

## Solidarity with Ford workers

# DEFEND



# EVERY JOB

**Nick Chaffey**

Socialist Party southern region secretary

**N**ews of Ford's plans to close the Transit plant in Southampton has hit workers and the city like a bombshell. 500 Ford workers' and 450 contractors' jobs are under threat. But the shockwaves of closure will rumble far further. 81 suppliers provide components and materials to Southampton.

After 700 jobs were cut in 2008, these redundancies will suck millions of pounds out of the local economy, leaving unemployment and increasing poverty in their wake.

The closure of the Ford stamping plant in Dagenham, east London, comes with an official estimate of 750 job losses in an area already ravaged by joblessness and privation.

It is vital that unions, especially Unite, act decisively and speedily to mobilise opposition to the closures. General secretary Len McCluskey has said the union will fight the closure plans.

Leading reps in the Transit plant see the need to fight, one told the Socialist: "This is a fight for the community, for the next generation."

Unite policy is for a national strike ballot to be called in the event of a plant closure threat. This must be the rallying call around which opposition is built across Ford plants.

Strike ballots at Southampton and Dagenham are due to take place. A campaign needs to be waged calling for a resounding yes vote in defence of jobs and the long-term future of

the factory.

There is no doubt that Ford workers would receive huge support from the trade unions and the wider community for such a stand. A battle on this scale would petrify Ford and the government. Such a campaign should link up with Ford workers in Belgium at Genk, who organised mass walkouts and protests at their factory last week.

### Rallying point

On 20 October over 150,000 marched with the TUC and answered Len McCluskey's call for a vote on a one-day general strike with a resounding show of hands. The fight to defend these jobs could become a rallying point across the private sector.

The dire future of industry in Britain has been exposed. It reflects the deep crisis of capitalism the Socialist Party has consistently warned about. In fear of a stagnant market in Europe, Ford is unwilling to invest their profits and re-tool the Transit plant.

The unions must demand that if Ford is unwilling to maintain production in Southampton and Dagenham and protect skilled jobs and manufacturing, they should be nationalised.

There is an urgent need to build support for an alternative, a socialist economy where democratic planning under workers' control and management could utilise the existing resources to meet the needs of society.

**More on page 2**



Unions need to mobilise opposition to the closures  
photo Paul Mattsson

### Workers need a political voice

Con-Dem Business Secretary, Vince Cable, moans he was "kept in the dark". Labour leader of Southampton city council, Richard Williams, has angered the unions by proposing the site becomes a training park - before a fight has even been launched to save the factory!

This shows that the industrial campaign to defend these jobs

Vince Cable claims he was 'kept in the dark'

needs to be linked to building a new workers' party.

Keith Morrell and Don Thomas, Southampton Labour Councillors Against The Cuts, told the Socialist: "We give our full support to the Ford workers and the fight of the unions to keep jobs and the Transit here in Southampton for now and into the future. Ford has told us that the Transit is 'The Backbone of Britain', but the company is now looking as spineless as this government's industrial strategy."

**Keith will be a speaker at Socialism 2012**  
See [www.socialism2012.org.uk](http://www.socialism2012.org.uk)



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what we think

# Start preparations for a 24-hour general strike

At the 20 October anti-austerity demonstration, three trade union general secretaries – Len McCluskey of Unite, Bob Crow of the RMT and Mark Serwotka of the PCS – reflected the feelings of the majority of trade unionists in calling for a 24-hour general strike.

Urgent plans must be drawn up now to give flesh to this call with an early date set for a strike to take place. However, it would be a mistake to imagine that the whole trade union movement is convinced and united in agreeing, let alone carrying out, the strike call, which was also endorsed by the last TUC Congress in September.

It was noticeable that other general secretaries did not, in their speeches, either support or join in the general acclamation in Hyde Park for the general strike call. This indicates that right-wing trade union leaders will attempt to hamper and frustrate a strike taking place. They will seek to hide behind the 'difficulties' – particularly the hurdle of Thatcher's anti-union laws – in organising such a strike.

Their role – particularly those like Dave Prentis of Unison – was laid bare during the 2011 pensions' battle. They broke the common front with other trade unions and, as a result, many workers will now be compelled to work longer for less pay. Mass pressure needs to be exerted now to ensure that this does not happen again. This is particularly necessary in unions like Unison, the GMB and in some others where the leadership will drag their feet.

Right-wing trade union leaders who habitually betray their members should take a warning from the recent splendid and heroic actions of the South African miners.

Kept in the dirt by ruthless South African capitalism, their suffering was compounded by their 'leaders' in the NUM and Cosatu, who have shamefully collaborated with the bosses. Consequently, the miners have elbowed their former leaders aside. A similar fate awaits those trade union leaders in Britain who let trade unionists down at this momentous time.

A mass campaign of explanation should drive home why a one-day strike is necessary to stop the government in its tracks. The trade unions have marched together; now it is necessary to strike together in one massive demonstration of the power of working people.

Imagine the scene; with factories, workplaces and transport – apart from the essential means of getting to demonstrations, etc – all falling silent on one day. It would bring home that society cannot function without the working class. The same could not be said for the parasitic capitalists who,

through their government – the Tory-Liberal Democrat coalition – are dragging the British people into a social abyss.

The British working class has not had such an experience for 86 years, since the time of the 1926 general strike. Greece has had 20 general strikes in the last two years alone. Spain, Portugal and Italy have trod a similar path, France and Belgium likewise.

Britain did come close to a one-day strike at the time of the jailing of the dockers in 1972. Even the right-wing then general secretary of the TUC, Vic Feather, was compelled to threaten the Tory government of Ted Heath with a general strike unless the dockers were released.

He did this knowing he would not have to carry out his threat because the government had already indicated that the dockers would be released through the medium of their own 'fairy godmother', the Official Solicitor, who few people had ever heard of before!

This demonstrates the lengths to which the British ruling class will go in order to avoid setting a new benchmark – a one-day general strike – for workers resisting them. It also illustrates that they can be compelled to make concessions when they are threatened with the power of the trade unions and the working class.

## Comparison

It is no accident that the issue of the general strike is back on the agenda of the workers' movement. There are similar features in Britain today as in the early 1920s, which culminated in the 1926 general strike. The scale and the depth of the economic crisis of British and world capitalism are devastating. Like then, the capitalists want to impose the cost of this crisis onto the backs of the working class. They prepared a savage programme of cuts, outlined in the Geddes report of 1922.

A similar scale of cuts has been proposed by Cameron and Osborne today, with the working class and poorest sections of the population, such as the disabled and low paid facing benefit cuts, etc, most affected.

Unemployment – the most visible expression of the sclerotic state of 'modern' capitalism – stands at 200 million worldwide, according to the United Nations' International Labour Organisation. That is fully 30 million higher than before the crisis started in 2007-08. 40 million more people have also dropped out of the labour market since then. Yet by 2013 the figure of worldwide unemployment will have risen by at least seven million to 207 million.

Cameron and British capitalism offer nothing different. A month ago, Cameron said the crisis would last at least until the end of this



The majority mood among trade unionists on 20 October photo Becky Davis

decade. Larry Elliott of the Guardian speculates that Britain may experience not one but possibly two or even three 'lost decades'.

This will be characterised by economic paralysis, resulting in stagnant and falling living standards. Yet Cameron tries to hide his nakedness by triumphantly waving the latest 'growth' figures, prepared for him by the 'Department of Wild Guesses', and the 'Ministry of Thin Air'!

These are just one quarter's figures. They largely arise from the Olympics, which had an effect almost solely in London. Even here they merely boosted part-time jobs and the self-employed, usually on miserable incomes, while the rest of the country outside of London still looks like an economic wasteland.

In fact, the crisis is so deep and profound, the sacrifices demanded of the working class so severe, that some workers say, why just strike for one day? If we come out for one day, why not then take it further into an all-out general strike? It is a question here of soberly estimating the stage through which the working class and the labour movement are passing.

An all-out general strike is one of the most

serious actions the working class can take, posing as it does sharply the question of power in society. Either the working class takes power and establishes a new socialist society or the capitalists can inflict a crushing defeat. Sometimes, as in 1926 with the Baldwin government, a general strike can be provoked by the capitalists without the working class being properly prepared, and its defeat can have lasting consequences.

Therefore, before engaging in such a decisive battle it is necessary to go through a preparatory stage, maybe a number of limited strikes of one day or even longer, as in Greece. It is vital to understand the rhythm of the workers' movement at each stage.

