

2013 cuts:  
Prepare for  
the fight of our  
lives  
see pages 6,7&8

# the Socialist

www.socialistparty.org.uk

10-16 January 2013

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## “Enough is enough!”



**Gavin Marsh**  
Southampton Socialist Party

Just before Christmas, the champagne coalition delivered a mean and spiteful present to local authorities, announcing additional cutbacks in government spending on top of those already planned.

In response, the leaders of Newcastle, Liverpool and Sheffield councils wrote to the Observer warning of “social unrest” as a consequence.

Yet even this dire prediction failed to ignite a New Year’s resolution from Labour councils committing them to resist this hated government. Not a single council has had the courage to say “enough is enough”.

There are a few honourable exceptions. In Hull a group of Labour councillors have declared that they will not vote for cuts. In Southampton, the two ‘Labour Councillors against Cuts’ are standing firm in their resolve to fight all cuts in the city.

As councillor Keith Morrell explained: “People in Southampton kicked out the Tories last May and won’t look kindly on Tory policies being foisted on them this year.”

This is absolutely true, yet members of the Socialist Party have been accused of being “from another planet” when we suggest that other councillors follow their courageous stance.

Instead of instigating a city-wide campaign and linking up local authority workers, service users and communities to refuse to implement these cuts, they resort to evasion, dishonesty and scaremongering, invoking the ‘big bad wolf’ of government minister Eric Pickles, ready to step on any council that dares to fight on behalf of its citizens.

Councillor Don Thomas added: “Labour councillors should stop whinging on about how ‘tough’ and ‘difficult’ it is for them to cut services. They should remember the fighting traditions of the labour movement and stand up and defend their class.”

The fight to save youth services from extinction is receiving huge support throughout

the city. Youth workers and their supporters are determined to “up the anti” and will be demonstrating outside the Extraordinary Council Meeting on Wednesday 16 January.

Under pressure the city council has been forced to ease off their ‘bully boy’ tactics of intimidating staff from speaking out. Now it is allowing council workers an unpaid two-hour lunch break to take part in an anti-cuts demo on 13 February when the council sets its budget. But it is essential that the unions organising the demo, Unison and Unite, call on the Labour council to side with Keith and Don and not implement cuts.

If the rest of the Labour councillors in Southampton and across Britain are going to carry on following Con-Dem orders, then we need to replace them with representatives who will fight for working class people instead of for the tax-dodging mega-rich elite.

That’s why the Socialist Party is part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition, which stands candidates that oppose all cuts to jobs and services and says ‘make the bankers pay’ for their capitalist crisis.



**Save Youth Services**  
Wednesday 16 January -  
5.30pm  
Southampton Civic Centre

● **Build for a 24-hour general strike**



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## Southampton council pantomime: 'Eight Consultations of Xmas'

**Gavin Marsh**  
Southampton Socialist Party

In true panto style, Labour-led Southampton city council embarked on a touring production which could have been called 'The Eight Consultations of Christmas'. It played to largely empty halls across the city.

Invites were sent out to community groups and organisations but members of the public were kept completely in the dark about their location and timing.

A Socialist Party member was the only person who turned up to one consultation but that didn't deter the councillors from declaring 'there is no room at the inn' and refusing his attendance!

Over two weeks, a collective audience of approximately 150 people attended these meetings.

However, those with the 'golden tickets' were treated to a rare spectacle of method acting involving dishonesty, evasion and handwringing.

At one meeting, a councillor lamented that they were carrying through Tory cuts "with a tear in my eye".

Don Thomas, one of the two 'Labour Councillors Against the Cuts', responded: "Stop feeling sorry for yourself and start feeling sorry for the people facing these cuts!"

### Fighting strategy needed

In the first meeting, we called for the council to use capital assets, reserves and borrowing to save all services and stop closures.

It could then use this breathing space as an opportunity to build a city-wide campaign, while linking up with other councils to force the



The two anti-cuts councillors, Keith Morrel and Don Thomas photo Southampton SP

government into retreat.

They claimed the finance officer had said it couldn't be done, but had no written record to show.

So we asked for it to be minuted that the councillors would officially speak with the finance officer about this option and forward the response to us!

The Socialist Party has taken the fight to the councillors, also encouraging other people to be more vocal and critical.

At the event I attended there were six councillors, including a Conservative, and half a dozen council officers.

Two youth workers had to fight

for the right to attend as they were "not on the list"! For their troubles they got to witness a tragic-comedic performance.

### Same old leftovers

After about ten minutes of the same old leftovers, I said: "It seems to me that this government are acting like a bunch of bullying thieves and have stolen money from you."

"Now if someone tried to snatch your purse or wallet, you would fight back and get help to return your property."

"What you are doing is complaining they have stolen your stuff, and

then nicking money off everyone else, particularly those who have the least."

This drew the only applause of the night.

Community activists are asking "shall we do it again?" - referring to standing independent candidates in the next local elections. One commented: "Last time we only had a few weeks, this time we will have longer."

His message to the three local ward councillors, all Labour, was stark: "We want to see that you are going into meetings and fighting our corner... We are coming for your seats."

## Birmingham Labour's 'grotesque chaos'

**Ted**  
Birmingham Socialist Party

Birmingham city's ruling Labour Party has quickly raised the white flag to the Con-Dem government. The council organised public meetings to present its case for massive, highly damaging cuts.

In Erdington, the audience of around 150 were talked at for over an hour before we were invited to say which services were most or least important.

Labour's council leader, Sir Albert Bore, attacked me after I joined other audience members in demanding a 'needs budget'.

As the biggest local authority in Europe, Birmingham city council would be best placed to lead a rebellion against the government.

These points, and the others who argued against cuts, drew big rounds of applause, in contrast to the entire top table who received not a single clap in two hours!

In a grasping response Sir Albert recalled the 1980s Labour Party conference when then-leader Neil Kinnock denounced "grotesque chaos" at Liverpool city council.

Liverpool had indeed taken on the Tory government, and won £60 million extra funding for jobs, services and over 5,000 homes. How chaotic!

This approach, in the tradition of previous principled Labour councillors at Clay Cross and Poplar, is alien to the likes of Sir Albert who talk of the 'end of local government' and 'decommissioning entire services' in order to set a balanced budget. This is supposedly responsible!

Labour locally has concentrated on Birmingham being disproportionately hit. Sir Albert says he has written to Tory community-slasher Eric Pickles to win back £80 million. Even if Pickles concedes, this will barely make a dent in the £600 million of cuts.

### Anti-cuts election candidates

The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition is standing in three byelections on 17 January.

Two young workers are contesting in both Wirral byelections in Merseyside.

Greg North, in Heswall ward, and Mark Halligan, in Leasowe and Moreton East, have pledged to fight local service closures and oppose the council's £109 million cuts plans.

In Brixton Hill ward in Lambeth, south London, TUSC candidate Steve Nally has the support of local RMT transport workers' union, Prison Officers Association and Fire Brigades Union activists.

TUSC was set up in 2010 to enable trade unionists, anti-cuts campaigners and socialists to



stand candidates against all the main parties.

It is supported by the RMT, leading members of trade unions such as the FBU, PCS, POA and NUT, and the Socialist Party and the Socialist Workers Party.

Socialist Party members have also attended the other consultations, but more importantly we will be at the forefront in building resistance.

This includes building TUSC and encouraging local activists to stand as council candidates against the cuts.

Birmingham is the biggest local authority in Europe

### In brief



Early Years demo poster

### Sheffield Sure Start

250 people protested in December outside Sheffield town hall against the Labour council's planned slashing of Sure Start children's centres and nurseries.

The council is aiming to cut £3.5 million. 19 of the 36 centres have been earmarked for closure. All remaining centres will be downgraded.

200 parents and children packed into a council cabinet meeting - which had to be moved to another room to fit everyone in.

Emma Chadwick, whose three year old autistic son attends Darnall nursery, presented the 1,500 signature petition to the meeting.

• Save Sheffield Early Years services - March and rally. Saturday 19 January, Assemble 11am Devonshire Green

**Sharron Milsom**

### West Yorkshire Fire

On Friday 21 December, West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority met to pass £7 million worth of annual cuts to its budget.

But pressure from campaigners resulted in four of the six fire stations that were to be closed remaining open, but with less staff and fire appliances. Haworth fire station has a two year reprieve. Other cutbacks went through, although not without some minor amendments, meaning that £3 million less has been cut than planned.

**Iain Dalton**

### Brighton council tax

A petition of 700 signatures opposing cuts to council tax benefit was presented to the Green-led Brighton and Hove council.

