

It's unsurprising that Blair seems

unbothered by Kazakh president Nazarbayev regime's history of corruption and repression of workers' struggles, including the massacre of up to 100 oil workers in December 2011.

£16m

Fee for Tony Blair's company for advising Kazakh government

In fact Blair has praised Nazarbayev for the "toughness necessary to take the decisions to put the country on the right path".

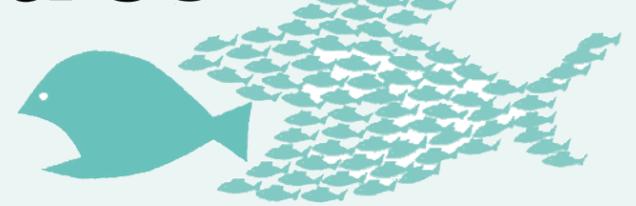
Spy to success

22% growth in sales in 12 months is an unusual thing to hear about at the moment but that's exactly what Panzettel has managed. What's their golden egg? A product called eziTracker which they describe as a "remote workforce monitoring service". That is, a system for bosses to spy on low-paid, insecure workers like cleaners - presumably to enable easier bullying.

Wonga profits

Wonga, the pay-day loan company, saw its profits almost treble last year to £45.8 million. The number of people seeking a loan from Wonga to bridge the gap between stagnant wages and rocketing bills and food prices, has quadrupled. With an interest rate of 4,214% APR, Wonga and companies like it trap people in a poverty cycle for years.

...& Us



Have you got news for the 'fishes'? Email: editors@socialistparty.org.uk

What we heard

In the back of a police van being escorted off Heathrow airport, where we had been leafleting construction workers with Unite:

Socialist Party member: You are being used by the management who want to stop their workers joining a union

Police officer: I know. But our hands are tied

SP: You need trade union rights

PC: I know. We're balloting in the autumn for trade union rights

SP: What do you think the vote will be?

PC: Overwhelming. But it won't give us trade union rights.

SP: No, you have to fight for them. You should do what the POA [prison officers' union] did

PC: But there would be other police still working that they could use

SP: Did you hear, in Greece there was a big police demonstration, and they used the riot police against them?

PC: Yes - but they beat them off, didn't they!

What have you heard?

Email us at editors@socialistparty.org.uk

or phone 020 988 8796



Join the fightback! Join the Socialists!

www.socialistparty.org.uk • Phone 020 8988 8777 • Text 07761 818206

Knowsley: Commissioning is privatisation

A Unison member

As recently reported in the Socialist, Knowsley's 100% Labour-run council plans to make the local authority a "commissioning council". Commissioning is privatisation!

The council is planning to outsource almost every service and job, whether 'backroom' or 'front-line' with funding cuts of up to 25% across the board. Adult Social Care, employment and skills, and transport are earmarked for "fast track" privatisation. Other services are to follow by April next year.

Knowsley Unison branch has made sure that members know exactly what the plans are after the chief executive only distributed the report to employees two days before it went to cabinet!

Unison members have met these

proposals with a mixture of anger and disbelief with one member stating: "I can't believe a Labour-run council would do this?"

Unison organised a lobby of the council meeting on 19 September. Before this lobby the council, clearly worried at the reaction to their privatisation plans, sent an email to all staff claiming that "Unison and the North West Socialist Party" were scaremongering! The briefing blamed cuts in funding on central government and said that they were not proposing to privatise council services or make any compulsory redundancies.

Members of Unison and other local trade unions showed who they trusted when over 100 turned out on the lobby. They held placards stating "no to privatisation", "no to commissioning". They distributed a response to the chief executive's

email. That explained how privatisation measures had already started in some areas and that the council explicitly said in its report that "it is increasingly difficult to reduce employee numbers without taking compulsory measures".

Following the lobby Unison made a proposal to the council about producing an alternative budget.

The council claims it has no

Background

The council's projections show that for the 12 months from April, it will be £6.85-£12.368 million in the red. Yet £45.507 million sits in council-wide reserves, and another £10.201 million in a "portfolio reserve" for a variety of projects including PFI privatisation plans.

choice, with a £38 million deficit due to government cuts over the next three years. This does not add up even according to the council's own figures.

Knowsley Unison is now going public in the next steps of the campaign, to include activities such as stalls in local town centres, petitions and doorstep campaigning.

We will also consider calling a special general meeting in order to gain a mandate for industrial action if the council refuses to make a u-turn on their commissioning plans. We will continue to work with other local trade unions to defend jobs, pay and conditions of service and to tell members the truth about what is planned.

Socialist Party members in Unison, Knowsley borough and Merseyside will continue to support the fight against commissioning/privatisation.

In brief

PCS strike



Fighting the DVLA closures
photo Hugh Caffrey

Members of the Public and Commercial Services union (PCS) working in the transport and environment departments were on strike on 21 September.

There have already been two months of rolling strikes in the Department for Transport over cuts and closures. Those workers were joined by PCS members from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

The march through central London was joined by PCS members from the Home Office who are also facing cuts.

Cuts, including the closure of all 39 of the DVLA's local offices and half the UK's coastguard stations come on top of a pay freeze and the threat of regional pay. PCS general secretary Mark Serwotka said: "As we approach the TUC anti-cuts demonstration on 20 October and beyond we believe more coordinated industrial action like this will be necessary, not just between civil service departments but across the public sector, if the government refuses to change course on cuts to jobs, pay and pensions."

Runcorn walkout

50 construction electricians walked out from the Runcorn incinerator on 24 September. This was provoked by management continuing to ignore agreements. More action may follow if there is no resolution with the Unite union.

Socialist Party website

For more on these issues, see our website: www.socialistparty.org.uk.

Argos tightens the screws on workers

Unite members at Argos distribution depots were on strike for four days from 19 September. This was against their employer's decision to end their final salary pension scheme. Dave Murray spoke to unite members at Argos's Basildon depot.

The scheme was closed to new entrants some years ago. The company is now leaning on its workers to join a new one which does not offer a pension based on earnings, but works as a savings scheme. This leaves retired workers at the mercy of the financial services industry.

The union is demanding a compensation package. This attack on pensions is just the latest move by Argos to tighten the screws on its workers.

The union won recognition at the Basildon depot 12 years ago, but only after a long campaign by Unite members. They faced down management threats of dismissal to organise a majority of workers. Since then, the bosses have systematically tried to undercut wages and undermine the union by using agency staff wherever possible.

According to management, 62% of the Basildon workforce are "temps" employed on lower wage rates through an agency. In a further assault on the idea of "the rate for the job" Argos now uses two separate agencies, Transline and Single Resource, paying workers different rates depending on which agency



On the picket line in Lutterworth photo Steve Score

supplies them.

At best, agency workers get a six-month contract, with a requirement that they must be prepared to work 20 out of 24 Sundays.

All workers are subject to relentless pressure to cut down "Idle Time" and meet "Key Productivity Indicators". They face a ruthless response if they are forced to take sick leave.

In fairness, not all Argos employees are under the cosh. Chief ex-

ecutive Terry Duddy "earned" £1.1 million last year. His pension fund is worth £4 million and will pay out £187,000 a year on retirement.

His underlings in Basildon have made it clear that in the New Year they intend to recruit permanent staff at below the current union rate, claiming lack of profitability in the face of stiff competition from on-line stores - like all bosses, they are always ready with a hard luck story.

The Unite picket line outside the Argos distribution centre at Magna Park, Lutterworth was well supported, with workers taking shifts to cover it round the clock. Passing lorries, nothing to do with the dispute, were hooting their horns in support as they drove past the big Unite banner.

Parish Patel, Unite regional officer said: "Our members feel very strongly about the company's decision to close the final salary pension scheme and offer a lesser scheme. It will mean people working longer and getting less. The company has rejected our proposals. Our members want to make a stand and defend their pensions."

"The directors' pension scheme is staying in place, they will walk away on retirement with handsome figures!"

Another worker commented: "This is the thin end of the wedge, they want to attack all our terms and conditions. If they had their way they would have us in there working for tuppence an hour. This is a cash rich company - where's all that money they made in the past gone?"

There was support among the pickets for the idea of uniting with public sector workers and taking general strike action around the issues that affect us all. As one worker put it: "It should have happened ages ago!"

Steve Score

Solidarity with workers sacked from Crossrail

Twenty eight workers including a Unite steward and safety rep have been dismissed from the Crossrail project in central London.

The workers employed by EIS Electrical were searched and removed from the site at the instruction of Bam Ferrovial Kier (BFK), the consortium of contractors building Crossrail.

Crossrail is going to be one of the largest infrastructure jobs in the whole of Western Europe - if it is unionised, the workforce will earn good wages and the job will be safe.

The termination of EIS on the project and the effective 28 sackings is a brutal attempt to intimidate construction workers on this prestige job and even throughout the industry.

It is yet another attempt by the construction bosses to grab back some of the losses they suffered after their Besna contract was defeated. This would have led to electricians, plumbers and pipe fitters

losing 35% of their wages but it was beaten by a campaign of stoppages, walkouts and protests lasting six months.

Initially, Unite was slow to respond but rank and file Sparks led the charge and the union came on board with a strike ballot that would have meant a stoppage at the oil refinery in Grangemouth.

Faced with this, the biggest of the 'Dirty 7' companies, Balfour Beatty, capitulated and the rest followed suit. This is the biggest victory for workers in the construction industry for 40 years.

Construction firm Crown House have broken away from the existing JIB terms and conditions, with Sparks rightly concerned that this will lead to them bringing in a new Besna.

The Crossrail sackings are another step in this direction - sack workers, victimise the union reps, try to break the union and then intimidate

all workers to prepare the way for new worse contracts now or in the near future.

Bosses always try and play off union reps against the workforce but why would a company go to this trouble if they didn't have something sinister up their sleeves?

A strong union is the only way to protect workers. Don't let them divide us.

If they haven't got anything to hide, they should make the commitment that national agreements are followed and these workers are properly transferred (TUPE) over to whoever replaces EIS on the job.

• Please send donations to the workers' fighting fund from trade union branches etc: cheques payable to Joint Sites Committee. Send to: Crossrail Fighting Fund Appeal 70 Darnay Rise, Chelmsford, CM1 4XA

A terrified Bam site manager ran out to meet the first protesters to arrive on 21 September, as construction workers and their supporters gathered in a quiet suburb of Cardiff to protest in solidarity with the 28 workers sacked by BFK on the Crossrail project.

As the crowd increased, he gave up trying to convince us that the right of companies to make profits was more important than the right of workers to get direct employment and a decent rate of pay, and protesters settled down to leaflet the around 100 workers currently employed on the project. Bam has been contracted by Cardiff University to put up the Haydn Ellis building, a £20 million research facility.

A Welsh representative on the national Rank and File Committee explained: "Crossrail is a

multi-billion pound project that will eventually employ thousands of electricians and other workers. Bam seems to be trying to clear the main union organisers off the site at the beginning."