Today, a one-day strike is the most appropriate and effective action the working class can take. Even the six million workers organised in trade unions – encompassing 26% of the labour force – coming out in a one-day strike would shake this rotten government to its foundations. The trade unions should lose no time in organising the most massive display of working class power seen in generations – a colossal and effective 24-hour general strike!

## Action to defend car jobs

...continued from page 1

With the devastation of industry in Southampton under the Tories and New Labour, the Transit plant is the last major industry in the city paying decent wages.

The Transit is a market leader, a profitable vehicle for Ford. "You could gift wrap a Fiesta, stick it in the back of a Transit, sell the Transit and still make a profit", were the words of a former Southampton Transit manager.

The scandalous truth is Ford wants to shift production from Southampton to Turkey. The company wants

to make even bigger profits by exploiting cheaper labour there.

Ford has offered redundancy terms which will seem generous. The sums however do not offer a rosy future. In 2008 around 700 workers were made redundant, in the main the older, 50-plus age group in the factory. The majority left are in their 40s or younger. That means redundancy money might last two or three years.

Where are the other well-paid jobs? The union must explain that the only future is to save the factory and jobs.

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# Tory cuts will increase child poverty

Alex Davidson

Iain Duncan Smith, Tory minister for work and pensions, has again revealed the clear class warfare at the heart of the coalition government's policies.

He wants to limit child benefit to two children for unemployed parents. The government's own figures show that this would save only £200 million, a mere fraction of the £120 billion that the PCS union has calculated is lost every year in tax evasion by the very richest in the UK.

To justify himself, Duncan Smith has used the usual propaganda of unemployed families of more than ten people living off the tax payer. As with everything else the government uses to try and excuse itself, this conjures a huge myth. In truth less than 5% of those on Jobseeker's Allow-



photo Senan

The effect of this attack will be devastating. The Tories' mantra that "work makes you free" (an actual quote from Duncan Smith) is completely at odds with the reality of there being over 2.5 million people unemployed and just under 500,000 vacancies. So even if every single job was taken tomorrow there would still be over two million unemployed.

As the Child Poverty Action Group notes, 90% of people will leave JSA after being on it for between six to 12 months. There is, therefore, exceedingly little evidence of this huge number of people refusing to take work that is available.

Child poverty in the UK is already at 27% and contrary to the Tory myth the majority of these families have parents who are in work. According to the Child Poverty Action Group

there will be 300,000 more children living in poverty by 2015 if current government policies continue.

New Labour has shown that, yet again, it is unwilling to act for working class families who are under threat from the Tories' policies. It is down to the trade unions and socialists to lead a fight back. There must be a trade union-led campaign in defence of the welfare state and against the lies spread by the political establishment to divide poor and working class people from each other. If we do not fight back against this government of the rich it will be our children who will suffer.

**Alex is the Trade Unionist and Socialist collation candidate for the 15 November by-election in Manchester Central.**  
See [www.tusc.org.uk](http://www.tusc.org.uk)

Child poverty in the UK is already at 27% and the majority of these families are in work

ance (JSA) and income support have more than three children and over 65% of them have no children at all.

The Tory press has been full of myths of the 'feckless poor' for decades and we should not forget that the previous New Labour government also quite shamelessly demonised benefit recipients.

# Stratford Academy Teachers strike against bullying management

Ian Pattison

East London Socialist Party

"It's like being run by the Stasi in this school", a striker commented, as teachers at Stratford Academy in Newham, east London, went on strike on Thursday 25 October.

The industrial action is over a pay cut imposed by school governors, and against a bullying school management. The governors' punitive salary reductions were made after these teachers began a work-to-rule, as part of national action by the NUT and NASUWT teachers' unions.

Following a lawful national ballot, teachers are refusing to undertake tasks that distract them from the core role of teaching and which do not require their skills as qualified teachers. The NUT rep Steve Charles explained that not only has teachers' pay been cut but that staff are subjected to threatening and intimidating actions by governors and school management.

A letter from management went to teachers demanding they agree not to take part in the national action, which stops short of a strike, or else have their pay cut. Those teachers who refused to be bullied into submission had their pay cut by 15%.

In response, the NUT and NASUWT unions, which represent the majority of staff, issued notice of a strike, demanding the punitive wage cuts are withdrawn and the intimidation stops.

## Parents' support

Niall Mulholland, a parent of a Year 8 pupil at Stratford Academy, and a local Socialist Party member, joined the picket line. "Teachers at Stratford Academy work very hard and professionally, despite dilapidated school buildings and the school being in one of the country's poorest boroughs.

"The teachers have been forced into strike action by the outrageous, autocratic actions of the governors

and senior school management. It is they who are entirely responsible for any disruption to pupils and parents. I and other parents will do all we can to support the teachers' completely justified action.

"We want to meet the governors without delay, to demand that they immediately end their pay cuts and anti-union intimidation."

## Further action

More strike action is planned by the teachers - two days in the week after half-term and three days after that if their demands are not met.

The Stratford Academy teachers' action is significant for all staff in academies and throughout the education system.

If the Stratford governors and management get away with their attacks, it will encourage similar action by management in other schools.

Please send messages of support to Stratford Academy NUT rep Steve Charles at [stevec4151@aol.com](mailto:stevec4151@aol.com)

# Them...



## Work-for-your-pension

Lord Richard tells us we should be 'encouraging' retired people to do community work or risk losing part of their pension. For example, they could look after people older and less able to do things than themselves. We're sure we've heard of people who do that...oh yes, care workers, nurses, social workers. And that's never mind the fact that our pensions, far from being some generous gift from government to be added to and taken from at will, are our money, deferred from wages while we're younger.

rip-off pay day loan company, Wonga. Famous for its 4,214% interest rate, Wonga is responsible for trapping an increasing number of people into a cycle of debt. They can probably do with someone who can sit down for a friendly chat with the PM to ensure the company's free reign in destroying lives.

## Make your mind up

Education minister Michael Gove says trainee teachers need tougher tests in English and maths before they're allowed to start their training. From September the standard needed to pass the tests will be raised and candidates won't be able to use calculators. Some might say it's funny that Gove is so concerned about the qualifications of teachers when he's made it possible for people with no teacher training at all to be employed as teachers in academies.

## Morally wrong?

David Cameron rushed to condemn comedian Jimmy Carr as 'morally wrong' for avoiding £3.3 million of tax. But when challenged in parliament to put Apple, Google, Facebook, eBay and

## ...meanwhile

The Public Service Pensions Bill had its second reading on 29 October. Let's not forget this legislation writes into law all public sector workers having to work for longer, pay more and get less. Disgracefully the majority of Labour MPs, too scared to make a peep in support of ordinary people, abstained from the vote - leaving the Tories and Lib Dems to get the attack through with no real opposition.

## Childcare nightmare

The Resolution Foundation has drawn attention to what many of us have known for a long time - soaring childcare costs are impoverishing low-paid workers. It's report showed that in general having a full-time job is 'hardly worthwhile' for the second earner in low and middle income families. A couple could be left with as little as £4 a week extra from two incomes than one because of the proportion of the second income that is paid directly to nurseries, crèches and child minders.

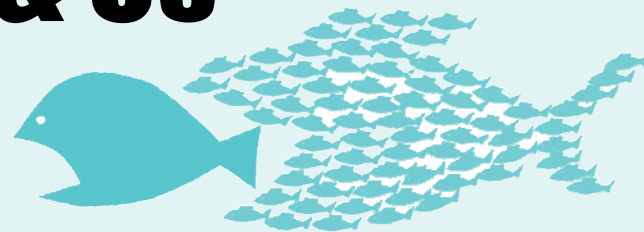
**900m**  
Avoided in tax by  
Apply, Google,  
Facebook, eBay and  
Starbucks

Starbucks - recently revealed to have avoided nearly £900 million of tax between them - in the same category, he wasn't quite as keen. In fact, the furthest he would go was agreeing that "HM Revenue and Customs needs to look at it very carefully". But of course his emphasis is "we do need to make sure we are encouraging these businesses to invest in our country".

## Revolving door

Jonathan Luff, a senior advisor at number ten, has resigned his post. Where will he go to make most use of his skills and contacts? He's been appointed to lead the 'government affairs team' at

# ...& Us



Have you got news for the 'fishes'? Email: [editors@socialistparty.org.uk](mailto:editors@socialistparty.org.uk)

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this week



Living wage - shouldn't the minimum wage and living wage be the same?