The Socialist Party organised a lobby outside the council building. The money that pays for council tax benefits is being cut by the government in April. In August it was reported that an 81-year old woman from Hove was jailed for 10 days for not paying council tax. It is estimated that up to half the revenue 'raised' by cutting the benefit will be spent on enforcement!

Read more anti-cuts campaigning news at [www.socialistparty.org.uk](http://www.socialistparty.org.uk)

# More attacks on benefits...

On 8 January Parliament voted to limit increases in benefits to 1% rather than by the rate of inflation as they had previously been. Cutting the link between prices and benefit rises is effectively a huge cut to future benefits because people will be able to afford less with the money.

Iain Duncan Smith, minister for work and pensions who is driving the attacks, said it would be 'absurd' to raise benefits by inflation (currently officially 2.2%). He said it was unfair because benefits are paid by the taxes of those who are working who are not seeing their wages increase by inflation. But contrary to the government's talk of 'shirkers' the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) has shown that this change will affect the benefits of far more working people than unemployed (7 million compared to 2.5 million).

This was just a day after the changes to child benefits came into force. Households where one person earns over £50,000 will see their benefit cut and over £60,000 will see it stopped altogether. The IFS has worked out that these families will lose an average of £1,300 a year.

**Louise Campbell**



photo C Job

## ...all based on lies

The Trade Union Congress (TUC) has published research which shows government and media attacks on 'scroungers' are based on lies.

On average members of the public think 41% of the welfare budget goes to the unemployed. This 'fact' is used to justify attacking the unemployed as scroungers. In fact the figure is 3%. And, with huge job cuts, any of the "hard-working taxpayers" of today could be denounced as the "work-shy scroungers" of tomorrow.

Alongside the massive tax dodging of firms like Vodafone and Starbucks, the amount of benefit fraud is even more miniscule. The public has been led to believe it is 27% of the welfare budget. The figure is ac-

tually less than 1%.

Compared to the legal and illegal expenses claims of MPs most benefit fraud is tiny. All this has not stopped the Tories of Westminster City Council from floating the idea of cutting benefit for people they deem too fat. And next week people they deem too thin or too tall no doubt.

### Too much?

People in work are being asked to approve attacks on the unemployed because they 'get too much money'.

However, one of the questions in the TUC survey was about the benefits entitlement of an unemployed couple with two children aged six

and ten. The imagined figure was £147 a week, when £111 is the real figure they would be entitled to. But the amount that those surveyed thought the couple would actually need to live on was £202 a week (excluding housing costs).

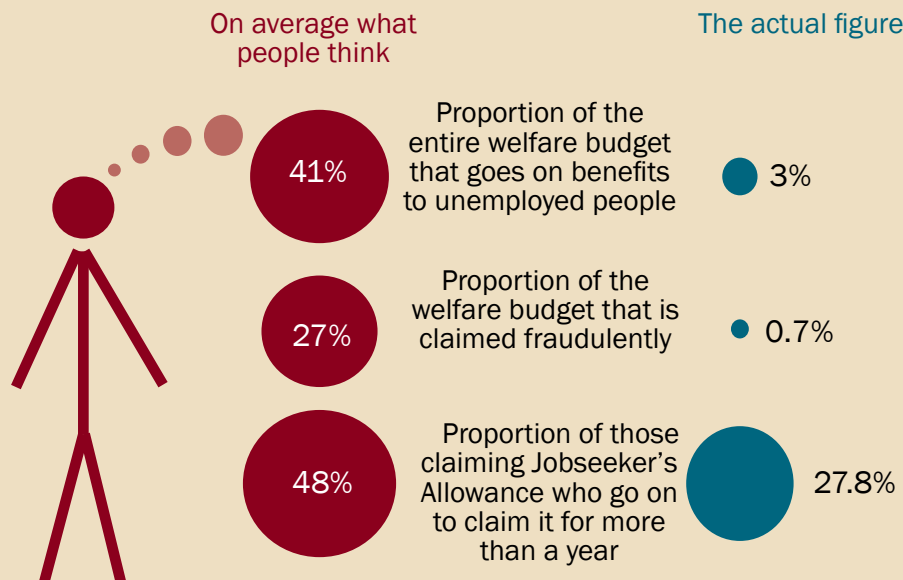
The old adage would seem to be true. Figures can't lie but liars can figure. The Daily Express contained headlines "a new ice age", "a cure for cancer" and "the economy is booming" in the same month. Why on earth believe it when they tell you 80% of benefit claimants are frauds?

The TUC has done a good job in commissioning this research. Now what are they doing about that general strike they promised?

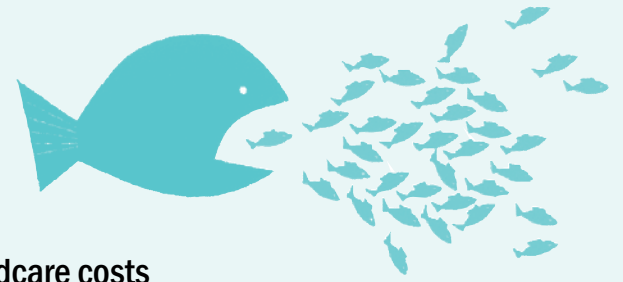
**Derek McMillan**

## Welfare myths

Source: the Independent



# Them...



### Childcare costs

Mothers with full time jobs and one young child spend a third of their salary on childcare – meaning they have to work for four months a year just to break even. On average a mother in Britain spends £7,127 a year on childcare.

Government ministers insist they want to see more women going back to work after having children. But they won't take any serious action to make this feasible – increasing the minimum wage and investing in subsidised childcare would be a start.

### New year, new price rise

Train ticket prices have increased by an average of 3.9% this new year. But figures have shown that over the past 10 years they have increased by a whopping 50%. Since the start of the recession in 2008 train fares have increased three times faster than wages. And then politicians have the cheek to tell us that unemployed people need to be more willing to travel to find a job!

### Bank let down

Yet more evidence has revealed that the government's attempts to appear tough on the banks are all a façade. Cameron and Osborne claimed their levy on the banks would raise £2.5 billion. Instead it's going to raise £1.8 billion this financial year. On top of escaping from part of the new levy, the banks are expected to benefit by £200 million from the cuts to corporation tax.

### Fiscal swindle

While big business politicians in the US Congress were scrambling to postpone the fiscal cliff they managed to find time to give themselves a pay rise – bringing their salary to \$158,103 a year.

The Financial Times, covering the story, strangely said the pay rise wasn't high enough. In the Socialist Party our elected representatives proudly take a wage no higher than the average wage of those they represent. Socialist Alternative (our sister section in the US) stood Kshama Sawant for the House of Representatives in Seattle. She won 30,000 votes against Frank Chopp, a member of the Democrat Party and Speaker of the House.

**Ian Pattison**

### Teachers' morale

A survey carried out by YouGov for the National Union of Teachers has shown morale among teachers to be 'dangerously low'. 77% said the government has had a negative impact on education in England.

These results are unsurprising given the vicious assault on education being carried out by the government. Academies are forcing teachers to put up with bullying managements and attacks on terms and conditions; sudden changes to qualifications are being foisted on them with little warning or consultation; children are coming to school hungry and unable to concentrate.

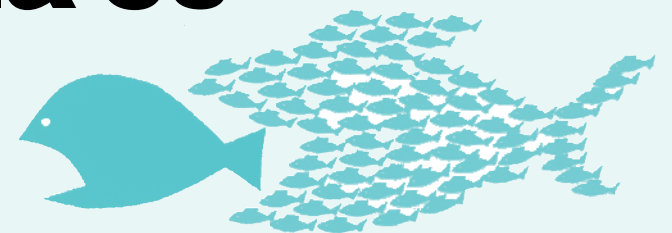
And Michael Gove is waging a propaganda war against them, even suggesting they have their pay docked for taking industrial action.

### Conflict of interests

The National Union of Teachers has revealed more Tory links with privateers. Several Department of Education advisors work as schools inspectors. One, Viola Hola, inspected a primary school which scored 'satisfactory' or 'good' in three out of four categories and yet claimed its performance was "significantly" below expectations. The school was then pushed to become an academy.

Others worked for organisations that run academies while also advising the government. No conflict of interests there then!

