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MASS ACTION TO SAVE OUR NHS

Roger Shrivs
Lewisham Socialist Party

Disgracefully the chief executive of the Health Federation, Mike Farrar, has declared that the public must accept 'the closure of many hospital units and live healthier lives if they want the NHS to survive'!

But the 2013 'State of the Nation' poll found huge support for the NHS and 72% agreed that: "we must do everything we can to maintain it". Never before has this support been so needed. The Con-Dems' attacks so far include 5,000 nurses' jobs axed, a 4% cut in the money hospitals will receive for treatment in 2013 and plans for hospital closures.

But both health workers and the public reject this. The strike by Unison members in the Mid-Yorkshire Hospital Trust against 'down-banding' pay cuts is an inspiring example. Branch secretary Adrian O'Malley pointed out that: "workers will support action to defend the NHS when a lead is given. We've recruited 200 new union members which shows what can be done".

A massive campaign in Lewisham, south London, is fighting threats to the local hospital. After a very successful protest march in November, another demonstration is planned for 26 January.

Maternity services at risk

Health axe-man Matthew Kershaw recommended to Tory health secretary Jeremy Hunt that the South London Healthcare NHS Trust should be broken up. Some services, he said, would carry on under new administration, others would perish. He asked Hunt to order the closure of Lewisham hospital's A&E department, used by 125,000 people a year.

Kershaw added an extra insult in his report by insisting that Lewisham's maternity unit should become a midwife-led 'birthing unit' ie one with no obstetricians or paediatricians. This is fine if there are likely to be no complications in labour. But more than half of the 4,400 pregnant women who use Lewisham hospital are classed as at 'high risk' of complications.

And as with the A&E closure, neighbouring hospitals will come under increasing pressure. Both Kings College

The Socialist Party demands on the NHS include:

- No cuts, closures or job losses in the NHS
- End privatisation. Scrap PFI and refuse to pay back the 'debt'
- Nationalise the pharmaceutical companies under democratic control and integrate them into the NHS
- For mass action to defend the NHS, including a 24-hour general strike

and Queen Elizabeth hospitals have recently been diverting ambulances carrying women on the verge of giving birth because local cutbacks mean they cannot cope.

The cuts measures would lose the hospital £195 million by 2015-16. All in order to safeguard the huge investments and profits of the private PFI firms whose greed caused the Trust's bankruptcy in the first place.

With a battle bus touring the region, door-to-door leafleting and leaflets aimed at fans of local football teams, the community campaign has done good work.

Staff at Lewisham hospital and other units facing attacks want to get involved - even when their own union leaderships try to hold them back.

Socialist Party members are encouraging nurses and other NHS workers to press hard within their union branches for a workplace ballot for industrial action. Health workers would be widely supported if they went on strike to save our local hospital and the beleaguered NHS.

Demonstrate Saturday 26 January, 12 noon, Lewisham roundabout, near railway station

See page 4 for more NHS campaigns



photo Paul Mattsson



We need an alternative to blind-alley capitalism... socialism!

It is little over a month since Tory Chancellor George Osborne stood at the dispatch box to deliver his autumn budget statement. He prefaced that vicious onslaught on the poorest – both in and out of work – with a claim that then, at best, looked foolish, and now looks ridiculous: “the British economy is healing”.

Even in that speech he had to admit that the government’s targets on deficit reduction would not be met and that cuts would continue until 2018. But he claimed that measures taken by the Con-Dems, chiefly brutal austerity, meant the economy is “on track”.

Hardly a day passes, however, without a slew of evidence in the news to the contrary. The National Institute of Economic and Social Research predicted the economy shrank by 0.3% in the last three months of 2012. That followed ‘growth’ of 0.9% in 2011. Predictions for a triple-dip recession abound.

In September Prime Minister David Cameron called for a “radical pro-growth agenda” and promised government support to building projects. But the latest Office for National Statistics figures for construction output in November showed that there was a 3.4% decline month on month and a 9.8% decline from the same period a year ago. The Construction Products Association revised its forecast for 2013 construction output to a 2% decline.

The ONS also reported a slump in manufacturing and production. Manufacturing, which makes up 10% of the economy, contracted by 0.3% in November. And now all three major credit ratings agencies have given official warnings that Britain can expect to be stripped of its AAA rating. Maintaining this was one of Osborne’s main priorities.

The retail sector is shedding high street brands. Comet’s announced closure in December was followed by Jessops and now HMV. This equates to an estimated 11,000 jobs.

The Wall Street Journal, commenting on Britain, reported that retail bosses expect more of the same in 2013. “Constrained

shoppers remain under pressure from rising inflation and are searching out bargains and saving up for special occasions, which will make the already competitive landscape even more cut-throat, putting sales and profits under increasing pressure.”

This is just a small sample of the figures which show that, as the Socialist has explained, British capitalism is in a blind alley. The best it can hope for is to keep ‘bumping along the bottom’ as it has since the autumn of 2010.

And all the Con-Dems’ measures, far from being a ‘healing salve’, massively exacerbate the situation. What the WSJ calls “constrained shoppers” are working class and middle class people who face attacks on their living standards on all fronts – public sector pay freezes, in reality pay cuts, job cuts, low pay, benefit cuts and an insecure future.

Reality of poverty

Independent journalist Charlie Cooper had a taste of what some of the cuts have meant when he spent a week living on £175.

According to the Resolution Foundation, that is the average income of someone at the ‘bottom end’ of the UK’s “low-to-middle income bracket”, which comprises eleven million UK adults.

He found the experience left him “tired, irritable and, yes, hungry”. It also gave him some insight into the poverty that exists in Britain and the precarious and depressing situation faced by those suffering it.

Cooper went to a food bank: “One woman who visited yesterday has two-month old twins. She was referred to the food bank by the children’s centre she attends. When she arrived for the first time, she wasn’t even wearing any shoes.”

So while the Tories try to paint those suffering at the hands of their cold cruel cuts as ‘skivers’ and ‘shirkers’ the reality is that:

a) With 486,000 vacancies and more than two and a half million unemployed, including 900,000 who have been unemployed for



Manufacturing and services are facing large-scale job losses in the ‘triple-dip’ recession

more than a year, there are obviously fewer jobs than there are people searching for them;

b) There is a huge and growing problem of underemployment – 1.4 million work part-time because they can’t find full-time jobs, and many full-time workers want more hours to achieve a living wage;

And c) those who have a job work some of the longest hours in Europe and contribute nearly two billion hours of unpaid overtime, the equivalent of a million full-time jobs according to the TUC.