**Nancy Taaffe**

Maybe Ian Dunk em Rich can have the children to clean his chimneys rather than get child benefit. Why not bring back the workhouse?

**GlosSocialists**

Disgraceful news that the Labour Party abstained on the pensions vote but not surprising. They support bosses not workers.

**Éoin Clarke**

Every MP who voted for the benefits cap should have their parliamentary expenses capped to the same level. Then watch them squirm.

**Tony Saunois**

#r4today Sandy batters the US but no mention of Caribbean which it also hit. Over 60 dead so far. Balance please.

**Dave Nellist**

Many thanks to #RMT education centre #Doncaster for hospitality + chance to discuss development of #TUSC with union activists



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# Birmingham: ‘The end of local government as we know it’

**Tony Leigh**  
Birmingham Socialist Party

The enormous TUC demonstration on 20 October pledged to fight austerity with a general strike. Labour leader Ed Miliband was booed when he took to the stage and declared that when in power Labour would have to make ‘difficult decisions’ and wouldn’t reverse the Tory cuts.

But Labour-run Birmingham city council has beaten him to it and announced vicious cuts totalling £600 million.

The Tories, in coalition with the Liberal Democrats, ran Birmingham until last May. They sacked 4,800 workers in the final two years and viciously attacked terms and conditions. In its last two budgets, the council cut £200 million and £100 million.

To its shame the present Labour council has willingly cooperated with the cuts pushed by the millionaires’ government of Cameron and Osborne. These eye-watering cuts of £120 million a year for the next five years will see over 1,000 council workers sacked and, in council leader Sir Albert Bore’s words “the end of local government as we know it.”

If there is any doubt in anyone’s minds about whether Labour is likely to shaft workers when in power Sir Albert unequivocally states Labour’s position. In future



The idea of a 24-hour general strike is gaining support photo Senan

“there could be no more ‘salami-slicing’ of services... we have to start decommissioning services. I am not looking forward to this but it has to be done.”

In other words the Tories might not run this council directly any more, but Labour are quite prepared to do their bidding.

Last week the city was appalled to learn that the Children’s Services

department had once again been criticised and rated ‘inadequate’. Before these cuts were announced this department had to make do with £22 million less this year.

Nationally, pressure on Labour councillors is ratcheting up as more and more pain is inflicted by their councils. And a handful elsewhere in the country have broken from the party line and courageously

voted against cuts, which we welcome and support.

But they face disciplinary action. This shows that a new genuine working class party is urgently needed to fill the vacuum on the left.

The city council unions must offer a lead. They must urgently organise a robust response to these latest attacks. Birmingham council workers have shown their willingness to fight in recent years – both against the pay cuts associated with the single status agreement and against the cuts wielded by the former Tory regime.

As a first step Unison and the other unions must immediately call emergency workplace meetings across all departments to draw up a plan of action to fight the cuts. This must be backed up with industrial action including strikes.

But this struggle is not confined just to Birmingham, or the public sector but all workers, including the private sector, where pay, jobs and services are under constant attack. This is why all struggles need to be linked up and workers united, to also take action together in a 24-hour general strike.

At the same time, Unison, Unite and other unions simply cannot justify handing a penny more of their members’ money to Labour. Members should start to debate now how this money could be spent building a new party which will fight for working class people’s interests.

## Unison leadership’s baleful response

**A Unison steward**

What is the response of the leadership of my union to this threat to its members in Birmingham? To mobilise the community and workforce in a mass campaign to defeat these cuts? To threaten to withdraw union funding of Labour, includ-

ing the subs of the very workers threatened with the sack, unless it defends our members’ interests?

No. Exactly the opposite! Unison is going to work with the Labour council and jointly approach Tory minister Eric Pickles on bended knee, for more money “...to try to minimise the impact of these bigger than expected budgets cuts.”

Inspiring stuff! Are they going to help the council decide which of our members’ jobs to cut first?

Unison’s leadership blames the cuts on the previous Con-Dem authority and the Con-Dem government for the cuts but instead of enthusiastically working towards organising a 24-hour general strike to bring this government down,

their approach is to ask that insect Pickles for fair play.

If Unison would add its weight to Unite and the other unions campaigning for a general strike, PCS, RMT, POA, we can build a movement that will bring this government to its knees. For that we need to reclaim our union and give it a fighting democratic leadership.

## Glasgow Unison’s fighting strategy

**Brian Smith**  
Secretary, Glasgow city Unison

In the May 2012 local government elections Labour held control of Glasgow city council, resisting a strong Scottish National Party challenge. However, the preparedness of the new council to resist the Con-Dem onslaught and protect the people of Glasgow has been exposed by the announcement at the end of September that Labour intend to slash £50 million from the council budget.

Glasgow council has cut nearly £200 million from its budget in the last four years. The consequences for workers, service users and the wider population will be huge. It will mean 1,000 jobs going by 2013 on top of 2,500 staff who have left since 2010. Another 1,000 jobs will mean one in five jobs have gone in four or five years.

To find this level of savings goes way beyond counting the paper clips and making efficiency savings. Social work, education and environmental services will be the major areas where jobs are likely to go. This is about large scale job losses and cuts to frontline services.

**This is the resolution passed by the branch, under a socialist leadership, to send to Unison’s Scottish Council on 1 December:**

“Coordinated trade union strike

action to defend jobs, wages, pensions and services in Scotland.

This meeting notes that the political parties in the Scottish Parliament and local councils are making the overall level of cuts in public spending asked of them by the UK government. Much of the UK government’s policy programme is a direct or indirect attack on jobs, wages, pensions and services which Unison can never agree to.

The UK government’s wider austerity measures, attacks on welfare benefits and overall management of the economy represent further attacks on working people and the most vulnerable in our society.

The trade union movement must now step-up its campaign to defend jobs, wages, pensions and services by organising coordinated strike action across all sectors of the economy.

This meeting therefore agrees that Unison Scotland immediately take the necessary steps to promote with all STUC affiliated trade unions the need for a coordinated industrial action strategy beginning with a one-day strike across Scotland, and to coordinate the strike with any action by trade unions at a UK level as appropriate.

In addition to the above, this meeting agrees to produce written material and publicity in support of this policy for distribution among members and the wider community.”

## Bromley council: Drop your plans or face a strike!

**A Bromley council worker**

The council chamber in Bromley was so packed on 23 October that protesting council workers spilled out onto the council chamber floor. 120 angry workers came to oppose council plans to opt out of the national terms and conditions for council workers.

The council are saying staff have nothing to worry about as they are not proposing to change any of the existing terms and conditions and we should trust in them. But, addressing the councillors, staff side secretary Glenn Kelly said: “the last time I heard someone say ‘trust in me’ was the snake in Jungle Book - just as he was about to devour Mowgli!”

The proposal comes at a time when the chief executive is travelling the borough like the grim reaper telling staff to prepare for a cuts Armageddon. Some councillors are calling for the workforce to be reduced from 3,700 to 300!

Glenn told the council that so dire was the message from the chief executive that he “half expected to see him in Bromley high street with a placard round his neck saying the end is nigh”.

Despite mass opposition from



Glenn Kelly photo A. Hill

the workforce the council voted to proceed with the proposals. They will now ask staff to sign up for the new contracts or face sacking and re-engagement. But Glenn told the councillors that: “turkeys don’t vote for Christmas”. Now both Unite and Unison intend balloting members for industrial action if the council doesn’t back down.

We will now be organising a mass refusal to sign the new contracts.

## In brief

**No sackings!**

CWU members in Coventry held a protest on 26 October against increasingly oppressive management. The bullying and unfair sackings resulted in an unofficial walkout on 25 October in response to the latest sacking of a CWU member.

The protest, which was supported by CWU members from across BT, Socialist Party members from the CWU postal section, and Unison is only the first step in the campaign. CWU members were quite clear they have had enough. They will continue to fight and strike if necessary to end this punitive management approach and get this dismissal reversed.

**North west NSSN**

An excellent meeting of the north-west Shop Stewards Network in Manchester on 27 October brought together stewards and members across Greater Manchester and Lancashire. There were workers from Unite, UCU, NUM, Unison and BFAWU bakers’ union. The main discussion on “next steps towards a one-day general strike” affirmed widespread support for the demand that the TUC name the date now for a well-prepared 24-hour strike.