# ...& Us



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

## What we read

80 years ago German socialist playwright and poet Bertolt Brecht wrote (roughly translated):

There are many ways to kill  
 You can stick a knife into a man's belly  
 Take the bread from his table  
 Refuse to heal disease  
 Place people in poor housing  
 Even work them to death  
 Drive people to suicide  
 Or lead them into war  
 Few of these are banned by our government

What have you heard? Email us at [editors@socialistparty.org.uk](mailto:editors@socialistparty.org.uk) or phone 079 580 320 71



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# Making it easier to sack workers

**Dave Gorton**  
Unite LE/372 branch

In another attack on union-won gains of the past, the government has announced that, from April 2013, it is to slash the redundancy consultation period from 90 to 45 days. Laughingly, Jo Swinson, Liberal Democrat employment relations minister claimed changes were aimed at helping workers as well as employers.

Currently, employers must consult with staff for a minimum of 30 days before making more than 20 staff redundant, or 90 days when 100 or more jobs are at risk. Swinson claimed: "The process is usually completed well within the existing 90-day minimum period, which can cause unnecessary delays for restructuring and make it difficult for those affected to get new jobs quickly".

What rubbish! How many of us have noticed a clamour from workers facing redundancy to be out of a job more quickly? If there had been widespread problems, trade unions

This is just the next stage in this government's plans to create a 'flexible labour market'

would have been making demands to fix them years ago!

The plans remove redundancy rights from fixed-term contract staff, many of whom are not 'temporary workers' covering maternity leave or sickness, but long-term employees. At a stroke, these workers will lose any current job security.

Needless to say, employers' organisations wholeheartedly welcomed the announcement - you wouldn't expect any different response from bosses being told it will now be easier to sack people! The head of employment and skills at EEF, the manufacturers' organisation, went further by saying: "[The government] now needs to complete the package by introducing

simpler settlement agreements and protected conversations."

Protected conversations mean employers will be able to 'talk to' staff about possible termination deals without having to worry about those conversations being referred to in subsequent employment tribunal cases. Not much scope for bullying, harassment and unfair dismissals there then!

This is just the next stage in this government's plans to create a 'flexible labour market' - the reintroduction of a hire and fire culture that unions spent the greater part of the 20th century trying to eradicate. Such plans need stronger opposition than just denunciations in the press.

The TUC is currently consulting on the idea of a one-day general strike. The doubling of the time before a worker can claim unfair dismissal in an employment tribunal to two years, cutting the redundancy consultation period and further attacks in the pipeline, are all further reasons why such a united response - in action not just words - is needed from the TUC.



Campaigning against the anti-union laws photo Paul Mattsson

## Rail cleaners fight for living wage Tyne and Wear

**Elaine Brunskill**

Churchill cleaners working on Tyne and Wear Metro took a further 72 hours of strike action over the Christmas holiday. They are fighting for a living wage.

Craig Johnston, RMT relief regional organiser explained: "Churchill have recently offered some of the workers a derisory £70. Not per month, but as a one off payment!" Churchill then challenged the RMT to put this derisory offer to their members - which they did. The cleaners voted 1 in favour and 48 against accepting the offer.

The RMT sent all councillors who are on the ITA (Integrated Transport Authority) a Christmas hamper - a letter urging the ITA member to make their New Year resolution to end poverty wages for Churchill cleaners. The ITA is Labour controlled. They privatised the Metro system and handed the operation over to DB Regio (German state railway), who in turn sub-contracted the cleaning to Churchill.

Craig told us: "Labour politicians talk about the introduction of a living wage, but here we have



On the picket line on Christmas Eve photo Elaine Brunskill

a maze of privateers and contractors that deliver poverty wages to our members. It's all well and good David Miliband (South Shields MP) writing articles for national newspapers on the living wage - he should get down to South Shields

metro station in his constituency and meet Churchill cleaners sub-contracted by a Labour transport authority on miserable wages. My message to the Labour Party is that your actions speak louder than your words."

## London Underground

**Paula Mitchell**

"We will not tolerate low pay in this day and age, nor being treated like second rate people. We clean your trains, your stations and your depots.

"We mop up all the nasty stuff that no one else wants to deal with. We clean up after four million people who use the London underground system so they can enjoy clean trains to use and clean stations to pass through".

So begins the leaflet given out by cleaners on London Underground on strike with the RMT union on New Years Eve and New Years Day.

The cleaners are employed by private companies Initial and ISS and are paid poverty wages of £8.30 an hour, with no holiday pay, sick pay, decent pension or free travel.

The RMT demands £12.50 an hour, plus better working conditions, and says that all cleaning jobs should be brought back in-house.

RMT assistant general secretary Steve Hedley made the point that the bosses rely on the hope that mainly migrant workforces will be difficult to organise. But the RMT has worked to organise East European, African and Latin American workers together into a powerful force.

The bosses have tried to bribe agency staff with £12.45 an hour to break the strike. The RMT made an appeal to agency workers with a special leaflet in different languages, appealing to workers to join the RMT.

National Shop Stewards Network supporters and Socialist Party members helped get the word around stations in the immediate run-up to the strike and brought our solidarity to the picket line.

The workers were also supported by other unions organising cleaners, including the PCS who organise and recently won a pay victory for cleaners at Buckingham Palace.

## Standing firm in Mid Yorks hospitals pay cuts battle

**Alistair Tice**

Admin and clerical Unison and Unite members at Mid Yorkshire Hospitals Trust have been fighting back against 'downbanding' ie pay cuts. But since their three-day strike action ended on 22 November management have still not actually downbanded any staff.

The Trust proposals mean pay cuts of between £1,700 and £2,800 a year on over 350 medical secretaries, receptionists and other admin staff employed at Dewsbury, Pontefract and Pinderfields Hospital in Wakefield. Over 40 posts have also been axed through voluntary redundancy and a 'Mutually Agreed Resignation Scheme'.

The Trust tried to bully workers into signing up to the pay cuts with the threat of dismissal and redundancy over Christmas and New Year but they failed miserably.

Two reps have been subjected to disciplinary action in separate incidents on spurious grounds. But the union refused to hold any negotiations with management whilst these two reps face disciplinaries. The first

was dropped without any action being taken before Christmas and now the second has also been dropped without going to a disciplinary hearing. The union has been told that no further action will be taken against strike activists.

Unison has told the Trust that if any 'dismiss and reengagement' letters are sent giving notice of downbandings they will immediately call further escalated strike action. Last week a manager sent out letters to some medical secretaries. The full time union official emailed management telling them of the intention to call a week-long strike. Management withdrew the letters saying they were sent out without their knowledge!

Unison is beginning a consultative ballot of the rest of the Unison branch members in other departments who are threatened with downbanding. Then they could move to a formal ballot when the timing is right.

The correctness of this approach to management's threats is shown by the Mid Yorks Unison branch recruiting 200-300 new members since the beginning of the dispute.

## Losing patience with Usdaw

Below we publish extracts from an article sent to us by a driver at the Sainsbury depot (operated by Wincanton) in Sherburn-in-Elmet, north Yorks. It details why 150 drivers have joined Unite after demanding that Usdaw leads a fight to improve conditions on site, but instead had several reps removed by Usdaw. This also comes in the aftermath of the inspiring dispute against Tesco and Eddie Stobart in Doncaster, where Unite members forced some concessions out of the companies after being made redundant.

In less than four weeks, over 150 union members in the transport have freely and without any influence from Unite, chosen to cancel their membership with Usdaw and transfer to Unite.

Concerns included ballot fixing allegations, union reps being removed for spurious reasons, and a union rep being appointed without a ballot. There was an 80-signature vote of no confidence in Usdaw.

Usdaw gave away the right to strike in return for recognition before the site opened five years ago. They also gave away the drivers' right to choose whether to opt out of the 10-hour night work limit.

In response, Usdaw have turned to the company for help, they have produced joint statements with the company threatening their members and former members stating that the company will not recognise any other union.

# India: Mass rage against rape

The brutal gang rape and murder of a female student in India has provoked daily mass protests of women and men across the country to demand justice and stop violence against women. The protesters have also railed against police and political corruption and the oppression of women which is rooted in both India's feudal legacy and its modern capitalist development. New Socialist Alternative (the Socialist Party's sister organisation in India), which has long campaigned for women's rights, argues, in the following extracts from their leaflet, for system change to end the oppression of women.

**T**he unprecedented anger in Delhi and across India against the gang rape of the medical student is an expression of the seething discontent that has been building against the system for a long time.

The response of the authorities to this spontaneous expression of anger has been to use the police to brutally repress demonstrators.

The heinous crime of rape happens everywhere: it happens inside homes, in families, in neighbourhoods, in police stations, and it is increasing.

Modern industrial times have increasingly brought women out of the confines of their homes and women's roles have changed phenomenally, but the ruling capitalist system, driven and controlled by the values of feudalism and patriarchy, has yet to come to terms with this change.

