Tories admit...

CUTS
DON'T
WORK

But we’ll carry on regardless

Chancellor Osborne has had to admit the humiliating truth – his policies to revive the British economy aren’t working. But his solution is to carry on with more of the same – make the working class pay more and do nothing about his tax-dodging, multimillionaire friends.

Councils across the country are cutting jobs and services. Now Osborne’s autumn statement is rubbing salt into those wounds. It carries measures which will hit the poor and the most vulnerable the hardest. In fact everybody except the super-rich is facing rising bills and falling wages, as well as job insecurity and a bleak future. We’re definitely not ‘all in this together’.

Big tax-avoiding companies like Starbucks, Amazon and Google are embarrassed that their antics have been exposed. It’s not good PR. But they know that the chancellor will generally leave them alone, along with his rich chums. After all it was Osborne who cut £3 billion from the tax office HMRC’s budget in October 2010. This included axing 10,000 jobs.

When you look at this alongside the scandal of MPs still with their snouts buried in the expenses trough, it’s no wonder that workers are fighting back.

The call for co-ordinated action against the cuts, low pay and the Con-Dem’s austerity agenda in general is gaining support. For example Unison’s Scottish council has voted unanimously to instruct the union to “immediately take the necessary steps to promote with all STUC affiliated unions the need for a coordinated industrial action strategy, beginning with a one-day strike across Scotland.”

Brian Smith, Glasgow city branch secretary and a member of Socialist Party Scotland explained that the trade unions “must step-up our campaign to defend wages, jobs, pensions and services by organising co-ordinated strike action across all sectors of the economy. At a time when Unison members are facing yet more pay cuts, further attacks on pensions and tens of thousands of jobs losses it’s clear the Con-Dem government will not stop unless they are forced back. A 24-hour general strike must be organised urgently to stop these attacks.”

More on page 2

Failing coalition can be beaten

The National Shop Stewards Network has organised a lobby of the TUC on 11 December to call on the TUC to name the date for a 24-hour general strike. To support this demand, see www.shopstewards.net and get a copy of the model resolution.
Scottish Unison unanimously backs one-day general strike

Scottish Unison unanimously backed a one-day strike action, beginning on 1 December, against cuts and privatisation in local government, health, education, etc. All 200 delegates representing the Socialist Party Scotland reporters.

In brief

All-out Christmas strike

After taking over 30 days of strike action over the summer, 20+ regional striking workers, working at Sheffield’s five D Limit sites, thought they had struck an agreement to restore their working hours. The GMB trade union members had struck for a year. The Labour council, Veolia and Sova.

Peter Davies, of the GMB union said “I believe the strike is at its peak. We have now agreed to drop a section of the strike action for 22 December.”

Covenry cuts

Workplace at Coventry city council have been hit by a sleighberger blow with news that an extra 600 jobs are going to go. The Labour council have now agreed to drop a section of their plans for 2013/14. This fourth year of cuts has been the worst so far in the Covenry.

The Labour administration gave unions just 45 minutes notice that the email announcing the cuts was going to be sent.

The council say they have no choice. But the choice is simple – which side are you on? The Con-Dems, or your own workforce and the people of Coventry.

If they refused to implement the cuts they would get massive support from across the city and further afield.

They could save a budget that meets the needs of the people of Coventry, as part of mass campaign involving unions, service users, all Coventry people, to demand more money from central government. Linking together with other local authorities, the government could be forced to do more with the resources to the city.

Locally the unions, Unison, GMB, and Unite, with the teaching unions, need to co-ordinate to discuss ‘batttle plans’, and a firm response to these attacks. If the council refuse to back down then they need to set up a programme of industrial action. This is looking increasingly like what it will come to.

A Unison steward

PCS protests

Members of the Public and Commercial Services union (PCS) protested outside their work- places on 30 November, against the government’s attacks on their working conditions.

At the same time there was a 24-hour strike by the 8,000 PCS members in the Department for Transport against cuts and privatisation.

Unison witch-hunt

In light of their previous climbdown on the witch hunt, Unison have now agreed to drop a sec- ond disciplinary case they had been pending for a year and a half.

Website

For more on these issues, see the Socialists Party’s website: www.socialistparty.org.uk.
Workforce schemes failing
We need real job creation

James Ivens

We will never be good enough. Mil- lions are out of work and out of their youth, all of us ready to work. We will never be good enough for Iain Duncan Smith.

Results for year one of the coali- tion’s welfare-to-work scheme ar- rived last week. The targets were not only not ambitious. Only 5.5% on placements needed to find jobs. They only needed to keep them for six months. And with only 3.5% making it, they couldn’t even man- age that.

But Iain Duncan Smith for- giveth. He explained to the BBC, “how difficult that is for people who have been, you know, scared by being out of work for a long time.” Perhaps it would be easier, Ians, if you weren’t filling up your paper with unpaid placements. Workfare puns long-term jobseekers in workplaces.

Adding to the problem
Inflation has driven up living costs with no real pay increase. Even so, poverty wages still mean more than the dole. But if you’re on workfare, you’re not paid wages. You are ‘paid’ your dole. If you decline? Your dole is withdrawn. This is slave labour. The government’s goal is giving the jobless ‘skills’ and ‘experience’ to make them more employable. This focus on our supposed fail- ings is a transparent ploy to shift the blame.

The screamingly obvious reality
is there are more jobseekers than vacancies. A child could see that let- ting employers take unpaid labour means still lower paid jobs. Duncan Smith points to improved figures for June and July. These were the months of the h leisure and Olym- pics. We’ll just have those every year, shall we?