It is unsurprising that, given these figures, the New Economic Foundation think tank has suggested that we all work fewer hours to create more jobs. This idea, sharing out the work, has long been part of the Socialist Party’s programme – with one important proviso – no loss of pay.

How would they pay for it? George Monbiot points out that there is no shortage of cash out there: “in 2012, the world’s 100 richest people became \$241 billion richer. They are now worth \$1.9 trillion: just a little less than

the entire output of the United Kingdom.”

In Britain it’s estimated that there is £800 billion sitting in the bank vaults of the big corporations as they see no easy profit in spending it. A one-off 50% levy on that idle wealth would go some way to covering the bill.

A government determined to act on behalf of ordinary people, ie not the super-rich, bankers and speculators as this lot does, could utilise such a policy immediately.

And it would make a huge impact towards easing the suffering of unemployment, borne particularly by young people. It would also put money in ‘constrained shoppers’ pockets leading to greater spending and tax income.

Building a mass movement and a new mass workers’ party that emblazons these policies on its banner, combined with a programme of nationalising utilities, banks and the commanding heights of the economy under democratic control and management of the working class, as well as expanding public services to meet all our needs, would be a good start to fighting for an alternative to blind-alley capitalism – a socialist society.

Tory minister lies about ‘lategate’... and offers no solution to youth joblessness

Well-rested Tory Business Minister, Matthew Hancock, who overslept and missed a TV debate with Youth Fight for Jobs supporter, Ian Pattison, has lied about how late he actually was. Hancock’s “30 second” gaffe is more like Hancock’s half hour.

Ian said: “I arrived at the ITV’s breakfast show Daybreak, at 6am, while the Minister was still asleep in bed. Matthew Hancock has tried to claim he was only 30 seconds late, but this is not the case. As Daybreak presenter, Matt Barbet, has said, the Tory MP was much later than that. If the minister was a jobseeker, he could lose his benefits for up to three months for such an offence.

“Hancock’s Traineeship scheme is the latest gimmick coming out of the Tories to disguise the fact they have failed to tackle the staggering problems of unemployment affecting young people. Hancock and his government are trying to shift the blame for youth unemployment away from them and their failed system, and onto the unemployed.

“Young people are not lazy. In fact, it is the Tories’ cuts agenda that is worsening the economic crisis, slashing jobs in the public and private sector. Research has revealed that it is harder to get an appren-



Ian blasted the ‘shirker’ minister

ticeship than get into Oxbridge. Hancock claims his Traineeships are a stepping stone to apprenticeships, but the whole point of an apprenticeship is to provide people with the training they need for a job. Hancock’s scheme doesn’t create any new jobs, or even promise any apprenticeships.

“Youth Fight for Jobs would still like to put the campaign’s views on his traineeship scheme to the minister. We’d like to challenge him to a debate on the scheme and the rest of his government’s policies on youth unemployment; any time, any place, one that Matthew Hancock can wake up for. Hopefully he will turn up on time!”

Youth Fight for Jobs calls for:

- A massive government scheme to create socially useful jobs and apprenticeships which pay at least the minimum wage (with no youth exemptions) and offer guaranteed jobs at the end
- Scrap all work-for-your dole schemes. Unemployed people should not be used as slave labour. If a job needs doing, someone should be employed for a proper wage to do it
- An end to job losses. We need huge investment in public services and the nationalisation of companies threatening closure, under democratic control

See www.youthfightforjobs.com for the rest of the YFJ programme and how to get involved in the campaign

The cruel reality behind the unemployment figures

Today I was being taught the new ‘conditionalities’ of signing on. One of which was a commitment to remove ‘scientific journalism’ from one of my job goals if I remain unsuccessful two weeks from now.

I broke down in tears. I cried for ten minutes. My support worker was sympathetic. She asked why I was so upset and I told her that I started education late in life because I suffered domestic violence and it knocked the confidence out of me. I then worked and studied for seven years to get GCSEs, A-levels and finally a BSc in neuroscience.

I explained that I did all of this and sacrificed so much time and even relationships so that I could earn more and have a job that was meaningful. I would have liked to go on and read graduate medicine but £9,000 a year is too steep. I’m 30, black, living with my mother and unemployed in spite of six months of searching.

To be penalised any more for a lack of work for which I’ve spent seven years training fills me with despair.

I feel powerless and aimless and muted.

I can’t keep hoping someone else will speak or act on my behalf. My predicament has led me to the Socialist Party.

Mark, a jobseeker in London

Beware: latest pensions changes

Paul Gerrard

The coalition government has confirmed its intention to introduce a new flat rate state pension from 2017. From that year the basic state pension and the second state pension (formerly the state earnings-related pension) will be amalgamated. It is claimed that the new flat-rate pension will be worth £144 a week at current prices.

The changes are being presented as a step forward for working

It's no surprise that the government is delaying the introduction of these long-promised plans until after the next general election

women, whose pension entitlement under the present system is often reduced by time spent at home looking after children.

But the 2011 census showed that nowadays the proportion of mothers in employment is less than 1% different to that for non-mothers who go out to work.

The National Pensioners' Convention has cut through the government hype. In their analysis, "the current rules allow men and women to pay 30 years' worth of National Insurance contributions in order to get a full basic and second state



photo Paul Mattsson

pension of around £150 a week. The White Paper calls for them to pay for 35 years and get £144 a week."

Even according to the Daily Telegraph, "most workers will find they have to pay more National Insurance contributions and for longer before receiving any benefit under changes long trumpeted by the government as the greatest reform of state pensions in a century."

No benefit for majority

The Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) estimates that while some groups such as the self-employed will benefit in the short term, "the main effect in the long run will be to reduce pensions for the vast majority of people."

They also dispute the claim that low-paid workers will benefit. In

2017-18, most low earners (who haven't yet worked 30 years) would under the current system accrue £5.05 of additional weekly state pension rights for 'contributing' for one extra year.

In the proposed new system, these same people would accrue £4.11 of additional weekly state pension". As the IFS put it: "the key point is that £4.11 is less than £5.05."