Across the political spectrum there is a contempt and impunity towards women and their rights. The system's mind-set perpetuates hatred against women and disregards the fundamental right of

women for freedom.

Violence against women in India is particularly rampant amongst the marginalised communities such as Daliths, Adivasis, women workers in unorganised workplaces, sex workers, etc, for which the conviction rate is abysmally low or non-existent, with the perpetrators largely roaming free.

Most of the incidents of rape and sexual assault go unreported because of the feudal values that dominate Indian culture and society. The custodial torture and rape and the sexual crimes committed by state agencies barely evokes much indignation.

## Solutions

While the perpetrators of such crimes must be punished, the solution does not lie in reverting back to medieval practices such as the death penalty or castration.

Nor does the solution lie in increasing police surveillance. This will only end up empowering the government with unprecedented powers and to act with impunity



There have been daily protests against rape across India

against working people. For so widespread a crime band aid solutions are not the answer.

We blame the system and the ruling class for this malady as they have thoroughly failed to develop society beyond feudal and medieval values and practices.

Violence against women is a product of a diseased system called capitalism, where people are conditioned to see women as inferior and to see women's bodies as commodities or objects meant for pleasure.

A campaign against rape in isolation from all other aspects of women's oppression will not work. Rape, like domestic violence and sexual harassment, is a symptom of a deeply unequal class-based society

that leads some men to think that they can control women, including sexually. This is reinforced by women's material inequality and lower status in society.

We must challenge sexism and through the process of struggle, which will see millions of people question the brutal, sexist and exploitative capitalist society in which we live, look for a socialist alternative.

●Paul Murphy, MEP, Socialist Party (CWI, Ireland) recently addressed the European Parliament on the caste discrimination suffered by Daliths and the impact of neoliberal reforms on the working people of India. See [www.socialistworld.net](http://www.socialistworld.net)

- Rape is the biggest crime in India: 24,206 rape cases in 2011.
- Incidents of rape have increased by 791% since 1971.
- Only 50% of rapes are reported.
- A rape occurs every 20 minutes. A child is raped every 76 minutes.
- Conviction rates for rape fell from 41% in 1971 to 27% in 2010.
- Among 53 cities Delhi accounted for 13.3% (4,489) of the total rape crimes followed by Bengaluru (5.6%) and Hyderabad (5.5%).



## South Africa: Founding of Workers and Socialist Party

Following the heroic strike struggles for a living wage by miners in South Africa's platinum and gold industries last year, pressure has built for a new, mass working class political alternative to the ruling ANC. On the initiative of the Democratic Socialist Movement (DSM, the sister organisation of the Socialist Party in South Africa) a press conference was held before Christmas to announce the formation of a new political party. Its formal launch will be on 23 March 2013, coinciding with the anniversary of the 1960 Sharpeville massacre. The following are extracts from the founding press statement.

An event that has the potential to change the political landscape of South Africa, as Marikana [where 34 platinum miners were gunned down by police acting on behalf of the government and mine owners] has done on the industrial plane, was marked in the founding of a new political party, the Workers and Socialist Party (WASP).

The need for such a party was clearly evident in the reports given by strike committee leaders of the situation that exists at various mines around the country after the return to work. At Bokoni Platinum a virtual state of emergency has been imposed and workers found not at work in the surrounding villages are frog marched to report for duty at the mine.

WASP will have to put as one of its key demands the nationalisa-

tion of the mines under the direct ownership, management and control of workers in the process leading to the socialist transformation of society which is the only basis on which a lasting solution to the problems of mine workers and the working class as a whole can be found.

WASP will have to distinguish itself from all other political parties by its clearly socialist programme, its approach to electoral politics as but one terrain of struggle and by its public representatives being subject to the right of immediate recall and to a worker's wage.

It will demonstrate the irrelevance of the ANC conference where candidates contesting for leadership are all committed to the preservation of the enslavement of the working class under capitalism - the very system WASP is dedicated to abolishing.

In the coming days and months

leading to its launch WASP will mobilise support for the party with a resolution calling for the building of the party to popularise the idea of an alternative in organised formations such as unions, community organisations, social movements and like-minded political organisations who will be invited to adopt the resolution as part of their formal affiliation to WASP.

WASP will be a fighting party that will unite service delivery protests, student struggles against unaffordable tuition fees and workplace struggles against short time, re-trenchments and labour broking.

Issued by:  
**DSM Executive Committee, the Strike and Workers' Committee Representatives of Bokoni Platinum, Harmony Gold, Anglo Gold Ashanti, Royal Bafokeng and Murray Roberts.**

17 December 2012

## 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:



### Hong Kong: 130,000 march on New Year's day

Protesters demand chief executive CY Leung's resignation and one person, one vote.

Dikang, Socialist Action (CWI, Hong Kong)



### Northern Ireland: Widespread protests continue over union flag on Belfast City Hall

A socialist analysis.

Statement by the Socialist Party (CWI, Northern Ireland)



### Greece: 'Initiative 1,000' - an ambitious move on the Greek Left

Build a united front of left forces on a programme to end the capitalist crisis.

Andros Payiatsos, Xekinima (CWI, Greece)

# 2013: Prepare for a mighty battle against deeper cuts

The coming year, like 2012, will be one of intense struggles by the working class in Britain, Europe and the world.

Five years into the most devastating capitalist economic crisis since the 1930s, the ruling classes continue to unload the burden for this onto the shoulders of the working class.

Because of inadequate and faulty leadership, working class people have paid a terrible price: mass unemployment at 18.5 million in the European Union, living standards slashed, and poverty that the present generation have until now only read about in books such as George Orwell's 'The Road to Wigan Pier.'

'Civilised' Britain now experiences some of the conditions once confined to the neocolonial world. In the lengthening queues for the bare essentials at food banks, middle class people who have fallen on 'hard times' rub shoulders with the destitute.

Guardian writer Zoe Williams suggests, "be optimistic", down with

'Civilised' Britain now experiences some of the conditions once confined to the neocolonial world

pessimism and always look on the bright side. She is correct in seeking to counter the government's mantra that "there is no alternative" to their cuts' programme.

She's also very good in debunking the "myths of the government" in relation to fraud in the benefit system, which accounts for 0.7% of the total bill. Cameron uses this myth

to stigmatise all those forced onto benefits.

In a sense, Zoe Williams expresses admirable sentiments - if the intention is to instil a sense of hope and resistance to the onslaught of the bosses against all past gains of the working class.

But she undermines her case by then asserting that "Britain is not Greece, our economy is stronger". The implication is that this country cannot go down a similar path to Greece.

This is a severe case of wishful thinking. The capitalists in Spain, Portugal and even Italy, although much stronger economically, also declared that they 'were not Greece'. Yet their economies have been plunged into crisis with debts, inherited from the 'boom', crippling them as they did Greece.

The economic and political fate of each country in Europe is linked together as never before. Intensified globalisation means the world is now bound together with iron hoops.

If Greece was forced out of the euro, it could trigger a spiral of decline which would intensify the already catastrophic crisis and drag the whole of Europe into an economic abyss.

If Spain, Portugal and Italy were to follow, it has now been estimated that the cost of the default would be £17 trillion by 2020, the equivalent of 180% of eurozone annual gross domestic product.

And Britain is presently Greece in slow motion! Yet the collapse of the euro could speed up the process enormously, hence Cameron's nervousness about the fate of the euro, even though Britain is not a member of the eurozone.

## Working class strength

There is not an atom of pessimism in this. We socialists and Marxists

are very confident in the ability of working class people - especially when they have a farsighted leadership, and a fighting mass party behind them - to not only resist the capitalist offensive but to provide an alternative to outworn and failing capitalism, in the form of a democratic socialist planned economy.



80%

of the cuts are still to be implemented

Proof could be seen on the huge October demonstration of 150,000 marching in opposition to the austerity coalition Con-Dem government and with the major trade union leaders calling for a 24-hour general strike.

Yet austerity - planned poverty - will not only be continued but worsened, with 80% of the planned cuts of the government yet to be implemented.

There is therefore every likelihood that 2013 will bring a heightened movement of the working class in Britain. This, of course, partly depends on the national leadership of the trade unions giving the necessary lead in preparing for one-day general strike action.

But if they don't act then a movement from below can develop, as in South Africa with the marvellous movement of the miners who came out on strike in opposition not just to the bosses but their own union leaders.

New Labour local authority leaders in the North of England have

Stagnation, combined with a dose of inflation, and decline, is the best-case scenario

warned that "civil unrest" could take place if the government continues to force through its cuts agenda.