And most of that taking part have skills beyond the shelf stacking and till operating offered. Limited only to these skills, the gov- ernment is treating us as nothing more than workforce lackeys. The pathetic ‘achievement’ of 3.5% of those on workfare finding six months’ work is also question- able. Six months is not a career. And 10.5% of the workforce, like me, is “underemployed” - not working enough hours to make ends meet.

Iain, if you weren’t filling up your paper to make them more employable. This focus on our supposed fail- ings is a transparent ploy to shift the blame.

The screamingly obvious reality

Victory for teachers strike
After revelations that the academies programme has run up a £1 billion overspend, which other schools are now being asked to pay for, anger against the government’s flagship programme has grown.

Academies allow private companies to take over the running of schools. A huge public robbery has taken place. Billions of pounds worth of public assets – schools buildings, land and so on – have been handed to the private sector.

It is also increasingly evident that academies can be used to attack teachers’ pay, working conditions and union rights. But as this report from Stratford Academy in east London shows, education workers, with support from other affected and from communities, can win battles against academies.

After protracted strike action, teach- ers at Stratford Academy went back to the classroom with their heads held high, winning big concessions from the head teacher and gover- nors. The strike was triggered by the Academy’s management’s extraor- dinary demand that staff must in- dividually promise not to take part in the NUT and NASUWT’s joint action campaign against excessive workloads, or have 15% of their wages docked every month.

After talks on 27 November, the unions and school produced a joint one sentence statement: “Following constructive talks facilitated by ACAS, all sides have agreed to a pro- cess of further discussions to deal with outstanding issues.”

The strike was suspended and teachers at Stratford will be reintro- ducing their unions’ joint national action (short of strike action) in opposition to excessive workloads. Last week teachers’ docked wages were returned.

The future
The striking teachers also demand- ed all threats of future wage cuts were dropped and that guarantees were given about classroom observations and other workload issues. Given the growing militancy of striking teachers, with parents’ backing, it is clear that rank and file teachers would only suspend the strike if their main demands were met.

Although the teachers’ dispute now appears to be getting resolved to teachers’ satisfaction, areas of concern for both teachers and par- ents remain, in particular the heavy- handed management culture and unaccountable governors.

On 27 November, the chair of the governors, John Swallow, wrote to Niall Mulholland, co-ordinator of the Stratford Concerned Parents, stating the governors refuse to meet Niall. Swallow alleged that Niall “dis- rupted” a parents meeting organ- ised by the head. In truth, up to 200 parents revolted against the actions of the senior management that provoked the strike. Swallow insulted other parents by asserting that he “would not want a repeat” of a meeting between a Concerned Parents’ delegation and senior staff. The governors’ chair and the head, lacking their wares, have no intention of being held accountable to the parents. But Stratford Acad- emy Concerned Parents are com- mitted to campaigning for real rep- utable schools and working closely with the teachers’ unions. This will include resolution opposition to any attempts by man- agement to victimise either parents or teachers.

East London Socialist Party members

James Ivens

Join the fightback! Join the Socialists!
www.socialistparty.org.uk • Phone 020 9898 8777 • Text 07761 818206

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

What we heard
“We dream of strikes”. These were the exact words spoken by a London street cleaner when told about the NSSN cam- paign for a 24-hour general strike. He had lived through privatization and street clean- ing service and could see exactly what it meant – worse pay, conditions and rights.

He was frustrated not to see more Unison activity to unite the multi-ethnic work- force in action. But he also said that now Polish workers like him have decided that this is their home – they must be prepared to fight for their rights.

Emma Smith

Hot air from Starbucks...
The ever generous Starbucks has agreed to carry out a review of wheth- er it makes possible, at some point, to pay a little more tax. The main reason being that the company recognises the very difficult position of aver- ages £474,000 – compared to just £4,000 savings for the poorest 50%.

Financially stretched
A spot by the Who’s consumer organi- nation has shown what was already becoming clear. Millions of people are financially struggling. 10% have de- faulted on a loan, credit card or hous- ing payment. 1.5 million households have had to use unplanned overdrafts or pay day loans.

Student suicides
Huge debt from extortionate fees, crip- pling housing costs, high graduate un- employment, cuts to courses and less and less contact time with lecturers. It’s depressingly understandable that between 2007 and 2011, as the eco- nomic crisis bit, student suicides rose by 38% among male students and al- most doubled among female students. The pressure of juggling university work with part-time work to get by, while the whole fighting to maintain de- cent grades to make your thousands of pounds of debt worth it, mean that for the majority of students ‘university’ means depression and stress. Gene is the ideal of university being about learning, life experience and finding meaningful employment.

Suzanne Belahon

We need real job creation
We need real job creation
The rotten establishment

Just as arrogant bankers flaunted their wealth while they helped crash the economy, so establishment politicians, press barons and some police have had their arrogance and contempt for ‘the plebs’ - the mass of working people in Britain - revealed in a seemingly ceaseless series of revelations of corruption and abuse of power.

From hacking, to Hillsborough, to blacklisting and blatant robbing of the public, Britain’s establishment are spolit rotten by power, and working people are getting sick of it.

Leveson report will not end abuse

Even Leveson’s tame report exposed the rotten and corrupt relationships between different parts of the British state’s establishment. Appalling abuses took place with impunity as press, politicians and senior police enjoyed cozy relationships.

The media is now full of debate about a ‘free press’. But we don’t have a free press! Do ordinary people own our big newspapers? Of course not. Rich people do, and they do it to buy power and influence.