Bam's actions will backfire - the workers on site enthusiastically supported the protest (one young worker forced into bogus self-employment shouted: "F@&k the agencies: give us holiday pay" as he drove past. The unions are reconquering the construction industry - provocations like Bam's actions in London will only accelerate that.

Construction workers will be lobbying Cardiff and Vale Health Board with Cardiff Against The Cuts to demand they blacklist the blacklists, and cut construction contracts with anti-trade union firms.

No excuse!

Thousands protest against victim blaming on London Slutwalk

Helen Ridett
Lewisham Socialist Party

"No sexual abuse! No excuse! No domestic abuse! No excuse!" was one of the chants on the lively and colourful Slutwalk London demonstration on Saturday 22 September. Thousands of people of all ages and genders took to the streets to demand an end to the abuse of women, particularly rape.

People were enthusiastic about the event and dressed up for it, making the point that rape has nothing to do with what we wear - and to oppose victim blaming.

Socialist Party and Socialist Students activists participated in the event, conveying a range of serious political messages. Cuts and austerity are impacting on women more than anyone else. We form the bulk of the public sector workforce and women and our children are increasingly being plunged into poverty by the Con-Dems' brutal cuts.



photos Paul Mattsson



Loud cheers greeted Socialist Students national organiser, Claire Laker-Mansfield, when she spoke at the rally about Rape Is No Joke - the Socialist Students campaign against 'rape jokes' on the comedy circuit. The campaign clearly chimed with many young women on the demonstration as they snapped up the campaign's placards and signed up for the mailing list. Rape jokes normalise the abuse of women and engrain it in everyday culture which is why challenging this is a key issue in the fightback against rape and sexism.

See www.rapeisnojoke.com



Cuts to refuges

Women's refuges are being shut down even though domestic violence is not diminishing. One recent example was Tina Nash who lost her eyesight after a vicious attack by her ex-partner. Victims of domestic violence are being forced to remain in dangerous and life threatening situations.

The message is put out that women need to report domestic violence but how can this happen in a safe way when the services that support women to do this are being cut due to austerity? Evidence shows that when a woman reports her abuser to the police the risk of her being beaten or

killed increases dramatically.

Platform speakers at the rally spoke of a culture of victim blaming which prevents women coming forward to report rape and which creates bias in the legal system. One speaker made the point that the poorer women are, the more likely we are to be subjected to rape and abuse.

We heard that the conviction rates for rape still stand at a shockingly low 6.5% and the point was made that when rapists know there is a high likelihood that they will be convicted, they will stop raping women.

Decisions are being made by those in power that impact women negatively. One example of this is

that personnel and resources are being stripped from the Metropolitan Police rape and serious sexual assault unit, Sapphire, as it seems car crime is deemed a higher priority than rape.

'Justice'

Women spoke of shocking cases of sexual abuse occurring within the criminal justice system. The public purse funds these services and if they were under the democratic control of workers and women's groups, abusers would be held to account and rooted out.

A self-proclaimed 'housewife' recounted her struggle to get justice for her daughter who was raped.

She outlined how obstacles were put in her path by the criminal justice system. Their hard won victory inspired her to step up and become an activist.

With an interview with Anastasia Richardson, one of the organisers of Slutwalk London; more on the Rape Is No Joke campaign and on why we need to fight for a socialist alternative to capitalism and sexism, we sold 70 copies of the Socialist during this event and 30 people expressed an interest in joining the Socialist Party.

Working class people must come together and demand that services and resources are put in place to protect women. We can also demand justice and compensation for all victims of abuse.

Enthusiastic start to the year for Socialist Students

University of Sussex

As students, we are facing one of the toughest periods in living memory, with fresh assaults on higher education announced almost every day. The current climate of cuts and austerity highlights the necessity of building a powerful Socialist Students group. We will be working even harder to campaign and support the interests of students and staff on campus, as well as the rest of the community.

For those of us involved in organising University of Sussex Socialist Students, the university's recent freshers fair was an excellent opportunity to re-establish ourselves in a new academic year and to share our ideas with students, new and old.

We aimed to spread awareness about the anti-privatisation campaign at the university. Hundreds of students signed up for further information and to get involved in action.

Our follow-up meeting was attended by many enthusiastic new faces. This positive step forward will help both Socialist Students and the



austerity, privatisation and cuts to grow.

Fred Groves
Sussex Socialist Students

University of East London

Between 17 and 21 September, Socialist Students held a freshers fair stall at the University of East London (UEL) Docklands campus. 25 people joined UEL Socialist Students, a huge success. 71 students bought the Socialist Students magazine, Megaphone, and over £100 was raised in donations.

We got most support for the campaign of solidarity with international students at London Metropolitan University who were threatened with potential deportation - something which people all across the world should be condemning.

There was also a lot of support for the campaign for a 24-hour general strike which would tell the Con-Dem government that we don't accept the austerity that they are imposing on us.

Fifteen students came to the first meeting of UEL Socialist Students, about what socialism is. After a suggestion by one of the students at the meeting, our next one will be on the Rape Is No Joke campaign.

Kyle Williamson
UEL Socialist Students

Leeds University

At Leeds University, Socialist Students got a good response, with over 20 members so far and well over 100 peo-



20 Socialist Students activists set off to march round Sheffield city centre against tuition fees and to restore EMA student payments. We were joined by others at the Town Hall where Sam Moorcroft, Socialist Students, and Steve Faulkner, National Union of Teachers rep, gave impassioned speeches photo Sheffield Socialist Students

ple asking to go on our mailing list.

Friday 14 September was the first freshers event, the International Students Fair. We campaigned over the attacks on their counterparts at London Met University, who face potential deportation in the coming months.

The next four days of freshers fairs were especially rewarding and encouraging. The first Socialist Students meeting of the year, on 'What is socialism?', was attended by 16 people.

Matt Booth
Leeds University Socialist Students

First private university opens doors - but not many go in

The UK's first private university, the New College of the Humanities, opened its doors on 24 September.

But it seems the idea is not as popular as philosopher AC Grayling, the founder, may have hoped - only 60 students have enrolled for the £18,000 a year courses, out of a planned 200.

A group of protesters threw eggs at the windows as the students arrived and held signs such as "privatisation=poverty".

We need a mass campaign of students, education workers and the trade unions to fight for a fully funded, publicly owned and democratically run education system at all levels.

MARCH TOGETHER THEN STRIKE TOGETHER AGAINST AUSTERITY

Building for the demo and strike in our workplaces

Martin Powell-Davies, a member of the National Union of Teachers' (NUT) national executive and secretary of Lewisham NUT, writes on the developing action in schools and how this can be linked to national action.

Across England and Wales teachers are preparing for the start of 'Phase One' of the NUT's national action - action we have to take to oppose the government's attacks on pay, jobs and working conditions. These attacks are, of course, also an attack on young people's learning conditions.

The action, being launched jointly with the NASUWT union, begins with a programme of 'action short of strike action' starting on 3 October. A list of 25 separate instructions have been jointly issued. These are intended to allow teachers to come together and to start to take back control of their workload.

Already, stories of successes are being reported. For example, some schools have cancelled the much-hated 'mock inspections' after NUT and NASUWT members informed their headteachers that teachers would be refusing to take part in them, protected by the YES vote in our action ballot and the joint action guidelines.

35 NUT members packed a recent Lewisham NUT Action Briefing to discuss how to make the action as effective as possible.

School reps were encouraged to set up urgent school group meetings to collectively agree the action points they will focus on. Teachers know that it will take determined effort to make the action effective. However, everyone at the meeting agreed that we have to take this opportunity to stand up for ourselves and start to turn back the tide of ever-increasing workload.

At one primary school, the im-

mediate priority was over the threat from the new appraisal and classroom observation policies which education minister Michael Gove wants schools to adopt. Teachers knew that the introduction of such policies would leave them demoralised and threatened by endless management observations of their teaching.

When I explained that Gove also wanted schools to be able to start cutting the pay of teachers who were deemed not to have met their targets, there was outrage.

We hope that schools will refuse to yield to the pressure to adopt the kind of draconian policies that Michael Gove is recommending. After all, why should schools implement the demands of a Secretary of State who, as the GCSE scandal has shown, is so clearly out to trash community schools and block opportunities for our young people too?

But where schools refuse to listen, action short of strike action alone will not be enough to defend teachers. There was also unanimous agreement that we cannot leave this campaign just with action short of strike action - national strike action is also urgently needed.

We agreed to encourage all members to attend the TUC demonstration against austerity in London on 20 October - but to use that event to call on all unions to organise further coordinated action in line with TUC policy. The meeting also agreed that we should write to the NUT executive to call on them to:

- * Urgently approach the NASUWT to seek agreement on dates for coordinated strike action in defence of pensions, pay and conditions.
- * Write to the national executives of other TUC affiliates seeking urgent discussions about cocoordinating the biggest possible joint strike action.

For more on this, see electmartin1.blogspot.com



Teachers will back strike action photo Paul Mattsson

Chicago teachers' strike wins public support

On 10 September, 29,000 teachers in Chicago went on strike against attacks on their working conditions and school privatisation. With large picket lines and protests involving parents, they defied the Democrat city mayor.

On 18 September the teachers voted to return to work, having fought off attacks like lengthening

the school day with no increase in pay, merit pay and cuts in the health insurance scheme.

Job security and school closures are still issues which remain to be fought over but this victory will give the teachers a boost to their confidence to fight back.

For more on this see: socialistworld.net



photo Paul Mattsson

Model resolution for a 24-hour general strike

For trade union and anti-cuts organisations. When this is passed, please tell the Socialist: editors@socialistparty.org.uk

This [body] welcomes the overwhelming vote at this year's TUC Congress in support of the POA motion. It called for the unions to take "coordinated action where possible with far-reaching campaigns including the consideration and practicalities of a general strike."

We are alarmed that a relentless barrage of even more austerity cuts is coming down the line, and will continue into the foreseeable future.

Millions of workers, young people, the sick and disabled people face a lifetime of severe hardship through cuts to pay, conditions, benefits and services - the horrendous situation facing people in Greece could be our future if we don't stop the Con-Dem attacks.

We believe austerity cuts must be stopped, and that the labour movement has the potential to force a massive U-turn from this Coalition government of the rich, if our trade unions were to organise action decisively together.

We urge all members, friends and families to come to the TUC demo on 20 October. Let's campaign so this day is seen as the beginning of a new stage of action.

We urge all unions participating in the demo to follow up with a further coordinated 24-hour national strike of both public and private sector workers, making direct calls to youth and students, the unemployed, and community campaigns to join in.

We, therefore, agree that this branch will organise a local/regional meeting to discuss how to progress these ideas put forward by the PCS and POA at the TUC.

We also call on the national executive of our union to call on the TUC general council to urgently meet to name the date for the biggest possible coordinated strike.

• For material backing a 24-hour strike, including petitions and leaflets, please see the National Shop Stewards Network website: www.shopstewards.net

General strike, the biggest weapon

I have worked for 50 years in the construction industry and I'm a member of the Ucat union. In 2011 I went on the 26 March anti-cuts protest in London where I met many Socialist Party members.