So it's no surprise that the government is delaying the introduction of these long-promised plans until after the next general election.

Recently some commentators have expressed the view that this government is clamping down on benefits, public sector workers, etc, but somehow 'looking after the pensioners.' After these proposals that particular myth can be laid to rest.

Honda: defend every job

Domenico Hill

South West Shop Stewards Network

Workers at the Honda car plant in Swindon were shocked when the company announced 800 job losses on 10 January. This figure was widely reported in all the news channels and newspapers.

But I spoke to a worker at Honda who told me that the number of jobs due to be cut is in fact 1,100, divided equally between production line workers, administration staff, and workers on temporary contracts. This amounts to almost a third of the workforce.

Only last September the company announced that they were

1/3

of the workforce is under threat

investing an extra £267 million in the Swindon plant and planning to increase the production of the new Civic from 183,000 a year in 2012 to



250,000 within three years.

A company spokesperson was quoted then as saying: "Sales in the UK are up 10%, so we are in a strong position. Europe is not quite so good, but is holding up."

In reality there has been a dramatic drop in sales of vehicles in Europe due to the recession, down from 17 million to 12 million. In Southern Europe, where Honda have concentrated their efforts, the decline has been even more drastic.

The Unite union branch is meeting shortly to draw up a campaign

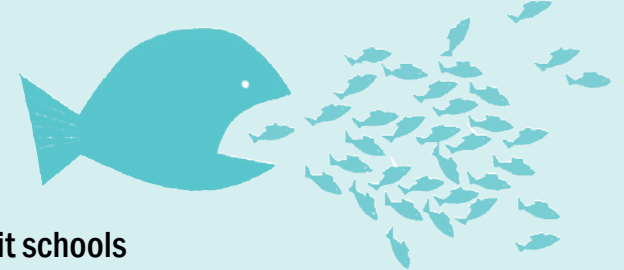
against the job cuts. Stewards have already informed management that if the threatened redundancies aren't lifted, the workforce will be balloted for industrial action. In the meantime, 'normal' relations are suspended.

The National Shop Stewards Network and the Socialist Party have already given full support to the workforce in any action they decide to take to defend all jobs at Honda.

See www.shopstewards.net



Them...



For-profit schools

Up to now, academy chains have not been allowed to declare a profit directly out of the school budget. A recent article in the Independent reports that education minister Michael Gove wants to take the next step and allow for-profit schools.

The proponents of the plan argue, "For-profit state schools are an example of applying Conservative means - faith in markets and competition - to deliver progressive ends - better free education for children with parents who lack the resources to give their children the best education" and proposes "mixed-age classrooms, where children are taught by ability rather than age".

This is nothing to do with improving education; it's about profiteering at our expense and handing over public services to big business. Of course, if you can also select the pupils that will cost you less to educate, then profit margins can be increased too.

Martin Powell-Davies

'Low pay'

70% of MPs believe they are underpaid. Already paid around £65,000 a year, Tory MPs are feeling most aggrieved, wanting a £31,000 increase. For the millions of public sector workers employed by the government to provide vital services, and for those who have to rely on already measly benefits to get by, MPs feel a 1% increase is the absolute limit.

Apparently the reason they need such a wage hike is that the 'costs of the job' are not covered by the new expenses rules. So they want to be compensated for the, albeit limited, crack-down on expenses? Don't think so mates!

Bankers' restraint?

Goldman Sachs is thinking about delaying its next round of bankers' bonuses.

Why? Poor performance? Threat of triple dip recession? Fund public services instead?

Of course not. If the bonuses aren't paid until after 6 April, the poor bankers can take advantage of the 5% cut in top-earner income tax.

In the US, Goldman Sachs paid bonuses early on 31 December - hours before taxes on earnings over \$400,000 were increased.

Every penny counts, eh?

Bob Severn

Waste

A new report 'Global Food: Waste Not, Want Not' produced by the Institution of Mechanical Engineers has found that between 30-50% of all food produced each year is wasted - between

1.2 and two billion tonnes.

The authors cite a number of reasons including inadequate investment in third world and developing nations in harvesting, transport and storage, but by far the largest identified is supermarkets rejecting crops of fruit and vegetables because they do not meet purely cosmetic standards for size and appearance. 30% of the UK's vegetable crop is not harvested for this reason.

This is at the same time that just shy of one billion people around the world are going hungry and the report expects the world population to grow by a further three billion by 2075. Time for a socialist plan of production and distribution.

Iain Dalton

Conflict of interests?

A chain reaction re-shuffle following the resignation of Lord Strathclyde means a new junior education minister has been appointed. And it sounds like John Nash will be among friends in the Tory Party establishment. He is a former chair of the British Venture Capital Association and has donated around £300,000 to the Conservative party in the last 30 years.

He clearly shares the Tories outlook for education too - Nash founded a charity which sponsors two academies in London.

Which class are you?

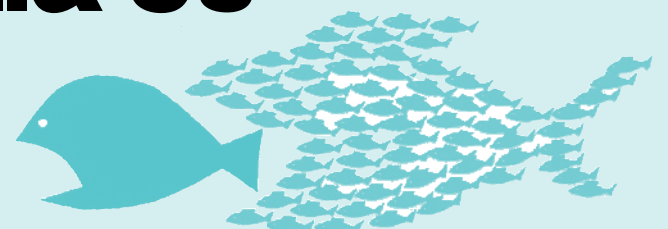
In 2011 24% of people in Britain felt they were working class, now it's nearly 60%. No wonder really when a



60% of people in Britain describe themselves as working class

university education, home ownership and 9-5 job - all the things used to trick us into thinking we'd escaped to the middle class - are all out of reach for an increasing number of us. We're all plebs now!

...& Us



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Sussex County hospital cleaning and catering

The brutal reality of privatisation

Jack Poole
Brighton and Hove Socialist Party

Cleaners and catering staff at the Royal Sussex County hospital in Brighton are feeling the effects of Cameron's broken promise to "protect the NHS". Farmed out to private contractor Sodexo in December 2012, the company announced 96 redundancies less than two weeks into the contract!

On top of this, some of the workers who had their contracts transferred to Sodexo haven't received a full pay cheque since the move.