Murdoch owns four papers and satellite TV. The press barons are part of the ruling establishment and use their media to defend their rotten system, a system founded on the wealth of a few and impoverishment of the many. They are the image of George Orwell’s ‘trash’ media from “1984”. Poisoning people and setting one group against the other to deflect the flak from themselves.

Leveson hoped his report would be accepted by all three political parties. That in itself indicates its ‘timidity’. It is little more than a beefed up version of what exists and allowed such abuses in the first place. After the experience of toothless watchdogs like gas price regulator, OfGem, who’d imagine O’Hass would be any more effective? However, media barons are demanding that they police the press, and there is a serious attempt to bury his report by them and many politicians.

Leveson whitewashes press, police and the political establishment

How do socialists see it? Dave Reid from the Socialist Party Wales, gives a socialist view.

Lord Justice Leveson’s report castigated the activities of the press but, like most judicial inquiries, brushed over the corruption of important elements of the capitalist establishment like the police and politicians. Like the inquiries of Lord Widgery and Lord Justice Taylor into the Bloody Sunday massacre in Derry and the Hillsborough disaster, Leveson absolved the representatives of the ruling class.

His report disregarded the exposure of corruption of police officials by the press, dismissing them with an eye-rubbing “I have not seen any evidence” or “I have not seen any corruption of police officers”. The report is a smear attack on the investigation of the Hillsborough Families and the work of Lord Justice Taylor. The report is a tool to cover up the truth of what happened.

The capitalist class in Britain has long protected this institution for its exclusive preserve. Like other state institutions that govern Britain, working class people have virtually no influence on how the press is regulated or how the press works.

Even Leveson himself, it will be stuffed full of establishment figures who will oppose Leveson’s call for state regulation of the press. Instead we should demand a much more radical democratic public control of the means of press communication and the media in general.

The press was called the “fourth estate” by the 18th century conservative Edmund Burke. It has effectively a quasi-constitutional role in acting as a check on the activities of the main wings of the state but also to defend them against challenges to their monopoly of power.

The capitalist class in Britain has long protected this institution as its exclusive preserve. Like other state institutions that govern Britain, working class people have virtually no influence on how the press’s power is exercised. The mass circulation press is 100% owned by powerful capitalist interests, referred to as “press barons” - itself an indication of their status.

Media magnates support one pro-market party or the other, usually the Tories. So when they and the Tories wall about the threats to “freedom of the press” they are really defending the free operation of the Tory press to act as the fourth estate in the interests of the wider capitalist class, fighting any threats to their interests. Charlotte Church correctly dubbed it as “corporate speech, not free speech” on Question Time.

While people are actually being imprisoned in this country for state sentences made on the social media, mainstream newspapers can print scurrilous attacks on labour movement organisations and individuals with impunity.

Laugh out loud! Cameron

Understandably victims of the News of the World phone hacking, like Millie Dowler’s parents, want to stop the intrusion and sensationalist harassment by the tabloid media and support the idea of an ‘independent’ body to control them.

But Marxists warn that no body will truly be independent. Like Leveson itself, it will be stuffed full of establishment figures who will ensure that the press is free to protect capitalist interests at the expense of working class people.

Regulations might lessen the routine atrocities committed by the press but they would be framed so that they protected the capitalist media while hamstringing workers’ papers like the Socialist.

As with many state regulations, they could be more of a burden on the smaller papers funded by the penneys and the pounds of working class people than the wealthy corporate press.

The political party registration system, for example, was set up in response to the corruption of the pro-capitalist parties in the 1990s, but its effect has been mainly to hamper the activities of left and workers’ political parties.

The Socialist Party was forbidden on spurious grounds from even registering as a party that can stand for election by the Party Registrar, while corrupt practices within the main parties continue behind the scenes.

Question of ownership

Instead, a much more radical democratisation of the press must be campaigned for.

An independent inquiry into the activities of the press should be established by the trade union movement, involving representatives of victims of the press like the Hillsborough Families Campaign, the families phone-hacked and others who have been harassed like Tommy Sheridan as well as the NJU and media unions.

And socialists must campaign for a real free press. For the resources of the press corporations to be taken out of the hands of the press barons and opened up to reflect the views and needs of the 99% of the population not just the interests and the whims of the top 1% through public control of the means of publication.
The rotten establishment - of a rotten system

Con-Dem coalition in crisis

Employers’ illegal blacklists

Employers’ illegal blacklists

System change needed

Don’t throw things at the telly - fight back!

Right wing Tories are now urging their party to do a deal with Ukip to avoid electoral Armageddon in two years time. Fear of defeat has led to the Tories planning to loot state assets even faster proposing more ridiculous privatisations.

In a wider comment on the political establishment, there was little enthusiasm for the opposition either. Labour leaders had repeated plans to continue Con-Dems cuts. Labour won all three by-elections but on small turnouts, meaning only roughly 16% of the possible electorate felt motivated enough to trust them to combat the Con-Dems.

As Tories cuddle Ukip, so Labour are wooing the Liberais. There’s not much sign of political principle around! It makes you wonder if they all think the same, why do they exist?

The job of Socialists in the years ahead is to replace the disillusionment felt by millions with a view of how we can change things.