For more details see: [www.shopstewards.net](http://www.shopstewards.net)

**Cleaners strike**

Rail union RMT members working in four different areas will be on a 48-hour strike over 2 and 3 November. This affects cleaners working for London Midland, East Coast mainline, Transpennine Express and the Tyne and Wear Metro. These are all long-running disputes with private contractors over poverty pay and poor working conditions.

RMT general secretary Bob Crow said: “RMT is committed to a national fight to both expose the reality of the profiteering on our transport services that bullies and exploits the cleaners and also to securing living wages that keep pace with the true cost of living. “All of these individual companies know that RMT members are determined to push on with the fight for pay and workplace justice and that they have shown rock-solid solidarity on previous strike days. The train operators and Metro authorities who give a green light to exploitation by these parasites should be using their clout to force them back to the negotiating table.”

**British Museum**

Cleaners and maintenance workers at the British Museum were on strike on 29 October against privatisation plans. Around 50 members of PCS and Unite had voted overwhelmingly for industrial action against plans to outsource cleaning and facilities management to a private contractor for next April. Workers fear their already low wages will be attacked in the name of profit and their working conditions worsened.

**Blacklisting**

The scandal of the blacklisting of workers seems to grow every day. It is now clear that workers in the rail industry have also been blacklisted by employers. Now the rail union RMT is demanding full disclosure of these files and action against all those involved in this conspiracy.



# Student demonstration must be just the beginning

**Claire Laker-Mansfield**  
Socialist Students national  
organiser

10 November 2010 saw more than 50,000 students take to the streets in protest. The government's onslaught was just beginning, their plans to triple fees, cut EMA student payments and place a decent education firmly out of the reach of the 'plebs' had just been announced. The demonstration was organised by the National Union of Students (NUS) and on the streets the anger was fresh and the mood determined.

But ordinary students' enormous willingness to fight was not matched by their 'leaders' at NUS HQ. Though this demonstration sparked a mass movement, with hundreds of thousands participating in student strikes, walk outs and occupations, this was all organised without the backing of the 'official' structures. The enormous resources

and the potential authority of NUS were wasted while a movement took place in spite of its 'leaders'.

## Leadership

Socialist Students played an important role in organising and building the movement against cuts and fees in 2010. When £9,000 a year fees were approved by parliament on 9 December we argued that the fight was not over, that, under the pressure of mass movements, laws could be overturned. We argued that we needed an NUS leadership that was as determined as its membership.

This year, clearly facing pressure from below, NUS has called another national demonstration. It will take place in central London on 21 November. This year's first year students are bearing the brunt of the government's worst attacks, so the need for action is clear.

To be a success the demonstration must be built for properly, with coaches booked from all over



**Socialist Students members march in 2010** photo Senan

the country, mass leafleting, door-knocking and so on.

Socialist Students members should be doing everything they can to make sure the day is as large a show of anger at the government

as possible. But we must push for student unions to be using their resources to full potential - organising activity to build for the demonstrations, meetings to discuss why students should be participating and what should come next.

a 24-hour general strike. We argue that students can strike alongside workers to deal the maximum blow against the government.

It is vital that the fight to defend education is seen as part of the wider battle against austerity

## University of East London - scrap the unfair attendance policy!

Three strikes and you're out - that's the current rule for students at the University of East London (UEL). If you miss three sessions, you are considered for module de-registration. If you are ten minutes late, if the lecturer cancels the lesson, if there is a faulty card reader or if you aren't properly enrolled, you are classed as absent. This is completely unfair and draconian.

The policy is part of a series of attacks by university management - £9,000 fees, sky-high rents and privatisation. Lecturers at UEL have already taken strike action

against changes that would see their workload increased and students getting a worse education. The attendance policy could be used against students supporting our striking lecturers. This is outrageous! It is our democratic right to strike alongside workers.

This is why Socialist Students is campaigning to abolish the unfair attendance policy. We feel that students should not be penalised if their train is late, they get stuck in a traffic jam or if a student is ill.

The only way we are going to get rid of the unfair attendance policy

is if we fight it! Management isn't going to give in to us no matter how nicely we ask. We have to get organised and protest and take coordinated action with lecturers and support staff alongside us.

Socialist Students is initiating a campaign which has met with a lot of enthusiasm from students on campus. The launch meeting on Wednesday 1 November will discuss organising protests and whether a boycott of the policy would be feasible.

**Kyle Williamson,**  
**UEL Socialist Students**

## Strategy

Socialist Students is also clear that one national demonstration isn't going to be enough. What's needed is a strategy for what comes next. This means a plan to build for further student action and to escalate the struggle in the New Year.

We argue that it is vital that the fight to defend education is seen as part of the wider battle against austerity. While student action can have a big effect, on its own, it won't be enough to stop the onslaught. To do that, students will need to link up with workers and trade unions also fighting back.

When workers' strike together, their economic power gives them the potential to force governments back, or even kick them out altogether. For this reason, Socialist Students supports the demand for

Following 21 November Socialist Students will be going back to campuses and helping to organise the meetings and discussions that can plan action for the weeks and months ahead. We'll be helping to organise local protests against cuts, but also raising the need for further national action.

We're calling on NUS and student unions locally to this year show themselves to be worthy of the task of defending education, for them to make sure 21 November is only the beginning.

## Scores of trains cancelled in west midlands Kick the fat cats off our railways

### Birmingham transport worker

If ever an example is needed which demonstrates how privatisation of key public services leads to job cuts, higher prices and a worse service, look no further than the rail network.

Train passengers in the west midlands and beyond have faced huge delays and disruption to their journeys recently as private train operator London Midland has cancelled scores of trains due to staff shortages.

So far up to 60 trains a day have been cancelled. The company has had to replace certain journeys with the hated rail replacement buses and have cancelled many others leaving passengers to experience long and uncomfortable journeys in crowded trains.

The firm is in crisis as a result, they claim, of a number of drivers leaving to work at another unnamed operator offering higher wages. They've stated that the disruption will continue until mid-December by which time they will

have trained some new drivers.

The reality, however, is that there is a long-established overtime culture on the railway, as there is at bus companies, with firms relying on train crew coming in on their days off in order to cover much of the work.

The current crisis has seen this method of operation literally stretched to breaking point resulting in massive disruption to passengers.

### Profit over service

The problem is made worse by the current London Midland franchise being due to expire in 2015. The company has been unwilling to spend the money on training sufficient numbers of new drivers in case they lose the franchise, choosing instead to boost profits.

This situation reflects the short-term approach of the Con-Dems and the bosses when it comes to running vital services but it is also a reality of today's railway which has been disastrously fragmented.

With rocketing fares, ticket of-

fice closures and jobs being cut left, right and centre, it's no wonder that over 70% of the public support renationalisation of the railway. But Labour continues to refuse to commit to this, desperately seeking alternative ways to make the privatised system 'work'.

But after the collapse of the East Coast Mainline franchise in 2009 that line was nationalised and today is actually returning a profit to the treasury.

Contrast this with the situation at London Midland and other firms - so inefficient is the privatised rail network that train operating companies receive more subsidy cash for providing the service today than when the whole industry was publicly owned!

The Socialist Party says: kick out the fat cats! Re-nationalise the railways along with the whole public transport system under democratic workers' control and management.

We want major investment in expanding and improving the rail network as part of a nationally integrated and affordable public transport system.



**Up to 60 trains have been cancelled so far**



# Housing: How the market has failed

Five million people in Britain – two million households – are desperate for decent, affordable housing. Liverpool council worker Dave Walsh explains the origins of the housing crisis and puts forward a socialist alternative.

## When strikes and protests won reforms



1915 Glasgow rent strike

In the 1980s Tory Prime Minister Thatcher claimed to want action to encourage home ownership. However Britain's owner-occupation rates were then at their highest point yet and had been increasing since the end of World War One (WW1). Britain's population had doubled during the 19th century, and overcrowded slums became the norm for working class families. Workers flooding into cities around 1850, looking for work in mills and factories, were housed in properties attached at the back and sides. Whole families were crammed into cellars with little light or ventilation and Friedrich Engels, the close collaborator of Karl Marx, called Manchester's housing for the poor "cattle sheds for humans". Cholera outbreaks throughout the century (from which the rich were not immune), led to the 1872 and 1875 Public Health Acts, the basis of future advances such as running water, drainage and refuse collection. The Housing of the Working Classes Act 1890 led many local authorities to clear slums. However they did not replace the houses they demolished, which created a housing shortage. Landlords received handsome compensation for compulsorily purchased properties, the poor saw rents increase.