In June I was on a protest march in Winchester and signed up to the Socialist Party. The Labour Party is not socialist or even in favour of serious reforms within the capitalist system.

Hampshire Socialist Party asked me to do some research and speak on the general strike and on the 1926 strike that is the best-known example. I learned that the strike and general strike, if skilfully used,

are the biggest weapons in the hands of the working class.

The Socialist Party, the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition and National Shop Stewards Network have already built up some inspiring support. But we can't do this on our own. We have to ask trade unionists to join us.

We are saying: let's all march together on 20 October then afterwards prepare to strike together. Then we should try to contact workers in other countries to organise a European continental-wide general strike.

**Dave Boyes
Hampshire Socialist Party**



- 1926 General Strike: Workers Taste Power, by Peter Taaffe £7.50
- France 1968: Month of Revolution. Lessons of the general strike, by Clare Doyle £7.50
- The General Strike (pamphlet). Includes three articles by Leon Trotsky £1

Special bargain offer: only £10 including postage

Offer closes 31 October. Cheques payable to Socialist Books
Send to: PO Box 24697, London E11 1YD.
Card Payments: Phone 020 8988 8789
bookshop@socialistparty.org.uk www.socialistbooks.org.uk

Reasons to join the 20 October demo, reasons to build for a 24-hour strike

Tories cut jobs - then increase penalties for unemployment!

A Jobcentre worker

Workers in Jobcentres around the country will be trained up in the government's new sanctions regime over the next few months, ahead of their implementation on 22 October.

These include much harsher penalties for claimants who fail to follow directions, forget to attend meetings or when advisers doubt that claimants are available for work or are "actively seeking" work.

Penalties for all of the above are being increased from one or two weeks suspension of benefits to an automatic four weeks for the first offence. Second offences will carry an additional sanction of 13 weeks.

New sanctions will also apply to people claiming Employment Support Allowance, involving open-ended suspension from benefits as well as a fixed period penalty up to a maximum of four weeks.

Leaving a job or being sacked for "misconduct" (a flexible concept with some employers) entail an automatic 13-week sanction under the new regime.

Capping the government's plans is a three-year sanction - three years of exclusion from benefits - for those who commit three "higher level" offences; sacked for misconduct, leaving voluntarily, failure to participate in mandatory work activity, neglecting to avail of an employment opportunity or refusing/failing to apply for a job.

With Slasher Osborne already moving to freeze benefits for two years, and thereafter to remove the



Jobcentre workers are being trained up in the new, harsh regime photo Paul Mattsson

link with inflation, all of these measures are about saving money, not about encouraging people to look for work. Staff on the training day I attended expressed indignation that yet again the government was simply trying to bludgeon people out of the benefits system.

Much of the education and training offered is held in low regard by Department for Work and Pensions staff, by claimants and by employ-

ers. Many of the jobs being touted are short-term, involve work in difficult conditions and/or come with piddling salaries that, even augmented with tax credits and housing benefit, are hard to live on. Both of those, by the way, have been recently cut.

The government is still pushing ahead with its plan to cut housing benefit for those out of work over a year by 10%.

Infatuated with privatisation

This government is infatuated with privatising everything. Perhaps I am being unduly pessimistic? Look how well G4S handled security at this year's Olympics - a perfect example of good organisation, and I am sure they can take over the role of the police! Do we really need the NHS? - I am sure Richard Branson and his Virgin empire can show us how it should be done!

The Fire Service are told to make even further massive cuts, but the government said this can be achieved by "more flexible staffing arrangements, and better sickness management" - we all know what that means!

If the government has its way everything in Britain in the near future will be done by the private sector, and houses will be left to burn, pa-

tients and the elderly left to suffer in hospitals and care homes, and private security firms will vie with each other to maintain law and order.

The government's opinion of the public sector is shown by Tory Chief Whip 'Thrasher' Mitchell when he allegedly abused a bobby at No.10 by calling him a 'pleb' saying 'he should know his place.'

L Black, Swansea

Campaign with the Socialist We need your reports and support!

Use this letter to build support for the Socialist among trade union bodies in the run-up to 20 October. It can be downloaded from www.socialistparty.org.uk/txt/255.pdf

Dear trade union branch secretary,

Let's campaign together for a 24-hour general strike as the next step in the battle to defeat austerity.

We are in the fight of our lives. The IPPR think-tank now estimates the government will need to make £14 billion of further brutal cuts to meet its deficit target.

But we already, with only an estimated 15% of the planned cuts, have suffered too much for a crisis caused by the bankers and the super-rich. Pay freezes, pension cuts, increasing numbers of workers relying on food-banks and unemployment stand testament to this.

Now the coalition is looking to implement a 'Beecroft-lite' bonfire of workplace rights. The need for a serious and determined resistance is clear - which is why the historic vote by the TUC to pass the POA prison officer union's motion is so important. It called for "coordinated action where possible with far reaching campaigns including the consideration and practicalities of a general strike".

This offers us a way to take on the Con-Dem cuts.

The Socialist, a weekly paper of the Socialist Party, is 100% committed to backing and building the campaign to make this happen. We back the likes of Bob Crow, Mark Serwotka and others who have called on the TUC to now name the date for as soon as possible after the 20 October demo.

The Socialist has a record of reporting on workers' struggles across England and Wales and internationally. We now see it as vital that we reflect the mood that exists for this motion to be urgently acted upon - contrary to what some may say.

We have published many articles by leading trade unionists from the RMT, FBU, PCS, POA, Unison, NUT and other unions - Socialist Party members and not. We welcome debate and discussion about this crucial step - can your branch contribute?

The model motion, letter and petition from the National Shop Stewards Network can be used to build this campaign (www.shopstewards.net).

We intend to increase our page count in the run-up to the 20 October TUC demo to accommodate this important material.

We appeal for your reports - but also for your support.

Can your branch take out a subscription for five or more copies? Can you pay for a greeting/ad from your branch or a group of your members?

This will help us with the additional costs of expanding the paper and make sure that these reports and articles reach the widest possible trade union readership.

Please send reports, updates, comment pieces and letters to: editors@socialistparty.org.uk

We very much look forward to hearing from you and your members.

TUC name the date!

A report by the 'Resolution Foundation' think tank has showed that average wage increases are below inflation - ie workers' pay is being cut!

So what's the Con-Dems' response? Cut benefits too. Prime Minister David Cameron wants benefits to be linked to wage increases instead of inflation, with the idea that unemployment is high because benefits are too high - not because there aren't enough jobs!

However, the report also says that wages are being held down because of the "loss of trade union power and government policies to force the unemployed to seek work" (FT 19/9/2012).

This shows that we need to rebuild the power of trade unions and fight workfare schemes. A hospital worker comments:

"This report is being used by the Con-Dems to attempt another cynical and brutal attack on our welfare state.

"It shows how capitalists use mass unemployment to continue to depress wages, combined with labour market "flexibility" and the anti-union laws. Now the Con-Dems want to use low wages to cut already-low unemployment benefits, adding to the urgency to implement the TUC Congress decision to consider organising general strike action.

"The PCS civil service union gave a brilliant example recently of the kind of response that unions should give when their preparedness to



photo Paul Mattsson

strike secured over 1,000 new jobs in the home office and HMRC.

"PCS vice president John McNally's TUC Congress speech in support of the POA's general strike motion was spot on when he said: "Austerity is a sanitised expression for what is an unremitting class war on our people. The aim is to achieve, on the basis of the cuts and privatisation programme, the biggest transfer of wealth and power in many generations."

"The report is another reason why trade union leaders need to conduct a militant struggle against austerity, starting with a 24-hour general strike. The TUC should name the date!"

ON 20 OCTOBER
TUC demos in London, Glasgow and Belfast
LET'S GET A MILLION ON THE STREETS AGAINST AUSTERITY
then let's all strike together to kick Con-Dems out
24-HOUR GENERAL STRIKE



Labour Party conference

Can Labour give a lead in the fight against austerity?



Peter Taaffe
Socialist Party general secretary

The Labour Party conference takes place at a crucial time. Working people are crying out for a lead in a mass movement which can force elections and topple the hated Con-Dem government.

The TUC has responded, under the pressure of left trade unions and radical fighting forces such as the National Shop Stewards Network, by passing a motion calling for a 24-hour general strike. The battle is on to make sure that, in the run-up to the 20 October TUC demonstration and afterwards, the General Council names the date for a one-day general strike.

No such bold initiative can be expected at the Labour Party conference. On the contrary, Ed Miliband and Ed Balls make it quite clear that they are opposed to strikes. Yet the right to strike is the ultimate weapon, the last resort which working people possess to confront the bosses and their government. And these rights are already severely restricted through Thatcher's anti-union laws. Laws, which New Labour in power, both under Blair and Brown, did nothing to repeal.

'Wait for Labour'

The Eds' mantra is 'wait for the Labour government'. It is also the real policy of right-wing trade union leaders who are incapable or afraid of mounting effective resistance which can mobilise the full potential of the labour movement to defeat the anti-working class measures of the government.

But what will such a government look like if it is successful in being elected? Ed Balls spelt this out in the most explicit terms at the TUC Congress. Delegates were outraged to hear a possible future Labour chancellor openly admitting that if New Labour was in power now it too would be carrying through cuts and holding down wages. This at a time when the TUC has pointed out that the share of GDP taken by wages declined from 70% in 1970 to less than 63% in 2010!

In other words, the only policy the New Labour leadership has is continued impoverishment of the working class.

Ah, but these would be different to Tory cuts! It would be like the ill-fated 'social contract' of the Labour government of 1974-79, which was supposed to be a trade-off for limited wage rises in order to create jobs. The social contract collapsed when the trade union movement concluded that it was a device for holding down wages while

prices increased, resulting in deteriorating living standards and little benefit in terms of new jobs.

Economic crisis

It didn't work then nor will it work today, particularly when capitalism demands unprecedented cuts in living standards as the price for maintaining the system.

There is not the slightest perception among the New Labour tops of the grave, deep-going crisis, which will hold any government in an economic vice, severely restrict its room for manoeuvre and remorselessly force it to bend the knee to capital unless it has a programme to break the stranglehold of capitalism.

Witness the retreats already, within months of being elected, of French president Francois Hollande. Forced by the pressure of the 'market', he has promised that his already weak and ineffective wealth tax will last no more than two years and even that timescale could be in doubt. Moreover, he has proposed a €30 billion cuts package in state expenditure. The consequence of this is a plummeting in his standing in the polls and, incredibly, a rise in the standing of the recently ousted right-wing Sarkozy.

The Bank of International Settlements shows that on the basis of capitalism, the scenario for the working people of Britain and Europe is dire. The Financial Times commented on its findings: "In most advanced economies, the fiscal budget excluding interest payments would need 20 consecutive years of surpluses exceeding 2% of gross domestic product just to bring the debt-to-GDP ratio back to its pre-crisis levels." [22 August.] The British capitalist economy has no chance of achieving a 'surplus'. In fact, despite all the pain associated with cuts, the budget deficit will not be eliminated by the next election.