For TUSC campaign report and more on Ukip see page 20

What we think
The 2014 referendum is going to be a crucial test of the working class. This is due to the crucial role that the working class play in the outcome of the referendum, the economic crisis that Britain faces, and the fact that the referendum will be held in the context of the election for a new parliamentary term. The working class is the group that will decide the fate of Britain and its future. The referendum will be the ultimate test of the working class’s resolve and determination to defend their interests and rights. The working class has historically been at the forefront of resistance to capitalist exploitation and oppression. The referendum will be no exception. The working class will have to stand up to the capitalists and their agents, and show that they are not to be taken lightly. The referendum will be a test of the working class’s ability to mobilise and organise, and to assert their will in the face of opposition from the ruling class. The referendum will be a battle for the very future of Britain. The working class must be ready to fight and to win. The referendum will be a test of the working class’s resolve and determination to defend their interests and rights. The working class has historically been at the forefront of resistance to capitalist exploitation and oppression. The referendum will be no exception. The working class will have to stand up to the capitalists and their agents, and show that they are not to be taken lightly. The referendum will be a battle for the very future of Britain. The working class must be ready to fight and to win.
We need decent jobs not benefit cuts!

In his Autumn Statement mini-budget, Chancellor George Osborne will attempt populist politics in his budget by scapegoating the unemployed and attacking benefits. He wants to remove any sense of working people against the other to avoid the blame himself. As unemployment rises, those in work are being forced to work longer hours, work harder, often being bullied and are doing so for less real pay.

With police therefore blaming those suffering in that way for idealising what an existence on benefits could mean. But the Socialist says to workers and pensioners: " Beware! " Watch out for your wages and pensions, they plan to drive them down using the brutality of benefit cuts.

Lord Richard, former benefits chief, recently said that retired people should do community work or face losing some of their benefits. When did a fund you pay all your life become a benefit? When the Con-Dems want to make you pay for their crisis.

Attack on all workers

Regarding workers, benefit attacks are, plain and simple, the government’s way of forcing down wages. Unemployment is an economic policy of capitalism to ‘regulate the labour market’.

Capitalist strategists actually debate what kind of unemployment they want. The long-term unemployed aren’t ‘good’ because they want more of a ‘precariat’ at: millions of insecure workers increasingly desperate and impoverished enough to take any job on any terms to undermine existing jobs, wages and conditions.

They hope that, as a result, people will be too scared to fight back in the unions.

Belgium

Defend Tamil activist from deportation

Tamils Solidarity activist Muraganaandam Murugasutha – thus his friends - was arrested in November and taken to a closed centre for asylum seekers in Steenokkerzeel, in Antwerp.

Neither he, his wife and two children, still has no official papers, has struggled with his wife and two children, and was sentenced to life in prison. The Shimul Centre in Calcutta, in Australia, of serious concern.

Both Tamils Solidarity and the CWI are protesting against the possible deportation of Thas. Socialist Party (Ireland) MRP Paul Murphy, a member of the South Asian delegation of the European Parliament, has issued a statement to the Belgian authorities opposing the deportation.

See www.tamilsolidarity.org for more details and updates and details of where to send urgently needed protest letters and solidarity messages.

Cultural commemoration on the first anniversary of the notorious massacre in Zhanaozen, Kazakhstan, of unarmed men, women and children by state forces

Bristol Socialist Party members were stunned by the untimely death of our comrade Suzanne Coombes on 10 November.

Known to us as Ears, she was an enthusiastic Socialist Party member who joined in 2003, along with her sister Bernie, during a local election campaign. Her thirst for ideas and discussion never diminished. Although health issues prevented Ears from being as active as she would have liked, she passionately supported our election campaigns, helping out with leafleting and particularly supporting her partner, Wayne, as a Bristol TUSC candidate in the May 2011 local elections.

Out of her last work was to record a postal vote for TUSC’s Tom Baldwin in the Bristol mayoral election shortly before she died.

Ears was also a talented letter writer - in particular around attacks on benefits and disability rights, and contributed articles to the Socialist on these issues. It was with great pride that she saw her writing in print, particularly in our own paper.

She also supported PCS union activities as both Wayne and Bernie are PCS activists. She always made a special effort to come down to our picket lines and support us – often providing important refreshments.

Ears was so full of life when battling with her health, no more so than when celebrating her marriage to Wayne and her 40th birthday this earlier year. To be taken from us so suddenly and so early is a huge loss to Wayne and Bernie, and to all those whose lives were touched by her. Her loyalty and contribution to the Party remained to the end.

Obituary: Suzanne Coombes

Support the fightback with the Christmas Collection

Ken Douglas

Socialist Party national treasurer

Socialist Party members are hitting the streets now for our Christmas Collection from 1 to 15 December.

Our members are at the forefront of organising action against the Con-Dems' austerity cuts - campaigning against closure, closures and privatisation in the NHS and council services.

We are helping to build the campaign in the trade unions for a 24-hour general strike to stop government, in its tracks and save our public services.

This includes lobbying the TUC on 11 December to ensure they stick to their congress decision to look at the practicalities of organising a general strike.

Often we are the only ones out in the town centres and shopping arcades who are putting forward any kind of alternative to the austerity consensus of the capitalist parties.

And ordinary working-class people recognise that - many times they put five, ten or even £100 pounds into our tins when we ask for their financial support. We depend on these donations to help fund our campaigning.

Can you help?

We are asking all branches and members to organise some extra fundraising activities in the run-up to Christmas. Can you help? Can you hold a Christmas party or raffle for the Socialist Party?

Save our server

Please consider making a donation against our server appeal. We are aiming to raise £12,000 to buy a new computer server and are asking all our members and supporters to contribute.

We have just over £600 to go to reach our target. Every donation, no matter how big or how small is very welcome and will take us nearer to our goal.

You can donate to the Socialist Party website www.socialistparty.org.uk and make your donation ‘Server appeal’ or telephone 020 8988 8777.