The GMB union that organises the workforce has taken action over this, balloting the affected workers for strike action over the redundancies. There has also been two solidarity demonstrations called by the GMB and local NHS campaigns.

Labour Party supporters attended both demos. While all support for the campaign is welcome, it should be made clear that the last Labour government ramped up the scale of privatisation within the health service, opening the door to companies



photo Paul Mattsson

like Sodexo.

The workforce must be taken back in-house. Job cuts and unpaid wages are the direct result of NHS privatisation by this, and the last government.

It is clear that health workers need

their own political voice that stands for their interests, and against all cuts and privatisation. Any campaign opposed to NHS privatisation needs to recognise this otherwise we will be fighting an endless battle against whatever party is in power.

...health workers need their own political voice that stands for their interests, and against all cuts and privatisation

At the second demo it was announced that Sodexo had agreed to meet with the GMB and would work towards paying back any unpaid wages.

The redundancies are still going ahead and the results of the strike ballot should be known soon.

What is needed is a united campaign of NHS workers, focused on the strength of the unions, but drawing in the mass support of the wider anti-cuts movement to fight on the slogans: Kick out private contractors, reverse all cuts and renationalise all sectors of the NHS.

Rotherham hospital job cuts threat

On 9 January, 20 trade unionists and socialists (TUSC supporters) protested at Rotherham hospital before presenting a 3,000-signature petition to the Foundation Trust governors, opposing the drastic cuts they are proposing to local NHS services.

In October, Brian James, then the Rotherham NHS Foundation Trust chief executive, proposed a "smaller hospital, with substantially fewer beds" and a smaller workforce to save £50 million over the next four years.

TUSC made fighting these cuts the main policy of our campaign in the Rotherham parliamentary by-election held in November.

We have continued the petition since and the protest was the next step in our campaign. TUSC received widespread media coverage with two local papers, three radio stations and BBC North news reporting on the protest and petition.

Brian James then retired, no doubt on a fat-cat pension, leaving 3,500 staff not knowing whether they would even have a job.

Hundreds of nurses, therapists, clerical and technical staff and some managers were then issued with "at risk of redundancy notices". 500 jobs are at risk with possibly around 200 compulsory redundancies, including frontline nurses, health visitors and community staff.

Many staff remaining will face "down-banding" ie pay cuts for the same job, and possibly privatisation of some departments.

Three wards are earmarked for closure including A6 ward for the elderly, losing 33 beds. And the management want a 20% cut in non-elective surgery and treatments.

Ralph Dyson, our TUSC candidate in the recent by-election said: "If these cuts go ahead, Rotherham will be reduced to not much more than a glorified cottage hospital.

"Why should the NHS staff and people of Rotherham have to pay this price when Tory cuts and privatisation, and Trust mismanagement are to blame?"

Alistair Tice

Prison closures = more privatisation

On 10 January the closure of seven public sector prisons was announced. Bullwood Hall, Camp Hill, Canterbury, Gloucester, Kingston, Shepton Mallet and Shrewsbury are due to close by 31 March. This comes after the announcement in November of the privatisation of four more prisons. John Hancock from the executive of the prison officers' union POA spoke to the Socialist.

"To say that these prisons have got to close by 31 March isn't realistic. The staff are very upset and feel let down. But I believe it's privatisation by the back door.

The inmates from the prisons that they are closing are going to have to go somewhere else. Which means overcrowding the rest of the public prisons. Then if those public prisons get a bad name, the Tories can say "private good, public bad - let's make more private prisons." I think it's all being driven by privatisation by greedy politicians and their cronies.

It makes a mockery of rehabilitation. The best way of rehabilitating someone in our opinion is to have them in local prisons with staff who know the area. They can then help with things like housing, drug programmes, etc.

If they're in a big prison miles from anywhere they haven't got visits. And when they finish their sentence the staff have to say: "Just go back to where you've come from mate".

Local prisons like Shepton Mallet and Gloucester employ quite a lot of people. Shepton Mallet has 300 staff, 120 of whom are prison



POA members outside Wormwood Scrubs June 2011 photo Keith Dickinson

officers. Closure will affect the local economy. There won't be compulsory redundancies among the prison officers but the civilian staff may not be protected. And there's no guarantee about further prison closures.

The POA will put as much pressure as we can on the government to reverse this decision. We fought the Maghaberry prison closure in

Northern Ireland and that was reversed. But united action against austerity from all the trade unions is even more important.

And that's why we need to promote the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC). I think standing as TUSC candidates could be one way we could get involved in the fight against cuts and privatisation."

Probation privatisation: the crime of the century!

"This act of vandalism destroys 105 years of work. I joined the Probation Service to help reduce crime and protect victims; breaking it up will increase risk, increase cost and ultimately increase crime".

Chas Berry, vice chair of the Probation Officers' union Napo in Kent was responding to the announcement that justice secretary Chris Grayling wants to privatise most work carried out by Napo members and transfer it to the private sector.

"No one is saying we couldn't do more to reduce re-offending, but Grayling's plans will transfer

this complex task to multi-national corporations such as G4S, Serco and Sodexo whose main interest is making money.

G4S had to be bailed out at the Olympics but still took the money and they are about to be given another large pay cheque".

Staff at HMP Canterbury were also stunned to learn that the prison is to be one of seven to close across the country.

Kent Federation of Trades Union Councils, said it would offer whatever practical support it could to oppose these plans and help or-

ganise those fighting the government's austerity agenda.

Federation secretary Dave Semple said: "My own union, PCS, has members in the prisons and elsewhere in the criminal justice system.

"We are all facing similar attacks on our jobs and our conditions of service and we need to stand together against this attempt to dismantle our public services.

"The prison officers' union (POA) has called upon the TUC to organise coordinated strike action to defeat these attacks and it's about time we made this a reality."

In brief

No to NHS attacks

NHS workers are being threatened with the break-up of the national pay and conditions agreement, Agenda for Change. If this goes through, workers will face serious cuts in their pay and conditions. It is clearly an attempt to make more of the NHS ripe for privatisation, by allowing the big health firms to boost their profits by paying poor wages.

Any concessions on these proposals will just mean the employers coming back for more. But Unison's leaders are arguing that accepting some cuts will stop some health trusts opting out of the agreement.