Then, only 10% of housing was owner-occupied and there was barely any council provision. 90% of housing was provided by private landlords and the law gave them the right to summarily evict tenants for non-payment of rent and to confiscate their possessions in lieu of arrears. In 1914, 300 tenants in Leeds went on strike against a 6d (2.5p) rent increase. A mass meeting of tenants organised a city-wide protest. Leeds Trades Council later called a labour conference intending to organise mass rent resistance. A Tenants' Defence League formed a central committee spreading the campaign city-wide through public meetings and canvassing. The tenants tried to challenge the rent increases through the courts, arguing that the combination of landlords fixing rents was an illegal conspiracy but the judge ruled against them and their campaign ended in defeat. However the need for municipal housing became a central plank of the Labour Party's campaign in the 1914 Leeds council elections and in many other British cities. In the 1915 Glasgow rent strike, tenants gained the backing of the Independent Labour Party. Industrial support came

from workers in factories and shipyards where emergency committees threatened a wave of sympathy strikes against rent increases. When WW1 broke out, a propaganda campaign encouraged men to 'do their patriotic duty' and fight for king and country, but tenants used this argument to encourage people to take part in the struggle against landlords who were acting unpatriotically. The rent strikers, mainly women, as the men were either fighting or working long hours in the factories, refused to pay the increases that the landlords demanded but paid rents at the old rate. As in Leeds, the landlords turned to the courts and sheriffs (bailiffs) to evict strikers from their homes. But when they arrived the women used bells, whistles and drumming bin lids to alert the community the sheriff was on his way. They crowded into lobbies and up the stairs stopping them entering the house. Industrial militancy and bold political action won many reforms in housing. Such massive protests nationwide forced the government to introduce legislation in 1915 which provided rent control and security of tenure and made it much harder for landlords to evict tenants.

Industrial militancy and bold political action won many reforms in housing

## When council housing tipped the balance

In 1917 Lloyd George set up a public inquiry, the Industrial Unrest Commission, which found lack of adequate housing was one of the main causes of 'unrest'. A 1918 report radicalised government housing policy amid ruling class fears of Bolshevism and the spreading international revolution! Rent control remained until 1923 when new legislation began the slow process of decontrol. However, in 1924 the first Labour government introduced a Housing Act encouraging councils to clear slums and build houses. Although only done sporadically, the two million houses built between the wars, together with rent controls that persisted, ate deeply into landlords' profits. They began offloading their stock. Home ownership, accounting for just 10% at the end of WW1, also began rising. More legislation aimed at deregulating rents was introduced but full rent control was reintroduced in World War Two. Wartime bombings created a severe housing shortage and these regulations remained until 1957. Workers were in no mood to give back to private landlords the freedom to exploit tenants.



Liverpool council, under a socialist leadership, built thousands of houses in the 1980s. This needs to be copied today, photo the Socialist

### Building programme

But it was the massive council house-building programmes and the post-war boom that had the biggest effect on rent and home ownership. Between 1949 and 1954 almost 1.5 million council houses were built. By 1975 it had risen to 4.3 million and, as living standards improved, a growing number of working people were able to get a mortgage. During this same period 3.9 million private houses were also built. Private landlords were being squeezed out of the market by housing opportunities which better met people's needs. This caused seismic shifts in Britain's housing. By 1945 the privately rented sector had already fallen to 57%, 10% was now provided by councils and almost a third of homes were owner-occupied. By 1961 there were more owner-occupied homes than privately rented, by 1981 council housing accounted for almost a third of the market and by 1992 the private rental sector sank to an all-time low of just 9%. But after 1979 Thatcher's Tory government offered council tenants a large discount under the 'right to buy' scheme. With repair services greatly reduced by cuts, many council tenants bought their home. At first the effect was a large increase in owner-occupation rates. This trend continued until 1992 but slowed markedly before reaching its peak of 72.5% in 2001 and started to decline. In 1988 rent control was abolished leaving arrangements between tenants and landlords purely a matter of contract. In 1991 Major's Tory government began removing tax relief on mortgages, a process completed by Blair's Labour government in 2001. Throughout this period, the labour market also underwent significant changes; with greater emphasis on flexible working while far fewer workers had secure jobs with pensions. In 1996 when the first 'buy to let' mortgage was introduced many workers saw an opportunity to secure their future with a property portfolio. From then on, the private rental sector began to recover. Recently it surged, today outstripping all social housing which is now less than 17% of all provision. London saw the biggest fall (6.3%) in home ownership rates between 2001 and 2006. Meanwhile the private rental sector there doubled in the last decade.

## Low paid and worse off

I'm 24 years old and have been working for seven years – and I'm being forced out. Mostly, my employment has been in minimum wage jobs with poor conditions. When I was 17 I would sometimes have to skip meals at the end of the month – I thought those days were behind me! I live in south London in a shared house. We were lucky with the deal we got considering the size and area, but it still costs me £485 a month in rent and bills. After giving us a pay cut, and finding out I was trying to organise staff to campaign against it, my bosses started cutting my shifts. I'm on a zero-hour contract and we don't have a union so there's nothing I can do but beg for more days. It's so bad I've had to sign on to make up the difference. But because I'm in casual work my income is fluctuating, so my claim is complicated and I still haven't received any money. It's very difficult to plan my life because I live off other workers' shift cancellations. Getting a second part-time job is nearly impossible because of clashing shifts. Luckily my parents can currently af-

ford to send me some money each month, but this counts against any housing benefit I might receive! Even if they stopped sending me money and I didn't get any shifts at work, benefits would cover at most two-thirds of my rent and bills. With Jobseeker's on top I'd still be about £100 short each month. And that's before I've bought any food or paid for travel to look for work! Despite my low pay I had put aside a few hundred pounds over several years. That all went recently so I could pay the rent on time. I'm at the bottom of my overdraft and likely to stay there because of all the fees the bank charges me for breaching it. My credit card is near its limit, not because of extravagant purchases, but from buying groceries and Oyster credit. I've got no savings left. Even with my parents' support and benefits, I'm running at a loss. I can't just make work give me more shifts. And there's precious little other work available, particularly with enough hours for me to make ends meet. I'm trying, IDS, but what more am I supposed to do? South London tenant

## Forced out of London



The photo on the right was recently sent to us by a young West Londoner. They are paying an extortionate £380 per month for this single box room on the outskirts of North-West London.



## The return of Rigsby plc

The grim figure of Rigsby, the grasping landlord in the 1970s sitcom Rising Damp (though often now Rigsby plc. and not at all funny) again dominates housing. Evictions by private landlords are up by 17% since the 2007 crash and could now spiral up with further cuts to the housing 'safety net'. The National Housing Federation predicts that home ownership will decline from 67% today to 64% in the next decade while rents will rise rapidly. In 2011, rents rose nationally by 6% and by 8% in London. The Oxford Economics think-tank predicts rents will rise by 20% in the next five years. 2008 figures show that 10% of all mortgage applications were for 'buy to let'. Savills thinks the UK rental market will grow from £48 billion today to £70 billion by 2016. The government's only answer to surging rent rises is the punitive 'cap' on housing benefit (HB). From April 2013 this will set a £250 a week limit for a one bedroom property, £290 for a two and £340 for a three bedroom property. Meanwhile the spare room tax will take £14 off HB for anyone with one empty bedroom and £25 for two. Benefit limits will only increase each year by the (lower) CPI rate of inflation, so HB will be unable to keep pace where rents rise faster than this. Tory minister

Iain Duncan Smith denied the cap would increase homelessness but leaked government figures predict that it will make an extra 80,000 homeless. There is 'social cleansing' of affluent areas. Changes are making many inner London neighbourhoods unaffordable to people on housing benefit. Advertisements saying: 'benefits claimants need not apply' are now commonplace. The three main parties agree on the HB cap. All vilify claimants, portraying them as scroungers while highlighting the very high cost of benefits. However, according to Inside Housing, 93% of HB claims last year were made from households with at least one working adult. Also of course, it's not the claimant who gains from these benefit payments but the landlord. The latest Rightmove survey shows that one-third of tenants spend more than half their income on rent and in London one in six spends more than 60%. Most private tenants are not renting by choice; 56% say they would rather buy but can't get a mortgage. The cheapest quarter of housing now costs six times the average household income, eight times in London, where owner-occupiers are a minority and predicted to be just 44% by 2021. London's housing crisis means that families in desperate need in Waltham Forest, east London, have been made

'take it or leave it' offers in the West Midlands, while neighbouring Newham council tried to transfer its waiting list to a housing association in Stoke. If people receiving these offers refuse, they may be deemed 'deliberately homeless' and have their HB for emergency accommodation removed. The government announced recently it will increase the discount for the right to buy but says it will replace properties sold. However, these replacement properties will be rented at up to 80% of market value. The government claims such rents are 'affordable' but most tenants would disagree! 1.8 million people are on housing waiting lists with five million in desperate need while the overall social housing budget has been cut by 50%. Moreover housing associations are being given the freedom to float on the stock market. Inside Housing reported in May 2012 that a consortium of ten housing associations planned to float their 10,000 houses on the London Junior Stock Exchange this year. This could begin a trend as government subsidies are reduced and housing associations seek funding for refurbishments and repairs. The private housing market has clearly failed. With house building now at its lowest level since the 1920s, a socialist alternative is urgently needed.