Films, poetry and live music Speakers include:

- Mick Whale, Campaign for Kazakhstans' memory, reports on recent visit to Zhanaozen
- Peter Taaffe, Socialist Party general secretary
- Weizmann Hamilton, Democratic Socialist Movement, on the struggle of Shalimarana Miners' Massacre

Plans will be announced for protests on 27 December

Socialist Party fighting fund

Belgium

Defend Tamil activist from deportation

Tamils Solidarity activist Muraganaandam Murugasutha - thus his friends - was arrested in November and taken to a closed centre for asylum seekers in Steenokkerzeel, in Antwerp.

This attack is even more shocking as it comes in the light of the recent leaked report showing that the United Nations failed in its mandate to protect civilians in the last months of Sri Lanka's bloody civil war in 2009.

The life of a known Tamil activist is in serious danger if they are sent back to Sri Lanka. Even the British high court has ordered that immi-
Food banks without politics don’t help

In a slightly shorter version of an article previously published on the Food Bankers’ blog, Nancy Taaffe explains her severe misgivings about food banks.

Every Saturday the Anti-Cuts Union has a stall in Walthamstow campaigning against cuts. The Labour council has passed a budget taking £52 million away from local services. Children and young people’s services have been decimated by cuts. I have a very low standard of living.

The three main political parties say there’s no money but that’s a lie. £750 billion is locked away in banks by the rich, who see no immediate way to make a profit so they sit on the by the money and let it collect interest. £20 billion is squirreled away through tax evasion. 1,000 of Britain’s richest people increased their wealth by £155 billion last year, exactly as the nation’s deficit overnight.

My local Food Bank runs a stall every Saturday next to the Anti-Cuts Union and asks the poor of Walthamstow to come to our stall to signpost toitunes of food banks to the destitute of Walthamstow. But we, the poor, shouldn’t be giving food banks signs that we exist.

Food banks are often set up by well-meaning people who want to help, but does a food bank with-out politics actually help? Poverty is the result of a hurricane or a flood, it’s man-made and it can be human-solved.

We regularly had protests outside the town hall, demanding that La-bour councillors stop squeezing the budget and reject cuts but they all voted for them. I stopped my local MP Stella Creasy’s big campaign of Food Banks) in the street (as I was losing my job) and asked her to make a public statement condemning conditioner to by libraries and children’s services but she wouldn’t.

Why? Because getting behind the consequence of cuts is far easier than fighting a pre-emptive battle... if you’re a career politician. When the Labour councillors took industrial action in November 2011 for decent pensions to prevent poverty in old age the same MP who stands behind the Food Bank stall wouldn’t support them. It seems to me if you’re crushed by poverty then you get patronised and pitied. But if you stand up and assert yourself through your trade union then you get condemned. It’s hypocrisy! I can’t stand, the councillors who voted to sack me to support food banks.

Poverty

My Liverpool grandmother told me of the poverty her family endured in the 1930’s, of picking up orange peel in the road to graze on to alleviate hunger pain. She also described the humiliation many mothers endured from ‘charitable organisations standing in a cold church hall putting your case to the parish fathers why you should have money to survive. Often these “parish fathers” were local businessmen and factory owners who paid poverty wages and were vicious if ‘their’ workers struck for decent pay and decent working conditions. The working woman’s re-bellion after World War Two was a revolution against the humiliation of poor relief and welfare administra-tion built on ‘charity’.

If Food Banks got political and mobilised those they fed to get or-organised then I could support them. The councillors who voted to sack me all support food banks.

Comedians’ party?

UKIP Leader Nigel Farage

The rising popularity and respectability of UKIP shows just how fed up the mainstream political parties people must be. You would have to be pretty desperate to support a man who claims about the EU grey train then claims £2 million in expenses. One Rotherham voter is quoted in The Guardian: “What do you call him? Le Fage? I saw him on the telly. He should be a comedian.” This is about right. But Labour’s disastrous record of separat-ing cuts and lining their own pockets is unattractive to working class voters. The manufactured story about parents being unable to foster children because they are racist and this being linked to their UKIP membership played right into the hands of the UKIP comedians. If you listen for five minutes to Farage you realise that a UKIP/Conservative coalition would not be a laughing mat-ter. More tax cuts for the rich and more welfare cuts for the 99%, all washed down with a dose of rage against im-migrants. UKIP want Tony education minister Savie as leader – that’s all you need to know.

Derek McMillan

Recipe for flood

During recent devastating floods in Brit-ain government ministers boasted that flood defences have protected many properties. What these Tory politicians (and also representatives of the last Labour government) don’t mention is that many more homes and agricultural land could have been spared flooding had the Environment Agency not had its budget repeatedly slashed over the years.

Jack Straw

In October, the Lancashire Telegraph (LT) serialised former Labour cabinet minister Jack Straw’s memoirs, Peter Harris, one of six Labour Party members expelled from Straw’s cabinet in October 9). That the expulsions from the Labour Party of six Blackburn Labour Party mem-bers records his recollections of the events surrounding the expulsions of six Blackburn Labour Party mem-bers in 1984 for supporting the ideas of the then ‘Militant’ newspaper.

That week with former Labour councillor Don Rishon (LT, Octo-ber) that the expulsions that saw the Labour Party were there to ensure primarily that Jack Straw would not be re-selected as Labour’s candidate. I also want to point out that at no stage did I ever threaten any person in the Labour Party and did not turn up at the hustings. The main accusa-tion about me is that I am a ‘successor to the Labour Party chairman.