This is a divisive and dangerous strategy. Unite and GMB, with fewer NHS members have come out against the proposals.

Unison is consulting health workers on this, finishing on 24 January. It is important to reject these proposals and demand nationally led industrial action against them.

Stop fire cuts

The Fire Brigades Union has organised a demonstration against proposals by the mayor of London, Boris Johnson, to close 12 fire stations, remove 18 fire engines and slash around 400 firefighter jobs. These cuts will obviously increase response times and jeopardise public safety.

The stations earmarked for closure are: Belsize, Bow, Clapham, Clerkenwell, Downham, Kingsland, Knightsbridge, New Cross, Silvertown, Southwark, Westminster and Woolwich.

The demonstration is on 21 January at 12 noon, outside the London Fire Brigade headquarters, 169 Union Street, London, SE1 0LL

Plymouth

Similar savage cuts to fire cover are also being proposed in the Plymouth area, where the chair of the firefighters' union FBU has said: "I'm not going to rule out strike action."

Police pay cut

Home Secretary Theresa May has confirmed that the starting salary for new police officers in England and Wales will be cut by £4,000 to £19,000. May is saying this will "modernise" pay and conditions and "increase local flexibility". Many other public sector workers will recognise this type of 'modernisation' and 'flexibility'.

RMT fights sackings

In 2007, London Underground (LU) inherited a contract with the Trainpeople agency from Silverlink. In breach of agreements with unions, these workers worked for five years in LU uniform while Trainpeople paid them as little as £6.75 an hour.

The Trainpeople staff joined RMT and organised for equal rights with permanent staff as stipulated in the 2010 Agency Worker Regulations.

Then, without warning, LU terminated its contract with the Trainpeople Agency a year early. Now the RMT is campaigning for LU to reverse this injustice and employ the agency staff.

There have been protests all over London and the RMT is balloting all Trainpeople staff working for LU for strike action. See www.shopstewards.net for more information.

A day in the life... Young, low-paid, bullied and angry

Hannah Parker

If I'm opening the pub, I start at 9am. A managerial staff member should arrive at 8am to let us in but usually me and another kitchen worker wait for ten minutes. So, management is over an hour late. We moan and I get the latest news of run-ins with them from the kitchen's point of view. We get little chance to talk during the day.

I open the pub. Despite having over an hour's worth of work and only 50 minutes to do it in, I am left alone downstairs. This is all the staff we'll have until 3 or 4 o'clock.

Taking risks

I have had one customer grab my bum, one grab my arm and scream in my face, both these customers were made to leave. But customers who whistle at me to serve them, are rude or shout are not asked to leave. The old manager wanted to make more money and would never refuse someone a drink.

I signed a risk assessment that says a person cannot be left alone

If evening jobs were not completed, we would have to stay until they were finished without pay

in the pub during the day but managers often do leave, so I may serve around 30 people drinks and food

on my own.

Last week the pub was especially busy so we did our evening jobs after closing. Management said we

These are non-unionised workers on short-term, zero hour contracts and most staff haven't worked for the company a year

shouldn't be paid for extra because we "should have made time earlier". Next day, a management sign said we had worked appallingly the night before. In future if evening jobs were not completed, we would have to stay until they were finished without pay.

We have two full-time kitchen staff and one part-time. When management refused to cover their breaks and workers couldn't get a break until their shift was nearly over, they refused to come in for three days and we had to close the kitchen.

But these are non-unionised workers on short-term, zero hour contracts and most staff haven't worked for the company a year. They feel isolated and felt forced to take action independently. After that one member went to Citizen's Advice (CAB) for advice. A manager later told me if he went to the CAB again, she would fire him.

One kitchen worker quit, then tried to claim Jobseeker's Allowance. The duty manager filled out the form for the jobcentre and gloat-



Youth Fight for Jobs demands permanent, full-time, decent jobs photo Paul Mattsson

ed he would not get Jobseeker's. He quit because she made his and our jobs unbearable. He has a family who depended on his income. When I said it was sad as his family would struggle she laughed.

Turnover

By 2pm, I still haven't had a break. The 3 o'clock staff arrive. I apologise that I haven't had time to wash up, but they understand. We have all been through it.

In my five months in the job, I've seen eight staff members come and go. But the newest member of staff (brother of the acting manager) just received a pay rise above all the rest. Two staff members then handed in

their resignations. They have both been working for the company over a year. Nobody denies he deserved a pay rise, we all do and we all support one another. But this is obviously nepotism from a bullying manager.

Management keep putting people on shifts less than eleven hours apart, which is illegal. When staff ask for this to be changed, the manager often replies that she has to work shifts less than eleven hours apart. But seeing as she writes the rota herself it's a bit different to us having to do it when we don't get a say! **It's class war 2013 style and we need to fight back. If you are working in a low-paid poorly organised job in London, contact youthfightforjobs@gmail.com**

Socialist Party national youth meeting

9-10 February London
Email clairelaker@socialistparty.org.uk
for details and to book a place



Reject the wedge between generations

Claude Mickleson

Anti-cuts activist, Forest of Dean

"The old are money-grabbers who want something for nothing and fuss when they don't get it." ... "The young won't do a fair day's work and laze around causing trouble." While the middle aged and "baby boomers" were 'brought up with unrealistic expectations' and 'demand more than the country can afford'.

These common typecasts probably fit a few people but most people of any age just want a reasonable life of peace and prosperity. Such stereotyping pleases the capitalists, who want to drive a wedge between us. I think the young are having a bad time of it.

I'm now 89 and left school 75 years ago. I had to take any available job and delivered groceries on a bike for ten shillings (50 pence) a week.

Even then, it couldn't keep a growing lad. My parents still had to keep me, living hand to mouth, as my dad's job was insecure and there were brothers and sisters. When the war came I joined the RAF, where I was fed and clothed.

A youngster today has higher expectations - that's called progress. These days, someone leaving school at 16 or older, probably better educated than I was, is lucky to get a job.



Claude leaflets on an anti-cuts protest photo Gloucestershire Socialist Party

This creates many problems unless he/she has well-heeled parents to support them, help them study and provide a deposit on a house.

Jobs for all

It's a crime that young people cannot get employment, something we all need to fulfil our lives and provide for our needs. The capitalist class wants to discipline workers by saying: "There's plenty waiting for your job if you don't behave."