These council leaders and others could avoid this if, instead of carrying through cuts, they led a mass movement of opposition which could defeat the government on this issue and undoubtedly prepare its downfall.

## Economic decline

Despite Zoe Williams' blandishments, British capitalism faces a bleak outlook, which means a terrible future on the basis of the capitalist system for the working class, above all for young people.

The blizzard of doom-laden facts and figures that have recently filled out the economic sections of the



www.hackettillustration.com

capitalist press amply demonstrates this.

British capitalism is reaping the rewards of a completely short-sighted policy over decades, not just years. The refusal to invest in manufacturing, which in turn resulted in industrial collapse, was highlighted by the Socialist Party and its predecessor in literally dozens of articles over the last three decades.

Indeed, Thatcher colluded in the deindustrialisation of Britain as a means of weakening the working class in the aftermath of the 1984-85 miners' strike.

The economy is bumping along the bottom, with growth "invisible to the naked eye outside of London". Stagnation, combined with a dose of inflation, and decline, is the best-case scenario.

The Economist characterises this as "the stuck society", a semi-paralysed zombie-type economy. Growth will probably be no more than 0.1% in 2012 and will be little more this year.

And this is without the threat of 'headwinds' - code for the deepening of the worldwide economic capitalist crisis which is severely affecting Britain.

The government loudly proclaims the success of its strategy for creating jobs and new businesses. The Economist, on the contrary, talks about "businesses without employees... business creation is flat".

Sales of homes are at half the level they were in 2006, while even right-wing think tanks warn the government that house-building is in a crisis, with the lowest number of houses built since the 1920s.

This, in turn, impacts on the

young, already confronted by mass unemployment, now compelled to live with their parents. Britain has begun to mirror Japan, where 44% of those aged between 20 and 34 are 'fridge raiders' in their own parents' homes.

But the next governor of the Bank of England, Mark Carney, will receive a whopping £250,000 housing allowance, on top of his mega salary of £624,000.

This just adds to the growing hostility - class hatred - which working people feel for the super-rich. It extends to the government, seen increasingly as the protector of spivs and economic racketeers.

These supposed 'trustees' of capitalism are in a fog about the workings of their own system, let alone possessing any remedies for solving the crisis.

**£624,000**  
basic salary of the  
next governor of the  
Bank of England

They have been like a cork bobbing on the waves in an economic tsunami. The Socialist did foresee the inevitability of a crash at a certain stage, although no one could predict the timing or the severity of this crisis.

The debt-fuelled boom - a massive injection of credit - extended the 'growth' cycle but

has deepened and lengthened the crisis when it finally struck.

## Marxist analysis

One of the Bank of England's top economists claimed crises were "a bit like earthquakes and flu pandemics in being rare and difficult to predict". In other words, the crisis of capitalism is like a natural phenomenon.

Marxism rejects such 'voodoo economics'. Marx pointed out that crises are man-made; they are an inevitable product of a system based upon production for profit and not for social need.

Capitalist 'overproduction' - unknown in previous economic systems - in a world crying out for continued economic growth to satisfy the obvious needs of the poor and dispossessed, is an economic absurdity and totally avoidable. This is on condition, of course, that the capitalist system is abolished.

Before departing from a recent visit to the Bank of England, the Duke of Edinburgh asked: "Is there another one coming? ... Don't do it again". But the capitalists cannot help "doing it", presiding over crises and slumps, again and again. So too with speculation and gambling.

This is organic to capitalism, like inhaling and exhaling to the human body. However, with age, the organism becomes weaker. The booms become less effective in solving the problems created by the previous crisis, while crises and slumps appear more frequently and last longer.

The current crisis could be very drawn out, similar to the depres-

sion in the 19th century from 1873 to 1896. But there is no "final crisis of capitalism".

Capitalism can always find a way out, through the destruction of living standards, and ultimately by

This is a moment in history similar to the early 1920s when the capitalists, through the Geddes report, proposed savage cuts in the living standards of the working class, which led to the 1926 general strike

curtailing and possibly destroying the democratic rights and organisations of the working class.

In this way, an unstable equilibrium can be established for a time. But as sure as night follows day, a new economic crisis will be prepared, as the history of capitalism has shown.

The conclusion arising from this? We should organise to mobilise working people for the replacement of the system by one that can use the full potential of the productive forces. This is only possible on the basis

of democratic socialism.

The working class is receiving brutal lessons in the character of capitalism, which puts the lust for profit before all 'humane' considerations.

To the delight of the bosses, "a supply of people able to work for less than the cost of living gives parsimonious firms a convenient pool of temporary workers" (The Economist). In other words, a reserve army of unemployed, as predicted by Karl Marx, has returned in Tory/Lib Dem Britain.

The plentiful supply of cheap labour obviously pleased the Bank of England's chief economist, Spencer Dale, who praised the labour market's "extraordinary flexibility ... The pay packets of the average worker bought 15% less than they would have done had the pre-crisis trend continued".

A low-wage economy alongside a mass and stagnant pool of unemployed, to be used as a weapon against those fortunate to have a low-paid job, is the future that is mapped out by the strategists of capitalism for the working class.

At the same time, a reduced standard of living for the great majority of the population is all that is offered. But this is just the beginning, with Cameron and Co predicting 'austerity' will last for at least another decade.

## Greater poverty

And of course the economic crisis will bear down greatest on the poorest households, hit by soaring food prices, even according to government figures.

These reveal that the consumption of every major nutrient has fallen in the last four years. Cash-strapped families have bought less lamb, beef, fish, fruit, vegetables, potatoes and alcoholic drinks, but more bacon, pork and cheese. What's more, rickets, the disease of poverty associated with the 1930s, has returned to Britain.

More than half of those responding to a survey believe "we are not in this together", as Tory Chancellor George Osborne has ceaselessly asserted. He was given his answer at the Paralympics: 'Why did 80,000 people boo George Osborne? Because that's the maximum capacity of the Olympic Stadium.'

The coalition is continuing Thatcher's work, going further than she dared. Recently released papers show that she rejected the complete dismantling of the 'welfare state' when it was suggested by her chancellor, Geoffrey Howe, in the 1980s. But Cameron and Clegg now intend to implement Howe's programme to the letter.

This is a moment in history similar to the early 1920s when the capitalists, through the Geddes report, proposed savage cuts in the living standards of the working class, which led to the 1926 general strike. A seemingly irresistible force in the form of a government determined to face down the working class at all costs met an immovable object, a working class ready to resist.

The only reason why the government of the time came out of this conflict victorious was because the trade union leaders refused to carry the strike - which was growing relentlessly each day - through to a conclusive victory.

The Con-Dems will not retreat, unless they are confronted by the most determined and broad mobilisation of the working class ready to use the full power of the labour movement.

Continued on page 8.



photo Paul Mattsson



The coalition is continuing Thatcher's work



photo Paul Mattsson



photo Senan

# New Year of more cuts

Continued from pages 6-7.

British and world capitalism offer no way forward for the working class. Therefore, in 2013 the Con-Dems will serve up the same toxic dish of further cuts in living standards, deeper cuts in national and local government budgets and attacks on the organisations of working people.

The government appointed, and controlled, Office of Budget Responsibility (OBR) predicts "that from a starting point of 2011, by the beginning of 2018, the economy will have lost 929,000 public sector jobs. That means that there are more than half a million public sector jobs still to be cut over the next five years... 'All this implies an average fall in GGE - General Government Employment - of just under 30,000 per quarter over the remainder of the period.' That's 10,000 public sector jobs going every month: more than 330 people being sacked every day... One public sector worker being sacked every 90 seconds for the next half decade". [John Lanchester - London Review of Books.]

Over one million public sector jobs will have been lost if just some of the scheduled cuts are carried out. Nor can salvation be expected from the private sector.

Education Minister Michael Gove is riding roughshod over the objections of parents and teachers in the relentless drive to establish academies. We don't have to speculate what the result will be; in Sweden, where profit-making schools are financed with taxpayers' money, this has led to a catastrophic drop in the quality of education.

A handful of companies in Sweden - some of them hedge funds - have made profits of over \$20 million from running private schools funded by the state. Within a few years this will also be the picture here, and not just in education, but also in health, conditions of work, etc.

This will be accompanied with a vicious attempt to nullify the effectiveness of the trade unions. Cabinet Office Minister Francis Maude, together with Eric Pickles, the local government minister, is already attacking 'facility time' for trade union representatives.

Yet it has been revealed in the Independent that "the government is paying staff from powerful firms including energy giants and a leading bank to work at the heart of Whitehall". What is that if not 'facility time' for the bosses?