Yes, I did ask Eric Smith for the nomination. I have been a trade Union Committee delegates as they had received two 180-page documents with unsubstantiated criticisms of ourselves and our activities. But Blackburn Labour Party would not circulate a word of our reply! The occupations of the six ex-

Jack Straw

The Labour council has passed a budget taking £52 million away from local services. Children and young people’s services have been decimated by cuts. I have a very low standard of living.

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Food banks are often set up by well-meaning people who want to help, but does a food bank with-out politics actually help? Poverty is the result of a hurricane or a flood, it’s man-made and it can be human-solved.

We regularly had protests outside the town hall, demanding that La-bour councillors stop squeezing the budget and reject cuts but they all voted for them. I stopped my local MP Stella Creasy’s big campaign of Food Banks) in the street (as I was losing my job) and asked her to make a public statement condemning conditioner to by libraries and children’s services but she wouldn’t.

Why? Because getting behind the consequence of cuts is far easier than fighting a pre-emptive battle... if you’re a career politician. When the Labour councillors took industrial action in November 2011 for decent pensions to prevent poverty in old age the same MP who stands behind the Food Bank stall wouldn’t support them. It seems to me if you’re crushed by poverty then you get patronised and pitied. But if you stand up and assert yourself through your trade union then you get condemned. It’s hypocrisy! I can’t stand, the councillors who voted to sack me to support food banks.

Poverty

My Liverpool grandmother told me of the poverty her family endured in the 1930’s, of picking up orange peel in the road to graze on to alleviate hunger pain. She also described the humiliation many mothers endured from ‘charitable organisations standing in a cold church hall putting your case to the parish fathers why you should have money to survive. Often these “parish fathers” were local businessmen and factory owners who paid poverty wages and were vicious if ‘their’ workers struck for decent pay and decent working conditions. The working woman’s re-bellion after World War Two was a revolution against the humiliation of poor relief and welfare administra-tion built on ‘charity’.

If Food Banks got political and mobilised those they fed to get or-organised then I could support them. The councillors who voted to sack me all support food banks.

Comedians’ party?

UKIP Leader Nigel Farage

The rising popularity and respectability of UKIP shows just how fed up the mainstream political parties people must be. You would have to be pretty desperate to support a man who claims about the EU grey train then claims £2 million in expenses. One Rotherham voter is quoted in The Guardian: “What do you call him? Le Fage? I saw him on the telly. He should be a comedian.” This is about right. But Labour’s disastrous record of separat-ing cuts and lining their own pockets is unattractive to working class voters. The manufactured story about parents being unable to foster children because they are racist and this being linked to their UKIP membership played right into the hands of the UKIP comedians. If you listen for five minutes to Farage you realise that a UKIP/Conservative coalition would not be a laughing mat-ter. More tax cuts for the rich and more welfare cuts for the 99%, all washed down with a dose of rage against im-migrants. UKIP want Tony education minister Savie as leader – that’s all you need to know.

Derek McMillan

Recipe for flood

During recent devastating floods in Brit-ain government ministers boasted that flood defences have protected many properties. What these Tory politicians (and also representatives of the last Labour government) don’t mention is that many more homes and agricultural land could have been spared flooding had the Environment Agency not had its budget repeatedly slashed over the years.
November byelections
Building an anti-cuts alternative

Dave Nellist, Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition chair, speaks to the Socialist

November was an unusual month. You can wait a long time for a byelection and then six come along in one month. The United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) contested three of the parliamentary byelections, in Manchester Central, 277 (1.6%) in Middlesbrough and 281 (1.3%) in Rotherham. 1,412 (1.6%) votes were also obtained in the Bristol mayoral election, in which TUSC received some local media coverage.

Where there are many by-election candidates, with little serious media coverage for TUSC, and, as in Manchester, historic low turnouts, then TUSC votes at this stage are certainly not large enough to be challenging for seats. But that is not the only reason we are standing in elections.

A petition, even of tens of thousands of conversations with people on why that issue was important.

In the same way, during the November byelection campaigns, thousands of conversations were held with people who, even if they didn’t vote TUSC, were made aware that we exist and are trying to build an anti-austerity, anti-cuts electoral platform for working people.

Building TUSC
The job is still to discuss with union and anti-austerity activists, the importance of building a genuine, independent political voice for people facing with three parties singing the same tune, albeit in slightly different keys. TUSC’s steering committee will be meeting mid-December to discuss the broader issues arising out of the November elections. A TUSC trade union forum will have a proper dialogue. In any event, TUSC and Respect are not the same. TUSC aims to create a new independent voice rooted in the organisations and communities of the working class. Respect has had break throughs, but only in certain selective areas, and does not pursue the work in the trade unions that TUSC does.

In the May local elections, the TUSC candidate in Middlesbrough had 3,000 petition signatures collected in support of the TUSC campaign, which can appeal to all working class voters in the constituency, in contrast to the Lib-Lab-Cong-sensus but in truth it shares the same central aim: make the working and middle classes pay for capitalism’s crisis. UKIP was part of a small pro-cuts rally in May 2011. Its website states “the coalition’s cuts do not scratch the surface of Labour’s deficit” and calls for reduced tax for big business and the rich.

UKIP leader, Nigel Farage, puts a Boris Johnson/Bill Clinton character to attract voters and mask the anti-working class, pro-austerity policies of his organisation.

To the establishment, while problematic, UKIP is nonetheless a more palatable, right-populist, protest vote for the socialist-led British National Party.

For sure, they would also rather promote UKIP than the real, anti-cuts, socialist alternative that TUSC offers.

That is why in the past four years the reality was a 25% turnout; 3 out of 4 people did not vote! Just 15% voted Labour.