A socialist's principle should

be that we are all fully trained and gainfully employed for the prosperity of us all. If any person is left on the scrapheap for any time it can become much more difficult to return to work and that's not good for them or the rest of us.

Then there's the Old Codgers, who served in the armed forces, worked in factories, farms, shipyards, coalmines or shops. Few except the rich escaped 'their duty'. Life was hard. If the baby boomers' lives later improved it was because their parents, after a grim war, were



Protesting against education cuts photo Paul Mattsson

determined that their children would have a better life.

Thatcher

Times improved slowly until 1979 when we were burdened with the 'Iron Lady'. We had to fight for every improvement - now we must defend them.

Since Thatcher life has become harder - especially as we were let down by Labour which always professed to support the working class, yet the leadership always fails to

defend us.

Now we face an extension of the working age despite a desperate shortage of jobs and a million young people facing a lousy start in life. In future people will be getting older, more infirm and worn out and slaving until they drop, while the young are out of work and kicking their heels.

We should make sure that everyone who is fit and able to work has a decent, fairly paid job. Those too old or disabled should be provided for and cared for with dignity.

RENATIONALISE THE RAILWAYS NOW!

On 19 January 1993, John Major's Tory government passed the British Coal and British Rail (Transfer Proposals) Act which led to the splitting up and privatisation of British Rail. Bob Crow, general secretary of the Rail, Maritime and Transport (RMT) union, spoke to the Socialist about the state of the railways 20 years on.



Bob Crow speaking at a National Shop Stewards Network rally photo Paul Mattsson

What do you think of the railways today compared to the last days of British Rail, and what are the solutions?

They are a rip-off and a disgrace, what used to be a public service has been turned into a money-making racket for a gang of spivs and speculators from the private Train Operating Companies. The taxpayer subsidy has tripled and more than a billion pounds a year is being robbed out of the railways in private profit. There is only one solution, full and total renationalisation.

operators public subsidy when they fail to hit their profit targets. They would soon chuck the keys back.

Labour's position on the railways has been a disgrace and of course John Prescott played a major role in keeping the train companies on the gravy train when Labour was in office. They are terrified of big business, but of course we support those pushing for them to side with the British people rather than the rip-off merchants on this issue.

What would the implementation of the McNulty report mean for rail workers and passengers?

It would turn our railways into a criminals' paradise and would compromise public and staff safety throughout the network. Throwing the guards off the trains and axing station staff would be a

'The taxpayer subsidy has tripled. Over a billion pounds a year is being robbed in private profit'

disaster waiting to happen. McNulty, set up under a Labour government, is about cutting costs while ring-fencing profits. It doesn't take a genius to work out that it's a reckless gamble that ignores the real reason why our railways cost more - fat dividends for rail company shareholders.

How do you think the trains could be renationalised?

We now have nearly 70% public backing for full renationalisation since the West Coast Mainline fiasco. It could be done easily, as each franchise comes up you take it back in house, just like what happened on East Coast. You also stop the corporate welfare of bunging the train

Is there a difference between how British Rail was run and your idea of renationalised rail?

You have to have one organisation, publicly owned and publicly accountable. That is the bottom line. Once you end the current fragmentation and profiteering, costs will fall and money sucked out of the system can be reinvested in infrastructure, fleet, operations and safe staffing levels. It's dead simple. British Rail achieved just that and of course the world has moved on since it was smashed up but the principle remains the same. Frankly, if the EU don't like it then that's tough luck.

Why did you support the POA's resolution 5 at the 2012 TUC congress, calling for the TUC to look at how a general strike can be organised?

There is hardly any group of workers that hasn't taken a battering under this government. It's pure common sense to link the struggles rather than fighting our own corners. It would scare the life out of the bunch of chancers who have seized power without any democratic mandate to sack workers, drive down wages and smash up public services.

Why do you support the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition?

Because it does what it says on the tin without any of the baggage and big-business agenda of the main political parties. Who else you gonna vote for?

privatised train timetable

Electrification and the environment

Using electric trains is far more efficient and potentially far better for the environment. Britain's first electric line was the City and South London railway in 1890, London's first deep tube, now part of London Underground's Northern Line. Most of the Southern Railway network was electrified between 1923 and 1939. Yet today there are still large parts of the railway yet to be made electric. A socialist plan for the rails would include electrifying the remaining lines. Of course, this needs to be linked to a socialist plan for renationalised utilities that would replace polluting energy such as coal and gas with renewable sources.

Guaranteed income

Train Operating Companies (TOCs) 'predict' their revenue - if a TOC takes less than 98% of that forecast, it gets bailed out by the taxpayer for 50% or 80% (depending on the size of the shortfall) of the missing takings. In October, it was announced that the annual 'revenue support' totalled £451 million, a big chunk of the railways' annual £4 billion government subsidy (double the subsidy for British Rail).

Socialist nationalisation

British Rail wasn't perfect - though far better than the mess that exists today. When it was first formed, in 1948, many of the same bosses stayed in place. Regions competed with each other. The Socialist Party calls for the railways to be renationalised under democratic working class control and management, using the experience and expertise of rail workers and passengers, to run trains as a public service and not a big business cash cow.

fatcatrailways

Profits provided to

January 1993
British Coal and British Rail (Transfer Proposals) Act passed, allowing the break-up of British Rail

November 1993
Railways Act to split British Rail into over 100 companies

April 1994
Break-up and selling off of British Rail starts, including Railtrack taking over the infrastructure

May 1996
Railtrack privatised

May 1997
New Labour government elected. Instead of reversing privatisation as promised, completes remaining privatisations

September 1997
Southall rail crash. Train with faulty Automated Warning System passes two cautionary signals and a red signal to collide with freight train. Seven people killed

November 1999
Paddington rail crash after train passes red signal. 31 people killed and 521 injured

October 2000
Hatfield rail crash. Four killed after train goes over broken rail at 115 mph. Cracked rail was known about before the accident

May 2001
Railtrack pays £137 million dividend to shareholders, paid for by subsidy from government

October 2001
Railtrack goes into administration with £580 million cost of railway repairs

October 2002
'Not for dividend' Network Rail takes over railway infrastructure

October 2004
Labour conference backs Aslef union motion by two to one to renationalise train operating companies. Labour transport secretary Alistair Darling overrules policy