Capitalism is going through its biggest crisis since the 1930s. The failure of this system is there for all to see in the more than 200 million unemployed

worldwide, including 100 million young people, and the colossal growth of inequality and poverty. Europe is convulsed - particularly southern Europe - by mass movements protesting against the dead end of capitalism, which offers nothing for the future but endless austerity.

Greece, Spain, Portugal and Ireland are experiencing a soul-destroying depression. The level of unemployment in Greece for instance is the same - 24% - as afflicted the US in the deep days of the 1930s Great Depression. The youth with no future have scattered to the four corners of Europe and the world, or are returning to the villages from which their families came, in a desperate but largely fruitless search for a job, any job, even one paying slave wages. The wheel of history is being turned back before our eyes!

And Britain, facing the onslaught of decayed British capitalism and its brutal agents, Cameron, Osborne and Clegg, is not far behind; it is Greece in slow motion! Unless the present economic decline is arrested and a massive programme of growth, generating millions of jobs, is put in place, the conditions of southern Europe will surely come to Britain. There are already elements of Greece present in the social decay of Britain flowing from economic decline, revealed already in the growing ranks of youth unemployment and the 'solution' of overseer Boris Johnson for them of work with no pay.

Even the knights of capitalism - professional economists - desperately casting around for an alternative have turned to Marx's ideas, according to the BBC economics editor Stephanie Flanders. She has produced a TV programme in which capitalist economists praise Marx and his ideas.

For instance, George Magnus is a senior economic adviser to the Swiss bank UBS and a frequent guest on Newsnight who "decided that Marx's warnings about the internal contradictions of capitalism were becoming more and more relevant."

It's reported that Magnus wrote an article headlined 'Give Marx a chance to save the world economy'. He received more emails in response to this than anything else he had written: "Some of the emails were pretty vicious"! The capitalist economist Nouriel Roubini simply stated in the Wall Street Journal: "Karl Marx had it right."

Miliband

Yet Ed Miliband chooses this moment, just before the Labour Party conference, when capitalism is coming apart at the seams and the props of the system are enormously weakened, to ride to the defence of capitalism. An interview with Miliband by Charles Moore, the former editor of the right-wing Daily Telegraph, in that paper has the headline: "I want to save the capitalism my father hated." [15 September]. His father, Ralph, was a well-known Marxist opposed to the system and its apologists on the right wing of the Labour Party.

The son, however, "wants to save capitalism from itself". When Charles Moore questioned his support for "re-

sponsible capitalism", which Moore correctly says is a "contradiction in terms", he doesn't even deny this! He just falls back on the moth-eaten arguments of Winston Churchill, famous for his hatred of the labour movement, socialism and particularly Marxism: "Yes! But I believe capitalism is the least-worst system we've got. I believe in the creativity of BlackBerry (picking up his)." How do we know that it is "the least worst system"? A real democratic socialist plan of production has not been

tried, at least in an advanced industrial country, up to today. Miliband seems to equate "inventiveness" - his BlackBerry - to capitalism and the market. Yet it remains a fact that all the big innovations, from space travel and its spin-offs, health research, the worldwide web and aeroplane were not developed by private capitalism for profit but were initiatives reliant on state backing.

Imagine the colossal advantages if instead of the isolated islands of innovation in the state sector this was translated to a national and international scale. Capitalism is an enormous brake not just on the productive forces, but on inventiveness, imagination and talent.

Even Miliband perhaps has an inkling of this history when he says: "While there's capitalism, there'll be socialism, because there is always a response to injustice." Precisely! Capitalism will always provoke opposition from the suffering working class and, ultimately, also big sections of the middle class. It will engender a mood of looking for an alternative which will lead to a rediscovery of socialism.

Why not then return to some of the roots of the Labour Party of the past which at least rested on the working class and the labour movement, although the right-wing Labour leadership always had one foot in the camp of capitalism? Miliband will not do this and is therefore preparing disaster for his party and the working class in the event of coming to power. Some on the left who remain within New Labour, including some left trade union leaders, vainly hope that they can 'reclaim' the party for the working class.

Some, like the left-wing celebrity and writer, Owen Jones, together with trade union leaders like Len McCluskey of Unite, have set up a think tank, the Centre for Labour and Social Studies (Class) to further this aim. Yet some of the panel members of this new organisation cannot be remotely described as 'left'.

It includes, for instance, Polly Toynbee of the Guardian - in the past, a champion of the right-wing Social Democratic Party split from Labour. She is, at best, a liberal critic of the present government. Jack Dromey, a former right-wing trade union leader and another stalwart of Class, was a hammer for Neil Kinnock and the right wing in the Labour Party against the immortal Liverpool councillors in the 1980s who confronted and defeated Thatcher.

Moreover, this campaign has set itself very limited aims: to "transform the debate within the Labour Party". When pressed if and when this project fails, under what circumstances will Class's supporters conclude that the task of transforming New Labour is redundant? Owen Jones has argued: "When the trade union leaders have come to that conclusion."

This worshipper of accomplished facts only proposes to change history when he is guaranteed overwhelming support supplied by the trade union leadership. With this approach, the Labour Party itself would never be founded in the first place. It was the heroic minority, those like

of socialism it was because capitalism had palpably demonstrated, as it does today, its inability to take society forward.

In the former Soviet Union a bureaucratic caste betrayed the ideals of the Russian revolution. Although the planned economy was still maintained - and therefore the system which remained was still relatively progressive compared to capitalism - a one-party totalitarian regime was gradually established.

Socialist opposition

But today, it would not be Stalinism but democratic socialism based upon workers' democracy which would be the model in Britain. The check and control of all leaders and representatives at every level through workers' control and management of the economy and society would ensure this. This could open up a future of unrestrained plenty.

The other perspective, chosen by Ed Miliband, is of a Labour government operating within the framework of a diseased system of capitalism, with the capitalists threatening blackmail at every step and defeat whenever even a slightly radical measure is proposed.

But if a mass workers' party, even a small one at the beginning, was in existence then right-wing Labour councillors - more like a privileged caste today rather than genuine representatives of the working class - will be looking over their shoulders at an electoral challenge from such a party. This would at least hold out the chance of staying their hand and preventing the cuts.

New Labour's party conference, we can be sure, will be long on flowery rhetoric but short on a practical fighting programme to defeat the Con-Dem government. It is to the idea of a new mass workers' party, with a fighting socialist programme, that increasing numbers of workers will turn in the stormy period opening up in Britain.

Keir Hardie, as well as the advanced trade unions, which fought for the project of a new party, which through struggle and events eventually found a majority. The same task is being fulfilled today by those left trade unions such as the RMT transport union and the left within the PCS and the FBUI, as well as the Socialist Party, who are fighting for the same project in modern conditions: a new mass workers' party.

In the teeth of New Labour-dominated councils inflicting savage cuts across the board, such as Knowsley near Liverpool or in Southampton, where two Labour councillors have been suspended for fighting against the closure of a swimming pool and other cuts, what do Owen Jones and his allies on the left do in practice to counter them? Hold out the prospect that, in the mists of time, somehow New Labour will be transformed. This will have as much effect as a drop of water on a hot stove.

But if a mass workers' party, even a small one at the beginning, was in existence then right-wing Labour councillors - more like a privileged caste today rather than genuine representatives of the working class - will be looking over their shoulders at an electoral challenge from such a party. This would at least hold out the chance of staying their hand and preventing the cuts.

New Labour's party conference, we can be sure, will be long on flowery rhetoric but short on a practical fighting programme to defeat the Con-Dem government. It is to the idea of a new mass workers' party, with a fighting socialist programme, that increasing numbers of workers will turn in the stormy period opening up in Britain.

Owen Jones has responded to our criticism in an article in the Independent by calling on "Labour councillors" and others "to join together and fight back". This is a step forward and we support his call.

There is a clear reference to the example of what the heroic Liverpool councillors did, when he states: "Some anti-cuts activists argue that Labour and Green councillors should simply refuse to implement cuts, and set budgets based on people's actual needs." Very good! But then he says Labour councillors do not want to be "martyrs" and, in any case, the Tories would step in and impose cuts!

He ignores the fact that Liverpool council in the 1980s first defeated Thatcher over cuts. Only when they were isolated, because others deserted the struggle, was she able to defeat them.

If the 22 councils who originally stood up to Thatcher had maintained their opposition, then the cuts would have been defeated. Today, if just a significant number of councils refused to implement the cuts, it would undoubtedly result in a mass response from working people. The tremendous support for the two Southampton councillors underlines this.

As Owen Jones puts it: "The choice facing our councillors is clear: face having to take responsibility for kicking people who are poor, disabled, old or young - or join together and fight back." We say: Fight back by resisting cuts now!

Socialism Today



The Socialist Party's magazine
October 2012 issue includes:

● **Whose party?**
A debate with Owen Jones on working class representation

£2.50 including postage from:
Socialism Today PO Box 24697,
London E11 1YD.

socialismtoday
@socialistparty.org.uk
www.socialismtoday.org
020 8988 8773

Owen Jones will debate these questions with Clive Heemsker, deputy editor of Socialism Today, at: **Socialism 2012**, a weekend of discussion and debate. See page 11.

SOCIALISM 2012

One of many protests outside Labour-run councils who pass on Con-Dem austerity measures, this one Waltham Forest

Sales of the Socialist Hitting the target

The Socialist Party sets quarterly targets for raising fighting fund to finance campaigns and for sales of the Socialist. These targets are broken down so each branch has responsibility for meeting them. The July to September quarter finishes on Friday 28 September at 2pm. The Socialist sales organiser for Coventry West explains how his branch is on course to break their paper sales target for the second successive quarter.

For a long time Coventry West Socialist Party has achieved high sales of the Socialist. But, more recently, we've managed to increase workplace sales in particular, as we attract more and more people to the party, and they take socialist ideas out and about with them.

We've also been doing regular paper sales outside the city centre bus station and this has helped to boost our sales.

We just ask passers-by if they'd like to buy a copy. We see people who we may not see on our regular Saturday campaign stall and now we have several regular buyers of the Socialist just from those sales.

Of course, the last four years of economic crisis has raised many workers' anger. The mainstream media focus on the double dip recession and decade-long austerity programme, which all the main parties agree on.

As everyone becomes more vulnerable due to cuts in jobs, pay and benefits - backed by the Tories, Lib Dems and Labour - people are beginning to see through the fakery of 'responsible capitalism'; this just doesn't chime with 99% of people.

No wonder the ideas of the Socialist, the ideas of the Socialist Party, are gaining ground in workplaces, on doorsteps and on high streets.

Our paper is the most basic way of getting socialist ideas out to people who are used to hearing TINA: 'There Is No Alternative'.

It is full of the struggles of ordinary people, which really resonates. People relate to other people taking action.

I can tell someone at work to go to a website and chances are they won't.