The long-term consequences of Maude's attacks could rebound on the bosses and their government by producing more hardened, militant and younger fighters in the workplace and the unions.



photo Paul Mattsson

But if these measures are not fiercely resisted now and defeated, in the short-term this could undermine resistance to the government's plans.

## Trade union 'brake'

For too long, some of the trade union 'generals', like Brendan Barber at the head of the TUC, have been a massive brake on the working class.

At its annual congress in September the TUC decided on a one-day general strike. Yet Barber, together

**929,000**  
public sector jobs  
expected to have  
been lost between  
2011 and 2018

with some right-wing union leaders like Dave Prentis of Unison, has clearly been trying to frustrate any attempt to implement this decision.

Barber's brand of 'responsible' trade unionism was summed up in his retirement message when he described the TUC as an 'institution', a pillar of the capitalist state.

The trade unions, in their foundation and their aims, are nothing of the kind. They are, or should be,

implacably opposed to the capitalist forces, red in tooth and claw, in the struggle for a living wage, against unemployment, etc.

It is for this reason that the organising of a one-day general strike assumes paramount importance, linking together the struggle against the cuts, with pay, pensions and conditions of work. The anti-trade union legislation is an obstacle but not an insurmountable one.

It is true that the anti-union laws in this country are among some of the most repressive in Europe. But workers in other European countries also face laws and restrictions limiting and in some cases prohibiting strike action.

Even in Greece, Spain and Portugal anti-union laws are in place - although not as restrictive or with the potential for financially damaging unions as in Britain.

This has not prevented Greek workers from engaging in 18 one-day strikes and four 48-hour strikes against their government.

## A one-day general strike

Firstly, a common date should be agreed - with the majority of trade unions committed to this - while the ballots for such action can be on different issues.

For instance, pay is now a burning issue for the great majority of workers with inflation exceeding the level of wage increases. There is also the question of conditions at work - for instance the horrific workload of teachers, the question of low pay, etc. In the final analysis, where there is a will there is a way.

We cannot allow the onslaught of the Con-Dem government and the capitalists to go unanswered. Forward in 2013 to a mighty one-day general strike, which properly organised will shake this government to its foundations!

Also Ed Miliband in his Christmas message once again shows just why New Labour does not represent working class people.

By calling for the unemployed to accept any job, no matter how low-paid, that is offered to them he is doing the Tories' job for them. This signifies acceptance of a slave-driver's charter - that a further impoverishment of the poor and the working class is inevitable and cannot be resisted.

Cleaners on London Underground and the Tyne and Wear Metro give the lie to this with their



photo Senan

struggle for a living wage.

This 'Labour leader' dares not agree with this for fear of alienating 'moderate' public opinion. The reality is that the mass of British

The organising of a one-day general strike assumes paramount importance, linking together the struggle against the cuts, with pay, pensions and conditions of work

people, not just trade unionists, would enthusiastically endorse this campaign.

Only a new mass party of the working class can adequately voice the growing mass opposition towards the government.

This opposition is increasing and is helping to provoke splits and divisions in the coalition. With their standing in the polls reduced to an all-time low, the Liberal Democrats could be forced by the social effects of further cuts to cut adrift from the coalition. 2013 could see the defeat of this government and a new general election, particularly if the trade union movement organises decisive action.

Despite his lack of programme, Miliband could be pushed into power. But New Labour has no answers to the burning problems that confront the working people of Britain. Even right-wing Labour MPs have voiced doubts about the long-term consequences for such a government.

The failure of New Labour could pave the way for the emergence of a new mass workers' party but also for an even more right-wing Tory government at a later stage.

Therefore no time must be lost in 2013 in preparing for a mighty battle on the industrial front and in creating a new party, which will provide real leadership to the working class in the big struggles that will take place.



photo Senan

# Obituary: Robbie Segal

## Leading Socialist Party activist in Usdaw union

Robbie Segal, a longstanding Socialist Party comrade and a leading activist in Usdaw (Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers), has died of a terminal neurological disorder.

Robbie joined her first trade union at 19 and was soon involved in industrial action against Express Newspapers.

Over the next four decades, she was at the forefront of workers' battles and on the streets arguing for solidarity and raising finance, whether it was defending the socialist Liverpool councillors, mineworkers and their wives, or the P&O seafarers' strike.

Similarly, she played a leading role in the struggle against Thatcher's Poll Tax. She was expelled from the Labour Party for her socialist beliefs.

For 25 years, Robbie worked in Tesco and was a shop steward for 24 of those years. She understood how essential it is to build a solid base and that gave her a platform for election to Usdaw's divisional council and eventually the Executive Council (EC) - serving four three-year terms.

Robbie recognised the power of the union was slipping away from its members to a handful of bureaucrats. She campaigned against Usdaw leaders embracing New Labour's 'partnership' policy - resulting in pay that was little more than the minimum wage, and the worsening of conditions.

Robbie resigned from the national store forum in protest over the 'partnership' agreement between Tesco and Usdaw.

Her warnings that this policy would result in attacks against the better-paid workers in distribution have unfortunately been proved correct.

Robbie was a solid voice of opposition and she was both vilified by the right wing and respected by the left for her uncompromising stand.

She was not only a fighter but also Usdaw left's most approachable figurehead. Though branded an 'extremist' by Usdaw's right wing, hundreds of activists turned to her for advice and support.



Robbie in 2008 when she won 40% of the Usdaw general secretary vote

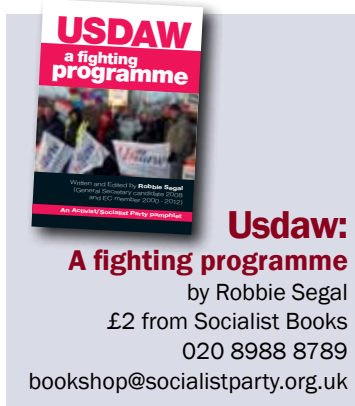
Robbie's major challenge was to democratise Usdaw and win the union back for its members. She understood the urgent need to educate a newer layer of activists on a programme of action.

### Militant alternative

Robbie considered it near impossible to promote a militant alternative while the current leadership had a stranglehold on the union, so she helped establish and regularly contributed to the Activist, the bulletin of Socialist Party members working in Usdaw. Robbie also wrote regularly for the Socialist on Usdaw matters.

At the union's annual conference, Robbie would be round the hall selling the Socialist, chatting to the delegates and by the end of the day she would have sold over 100 copies.

She would always linger a mo-



ment longer to give a word of encouragement to the younger delegates and discuss the agenda.

In 2008, Robbie stood against the incumbent for the post of Usdaw general secretary. With very few resources and no method of contacting the branches, she stood on a socialist programme with the theme of returning the union back to its members. Her stand won her over 18,000 votes, 40% of the total vote.

Robbie warned: "The bosses are intent on the working people of this country paying for their mess... only a socialist society offers a solution to the blight we face at present."

Robbie was always there to give advice and a smile, and she will be sadly missed.

We send our condolences to Eric, her husband and fellow Socialist Party activist, their three children, Johanna, Polly and Miriam, and grandchildren.

**Udaw Activist supporters**  
usdawactivist.wordpress.com

# 2012 Fighting Fund target smashed

**Ken Douglas**  
Socialist Party national treasurer

Socialist Party members smashed through the fighting fund target, raising a fantastic £28,497 - 116% - in the three months leading up to Christmas. In the whole of 2012 our members raised £109,228!

This was a magnificent effort - as well as campaigning in the town centres and shopping arcades they also found time to relax and have a party, while still ensuring that fighting fund was raised!

Branches were campaigning on a whole number of issues, including against cuts, privatisation and hospital closures in the NHS, forced privatisation of schools through the academies programme and the profiteering of the energy companies.

At the same time we explained how we could stop this government of Con-Dem millionaires in its tracks through building a campaign to resist the council cuts alongside a 24-hour general strike of public and private sector workers.

Now we have to ensure that we maintain our fundraising drive throughout 2013 - this is vital for our campaigning to reach as many people as possible.

With sickening hypocrisy, the Con-Dems have just approved a below-inflation 1% cap on benefit increases. The six million people who are in work but living below

**Save our server!**  
**Total raised so far: £11,794**

Can you donate to our appeal? We are aiming to raise £12,000 to enable us to buy a new computer network server and are asking all our members and supporters to contribute.

We are continuing to get a great response from members and readers. Thanks to John Ewers £20; Liverpool branch £70 and a reader from Wirral £7.

Please consider donating to the appeal. We have just over £200 to go to reach our target. Every donation, no matter how big or small is very welcome and will take us nearer to our goal.