February 2007
Grayrigg derailment, Cumbria. One killed and 88 injured after West Coast Main Line train goes over faulty points

November 2009
East Coast Main Line renationalised following failure under private hands, leading to improved punctuality and customer satisfaction

May 2011
Sir Roy McNulty's 'Rail Value for Money' report calls for drastic cuts while keeping same privatised rail structure

October 2012
FirstGroup deal to take over West Coast Main Line franchise scrapped due to errors in bidding process, at a predicted state cost of £100 million. Virgin franchise extended for two years

Rebuilding Rail

'Rebuilding Rail' shows need for unified public train operator

An Aslef rail union member

Overcrowding is now a major concern for travellers with implications for safety. The rush hour becomes crush hour and the festive season a battle to find a seat. Ticket purchasing can be very complex and the lack of cooperation between service providers means passengers can be stranded. There is increasing pressure from firms to cut ticket office and station staff - more potential travellers are discouraged and turn to the car. The promised electrification between Manchester and Liverpool will use quarter-century old trains, such as the lack of a viable UK-based train building capacity. Section six of Rebuilding Rail is a discussion on the objections which supporters of privatisation make to proposals to remove the profit motive and franchise system. These include objections that privatisation means innovation, investment and efficiency, the cost of buying assets back, and the restrictions imposed by European Union law on public ownership. While these issues can't be ignored, the main problem to be solved is to develop a movement with the political will to overcome these and other obstacles in the way of returning the rail industry to public ownership, and to introducing for the first time measures to ensure democratic control.

Solutions

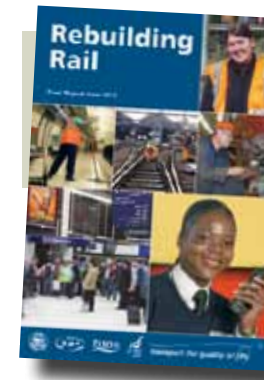
In the part of Rebuilding Rail dealing with "The Solution", the authors list many aims for the rail industry with which socialists would agree and have been campaigning for. They point out that "the purpose of the railway system is primarily to provide a public service not private profit". Public ownership is therefore the solution - including train operating, infrastructure, rolling stock, etc. There needs to be a structure to provide integration, expanding capacity, more freight on rail and rail industry manufacturing. Some other points have not kept pace with reality, eg "devolution to regions and counties" at a time when county councils are withdrawing from doing anything themselves and becoming commissioning bodies handing contracts to private firms. Interesting figures are given relating to train and rail manufacturing and comparisons of the UK with other European countries, Japan and New Zealand, in terms of public/private ownership, and the rail share of the freight market. The authors show that "a unified public sector train operator" along with direct public ownership of Network Rail, control of buying and building trains and increased use of freight on rail are necessary and beneficial. When maintenance work was brought back in-house by Network Rail, the savings were £264 million a year. Renewals and enhancements to infrastructure are still outsourced with profits estimated at £200 million a year. The small number of companies which own trains and lease them to the Train Operating Companies are hugely profitable, one estimate is that profits before tax and interest are 41% of income. But the case against privatisation is not solely based on avoidable costs. There is effectively no competition in the privatised railway. There is hardly ever a real choice because one franchise has an effective monopoly.

Costs of privatisation

Costs, which the authors say would be cut out by public ownership, include Network Rail debt interest which would be less expensive to the government, fragmentation costs, profits for contractors at various levels, and rewards for investors. Removing these costs could lead to an 18% reduction across all fares, rather than the 6% increase introduced this month. It is estimated that 5% of Train Operating Companies' costs are caused by their interface with Network Rail, and that between 300 and 500 rail workers are engaged in delay attribution (identifying reasons for delays). The industry guide to delay attribution runs to 90 pages. When maintenance work was brought back in-house by Network Rail, the savings were £264 million a year. Renewals and enhancements to infrastructure are still outsourced with profits estimated at £200 million a year. The small number of companies which own trains and lease them to the Train Operating Companies are hugely profitable, one estimate is that profits before tax and interest are 41% of income. But the case against privatisation is not solely based on avoidable costs. There is effectively no competition in the privatised railway. There is hardly ever a real choice because one franchise has an effective monopoly.



RMT members take action against low pay photo A Hill



'Rebuilding Rail' shows need for unified public train operator

An Aslef rail union member

Researchers Dr Ian Taylor and Dr Lynn Sloman, funded by the railway trade unions, interviewed a cross-section of people involved in the industry to produce Rebuilding Rail for the Transport for Quality of Life group. The participants include such diverse views as those of Lord (Andrew) Adonis a former (unelected) Labour Transport Secretary, and Bob Crow and others from the RMT union, and leading figures from the Aslef union. Any attempt to map out a future for the rail industry is to be welcomed but a comprehensive plan should involve the experience, expertise and proposals of the workforce themselves and the travelling public. The authors claim that the current franchising system has failed all the major tests - failing society as a whole, the economy and the environment. They say that £1 billion could be saved annually for the benefit of wider society, by removing the profit motive. The cost of running the railway has increased since privatisation when Tory propaganda said costs would fall. Fares have risen 50% in ten years, and are up to ten times higher than in other parts of Europe. A rail season ticket is a major item of expenditure. Freight charges have played a part in discouraging more freight on rail. A senior accounting lecturer at the University of Essex, John Stittle, offers the following view: "The state is putting an awful lot in. If British Rail had the same funds now we would have a gold-plated state railway."

Clearly some increase in costs resulted from more services being run and catch-up expenditure on infrastructure which was neglected. Even so, privatisation has seen virtually no increase in electrification which benefits reliability and the environment. Freight charges have played a part in discouraging more freight on rail. A senior accounting lecturer at the University of Essex, John Stittle, offers the following view: "The state is putting an awful lot in. If British Rail had the same funds now we would have a gold-plated state railway."

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Building a working class political voice

Brixton Hill: Opposing Labour's 'cuts cooperative'

Steve Nally
Brixton Hill TUSC candidate

It may be freezing in Brixton Hill ward but our fighting message has been warmly received on the doorsteps and streets.

The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) campaign for the 17 January byelection has chal-

lenged the bankruptcy of the three main political parties. Lambeth Labour's 'cooperative' council has bent over backwards in cooperating with the Con-Dems' cuts!