But if I have a paper to talk about during a break, and then to sell, word spreads. And our ideas spread.



photo Sarah Mayo

So, if you're a Socialist Party member or agree with what's said in the Socialist, always have some papers with you when you're out and about.

Try and sell to family, friends or neighbours.

If you can't sell in work, maybe you can sell to workmates as they go in, at lunch or after work. Not everyone will say 'yes' - but if you don't ask, you don't sell!

Save our server! Total raised so far £6,957

Can you donate to our appeal? The Socialist Party is aiming to raise £12,000 to buy a new server and is asking all its members and supporters to contribute.

The server networks all the computers at the national centre and stores all the hundreds of letters, articles and reports that are created every day.

It also acts as a safe gateway to the internet and provides a high level of security to protect against anyone trying to access sensitive information. However, our current server can no longer cope with the number of computers, files and emails which it has to manage.

We are getting a great response from members and readers. Thanks to: Andy Bentley and Mandy Marfleet £25; Arti Dillon £25; Kevin Patterson and Ros Campbell £50; Chris Huggins £20; Steve Appleton £100; Geoff Stokle

£20; Elaine Brunskill and Norman Hall £20; Kerry Feetham £25; Ken Smith £20; Matt Leek £20; Roger Bannister £25; Ben Golightly and Robert P Williams £30; Roger Ingham £100; Peter Hall £100; Bob Severn £30; Lee Hawksbee £30; John Sharpe £10; Adam Hemsley £100; Steve McDonnell £25; Andy Hammond £20; Mark Evans £30; Scott Jones £20; Craig Morris £8; Roger Keyes £60.

Please consider donating to the appeal. Every donation, no matter how big or how small, is very welcome and will take us nearer to our goal.

You can pay via the Socialist Party website www.socialistparty.org.uk/donate and mark your donation 'Server appeal' or telephone 020 8988 8777.

Ken Douglas
Socialist Party national treasurer

Fund the fightback!
Online: www.socialistparty.org.uk/donate
Phone: 020 8988 8777
Post: Socialist Party Fighting Fund, PO Box 24697, London E11 1YD
Make cheques payable to Socialist Party. Please give your name, address and contact details

Hull marches against NHS cuts

Matt Whale
Hull Socialist Party

300 beds - one-fifth of capacity - and the neurology department are at risk if £99 million is slashed from the Hull and East Riding NHS budget.

On Saturday 22 September, over 300 trade unionists and service users marched through Hull to protest against these cuts.

A petition with over 3,000 names has been collected and will be handed in to Con-Dem health secretary Jeremy Hunt. Thousands of leaflets were produced and distributed around Hull and the

surrounding areas.

The march was loud and vibrant with families, the elderly and young people all taking part.

The local Labour MPs didn't attend, with rumours flying around that the shadow cabinet had instructed them not to attend due to the influence of 'socialists' in the planning of the march!

Hull Socialist Party sold over 40 copies of the Socialist, arguing that not one cut is needed to any public service.

The austerity agenda is clearly not working. We need investment in services and communities, instead of propping up the bankers.

The Observer revealed how Jeremy Hunt personally intervened to ensure that Virgin Care was able to take over the running of seven community hospitals in his constituency. The Guardian reported that he wants to take on Christine Lineen, formerly head of communications at Circle Health as an 'advisor'.

Circle was awarded management of Hinchingsbrooke hospital in Cambridgeshire last year and is owned by companies and investment funds registered in tax havens.

Opencast mining: "Protect us from Provectus"

"Protect us from Provectus!" chanted a 200-strong march in North Derbyshire on Saturday 22 September.

The Provectus company wants to excavate an opencast coal mine within 500 metres of 1,300 homes. If the plans go through the site would be dug out to a depth of 30 metres.

Work would continue for three or four years. During that time, local residents would have noise, dust

and frequent lorry movements to put up with, as well as losing their local countryside.

And although jobs are desperately needed in this area of high unemployment, opencast mining creates very few local jobs.

The march followed a three-mile route circling the site, including Tupton, Holmgate and Clay Cross. Many joined as the march passed their houses.

SOCIALIST PARTY FIGHTING FUND

	£ target	£ received	July-September 2012	Deadline 28 September
South East	750	1,536	██████████	██████████
North West	1,200	1,763	██████████	██████████
Eastern	1,200	1,665	██████████	██████████
East Midlands	1,550	1,956	██████████	██████████
Wales	2,300	2,666	██████████	██████████
South West	1,400	1,309	██████████	██████████
West Midlands	2,100	1,693	██████████	██████████
Southern	1,200	936	██████████	██████████
Yorkshire	2,900	2,051	██████████	██████████
Northern	600	374	██████████	██████████
London	6,100	3,036	██████████	██████████
England & Wales	3,700	1,064	██████████	██████████
TOTAL	25,000	20,055	██████████	██████████

Get the Socialist delivered to your door - subscribe today!

Name _____
 Address _____
 _____ Post Code _____
 Tel/email _____

Post your completed form to: Socialist Publications, PO Box 24697, London E11 1YD
 Call 0208 988 8796 to pay by card www.socialistparty.org.uk/subscribe

Pay by cheque or card

3 months/12 issues £15 6 months/24 issues £28 12 months/48 issues £50

I would also like **Socialism Today** (12 months/10 issues) for £18

Please make cheques payable to Socialist Publications Ltd and send to the address above with this form.

Total £ _____ Card no. _____

Valid from _____ Expires _____ Security code _____ Issue no. (Switch only) _____

We can accept Visa, Mastercard, Maestro, Switch and Colo credit and debit cards.

Pay by Direct Debit

The Socialist for £4 a month **Socialism Today** for £2 a month **The Socialist and Socialism Today** for £6 a month

DIRECT Debit Instruction to your Bank or Building Society to pay by Direct Debit

Please fill in form using a ball point pen and send it to: Socialist Publications, PO Box 24697, London E11 1YD

Name and full postal address of your Bank or Building Society

To: The Manager Bank/Building Society

Address _____

 Postcode _____

Name(s) of Account Holder(s) _____

Bank/Building Society account number _____

Branch Sort Code _____

Reference Number (Socialist Publications Ltd to fill this in) _____

Originator's Identification Number **6 7 5 4 8 2**

Please deduct my Direct Debit on or soon after the 1st day or 15th day of each month (Please tick one)

Instruction to your Bank or Building Society
 Please pay Socialist Publications Ltd Direct Debits from the account detailed in this Instruction subject to the safeguards assured by the Direct Debit Guarantee. I understand that this Instruction may remain with Socialist Publications Ltd and, if so, details will be passed electronically to my Bank/Building Society.

Signature(s) _____
 Date _____

Banks and Building Societies may not accept Direct Debit Instructions from some types of account

The Direct Debit Guarantee
 This guarantee should be detached and retained by the Payer.

- This Guarantee is offered by all Banks and Building Societies that take part in the Direct Debit Scheme. The efficiency and security of the Scheme is monitored and protected by your own Bank and Building Society.
- If the amounts to be paid or the payment dates change Socialist Publications Ltd will notify you at least 14 working days in advance of your account being debited or as otherwise agreed.
- If an error is made by Socialist Publications Ltd or your Bank or Building Society, you are guaranteed a full and immediate refund from your branch of the amount paid.
- You can cancel a Direct Debit at any time by writing to your Bank or Building Society. Please also send a copy of your letter to us.

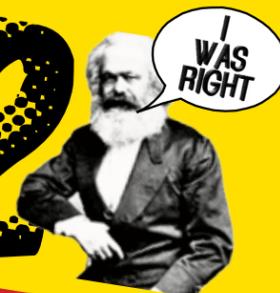
PLANNING THE FIGHTBACK AGAINST AUSTERITY AFTER 20 OCTOBER...

SOCIALISM 2012



@SOCIALISM12 #SOCIALISM2012

BUY NOW! 10% DISCOUNT ON PURCHASES BEFORE 2ND NOVEMBER



RALLY: FIGHT AUSTERITY

KICK OUT THE CON-DEMS

BUILD A 24-HOUR GENERAL STRIKE

6.30PM SATURDAY 3 NOVEMBER

SPEAKERS INCLUDE:

BOB CROW

RMT TRANSPORT UNION GENERAL SECRETARY

MATT WRACK

FIRE BRIGADE UNION GENERAL SECRETARY

PETER TAAFFE

SOCIALIST PARTY GENERAL SECRETARY

AND MORE

LONDON 3-4 NOVEMBER

WWW.SOCIALISM2012.ORG.UK



HOSTED BY THE SOCIALIST PARTY

020 8988 8777

JOIN THE FIGHTBACK FIGHT THE 1% FIGHT FOR SOCIALISM

WEEKEND £30/£15 (concs)
ONE DAY £15/£8 (concs)
RALLY ONLY £5

Saturday night accommodation available. See the website for details. There will be a full creche. Please phone to book a place.

GETTING TO SOCIALISM 2012:

Nearest tubes to ULU and FMH: Euston, Warren Street, Goudge Street and Euston Square. Close to: Kings Cross and Euston train stations. See the website for more details

VENUES

RALLIES FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE
179 EUSTON ROAD, NW1 2BJ

WORKSHOPS&DISCUSSIONS UNIVERSITY OF LONDON UNION, MALET STREET, WC1E 7HY (REGISTER FROM 2PM SATURDAY)

CLOSING RALLY FOR SOCIALISM

3PM
SUNDAY 4 NOVEMBER

Workshops and discussions include: The Hillsborough cover up: what does it say about the role of the police, media and government?; Debunked: the lies they tell you about capitalism; Is the Labour Party a vehicle for socialism? (forum); How do we combat the growth of the far right?; and much, much more

A WEEKEND OF DISCUSSION&DEBATE

Buy tickets online at www.socialism2012.org.uk, call 020 8988 8777 or email socialism@socialistparty.org.uk Send cheque or postal order payable to 'Socialism' to: Socialism, PO Box 24697, London, E11 1YD with your name, address, phone number and details of your purchase.



Join the socialists!

Phone our national office on 020 8988 8777
Email join@socialistparty.org.uk

Locate your nearest Socialist Party branch - text your name and postcode to 07761 818 206

Contact your region's Socialist Party organiser:

Eastern 07905 167703 Southern 07833 681 910
East Midlands 07737 978 057 South East 07894 716 095
London 020 8988 8786 South West 07759 796 478
Northern 07841 144 890 Wales 07855 936 859
North West 07769 611 320 West Midlands 07929 395 884
Yorkshire: 07706 710 041

TUSC conference: A step forward for working class political representation

TUSC AGAINST CUTS



Building support for TUSC among the working class is an important task for socialists photo Paul Mattsson

Paula Mitchell
London regional secretary,
Socialist Party

The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition conference on 22 September was a forum for real debate about political representation for working class people.

In opening the conference, former Socialist Party councillor Dave Nellist pointed out that the two general secretaries who moved and seconded the general strike resolution at the TUC – Steve Gillan of the POA prison officers union and Bob Crow of the RMT transport union – plus the first contribution in the debate from PCS vice-president John McNally – are all members of the TUSC steering committee. That shows how serious a development TUSC is.