You can pay via the Socialist Party website at [www.socialistparty.org.uk/donate](http://www.socialistparty.org.uk/donate) and mark your donation 'server appeal' or telephone 020 8988 8777.

the poverty line, the unemployed, pensioners and disabled people will all see the buying power of their income fall.

In contrast, the richest 1,000 people in the UK saw their wealth increase to £414 billion in 2012, with the additional bonus of a tax cut courtesy of Cameron and Osborne, and can look forward to piling up more ill-gotten gains in 2013.

Unlike the Con-Dems we don't enjoy the support of the super-rich! We rely on the support of ordinary people; the small donations made to our party in the shopping centres, on picket lines and on protests and demonstrations. Can you help by making a donation?

**£414bn**  
is the wealth of the UK's richest 1,000

## Planning for the Planet

How socialism could save the environment



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## Tribute by Bill Mullins

"I knew Robbie for many years when I was a Socialist Party industrial organiser. She was a stalwart for the workers of Tesco in particular. The Usdaw right wing knew this and hated her for it.

When standing for the union's executive council, the leadership put two full time officials to sit in a car outside Robbie's home to monitor her.

When the left, led by Robbie, stood in the union's presidential election, the Socialist Party

hosted a fringe meeting at the TUC conference. The candidate and Robbie were on the platform and I chaired.

You can imagine our surprise when the right wing incumbent president and full time officials turned up at the meeting, and started heckling before the platform speakers had an opportunity to speak.

It gave me a glimpse of Robbie's experiences when she attempted to speak at the union's executive meetings."

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## SOCIALIST PARTY FIGHTING FUND

	£ target	£ received	October-December 2012	Final Chart
East Midlands	1,550	2,872		
Eastern	1,200	2,046		
North West	1,200	1,836		
Southern	1,200	1,709		
West Midlands	2,100	2,893		
Wales	2,300	2,867		
South West	1,400	1,707		
Yorkshire	2,900	3,226		
London	6,100	5,696		
Northern	600	553		
South East	750	645		
England & Wales	3,700	2,891		
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>25,000</b>	<b>28,947</b>		



## the Socialist postbag

**Do you have something to say?**

Send your news, views and criticism in not more than 150 words to Socialist Postbag, PO Box 24697, London E11 1YD, or phone 020 8988 8771, email: editors@socialistparty.org.uk. We reserve the right to shorten letters. Don't forget to give your name, address and phone number. Confidentiality will be respected if requested.

**Better life**

I was moved by the report by a public sector worker: "I want to live, not just exist" (The Socialist 746). Doesn't this just sum up the struggle we face? Ordinary working people not only face an attack on their living standards, but on the right to earn a living at all. In-work poverty is rising.

Other things that make life worthwhile are being hit too. Newcastle council plans to axe many of its cultural services, including libraries. Yet these things are part of a truly civilised society. We need to fight the attack on all fronts, and demand a better life.

**Graeme Kemp, Telford**

**Support the Shrewsbury pickets**

Ricky Tomlinson's announcement that the Justice for the Shrewsbury Pickets Campaign has launched a petition to secure the release of state documents, deserves maximum support.

This could be vital in proving the innocence of the building workers framed and jailed at the big building conglomerates' insistence in the early 1970s for alleged conspiracy under an act introduced in the 13th century.

After the magnificent success of the campaign to secure justice for the Hillsborough 96, and now the investigation into the unlawful activity of the Metropolitan and South Yorkshire police during the miners' strike when hundreds of miners were framed, 'people power' has shown that even the most corrupt bodies of the state can ultimately be held accountable.

Hopefully the Shrewsbury Pickets petition will help right the wrong perpetrated 40 years ago and also sends a

With astonishing bravado they have insisted customers "don't call us - we have all the information to sort this out!" If they were disabled or unemployed people they would be called scroungers. Isn't it nice to know our money is safe in their hands?

**Dave Mackay**

**Scrooges beware**

At 5am on Christmas Eve two boys excitedly woke up their dad. Had they got



the wrong day? Surely Santa wasn't due until tomorrow. No! Their dad had promised that they could go along to the Churchill cleaners' strike.

Bosses from Churchill's and other Scrooge companies beware - the next generation of class fighters are already on the picket lines!

**Elaine Brunskill**

**No secret**

The recent TV series of "Hunted" offered a gripping storyline, with lots of tension, if you like that sort of thing. The series delivered as promised until it came to the "secret" that the key character was being hunted for. The 'secret' - wait for it - was that five companies were planning to take control of the economy after a secret pact in 1948.

Now forgive me for sounding naive, but the capitalist plot has been out of the bag for decades. When the next series of "Hunted" comes back, I'm sure these five companies will be destroyed, but it won't make a blind bit of difference to capitalism, unfortunately.

**Greg Moran, Derby**

**Medieval Cameron**

Prime Minister David Cameron is behaving like medieval King John, a wicked ruler who took as much money as he could from his people. Cameron is killing the welfare state that has been working since 1945. So now we have the people (up in arms) and the unions protesting against pay and pension conditions.

Likewise my local Salford council. Mayor Ian Steward could be the Sheriff of Nottingham with his nasty barons, burning all the drop ins, making cuts to the workforce, getting rid of support workers and trying to put volunteer slaves in their place. We are going backward into the dark ages, possibly we need a Robin Hood though I don't think that would work now!

**Paul Quinn, Eccles**

# Who's neglecting society, Mr Lamb?

**Becky Johnson**

Happy New Year to NHS staff, patients and campaigners everywhere! Sadly, greetings cannot be extended to health minister Norman Lamb, who used New Year's Day to lament that ordinary working people don't do enough to help our elderly neighbours.

He told the Daily Telegraph that the "neglectful society" we live in drives the elderly into care homes. Perhaps the increasing life expectancy and rise in adults with long-term complex health problems escaped his attention. Clearly not, as he later said, if people were more neighbourly, it would reduce the burden on the state.

No-one is going to vote against human decency, but that's not what this is about. The government are set to announce plans to cap the amount that can be spent on an individual's care. Social care itself faces a long-term funding crisis. Elderly people and local authorities are being held to ransom by private care firms, squeezing profit out of old age. There is your neglectful society!

Britain has some of Europe's longest working hours. Women, who were traditionally looked to for providing care to family members, find flexible hours hard to obtain, and face penalties on their pay. They face hostile attitudes at work, as employers are reluctant to grant carers leave.



**Norman Lamb MP - spouting government hypocrisy over care of the elderly**

At the same time, the public services that maintain the fabric of our communities are being cut. Yet finger-wagging ministers lecture us for not providing care that should be available, freely to all, based only on your needs, not your ability to pay, or the niceness of your neighbour!

My great-grandparents' generation fought to create the NHS, removing the profit motive from health care.

What we need now is a nationalised care service. Private care homes and community based firms should be brought under public ownership, to provide top-

quality, free, inclusive support to people getting older, whether in their own homes or not.

And finally...The Prince's Trust reckons that half of young people who can't find work are depressed. Can't imagine why. As if being thrown on the scrapheap before 25 isn't bad enough, they are demonised in the press as work-shy job snobs. Enough to mess with anyone's mental health!

The sad story shows why young people need to get involved in campaigns like Youth Fight for Jobs, to fight for a decent future.

## More Tory privatisation

The Tories plan that the National Health Service will have to pay over 100 private firms to treat patients in a major expansion of privatisation. The healthcare firms will be given the status of 'any qualified provider' (AQP) and allowed to offer services like physiotherapy, hearing aids and MRI scanning - for profit.

Companies such as InHealth, Virgin Care and Specsavers will be among the first to take advantage of this. NHS workers, including many doctors, fear that the NHS is being atomised, split into thousands of different providers.

Meanwhile patients have to find their way through many different

organisations instead of one NHS.

Capitalism's future for the NHS is one where big firms, wary of investment elsewhere, make money from our public services and our health. We say kick big business, which cares only for profit, out of the NHS.

**Sam Rivers**

## Socialist Party women's meeting

**Sarah Wrack**

On 5-6 January 40 people attended a Socialist Party national women's meeting in London. Every region was represented.

The meeting opened with a re-

port from a recent meeting of the International Executive Committee of the CWI by Hannah Sell, Socialist Party deputy general secretary. Hannah reported on developments including in the Middle East, US and South Africa and the important role the CWI is playing in each.

The meeting then divided into two commissions - 'abortion' and 'women and the cuts'. The commissions discussed the details of the situation facing women at the moment and the risk of further attacks.