Ballot box reports
Rotherham
Alastair Tice
Rotherham TUSC election agent

After the TV cameras and chauffeur-driven politicians had left the Rotherham by-election count, TUSC campaigners were out the next day alongside Union members opposing NHS cuts.

UKIP was led by Douglas Black, known as the candidate against the £50 million hospital cuts, with over 3,000 petition signatures collected in the three week election campaign.

Wherever TUSC went – the town centre, bus station, hospital, council offices, mosques, schools, estates – we received a fair hearing and seemed to be everyone’s second preference. After the first past the post, that doesn’t get many votes! 281 voted for TUSC - 1.3% - about what we expected, but only 170 votes behind the Lib Dems.

Before the election, the far-right targeted the town with two demonstration, supposedly protesting against the alleged “Asian grooming cover-up”, but in reality trying to sow racism and division.

Labour’s electoral machine excluded a local council assistant and imposed an external candidate, leading to over half the selection meeting delegates walking out.

At the count, Labour members were mighty relieved to keep the seat they’ve held for 80 years. While their majority almost halved due to the low turnout, their vote share increased slightly to 46%. Disgust with the resigned MP Denis MacShane’s expenses fraud did not break traditional Labour loyalties, especially among older voters with an underlying class hatred of the Conservatives.

With eleven candidates, protest votes were divided among many parties.

UKIP received its highest parliamen- tary vote - 21% - after cynically exploiting the removal of East European foster children from UKIP member foster parents to gain huge publicity and sympathy. While handled clumsily, it has emerged there were multiple reasons - not merely the foster parents’ political affiliation - for why the children were removed. Also, the placement was always intended to be temporary, with the aim of placing the children with carers who could speak their first language.

The racist British National Party came third with 1,804 votes - 8%, down from 10% in May 2010. Yvonne Rayley, the former Express journalist and Taliban-hos- tage who converted to Islam, came fourth with 1,778 votes. Despite Respect nationally not responding to TUSC, locally their new supporter- s in Rotherham, especially Asian women and youth, are very open to joint campaigning with TUSC against the cuts and against the far-right.

The English Defence League can- didate, masquerading as an inde- pendent, got 29 votes and was beat- en by spilt ballot papers!

The real winner though was “fed up of all of them”.

The United Kingdom Independ- ence Party (UKIP) saw an increase in its share of the votes as a layer saw it as a means to protest against the three main parties. Millionaire-backed UKIP can sound different to the Lib-Lab-Cong-sensus but in truth it shares the same central aim: make the working and middle classes pay for capitalism’s crisis. UKIP was part of a small pro-cuts rally in May 2011. Its website states “the coalition’s cuts do not scratch the surface of Labour’s deficit” and calls for reduced tax for big business and the rich.

UKIP leader, Nigel Farage, puts a Boris Johnson/Bill Clinton character to attract voters and mask the anti-working class, pro-austerity policies of his organisation.

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Middlesbrough
John Docherty, TUSC candidate and Socialist Party member, polled 277 votes in the Middlesbrough byelec- tion on 29 November.

This was the first time that TUSC stood in Middlesbrough. People on the streets were supportive of our anti-cuts and pro-public service message. As a candidate, John was known by trade union activists and health workers.

Labour regarded this as an “easy win”, one of their safest seats, with little effort. Their candidate promised to have a constituency office and hold regular surgeries. This was to counter criti- cism that Stuart Bell, the decreased MP, refused to hold surgeries and spent all of time in France.

Labour also promised “a jobs fat”. But there aren’t many vacant jobs here.

Labour gained 60% of the vote. UKIP came second, but with only 1,990 votes, not far ahead of the Lib Dems and Tories, both deci- mated compared to previous elec- tions as a punishment for their austerity policies.

The maverick Peace Party can- didate, with a lot of money spent on its campaign, gained over 1,000 votes with sizeable support from the Asian community.

The BNP vote was slashed from 2,000 to just over 300. This was de- spite the BNP getting media cover- age that was denied to TUSC.

Labour claimed after the election they had the overwhelming support of the people of Middlesbrough. The reality was a 25% turnout; 3 out of 4 people did not vote! Just 15% voted Labour; and if Labour does not se- rioulsy oppose austerity their vote will decline even further.

The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) is an electoral alliance that stands candidates against all cuts and privatisation. It involves the RMT transport workers’ union, leading members of other trade unions including the PCS, NUT and POA, the Socialist Party and the Socialist Worker Party. Read the latest TUSC bulletin at www.tusc.org.uk
NHS in Wales under attack
Mass action needed to save our health service

Claire Job
Nurse and Socialist Party member

In England, NHS users face the relentless drive to privatisate so that ruthless private bosses can make a fortune with no regard for the service they are supposed to provide.

While Welsh politicians are quick to point out these attacks on the English NHS, they are silent about the fact that years of under-funding and now deep, deep cuts are undermining the founding principles of the NHS in Wales every bit as surely.

The Welsh government has major plans to reshape the NHS in Wales.

These cuts have led to shortages of doctors and other staff, jeopardised the quality and safety of healthcare and threaten the sustainability of services Welsh people depend on.

The South Wales Plan will end the concept of the general hospital as we know it and result in only four or possibly five centres providing what many of us would consider essential services - A&E, maternity, paediatrics - across the whole of South Wales.

It has been confirmed that Morriston hospital in Swansea, the Heath in Cardiff and a new hospital planned for development in Gwent will be saved. But which will be closed of Prince Charles in Merthyr, Royal Glamorgan in Llantrisant and Princess of Wales in Bridgend?