The first session of the conference was a debate about building working class political representation against austerity and the parties promoting it. RMT president Alex Gordon said that the RMT, in supporting No2EU in the 2009 European elections, was the first national union to back candidates against the main parties.

Both the resolution passed at its 2012 annual conference (AGM) and its motion presented to the TUSC conference, underline the determination the RMT has to build TUSC. The RMT had sent four

delegates from its executive to the conference, along with the London regional secretary.

“TUSC provides a nucleus, perhaps a step on the path to a mass working class party that represents the interests of the masses not the bosses,” said Alex. However, he was

It is not just about getting the backing of the trade unions for socialist/left candidates, but forging a political voice of trade unionists

clear that the litmus test for the success or failure of TUSC is getting the involvement of trade union forces.

John McNally, PCS vice president, explained the process towards a political fund in the PCS and now the decision to support or stand candidates in national elections in exceptional circumstances.

The PCS is the first union that has not been affiliated to Labour to vote to stand candidates. John stressed the necessity of the debate they had had at all levels of the union, against the argument of the “Moderates” that the civil service union should

be politically neutral.

He acknowledged that this decision is not enough to solve political representation but is a significant step. He made his view clear that it is a bankrupt proposition to say the Labour Party can be transformed.

TUSC steering committee member Charlie Kimber explained the position of the Socialist Workers Party. He said that while the key method of fighting austerity will be resistance in workplaces and on the street, there is also the need for political representation and a socialist party.

The volatility shown by the dramatic increase in support for Syriza in Greece showed what is possible. He argued that it is necessary to root an electoral alternative as broadly as possible, and to secure good results in order to look more credible. Trade union support is key, he said.

Left forces

Rob Griffiths, leader of the Communist Party of Britain, was next in the debate. The CPB is not part of TUSC, although it has been invited to join, but the TUSC committee believes it is important to engage in discussion with other forces on the left that are also standing candidates.

Rob said that the CPB believes that what is needed is a mass party of labour based on the organised working class movement, capable of winning a general election and implementing, at least, reforms

The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) was set up in 2010 to enable trade unionists, community campaigners and socialists to stand candidates against the pro-austerity establishment parties.

TUSC came out of a series of discussions by participants in the No2EU-Yes to Democracy coalition, which contested the 2009 European elections with the official support of the RMT transport workers' union, the Socialist Party, and others.

TUSC is a coalition with a steering committee which includes, in a personal capacity, the RMT general secretary Bob Crow, the general secretary of the POA prison officers union, Steve Gillan, and national officers and executive members of the PCS civil servants union, the Fire Brigades Union, and the National Union of Teachers. The Socialist Party and the SWP are also represented on the committee.

TUSC is a federal ‘umbrella’ coalition, with agreed core policies endorsed by all its candidates but with participating organisations accountable for their own campaigns. Its core policies include a clear socialist commitment to “bringing into democratic public ownership the major companies and banks that dominate the economy, so that production and services can be planned to meet the needs of all and to protect the environment”.

in favour of working class people. It would need not just unions like RMT and PCS but big unions like Unite and GMB.

In the view of the CPB, “the most direct and straightforward route” to do that is reclaiming Labour. He argued it won’t be possible to convince Unite activists that the project is futile until they have gone through the experience. He quoted Unite general secretary Len McCluskey saying that if there were no significant advances by the next general election, we will then have to reconsider.

Will McMahon spoke for the Independent Socialist Network. He said that it is necessary to enfranchise the thousands of trade unionists in unions still affiliated to Labour, and provide a way for people involved in single issue campaigns to get involved.

He argued for the establishment of TUSC groups all over the country. He also argued for standing candidates widely – “putting a flag in the ground” – and to not be put off by small votes.

Hannah Sell spoke as the Socialist Party’s representative on the national TUSC committee. She underlined TUSC’s achievements so far and said TUSC should aim to stand the (up to) 400 candidates necessary for a TV broadcast in the next local elections in 2013. That would raise TUSC’s profile and improve its credibility.

She pointed out the powerful mass movements that can develop and that TUSC should not expect to just keep progressing incrementally. The most important task is how we build support for TUSC amongst the working class, especially amongst the organised working class in the trade unions.

Hannah argued that it is not just about getting the backing of the trade unions for socialist/left candidates, but forging a political voice of trade unionists. The RMT had gone through a period of steps and now other unions needed to do the same. TUSC supporters in PCS now need to wage a campaign.

Hannah disagreed with the CPB that there can’t be significant steps until the big trade unions like Unite are on board – there will be a battle inside Unite for some time. And you can’t say there will be no breakthroughs before the Labour Party is in power.

From the floor there was general agreement that TUSC should appeal to people who vote Labour, and that we should support the tiny number of Labour councillors who have stood out against the cuts, and those who fight for Labour to adopt policies in favour of the working class. But Socialist Party members pointed out that this should not mean soft-peddling when it comes to Labour councillors who vote for cuts.



Alex Gordon photo S Beishon

Elections

The second session of the conference dealt with preparation for the council elections in 2013, with introductory speeches from TUSC/Walsall Democratic Labour Party councillor Pete Smith, Mark Kranz from the SWP speaking on behalf of councillor Michael Lavallette, and TUSC’s Liverpool mayoral candidate and Socialist Party member Tony Mulhearn.

Tony was able to draw on the experience of Liverpool council in the 1980s, which was led by Militant supporters (the forerunner of the Socialist Party), to show how a

mass movement of trade unions and the community can be built to back a fighting stand taken by elected councillors.

The discussion from the floor included the importance of equalities, and of campaigning early.

Socialist Party members stressed the importance of giving TUSC candidates a platform at every opportunity and not giving credibility to Labour MPs and councillors, such as had happened in the recent campaign against the far-right EDL march in Waltham Forest.

Structures

The final session gave an airing to the on-going discussion on organisational structures. The TUSC committee has set up a Structures Commission to take submissions from any groups or individuals on how TUSC can be best structured to achieve its tasks at this stage in its development.

Clive Heemsker, national nominating officer of TUSC, explained the importance of retaining TUSC’s federal, consensus-based structure as the one best suited for TUSC’s current stage and tasks. This was endorsed by both the

SWP speaker Mark Thomas, and Pete McClaren, speaking for the Independent Socialist Network. Pete also stressed his view of the necessity of building up branches and of considering individual membership at a later stage.

This session also discussed democracy. A representative from Socialist Resistance, which has applied to have a place on the national TUSC steering committee, suggested that TUSC is not democratic because the conference was not voting on these issues.

However, as Sean Hoyle, a del-

egate from the RMT executive, explained, the issue of structures is very serious if we are to be able to draw in more trade union forces.

A careful process is in place, which would not be helped by premature decisions before there has been serious consideration given to the proposals and their ramifications.

Clive explained the case for representative democracy: all the participating organisations in TUSC are democratic bodies which send representatives to decision-making meetings.

Spain: March on Madrid kicks off a hot autumn of struggle

Socialismo Revolucionario
(CWI in Spain) reporters

On Saturday 15 September, workers from all over the Spanish state marched on Madrid to protest against the massive cuts to public services by the right-wing People's Party (PP) government.

This represents the start of this autumn's movement against austerity imposed by the big banks and the European Union (EU) and rubber stamped by prime minister Mariano Rajoy's increasingly unpopular government.

The majority Spanish trade unions, UGT and CCOO, branded the demo as the launching of a campaign to compel the government to call a referendum on the cuts.

Over 200 other civic organisations supported the march. It was a magnificent sight to see the ten feeder marches assemble in the centre of Madrid. Each section wore their own distinctive t-shirts - red for unions and industrial workers, white for health workers, violet for women's groups, through almost all the colours of the rainbow.

It was almost impossible to reach the end of the demonstration in Plaza Colon as the various marches snaked slowly forward. Columns of marchers had to leave the Plaza to allow others to get in.

Laughably, the Madrid regional government claimed only 65,000 workers had marched. El Pais and other serious newspapers put the figure at 'hundreds of thousands', with union estimates ranging from half a million to more than one million.

The real significance of the March on Madrid is the arrival on the scene of the organised working class. CCOO/UGT had already organised a 24-hour general strike last March,

which the government has tried to ignore and the union leaders did not follow up with an escalation of the struggle as Socialismo Revolucionario (CWI in Spain) argued for. However, pressure from the unions' ranks, as well as the deepening financial crisis and ever more vicious cuts, have compelled the main trade unions to act again.

The UGT and CCOO leaders, Fernandez Toxo and Candido Mendez, met with King Juan Carlos to put their position. They also pulled together a 'Social Summit' in which hundreds of civil organisations participated. A petition in favour of the referendum has also been launched.

However, their campaign for a referendum does not match either the needs of the situation or the militancy of workers, as was seen in the miners' strike and spontaneous walkouts of public sector workers against the austerity measures.

Only two days after the march, transport workers took national strike action and had a big impact, despite the scandalous anti-trade union 'minimum services' laws which obliged over 50% of services to operate in some cases.

Economic catastrophe

During the summer, the left-wing United Left (IU) leader, Sanchez Gordillo, in Andalucia and the Andalucian SAT trade union made headlines all over the world with their bank occupations and expropriation of goods from supermarkets to distribute among the poor.

The economic situation in Spain is worsening by the day with unemployment over five million and the spectre of home repossession hanging over thousands of families. Over half of under-25 year olds have never worked, and students have returned to college and university



Millions have marched in Spain and Portugal against austerity

to attend much bigger classes (and fees) and awful conditions.

It was extremely inspiring to see thousands of workers from all over Spain marching together but it is true to say that the day lacked a certain focus. The CCOO/UGT leaders are appealing to deaf ears as it is highly unlikely that the PP government will submit their austerity plans to a referendum.

At the rally the union leaders said the ball was in Rajoy's court as to whether there would be another general strike. Unfortunately, vague threats are not enough at this stage.

SR's demand for a 48-hour strike got a good echo from marchers throughout the demonstration. Such a strike would serve to escalate the struggle and build a movement capable of bringing down the increasingly weak Rajoy government, setting our sights on a struggle for a workers' government to implement socialist policies as the only way to break from the spiral of crisis.

It is a time for serious action by the unions. As the one million people taking to the streets of Portugal on the same day against the same austerity policies shows, there is also a pressing need for internationally coordinated action and general strikes on an all-European level.

In Catalonia, we have seen up to two million people take to the streets for independence but also in opposition to the cuts. And in Euskadi (the Basque country), there will be a general strike called by the majority Basque unions on 26 September.

Spain is entering a decisive phase. The deepening crisis is also opening up national contradictions in Catalonia and Euskadi. A continuation of austerity will mean economic chaos and a dismantling of the public services and reforms gained over the last 30 years of 'democracy'. The struggle is on to build a united movement with a genuine socialist and fighting leadership.