## A socialist programme for housing

- The trade unions, along with tenants' associations should fight for immediate action to solve this crisis. They should demand:
- No to privatisation of Britain's housing stock - keep council housing publicly owned
  - Massive government investment in housing for councils, who should immediately start a mass building programme of affordable, good quality publicly owned housing, and renovation. This would help solve the housing shortage but also create jobs
  - No repossessions! For cheap, no-interest or low-interest mortgages. Any banks that refuse should be fully nationalised and run to meet social need
  - Cap rents in both public and private sector at a genuinely affordable level with regular council checks
  - No to cuts in services and jobs. Workers should be paid a decent living wage of at least £8 an hour without exemptions
  - Fight homelessness. Councils should take over and reopen empty properties as affordable housing
  - No to laws against squatting that could victimise vulnerable people and increase rough sleeping
  - Reverse all housing benefit cuts for tenants of all ages. No to lower rates for young tenants
  - Nationalise development land and the top building companies with compensation paid only on the basis of proven need







# Spain: Autumn heats up as general strike approaches

On 14 November a general strike called by Spanish, Portuguese, Greek and Cypriot trade union federations will take place against government austerity measures – part of a “day of action and solidarity” called by the European Trade Union Confederation. Ahead of the general strike, Danny Byrne reports from Spain on the devastating impact of capitalist recession and austerity in that country and how the working class is fighting back.



photo S Wrack

“Endless protests” against austerity by workers, students and the unemployed are taking place in Spain

The Spanish government is living through the autumn like a hangover victim on a rollercoaster, with the twists and turns of mass protest, and mounting regional and national crises constantly upsetting its already nauseous and unstable equilibrium.

As each day goes by the weakness of prime minister Mariano Rajoy is underlined, as is the failure of his ruling People's Party policies. So desperate is the government to deny reality, it paints the loss of 140,000 votes in the recent Galician regional elections as an astounding victory!

The constant release of economic data rubbishes any claims that the government has the situation under control. Predictions from the most credible economic analysts for the Spanish economy for this year are for a recession three times deeper than the government's forecasts.

This ‘worse than expected’ outcome will undoubtedly be used to justify further blood-sucking measures, beyond the already brutal cuts package of €27 billion included in the budget. The graphic failure of austerity policies, which are further depressing the economy, hardens

the resolve of those determined to fight for an alternative path.

As well as sinking the economy, these measures and the catastrophic economic depression underway, also sink millions into poverty and desperation. Last weekend, official unemployment passed 25% of the workforce, over 5.7 million people. Over 1.7 million households are without any working income, and over 2.5 million of the unemployed do not even receive state benefits.

Over 70% of those on the measly state pension subsidise a younger family member and often his/her entire family.

In recent days, the trauma of evicted families has been at centre-stage in the Spanish press. 19th century archaic property laws mean that the hundreds of thousands of people, whose houses were repossessed following the collapsed housing bubble, not only lose the house but continue paying for it until the end of their days! The high-profile suicide of an evicted man in Granada sums up the hopelessness of such a position.

These are but a few examples of the devastation that the capitalist crisis is producing, and which is set to deepen if the growing fightback from below does not manage to

chart a way out of the quagmire with socialist policies.

## Mass protests

In Madrid, the regional government is proposing unprecedented measures to curtail the “endless protests [which] are collapsing the city”. Each day also brings strikes over various austerity measures in varying sec-

Predictions from the most credible economic analysts for the Spanish economy for this year are for a recession three times deeper than the government's forecasts

tors. For example, on Friday 26 October, 47 anti-austerity demonstrations took place, in Madrid alone!

Not a day goes by when town halls in all major towns are not inundated by protests. In recent weeks, national strikes have taken place among bus, metro and pharmaceutical workers, as well as numerous

industrial disputes in private sector factories.

School students engaged in a 72-hour strike on 15-18 October which, in a historic development, was supported by the main Spanish parents' association which called on parents to keep children out of school. The list of mobilisations is endless.

The general strike of 14 November will surely represent a powerful coming together of these channels of anger and opposition to austerity. However, it is crucial that the ‘pattern’ of struggle imposed from above by the main union leaders – of massive displays of strength followed by demobilisation and resignation to the government's policies – around both the general strikes of 2010 and of March this year, is broken.

Socialismo Revolucionario (CWI in Spain) emphasises the importance of the building and strengthening of democratic assemblies as genuine instruments of organised pressure from below to be coordinated. These assemblies should debate and discuss the way forward and struggle from below for a militant strategy of sustained and escalating struggle.

Such a struggle should adopt the demand for a 48-hour general strike as a fitting next step in a calendar of mobilisations.

The 14 November strike confronts a government much weaker than in March this year; and a movement strong and determined enough could bring it down.

14 November will represent a key step forward, in bringing together for the first time, workers across the Iberian Peninsula in general strike action, a source of confidence to workers in both countries and across Europe.

This – which could and should be added to by other countries in Southern Europe – can open the way for widened coordinated action, towards an all-European 24-hour general strike.

## Spain in crisis

- Officially, unemployment in Spain is over 25% or 5.8 million, second only to Greece in the eurozone and double the European average of 11.4%. Unemployment in Spain is now at its highest since the fall of general Franco's dictatorship.
- Figures for the third quarter of 2012 show that a further 56,000 construction jobs, 32,700 service sector jobs and 11,900 agricultural jobs have been lost.
- The official unemployment total does not include the huge leap in ‘self-employment’ or the mass emigration of job seekers.
- The number of families with all their members unemployed has risen to 1,737,900 households.
- The International Monetary Fund expects the Spanish economy to further contract by over 1% in 2013.



Mariano Rajoy - in denial of crisis

Socialismo Revolucionario demands:

- No payment of the debt! Use the wealth to create jobs and strengthen public services, and rebuild the productive economy!
- Place heavy taxes on the wealth of the millionaires and big companies to pay for massive public investment! Nationalise the banks under democratic control. Impose capital controls to prevent a ‘flight of capital’.
- Nationalise the key sectors of the economy under democratic workers' control and management, to recuperate and restructure the economy under a plan for real development, instead of market chaos.
- For a united general strike of 48 hours throughout the Spanish state as the next step in a sustained plan of struggle! Unite the struggles in Europe with an international day of struggle including a coordinated general strike in Southern Europe! Towards an all-European general strike!
- For the building of an united, democratic mass Left, to struggle for a workers' government as an alternative to the rule of capital.

## 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](mailto:cwi@worldsoc.co.uk)

## www.socialistworld.net

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



## Lebanon: Sliding back to civil war?

A workers' alternative is urgently needed.

Aysha Zaki and Tamer Mahdi, (CWI, Lebanon)



## Brazil: Government parties win municipal elections

But growing contradictions for president Dilma Rousseff, as Party of Socialism and Freedom (PSOL) makes gains.

André Ferrari, Liberty, Socialism and Revolution (CWI, Brazil) and member of PSOL National Board



## Paul Murphy MEP - Opposing CAA protocol trade agreement with Israel

Video of Socialist Party MEP (Republic of Ireland) addressing the European Parliament.

## Socialism 2012 Spain in revolt

Speaker: Danny Byrne  
Saturday 2 November, 3-5pm  
ULU, Malet St, London WC1



[www.socialism2012.org.uk](http://www.socialism2012.org.uk)



# Savile case

## How bullies and predators thrived

Eleanor Donne

The revelations about Jimmy Savile's serial sexual assaults and rape of children over decades will disgust many from the 'Jim'll Fix It' generation. As more and more witnesses come forward the scale of his abuse is becoming clear. It is already clear that he was not the only one involved.