Outside of these four or five hospitals, services will be downgraded to mean:

• No paediatric inpatient beds
• Midwife only led maternity services
• Minor injury units as opposed to A&E services.

These plans mean reduced access for urgent medical care for lots of people. Public transport, even in urban areas like Llanelli, Bridgend and Merthyr, is appalling - infrequent, unreliable and expensive. In some areas, even just outside bigger towns and cities, transport is almost non-existent at weekends or in the evening. And public transport budgets are also being slashed.

The Welsh Ambulance Service is creaking at the seams - stories have been circulating in the press of staff shortages and their budget is up in the air. For four months running they’ve failed to meet the target of answering 65% of calls within 8 minutes.

The problem with the plan is not just the distance travelled to get to hospitals in an emergency. There is also the fact that, whenever somebody requires urgent in-patient care, they will be removed from their friends, family and community - all those things that add up to an essential support network for working class people.

The people of Wales are being told by the health boards that our view was echoed by other speakers. The demo was angry and former Socialist Party councillor Chris Flood, proposed the main step that workers have to consider when major attacks on jobs and services threaten - strike action. Chris’ view was echoed by other speakers.

Strike action is not an easy option but most health workers agree that it is far better to have hospital services restricted for a few days of determined strike than to see them permanently destroyed through Con-Dem cuts and closures!

More and more NHS workers realise that such hold trade union action would gain enormous support and give new force to the campaign against cuts and closures, to cancel the PFI debts and save our NHS.

By 2014/15 spending per head of the population on health in Wales will be scrapped.

A leaked document from the centre shows they intend to rip up terms and conditions wholesale. Everything is up for grabs - NHS workers will have to work longer hours, get fewer holidays, less sick pay and a cut in wages. If that wasn’t enough, national pay bargaining and all shift allowances will be scrapped.

Strategy

The Unite and Unison unions called the demo together with the Bristol and District Anti-Cuts Alliance. The demo was angry and lively. 3 spoke in defence of people arguing the case for a 24-hour general strike to defeat the cuts. Not one disagreed or thought it was unreasonable or unrealistic, though quite a few did not know that their own trade unions officially support the call for a general strike. At the rally trade union officials denounced the centre’s proposals

without putting forward any strategy to defeat them.

Merynn Rees, the failed Labour candidate in the recent mayoral elections in Bristol, was greeted by a chorus of shouts of “strike in general, platitude, fairness, a modern Bristol, going forward in the 21st Century”, and failed even to mention Labour’s commitment to repeal the Con-Dem’s legislation on the NHS.

Only the Bristol and District Anti-Cuts Alliance speaker got a roar of approval when he called on the unions to name the date for a 24-hour general strike.

We gave out hundreds of National Shop Stewards’ Network bulletins. The demonstration, which was called at short notice and given minimal publicity, shows what can be achieved if the unions put their full resources into a campaign.

The London Socialist Party has put together a campaign to save the PFI and the government has its axe poised for destruction this month and next. Speakers from the floor, including health worker and former Socialist Party councillor Chris Flood, proposed the main step that workers have to consider when major attacks on jobs and services threaten - strike action. Chris’ view was echoed by other speakers.

Strike action is not an easy option but most health workers agree that it is far better to have hospital services restricted for a few days of determined strike than to see them permanently destroyed through Con-Dem cuts and closures!

More and more NHS workers realise that such hold trade union action would gain enormous support and give new force to the campaign against cuts and closures, to cancel the PFI debts and save our NHS.

If you want to know more about the Windsor Demo campaign, please contact us.

www.socialistparty.org.uk
Michael Wrack

Proposals have been announced to close four accident and emergency (A&E) units in north west London: Charing Cross, Central Middlesex, Hammersmith and Ealing.

NHS North West London claims these proposals were backed by public consultation. But the consultation was only open for six weeks and none of the hospitals in the area were invited to attend A&E meetings, with no option available to oppose all cuts and closures.

The consultation received around 17,000 responses from a population of two million, representing a “public support” of less than 1%. On top of this, 66,000 people who signed petitions opposing the plans - almost four times as many as responded to the official consultation - have had their voices practically ignored, or more specifically counted as 18 opposing votes (one per petition).

Shaping a Healthier Future, the cluster of NHS Trusts involved, claims the decision is based on the service needs of the area, which would apparently be better served by having less A&E units.

A more believable reason for the closures is the £1 billion of savings the Trusts say they need to make in the next three years. This £1 billion is part of a total £5 billion cuts being made in the NHS across London, tearing the service apart.

South London Healthcare Trust has already become the first NHS trust put into administration, with Lewisham A&E under threat just six months after reopening. This situation will be repeated elsewhere unless a successful national campaign to defend the NHS is fought.

Good campaigns are being fought locally in these areas to defend local services, but must be linked to the wider picture of generalised attacks on the NHS. Focusing only on saving local services leads to the situation seen in north west London, with service users asked which services should be closed.

For the campaigns to be successful they must also involve, and ideally be lead by, the health trade unions. Local union branches must involve themselves as key elements to community campaigns, while simultaneously putting pressure on union leaderships to build for national action.

The TUC has already voted to “consider the practicalities” of a general strike, and health workers should make this a key demand of their campaigns. They should also join the National Shop Stewards Network lobby of the TUC General Council on Tuesday 11 December to demand that a date be named.

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. Demand our pensions.
• No to privatisation and the Private Finance Initiative (PFI). Re-nationalise 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 at all to 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 £20 an hour without exemptions as an immediate step towards £15.00 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 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 350 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!