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

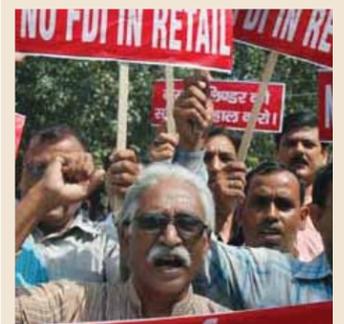
The CWI website contains news, reports and analysis from around the world. Recent articles include:



Anti-Islam movie: Protests spread

US imperialism reaping the whirlwind from what it has sown.

Cédric Gêrôme, CWI



India: National stoppage against multinational 'invasion'

Millions involved in countrywide bandh.

Anand Kumar and Jagadish G Chandra, New Socialist Alternative (CWI, India)



USA: Chicago teachers win important concessions

Prepare for a further struggle to defend public education.

Tom Crean, Socialist Alternative (CWI supporters, USA)

'Lonmin settlement a victory – struggle pays!'

After six weeks of defiant strike action in the teeth of violent attacks by police acting on behalf of the mining bosses, when over 40 miners were killed, the Marikana platinum miners have won a significant 22% pay increase and a R2,000 payment for loss of earnings from mine owners, Lonmin.

Members of the Democratic Socialist Movement (the Socialist Party's counterpart in South Africa) have played an important role

in the miners' struggle, in particular, through the adoption of the demand for an industry-wide general strike. South African capitalists are fuming in the news media, complaining that the pay concession will lead to "contagion" throughout the rest of the mining industry.

The following statement was issued by Rustenburg Joint Strike Coordinating Committee on 19 September:

"The Rustenburg Joint Strike Coordinating Committee sees the settlement between the Lonmin management and strike committee as an important victory not just for the Lonmin workers but for the general strike without which the employer would not have come to the table. We are inspired to continue the fight in the mines which continue to resist our united action.

Lonmin's agreement to a 22% adjustment to wages, which means Rock Drill Operators' basic wages are up to R11,078, plus a one-off "bonus" of R2,000, constitutes a victory on its own when workers across the economy have been forced to accept effective wage cuts through below-inflation increases.

But most important is the fact that the Lonmin bosses had to recognise the workers' power to organise themselves independently of them and their stooges. The framework of negotiations above the heads and behind the backs of us has been torn down.

The concession that has been won has come at a very high price - 44 dead, many more injured, arrested, tortured and harassed. The settlement can never make up for the loss of the comrades who were murdered by the government in defence of the mining bosses or hide the true colours of the state that were exposed with the massacre on 16 August - the first state

of emergency since the apartheid days.

The only way we can begin to give them justice is by moving the struggle they spearheaded onto a higher level - we cannot continue dying fighting for crumbs. We therefore remain determined to spread the Rustenburg-wide general strike in demand of a R12,500 living wage.

The strike is growing stronger in nearly all Rustenburg mine operations - Anglo Platinum, the world's biggest platinum producer, Impala Platinum (second biggest), Samancor and Xstrata workers have now been joined in strike action by the workers of Royal Bafokeng's Rasimune mine as well as by organised communities.

A very small minority of workers was back at the shafts Anglo tried to reopen yesterday [18 September]. We call on workers and communities across the country to join us and take the struggle for a better life into their own hands.

We continue to be shot at, harassed and intimidated by the police and army that have been sent to Rustenburg. Yesterday, several striking Anglo workers were shot with rubber bullets, without provocation, by police.

We urge Cosatu [Confederation of South African Trade Unions] delegates at their ongoing national congress to remember that 'an injury to one is an injury to all', to support our action unconditionally and to call a general strike for a

R12,500 living wage and for an end to the shooting of workers.

We also call on workers and communities from throughout the country to join us in a march to Union Buildings, Pretoria on Saturday 29 September to demand justice for the comrades killed, national living wage of R12,500, the ending of the state of emergency, for a workers' and communities' independent investigation into the Marikana massacre, the re-employment of all workers unfairly dismissed from the mines, nationalisation of the mines under democratic control of workers and communities, to allow for decent housing, clean running water, electricity, sanitation, roads and quality education and work for all."

See: 'Marikana massacre ignites the mass movement' on www.socialistworld.net

SOCIALISM 2012

A leading trade union activist and Democratic Socialist Movement member from Rustenburg, South Africa, will be speaking at Socialism 2012 in London (see page 11) on the miners' general strike and the political tasks facing the South African working class.

Hattersley residents say stop the smears



The Hattersley community's views on the shooting incident have not been properly expressed

Peter Jones

The deaths of two women police officers in Tameside, Greater Manchester this week saddened and shocked many people - none more so than people on the estate of Hattersley where it happened. But it seems some people only see political opportunity in this sad incident.

Norman Tebbit - famous for bashing workers in the 80s - immediately jumped on the bandwagon, calling for the police to be armed. Closer to home, Tameside council used it as an excuse to avoid having to justify themselves publicly to people who turned up to protest against library closures in the area, with little or no discussion.

Further still the Manchester Evening News (MEN) caused outrage by publishing an article - 'Police shootings: Conspiracy of silence that let fugitive Dale Cregan evade capture' - implying that his wherea-

bouts were widely known among the community.

Members of the community contacted MEN to arrange a meeting on the estate where people could express their views on the incident. Yet the meeting was cancelled before it began with the MEN stating that no one bothered to turn up!

Only hours after it had become clear to estate residents what had happened, a Facebook event for a vigil, to show the community's respects, gathered hundreds of promised attendees.

The police, however, would not support the event at the time it was set and told everyone to hold off until next week, the reasons for which became clear as both police and media stuck the boot in.

I watched the BBC's Newsnight coverage with growing unease as the estate was labelled a safe-haven where criminals are revered and everyone feels unsafe. Is it a coincidence that the vigil was postponed by the police when the chief con-

stable had arranged to visit the site (along with the inevitable media circus) on the same day?

Why were community representatives not invited so that they could respond?

Comments by the Chief Constable on Newsnight (20 September), using emotive language, linking Hattersley with gun crime and gangs only serve to drag the estate's reputation down.

Having lived on the estate for a while I know nothing is further from the truth. I have always felt relatively safe here and found people friendly.

Working class people of Hattersley are fuming about the way we are being portrayed in the media, which is unfortunately part of the general trend to pour scorn and derision upon the working class.

Only a socialist transformation of society can free journalism from the yoke of capitalism and allow unbiased and objective news accessible to all.

Tameside - Labour's 'get used to it' councillors

Dean Kavanagh
Manchester Socialist Party

Tameside's Labour-controlled council recently announced proposals to close and severely cut the budgets of libraries in the authority. In response, many outraged residents have begun to organise themselves into groups to fight the council's attacks.

A number of protests outside Labour MP Andrew Gwynne's surgery and endless letters to councillors, all seemingly fell on deaf ears. One councillor Margaret Downs, contemptuously told a campaigner against the upcoming closure of Haughton Green library: "It's gone, get used to it!"

On 19 September, the three ward councillors for Denton South attended a 'Save Haughton Green Library' meeting. Their insistence on there being no money to sustain the libraries met with calls to use the £9.6 million of reserve funds which the council shashed away over the next three years.

Responding to the meeting's anger, Councillor Claire Francis suggested foolishly that local residents could volunteer to run the library. She was left dumbfounded by the uproar. One former librarian likened it to Cameron's 'Big Society' where highly trained, paid professionals could lose their jobs for poorly trained volunteers.

The anger against the Labour Party in the meeting was unmistakable. Many are concerned that service cuts will worsen the prospects of Tameside's young people. About one in four children in the borough lives in poverty.

With the recent closure of a number of community high schools, £1 million being cut from Connexions career services and cuts to school clothing grants, the situation can only get worse.

The meeting decided to broaden the campaign, to work closely with other library groups and appeal to local trade unions for support to challenge the council and build a mass campaign against the cuts.



Anti-cuts campaigns should unite the trade unions and communities

Why Hull council should defy the government's cuts to services

Mick Whale,
Hull NUT teachers' union secretary

'Because you have all done so well, we are going to give you some more cuts to carry out.' This was the message from Local Government Minister Eric Pickles to a recent meeting of the Local Government Association.

In effect, Pickles was saying that the complete absence of any organised opposition from Labour local authorities has encouraged the Tories to impose more suffering on the poor and vulnerable.

Steve Brady, Labour council leader in Hull has called for a campaign against cuts but has also repeatedly stated: "Hull city council is not going to do a Liverpool!"

Brady, probably aware that if he "does a Liverpool" the Labour Party leadership will attack him, blamed the Liverpool councillors' stand for the witch-hunt and destruction of the Labour Party in Liverpool in the 80s.

Hull trade unionists have called Steve Brady to account for this. They explain that a key task for Labour in Hull should be to draw up a 'no cuts'

budget based on need and go to the people of Hull for support. Petitioning and lobbying for the no cuts budget, as used in the campaign that defeated a job threatening caravan tax, would help.

Worryingly, a recent Labour



photo S Beishon

group meeting in Hull seemed to be preparing a plan that could mean widespread cuts in terms and conditions and probably job losses as well. Steve Brady himself refused to rule out compulsory redundancies.

Labour has to make its mind up. Either it is going to fight the cuts or implement them. Four Labour councillors voted against the cuts proposals in the group meeting and the unions have written an open letter to all the labour councillors demanding that they stand strong against the cuts.

In Liverpool, in 1983, Labour councillors put themselves at the head of such a campaign with a clear commitment that they would not implement Tory cuts. That built the campaign that forced the Tories to climb down. In 2012, if Labour in Hull put themselves at the head of a similar campaign, the fight against the cuts would be enormously strengthened.

Last year council trade unions provided the foot soldiers that won Labour office in Hull to stop the cuts. They will not sit back and let a Labour council implement cuts. One way or another there will be a fight against the cuts!



There was mass support in Liverpool for fighting the cuts photo P Traynor

'Doing a Liverpool'

'Doing a Liverpool' refers to the struggle by Liverpool city Council in the 1980s against the Thatcher government's cuts. Significantly the Labour party in Liverpool at that time had a fighting socialist leadership, provided in large part by Militant (the forerunner of the Socialist Party).

The Liverpool councillors made a clear stand against the Tory cuts and got mass support from the people of Liverpool. The campaign waged by the councillors, local authority trade unionists and the wider community in Liverpool was successful in reversing most of the cuts in 1984.

Unfortunately, the council

was left isolated in 1985 and was defeated, bloody but unbowed. Significantly, it was the intervention of Neil Kinnock, the Labour leader at the time, which gave the green light to the Tories to bring the full force of the law against the Liverpool councillors.

Eventually, having defied the government for four years and won lasting gains for the city, the councillors were dismissed from office in March 1987 and surcharged (for losses caused by delaying the setting of the rates). This last point is not something that the labour movement in Hull is asking the Labour councillors to do at this stage.

Belfast Outdoor Relief Strike 1932

When the Shankill and the Falls fought together

This year marks the 80th anniversary of the heroic Outdoor Relief Strike in Belfast. This battle is an important example of workers' unity that has vital lessons on how sectarianism can be overcome and the Northern Ireland Assembly's austerity defeated today.