Savile's descent from 'national treasure' to predatory sex offender in the national consciousness has been swift. He will never have to answer personally for his crimes, having died last year with his knighthood and reputation intact.

However, the wider question of how he could use his position as a TV presenter and charity fundraiser to target vulnerable young people is gaining momentum.

Why was Savile a keyholder at Broadmoor, Britain's most secure psychiatric hospital? Just how was he able to convince managers at Stoke Mandeville Hospital that he needed a private room there? Money talks, it seems. The fact that Savile used his influence and name to raise millions of pounds for that and other hospitals assured silence.

It appears to have been a fairly open secret at the BBC as far back as the 1970s that Savile, in the words of



Savile moved in the corridors of power

one ex-colleague, 'liked 'em young'. Nevertheless an investigative exposé about the matter by respected BBC journalists was blocked.

Liz McKean one of the programme's makers was appalled at the decision, saying that Savile's victims collectively deserved to be heard. To add insult to injury the BBC went ahead with a tribute programme to Savile in December 2011.

The BBC now joins the list of 'Great British Institutions' under investigation for immoral and illegal conduct, alongside sleazy politicians, bent coppers and criminal journalists.

The BBC's media competitors in commercial television of course have their own business agenda and want to see the state broadcasting company broken up and sold off. Is it just coincidence that the investigation into why the Newsnight

programme on Savile was dropped is being led by Nick Pollard, former head of Murdoch's Sky News?

The NSPCC and other support organisations for those who have been abused in childhood report that calls have increased since the revelations about Savile's actions, and estimate that even today only a third of abused children report their abuse at the time it happens.

There have been some heart-breaking accounts from Savile's victims, some of whom have felt too ashamed to tell anyone at all until others went public with their stories. Savile, like many other sex offenders, tried to target children who were marginalised already - suffering mental illness or attending reform schools, in care or physically or mentally disabled.

He figured, rightly unfortunately, that they would not be believed. One girl who resisted Savile's sexual assault and spoke out at the time was even punished by the staff for being rude.

While such regimes are much less common now, children in today's under-funded and fragmented care system are still very vulnerable to grooming, sexual exploitation and

rape, as the Rochdale case shows. However, while the current media focus is on institutions, the vast majority of child abuse takes place within the family.

A former Court of Appeal Judge is leading an inquiry into the culture of the BBC during the years Savile worked there. Clearly questions need to be asked in particular about the cult of celebrity, which renders certain individuals 'untouchable'.

But sexism, serious abuse of power at the top and a complete lack of democracy, accountability or workers' control is common to all major public bodies and corporations in the current capitalist economy. Savile's career holds a mirror up to capitalist society and shows us a world of great inequality where bullies and predators can thrive.

Much has changed since the 1970s, including laws and work practices designed to reduce abuse and keep children safer, and also 'whistle-blowing' policies allowing employees to report suspected abuse by colleagues or managers.

However, such measures require decent employment rights and effective union organisation to be really enforceable and the government is attacking both. If it succeeds it will become more, not less, difficult to speak out.

## Gas prices

### All companies join price hike

Alec Price

Following the price hikes by four of the 'big six' energy companies, the French-owned EDF Energy kept tight lipped on whether it would follow suit. It told the Financial Times EDF 'keep[s] its prices under constant review'.

Now it has announced an 11% price hike, effective from 7 December - the biggest of all!

As the table below indicates the 'big Six' companies are all hiking up prices by roughly the same amount and at roughly the same time.

The only exception is E.ON which has a price freeze for this year but may well announce price

rises from January 2013. Martin Lewis, of moneysavingexpert.com, tried to place a £1,000 bet that E.ON's price will announce or raise prices in January - the bet was refused!

This is price-fixing for maximum profit. The fact that many people will be weighing up whether to buy food or put the heating on is, at best, a secondary concern for these greedy companies.

If we were to bring these companies back under public ownership, and run them to meet the needs of society as part of a wider socialist economy, then we could fix a price for gas and electricity that would allow people to heat their homes and provide food for their family as a bare minimum.



Prices "under constant review"

Energy Provider	Average hike (G=Gas E=Electricity)	From
British Gas	G: +6% E: +6%	16 November
E.ON	Price freeze for 2012	N/A
EDF	G: +10.8% E: +10.8%	7 December
nPOWER	E: +8.8% G: +9.1%	26 November
Scottish Power	G: +7% E: +7%	3 December
SSE	G: +9% E: +9%	15 October

## Our Marie Antoinette award

Once these winter price rises go through, the average household energy bill will have rocketed up by £812 since 2004. Then the annual cost was £522 - now on average each household will be paying a record high of £1,334 a year by the end of 2012.

The Independent newspaper asked the big six companies: 'Why couldn't the 5% profits claimed by these companies be reduced to 3%?' One energy industry fat cat dismissed this, saying: "That would only cut average bills by around £30. What's the point?"

As the Independent commented, £30 is a lot of money when you have none to spare.

This fat cat looks favourite to win this year's Marie Antoinette 'let them eat cake' award. The 2008 winner was Jake Ulrich of energy giant Centrica who told people fac-

ing huge increases in bills that they should wear two sweaters to keep warm!

These companies have plenty of money without handing us these inflation-busting price hikes. They should never have been privatised in the first place - they should be renationalised and the energy industries run under democratic workers' control and management not by greedy fat-cat capitalists.

## FBU remembers Joe Strummer



Mark Bedford

On the tenth anniversary of the national Fire Brigades Union (FBU) dispute, a benefit event will be held on Friday 16 November at the Tabernacle, Notting Hill, London W11 with the Men They Couldn't Hang, Tymon Dogg, Take the 5th (Clash tribute group), FBU general secretary Matt Wrack and other special guests.

We will also remember the 2002 benefit concert fronted by the great punk musician Joe Strummer formerly of the Clash! On 15 November 2002 Britain's firefighters and control staff had just completed a 48-hour walkout (the first national fire

service strike since 1977 - the 'year of punk'). The Red Watch at Acton Fire Station, west London, had organised a benefit to raise money for the FBU hardship fund where 500 firefighters saw Joe Strummer and the Mescaleros topping the bill!

The band finished with London's Burning - it never sounded more relevant! Sadly, Joe died suddenly a few weeks later aged just 50. London firefighters provided a guard of honour at his funeral.

With the government's plans for piecemeal privatisation of the fire service such a spirit is needed more than ever. For further information and tickets go to: [www.armsaloftinactontown.co.uk](http://www.armsaloftinactontown.co.uk)



# Racist EDL fails in second attempt to rally in Waltham Forest

## Walthamstow Socialist Party

Socialist Party members from Waltham Forest and across London joined the hundreds-strong protest against the racist English Defence League (EDL) on 27 October.

Following the successful humiliation of EDL hooligans in Walthamstow by anti-racist protesters and local young people on 1 September, the racists, in an attempt to save face, had vowed to return, threatening to 'unite the right'.

The massive local campaign against the EDL led to the police banning them from marching and from holding a static protest in the borough.

No doubt residents were relieved that this racist, hooligan organisation was not able to bring people into Waltham Forest to try to spread its racist lies and create division and tension.

But scandalously, the ban against the EDL was also applied to the thousands of local residents, workers and young people who were preparing to march against the racists.

The ban on all protests has been applied to the whole of Waltham Forest and three neighbouring boroughs - Newham, Islington and Tower Hamlets - for 30 days.

Waltham Forest's Labour council further attempted to demobilise the anti-racist opposition by issuing a letter which said: "We will not allow any counter demonstrations or protests to take place in this area."

The council occupied the area the local anti-racist campaign had planned to use, the town square and another central area, with a funfair policed by council enforcers and security.

A static protest by anti-racists in Hoe Street, one of Walthamstow's main roads, was eventually agreed. But anti-racist protesters setting up campaign stalls in preparation for the protest were harassed and harangued by police and council security.

Scandalously a letter signed by the borough's three MPs, Labour's

John Cryer and Stella Creasy, and welfare-smashing Tory Iain Duncan Smith, included the line: "We call on everyone who had planned to demonstrate, especially those who have no connection to this borough, to stay away and allow the community to get back to normal."

Hundreds of police, along with dogs, horses and dozens of police vans, added to the clampdown on the democratic right to protest.