On Sunday the meeting discussed Rape Is No Joke, the Socialist Students campaign against misogyny in comedy. The discussion agreed that the campaign is a good addition to other work that areas are involved in. Several people reported very successful meetings and events of the campaign. The idea was raised of a week of action leading up to International Women's Day in March.

The final session discussed building the Socialist Party amongst women. We discussed the need to focus on campaigning and responding to events. We heard reports of how areas have organised in the last year, including two recent regional women's meetings. Women in each region then got together to make plans, including to increase sales of the Socialist Party's pamphlet Women: Fighting Austerity, Fighting for Equality and to report back to all branches from this very successful meeting.



**Socialist Party campaigning against sexism** photo Paul Mattsson



clear message to present-day abusers of political power that they ultimately will be held accountable.

**Tony Mulhearn**

**Automatically Takes Money**

The Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation (HSBC) - chiefly famous for money-laundering - have also shanghaied millions of pounds from ordinary customers by jiggery-pokery with cash machines.

If you accidentally leave your money in an ATM for about 30 seconds, the machine takes the money back. You might expect the bank to refund the money to your account. RBS and HSBC do not think like that.

For years they have just quietly kept the money unless the customer specifically complains to them. HSBC was the last major bank to reluctantly and grudgingly agree to give ordinary customers their money back.

# Unite the Union general secretary election

## A Socialist Party statement

Unite general secretary Len McCluskey has decided to bring forward the next election for general secretary by almost three years. Because of his age, realistically he would otherwise be a 'one-term' general secretary.

This move has been agreed after wide consultation on the left, including the Socialist Party. Peter Taaffe and Rob Williams had a two-hour meeting with Len McCluskey where he asked for our party's endorsement of the steps he was preparing to take.

We have agreed to give him critical support. This is despite some political disagreement such as on Unite's continued support for New Labour.

This does not mean we will automatically endorse all his and Unite's leadership's decisions and actions.

We will argue for the need for Unite to break the link with New Labour, which has clearly indicated that, if it wins the next general election, it will continue the present government's cuts.

Some, like Jerry Hicks, who has now declared that he will stand, and the Socialist Workers Party, have tried to argue that the early election is undemocratic and smacks of past sharp practice by right-wing ex-Amicus [one of the unions which merged to become Unite] general secretaries.

Some other activists, particularly from the ex-Amicus wing will have genuine concerns as well. But we have to frankly explain that it's not just a case of what is done but who does it and for what reasons.

Unlike with right-wing union leaders in the past or in the future, this election is not being brought forward in order to push Unite to the right but to consolidate the union for the left.

Providing the rank and file is strengthened, we believe that a victory for Len McCluskey can achieve this.

Ultimately the essential considerations are: what are the interests of Unite members, the left and the wider working-class?

### Victory for the left

The election of Len McCluskey in 2010 as the first general secretary of the merged union was a victory for the left in Unite and the wider trade union movement.

The Socialist Party supported his candidature rather than that of Jerry Hicks because we believed that Len was best placed to defeat the right wing. A victory for the 'Simpsonite' [Derek Simpson, the previous Amicus general secretary] candidate Les Bayliss would have been a major setback for the left.

It would have meant Unite lining up with the other big unions, Unison and the GMB, along with the TUC bureaucracy against the smaller left unions.

Instead, Unite voted in favour of Resolution 5 at the 2012 TUC congress, supporting the idea of moving towards a general strike against austerity.

At the post-congress general council executive, Len McCluskey lined up with the likes of RMT general secretary Bob Crow to defeat the TUC leadership's attempt to effectively stop all talk of a general strike.

The huge potential of Unite has started to be realised under McCluskey's leadership. It is far from



Unite members on the 20 October 2012 TUC demo against austerity photo Paul Mattsson



Len McCluskey speaking at the TUC rally photo Paul Mattsson

perfect. In just two years, in a union of up to 1.5 million members across 23 industrial sectors, with the history of the ex-Amicus unions, some of them right-wing, it would be an extremely difficult task under the best stewardship. And Unite is in some ways a mini TUC. It is four to five times the size of the civil service union PCS.

There have been clear steps forward. There have been innumerable strikes by Unite members and some notable victories, even if partial and/or short-lived.

The Sparks, London bus workers, Paddy Brennan in Honda Swindon, and now the Doncaster Tesco drivers have all won some gains.

Many others from Unilever, Crown, Remploy and Amnesty, as well as public sector members in the pensions dispute have also engaged in action.

Len has emphasised that not once has he issued a repudiation letter to any Unite members taking unoffi-

need for a 24-hour general strike or at least mass coordinated strike action against the ConDem austerity onslaught.

On the Labour Party, we disagree with McCluskey's view that the party can be reclaimed. We instead pose the need for Unite to disaffiliate and work with other unions to create a new party for working class people.

### Labour councillors

At the national United Left meeting, Len said Unite would support Labour councillors expelled for opposing cuts. He said he would be prepared to put to the union's executive before the next council elections that they give Labour leader Miliband an ultimatum that Labour doesn't stand against them. He was well aware that this could change the whole relationship between Unite and Labour.

We also need to use the general secretary election to push Unite to lead the call for mass coordinated strike action, up to and including a 24-hour general strike.

This approach has helped prompt Len to state that Unite will ballot and take action alongside PCS on pay, which he says is the next focus for the struggle against the cuts.

Unite could put pressure on Unison and the GMB if it seriously links up with left unions such as PCS.

Unite's United Left has many weaknesses - it is still too much influenced by full-time officials and hasn't been able to attract enough fresh forces - but we still think that it represents the most forces of the organised left. We will continue to strive to build it and make it more democratic and accountable.

Under Len McCluskey's leadership it has been possible to open up the union and push back the forces of the right. But we shouldn't write off the potential for the right to reassert itself if the union's leadership disappoints.

Instead of following our advice and coming into the United Left

after the last general secretary election, Jerry Hicks has continued with his own 'Grassroots Left'.

But we don't believe that Jerry has proved capable of building the broad left alliance that would be essential to drive the union to the left, combat the bureaucracy and build across the wider trade union movement.

The re-election of Len McCluskey is an important step to consolidate the real gains that have been made, which can be the foundation for the union to move forward.

There is a meeting for Socialist Party members in Unite on 27 January in London. Ring 020 8988 8777 for more details.

### Socialism Today



The Socialist Party's magazine December-January issue includes:

#### World in revolt

Peter Taaffe looks at the key events of 2012 and outlines the way forward for class struggle.

And much more

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## Prepare for strike action to

# SAVE OUR HOSPITALS

### A London nurse

A quarter of a million residents of Lewisham in south London are waiting to hear if they will still have a local hospital. Asset strippers, led by special administrator Matthew Kershaw, are trying to carve up the local NHS.

Another 500,000 people could be hit by other changes Kershaw is considering in the South London Healthcare Trust hospitals.

The closure of state of the art medical facilities at Lewisham hospital is a disgusting waste of public money. For example it cost £12 million to upgrade Lewisham's A&E department and put X-ray machines in each cubicle. It is now under threat. If the intensive care unit closes, 100 nursing and medical jobs will be put at risk.

The long term plan for Lewisham hospital is to downgrade it and sell off 58% of the site to property developers. The administrators also plan to shut Orpington hospital completely and Princess Royal in Bromley may be managed by private providers. But Hinchingsbrook hospital in Cambridgeshire is al-



Marching on the 20 October TUC demo against austerity photo Senan

ready being 'privately managed' with disastrous consequences.

With all of these cuts in our NHS, sitting back and complaining isn't enough. There is already a community-based fightback in south Lon-

don which is holding another big protest on 26 January.

Lewisham hospital staff want to join in with the public and fight but they are being held back by their union leadership. These leaders

cannot stem the tide of anger forever. Regional officials from Unison recently attended a Greenwich local 'save our NHS' meeting. That shows the pressure they are under from their members.

In London, seven out of 32 A&E departments are already marked for closure by 2020 and the remainder will have to cover an extra 120,000 people on average. But this battle is nationwide. It is time the health workers' unions and the trade union movement as a whole gave a clear lead in fighting these plans.

The fight needs to be escalated by encouraging nurses and other NHS staff to move to the forefront of the struggle and take industrial action. They will get massive public support and backing when they do so!

Socialist Party activists from Greenwich and Lewisham are offering staff encouragement and a programme to get their unions moving to defend all the hospitals at risk. We are urging health workers to petition their union leaderships and put motions to their branches calling for a strike ballot. We stress that these NHS cuts are not necessary. Our ideas are chiming with hospital staff and local people alike.

The fight for Lewisham A&E and the future of the NHS is on. With determined action we can defeat these cuts.

### 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!