On 6 October Youth Fight for Jobs in Northern Ireland will be marking this anniversary with a march up the Shankill and down the Falls Road, Protestant and Catholic areas respectively (see advert below). These were the heartland of the struggle 80 years ago and today have some of the highest rates of unemployment.

Kevin Henry
Youth Fight for Jobs, Belfast

Since its formation, Northern Ireland had been riddled by unemployment - even in the brief economic upswing in the mid-1920s, unemployment never fell below 15%.

The worldwide stock markets crash of 1929 caused further destitution - 37% of the workforce were unemployed by 1932.

In shipbuilding, Belfast's key industry, 73% of workers were out of work. Emigration had provided a release but by 1931, with no jobs both Canada and the USA started to give 'one-way' tickets home.

The Board of Guardians which controlled the distribution of outdoor relief, a miserly form of benefit, was dominated by 'big house' Unionists who saw it as their 'civic duty' to discourage the unemployed from claiming.

This included publicly listing all claimants on gable walls and through personal interviews that probed every detail of their finances and personal life.

Only able-bodied, married men were able to apply, with many workers failing the test because they were undernourished. The only alternative was 'indoor relief', ie the workhouse.

Those 'successful', were made to do 'task work', such as mending roads, for which they received lower payments than those in Britain. A married man with one child received twelve shillings (60p) compared to thirty-five shillings (£1.75) in Glasgow.

Payment was also made 'in kind', in the form of a chit - a signed credit note - which could be exchanged at only a few Unionist-owned shops - meaning payment couldn't be used for rent.

The Board of Guardians operated the system in a blatantly discriminatory manner against Catholics but also against those in the labour movement.

They were completely out of touch with the unemployed's plight. At one meeting the chairperson of the Board proposed that, because too many applications were made on one day, they should all be rejected so the Board could go home!

Demonstrations

The months before the Relief Strike saw increased demonstrations of the unemployed. But it was the example set in Birkenhead and Liverpool - where an uprising defeated the hated 'means test' (see the Socialist 656) - that gave confidence to thousands of Belfast's unemployed that mass action could win.

On 30 September 1932, 2,000 people attended a mass meeting called by the Outdoor Relief Workers' Committee, which had been formed by the Revolutionary Workers' Group (RWG).

At the meeting, it was agreed to call a strike around the following key demands: Abolition of task work; Increase in relief payments; No payment in "kind"; Street improvement work to be paid at trade union rates; and outdoor allowances for all single unemployed men and women.



Mass unemployment was the scourge of the 1930s photo The Humphrey Spencer Archive

Class unity, class strength

On Monday 3 October, the strike began when 600 relief workers joined the strikes. With 20,000 pickets across Belfast all the schemes were closed down and the strike was 100% solid. That evening, a crowd of 30,000 marched to Custom House, where a mass meeting was held. Bands which previously played sectarian songs came together and played 'Yes, We Have No Bananas', a current popular song.

The next day thousands marched to the Belfast workhouse, blocking the road. The following day, the same demonstration was stopped by police armoured cars. 114 strikers, however, managed to sign themselves into the workhouse, where they refused to obey orders and danced all night until the police came and arrested them!

In the following nights, there was fierce rioting. The Mayor was forced to offer to increase the amount of

relief by 50%. At a mass meeting, however, the proposal was rejected, the weakness shown by the establishment spurred the workers on with plans to escalate the struggle through a rent strike, a hire purchase or 'tick' strike and general strike.

Plans for another demonstration - with feeder marches from across Belfast - were drawn up for 11 October. The government banned all demonstrations and enacted the draconian Special Powers Act. At the same time, the workers organised house-to-house collection of money and food, and single men carried out raids on workhouses. Mass meetings were held which decided to defy the ban and go ahead with the demonstration.

On the 11th, workers came out in their thousands to defy the Stormont government. They were regularly baton-charged by the police

and workers set up barricades and resisted throughout the day.

On the Falls, the police moved in with armoured cars and rifles. Bates, the Home Secretary, gave orders that live ammunition be used in Catholic areas in an attempt to whip up sectarianism. This actually had the opposite effect and created greater unity. When strikers from the Shankill got word of the battle on the Falls, they ran to assist their Catholic comrades.

When the dust had settled, the state had killed one Catholic and one Protestant. When it came to the funerals of these martyrs, 100,000 lined the route.

Despite a government curfew and an attempt to stop the supply of food to areas, the government recognised that it could not defeat a united movement, especially when Belfast Trades Council threatened a general strike.

Struggle against the capitalist system

The strike won an increased rate for married men but only part of the demands had been met. The intervention of the trade union officialdom offered enough weight to have this deal accepted at a mass meeting.

Tom Geehan, a leader of the struggle, addressed the meeting. He said: "What we have achieved gives the direct lie and contradiction to those who said the workers of Belfast could not be united, and would not fight. They had seen Protestants and Catholics marching together and, on Tuesday, fighting together."

One of the main demands, not conceded, was relief to single persons. RWG members on the strike committee came in for heavy criticism for ending the strike before winning this and splitting the unemployed movement.

As well as the body originally established by the RWG and a 'moderate' organisation set up by the Trades Council, there developed a body specifically for those single persons left with nothing.

This division allowed the Guardians to announce as early as Decem-

ber that the new agreed rates were maximum rates only and could be reduced as they decided!

Had the Trades Council followed through with their threat of a general strike this could have resulted in a much more decisive victory.

The RWG played an important leadership role throughout. This small band of 50 members committed to anti-sectarian, socialist politics was able to lead a movement of thousands of workers.

However, reflecting the Stalinist policies of the time, they failed to engage in serious work within the trade union movement which could have allowed militants to win the workers' support for more decisive action.

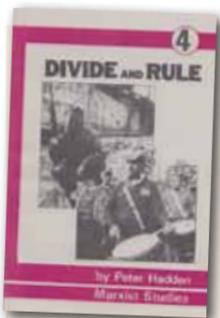
This movement was only the start of an important period of working class struggle and unity. It was followed by a bitter railway workers' strike against wage cuts, which gained massive sympathy from the working class. While these workers' struggles were taking place, sectarian forces found it hard to find an echo among the working class.

In the context of defeats and a labour movement that was politically unprepared to take on sectarianism, however, the bigots began to regain their base in society. 1935 saw the greatest pogrom since those during the foundation of the Northern Ireland state.

Had the RWG seized upon the opportunities of the early 1930s and orientated itself towards building a base in the trade union movement, a political force could have been built to challenge sectarianism and also the capitalist system in which it is rooted.

Socialists need to draw some pointed lessons from these historical events, but the 1932 strikes reflected a marvellous example where workers and unemployed united in struggle against the system.

See also the article by Peter Taaffe on the 1932 riots in Birkenhead in the Socialist 656 socialistparty.org.uk/656/11089 For a background on Northern Ireland, including the Peter Hadden archive, see socialistpartyni.net



Divide and rule by Peter Hadden £4
When workers stood united,
Socialist Party, £3

Add 10% postage

Available from Socialist Books
020 8988 8789
bookshop@socialistparty.org.uk
www.socialistbooks.co.uk
PO Box 24697, London E11 1YD

KICK OUT THIS SORRY LOT! SCRAP STUDENT FEES



Chaz Lockett
Sheffield Socialist Students

There's a part of me that almost feels sorry for Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg - trapped between his own dissatisfied grassroots Lib Dem members on the one hand, and the rabid Tory back-benchers on the other. But then I remember what

he did to me and my fellow students back in 2010 - he sold us down the river when agreeing to the Con-Dem coalition.

I watched him sign his pledge to abolish tuition fees (instead of tripling them!) on the steps of Sheffield City Hall. Yet a few months later, me and thousands of my classmates in Sheffield were occupying, marching and organising on campus, having been utterly betrayed, with our futures thrown into uncertainty.

Quite rightly, Nick Clegg's attempt to save face by apologising to students has been ridiculed. Perhaps his apology might have had a little more weight if he'd apologised for the privatisation of university education, the slashing of teaching budgets, the removal of Education Maintenance Allowance for college and sixth form

Looking after the 1%

Nick Clegg has said his fees pledge was unaffordable, but there seems to be plenty of money for bankers and fat cats:

Student loans: £3 billion a year
Corporation tax cuts 2010-2012: £4.5 billion a year
Total student debt: £40 billion
Total bank bailouts: £850 billion

students, and the tripling of tuition fees. But no - what he actually apologised for was that he made the promise in the first place!

"There's no easy way to say this: we made a pledge, we didn't stick to it - and for that I am sorry," said Clegg.

"When you've made a mistake you should apologise. But more importantly - most important of all - you've got to learn from your mistakes. And that's what we will do."

"I will never again make a pledge unless as a party we are absolutely clear about how we can keep it."

This is a sign of a weak leader of

an impotent party, desperately trying to win back support. Recent polls suggest that the Fib Dems will take only nine seats at the next general election.

But students starting courses this year, disgusted with having to pay £9,000 a year in fees, are not in any mood to forgive Clegg. Instead they're looking to fight back and kick out the Con-Dems.

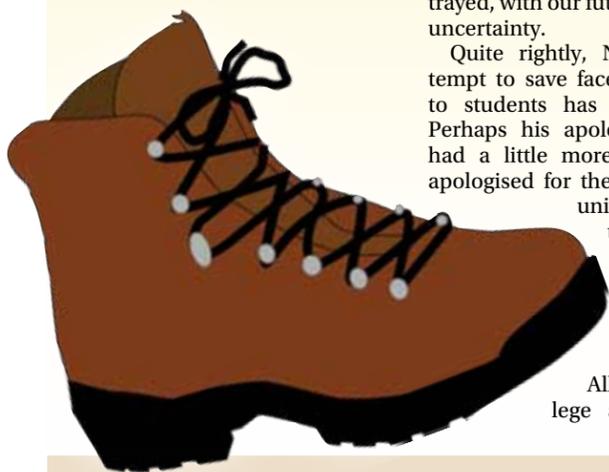
Socialist Students is meeting students across Britain who support the call for a 24-hour general

strike, as part of uniting students and workers against all cuts. Solidarity from students when workers go on strike will be returned with solidarity when we march - including the National Union of Students demo on 21 November - and when we occupy.

Socialist Students says:

- Abolish tuition fees. Write off student debt.
- For a mass mobilisation of students on both the 20 October TUC demo and the 21 November NUS demo
- Support the Youth Fight for Jobs fortnight of action on 13-27 October
- For 21 November to be the start of a mass campaign of demos, walkouts, occupations and nationally coordinated action
- For student unions to link up with the trade unions. For a 24-hour general strike against austerity that includes both workers and students
- For education that is fully funded, publicly owned, democratically run and universally free at all levels - a socialist education system

www.socialiststudents.org.uk



What we stand for

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

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

Our demands include:
PUBLIC SERVICES

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

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

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

WORK AND INCOME

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

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

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

ENVIRONMENT

- Major research and investment into replacing fossil fuels with renewable energy and into ending the problems of early obsolescence and un-recycled 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!