Socialist Party members were angered when the police informed them that they were preparing to allow the EDL to assemble at the town hall if they turned up. Thankfully this did not come to bear.

## Labour's cutting council

The Socialist Party has been part of the local campaign against the EDL's plans to march from the off. As well as building opposition to the EDL in the trade unions, workplaces, colleges and communities, inside the campaign we have argued against an uncritical platform for Labour politicians who are cutting jobs and services at council level and providing no opposition to austerity at a national level.

The anger and frustration with the council's actions among local people was reflected by some of the speeches from the stage erected in Hoe Street.

Labour councillors, who had previously been given a platform by the campaign, then banned its march. Local vicar Stephen Saxby's condemnation of this drew support from the crowd.

Unbelievably Stella Creasy, who also spoke at the 1 September demo, was allowed to speak from the stage despite her attempts to prevent an anti-racist event taking place.

Steve Hedley, RMT union assistant general secretary, made a powerful speech explaining the link between austerity and the rise of the far right.

Steve appealed for support for the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) to build a voice for working class people.

Nancy Taaffe, a local library



Socialist Students and Youth March for Jobs supporters at the Walthamstow demo photo Sarah Wrack

worker sacked through the cuts and TUSC candidate for Walthamstow in the 2010 general election, made it clear that "we must have a political challenge to the lies of austerity and of cuts where the three main political parties have betrayed the working class".

Nancy explained TUSC's plans to put up candidates against the council that had carried through Tory cuts and privatisation, calling on parents fighting academies, workers and trade unionists fighting cuts, to build a "working class alternative to the politics of sell-outs".

Oktay from the Day-Mer Kurdish and Turkish youth organisation made a strong speech calling for workers and young people to unite and build the resistance to racism and fascism, and to austerity.

In the end, less than 50 EDLers, outnumbered by police, held a static protest near parliament, where they were given permission to do so at one day's notice.

This pathetic show earned the

hooligans a video on the Telegraph and Evening Standard websites. Many bigger demonstrations of the labour movement are completely ignored by the right-wing press.

## Working class unity

The Socialist Party leaflet distributed on the day called for "a massive, united campaign of working class people that has the power not only to marginalise and smash groupings like the EDL, but to hold out hope in a real future to those small layers of people who might be attracted by them".

It also noted that: "The impressive TUC demo on Saturday 20 October, following the big events of last year (the 26 March TUC demo and 30 November public sector strike), all show that the organised working class in the trade unions has the power to mobilise masses of people in decisive action."

"The trade unions should be at the heart of any fight against the



TUSC candidate Nancy Taaffe photo Paul Mattsson

EDL, making it clear that they stand firmly in the interests of defending all sections of our communities against austerity attacks".

Socialists will continue to fight for such a campaign to be built.

## Stop deaths in police custody



Hundreds turned out to protest against deaths in police custody on 27 October in Westminster. A brief march from Trafalgar Square ended at Downing Street where a rally was held with speakers including relatives of the victims. There was an attempt by two EDL members to disrupt the rally but they were quickly chased away by protesters. photo Neil Cafferky

## Rotherham workers and youth unite against the National Front

### Rotherham Socialist Party

In two weeks Rotherham has seen protests by far-right groups, first the English Defence League on 13 October followed by the National Front on 27 October.

Both groups claimed to be protesting against Asian 'paedophilia cover-ups' in the area in order to spread their fascist propaganda. On both occasions they were met by stiff opposition from local residents at demonstrations also held in the town centre.

Socialist Party members from Sheffield and Rotherham took part in the counter demonstrations, campaigning for united working class action under the slogan 'jobs, homes and services not racism'.

The protest against the National Front especially was a great victory for anti-racists. Only 40 NFers turned up for their rally. This compared to 250 local residents, mainly Asian youth, at the counter-protest. This shows that, united as a community, we can defeat the racist views of the far right.

But now the community must unite again, this time against the spectre of savage cuts by our NHS Trust to local hospital services. You can bet the far-right groups that claim to protect 'our country' will have no idea how to fight against the £50 million budget cut proposed in Rotherham by 2015.

These cuts, according to their proposer, trust chief executive Brian James, could result in "a smaller hospital, with substantially fewer beds", 750 job losses, 20% of the total workforce, meaning "compulsory redundancies [are] inevitable". It is a massive and devastating attack on the local area which must be fought against by the entire community.

And with the Con-Dem government having only made around 15% of their cuts so far and public services already struggling to cope, you wonder what will remain after the remaining 85%.

Rotherham Socialist Party has already contacted the trade unions to offer our unlimited support for any action they wish to take, as well as starting a petition in opposition to these brutal cuts.



# South African miners: THE STRUGGLE CONTINUES

Following the massacre at Lonmin's Marikana mine in South Africa, in August, readers will be shocked and disgusted to learn of the ongoing horrendous attacks on striking miners.

On Tuesday 30 October police deployed rubber bullets and tear gas at close range at the Anglo American Platinum (Amplats) Thembelani mine. This attack was the stick, which alongside a very small carrot of 2,000 rand (£140), formed an attempt by mining corporation Amplats to force strikers back to work.

A deal, struck between Amplats and unions including the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM), had

not been agreed by the miners. Previously Amplats sacked 12,000 workers. When the miners, determined and organised, did not retreat mining bosses sought another route to continuing their brutal exploitation of the workforce.

Hoshoko Letshoba, a miners' leader, spoke to the Socialist and explained that the miners are determined to keep on fighting for their minimum demand of a wage of R12,500.

He described some of the intimidation faced by the miners – about 500 have been arrested on trumped up charges. Hoshoko is a member of the Democratic Socialist Movement (DSM), the Socialist Party's sister party in South Africa, and will be a key speaker at the Socialism 2012 weekend.

## NUM leadership

Across the world workers and trade unionists were horrified by the role played by the NUM leadership in the Marikana attack.

Again there has been involvement by the NUM leaders in further attempts to undermine the strike and to impose its leadership, including trying to organise a provocative rally in the Rustenburg mining area last Saturday.

Two workers were shot with live ammunition in the clashes that inevitably followed between striking workers on the one hand and union officials and police on the other.

As the DSM explains "the NUM leadership stood on the other side of the class barriers, actively colluded with the mining bosses, denouncing the demands and the actions of their own members, and called for the ANC to help end the strike and for the police to smash it."

As Reuters news agency com-

mented: "The strikes have shone a harsh spotlight on South Africa's persistent income inequality and the promise by Nelson Mandela's African National Congress (ANC) to build 'a better life for all' following the end of white-minority rule." This is also true for Cosatu. Hoshoko reported that the support for the building of a new mass party of the working class is growing.

DSM speakers have made the case for the building of a new government that would nationalise mines, banks and land. Mametlwe Sebei, a leading DSM member, is quoted in the SA press saying: "We have drawn a line in the sand. We're building a socialist alternative," when he spoke at a mass meeting of AngloGold Ashanti workers.

Questioned in South Africa's City Press another DSM member, Tham-sanqa Dumezweni, said: "Workers only have their heads and hands, which they sell. This is a revolution against capitalism."

## Support the South African miners

Any donations for the struggle are welcome. Deposits can be made into the account below - Rustenburg Joint Strike Coordinating Committee

Bank: **Standard Bank, South Africa**  
Account: **Workers Defence Fund**  
Account No. **300495986**  
Branch: **East Gate,**  
Branch Code: **018 505**  
Swift Code: **SBZAJJ**



Platinum miners celebrate a 22% pay increase at the Lonmin shaft

## Socialism 2012

Socialism 2012 is a weekend of discussion and debate taking place in London over 3 and 4 of November. Hoshoko will speak in the Saturday night rally alongside RMT transport union general secretary Bob Crow and Socialist Party general secretary Peter Taaffe and others. There will also be a Rally for Socialism on Sunday.

As well as two rallies, there are 36 sessions across the weekend discussing everything from 'Is human nature too greedy for socialism?' to 'Scroungers? The role of unemployment in capitalist economy and the ideology of 'benefit culture'.

See [www.socialism2012.org.uk](http://www.socialism2012.org.uk) for full programme and tickets. 10% discount until Friday 2 November

## What we stand for

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

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

**Our demands include:**  
**PUBLIC SERVICES**

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

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

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

## WORK AND INCOME

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

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

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

## ENVIRONMENT

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

## RIGHTS

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

## NEW WORKERS' PARTY

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

## SOCIALISM AND INTERNATIONALISM

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