There have been £30 million of cuts since 2010 with a further £89 million to cut by 2016. Child poverty, overcrowding and unemployment are endemic in the south London borough, but Labour cuts the

youth service, gets rid of its housing stock and makes redundancies.

Labour no longer fights for working class communities. TUSC is building a serious, fighting alternative to all the careerists and suits that use the working class as a stepping stone to better things.

TUSC has exposed the scandal of 670 Lambeth families facing eviction due to housing benefit cuts, the 13% of households that are overcrowded and the decimation of a much needed youth service.

From the top of Brixton Hill you can see the City of London and Canary Wharf offices of the big businesses stashing £800 billion away as they can't find any profitable outlet for it.

Working class people made that money and we now have to build a movement and political representation that will get that money back and to reclaim our future.

**TUSC
AGAINST
CUTS**

The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (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 socialists including the Socialist Party.
www.tusc.org.uk

Fighting closures in Wirral

Hugh Caffrey

Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) candidates are contesting two byelections in Wirral, Merseyside, on 17 January, in opposition to the Labour council's £109 million cuts plan.

The council intends to make £39 million of these cuts within the next 14 months, while stashing over £20 million away in reserves!

TUSC's Heswall candidate Greg North said: "After attending university, I returned to the Wirral to find job opportunities rare, and have worked since then as a taxi driver.

"I will oppose Labour's cuts budget.

"We should be demanding back the £109 million in funding which the Tory government have stolen."

Mark Halligan, a Unite union shop steward, is standing in Leasowe and Moreton East: "I was born and have lived all my life on the Wirral. I work at a major factory within the ward.

"The election of the Con-Dem government made me realise I could no longer sit back and accept the endless cuts, so I joined the Socialist Party and became active in TUSC."

Both candidates will, if elected, use their council position to fight the local closures. Both will argue for an alternative council strategy using reserves and borrowing to safeguard services while mobilising a massive fight against the Tory-Liberal government.

Local authority unions are now considering industrial action, which would be fully backed by TUSC.

Expanding sales of the Socialist

Sarah Wrack
The Socialist sales organiser

Sales and subscriptions of the Socialist reached 83% of the national target in the last quarter of 2012. The Socialist Party Northern region reached 108%.

There were particularly successful sales during the university fresher fairs, when there was a special deal combined with Megaphone, the magazine of Socialist Students.

Also for the 20 October TUC demonstration, when thousands of people were keen to read the Socialist Party's ideas for what should come next in the struggle against cuts. Many people took up our special subscriptions offers.

Now local Socialist Party branches need to make plans for the coming three months. Start with the basics - who is responsible for keeping track of paper sales and subscriptions?

New sales

What one extra step can your branch take this quarter that it wasn't doing last quarter - a new workplace to sell outside, trying to do an extra campaign stall each Saturday?

If every branch sold five extra copies a week or got five more subscriptions, we would reach our target - who in your area knows someone who might take out a subscription? What about local union branches or community groups?

These are also places to appeal to for May Day greetings this year, to celebrate International Workers' Day while raising essential money for funding the paper that fights all cuts. See www.socialistparty.org.uk/mayday - as well as future issues of the Socialist - for more details.

Most importantly, the Socialist should be part of all the Socialist Party's campaign work. That means selling it on all activity, reading it, using it to discuss our ideas and also writing for it.

Send us reports of protests or letters about something you've been discussing at work or in your branch meeting.

Let us know your plans to increase sales and subscriptions - circulation@socialistparty.org.uk

Indian embassy protest: raging against rape



photo Damini

Claire Laker-Mansfield

Rage, disbelief and above all a deep sense of solidarity were on display at a protest outside the Indian embassy on 7 January. Socialist Party members joined 500 women and men to support India's growing anti-rape movement.

Disgust at the horrific gang rape which sparked the movement was matched by an understanding of the endemic nature of this crime in Indian society. Placard slogans included 'don't blame the victims'.

Protesters were clearly looking for answers as to how we can campaign to stop rape and violence against women. Socialist Party members were proud to be able to point out the work

of our sister party in India, New Socialist Alternative (www.socialism.in).

We raised the need to view rape within the context of the widespread sexism within societies based on class oppression, and to link it to the struggle against austerity and capitalism.

We also raised the need to fight sexism in Britain. The Socialist Students campaign Rape is No Joke, which takes up the issue of 'rape jokes' in comedy, drew widespread support with many signing up to get involved.

As the movement continues in India, young women and men across the world are drawing inspiration from this struggle as well as gaining confidence to fight sexism and oppression in all its forms.

Socialist Party meetings

Find out about more meetings and other events at www.socialistparty.org.uk/whatson

Hackney and Islington

Israel-Palestine: how can the conflict be ended?

Wednesday 23 January, 7.30pm

Olive cafe (downstairs), Stoke Newington High Street, London N16 7PL

Huddersfield

What happened to the Arab Spring?

Thursday 24 January, 7.15pm

Irish Centre, Fitzwilliam Street, Huddersfield HD1 5BB

Leeds North West

The environment and global warming

Tuesday 22 January, 7.30pm

Upstairs, Packhorse Pub, 208 Woodhouse Lane, Leeds LS2 9DX

South East Socialist Party

Marxist day school

Saturday 26 January, 10am-4pm

For info contact Jon Redford on 07894 716095

Swansea

No to benefit cuts - exposing the welfare myths

Thursday 24 January, 7.30pm

Dyafthy Community Centre, Chapel Street, Swansea SA1 1NB

Wales Socialist Party conference

Saturday 26 - Sunday 27 January

Cardiff - phone 029 2044 0571 for more details

West London

Housing, jobs and benefits under attack!

Thursday 24 January, 7.30pm

West London Trade Union Centre, 33-35 High Street, Acton, London W3 6ND

Get involved

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Planning for the Planet

How socialism could save the environment

Book launch with author Pete Dickenson

Thursday 31 January, 7pm

Brick Lane Bookshop, 166 Brick Lane, London E1 6RU

Free entry but please contact the bookshop to

reserve a place: 020 7247 0216

info@bricklanebookshop.com

Nearest tube stations: Aldgate East, Shoreditch

High Street, Liverpool Street

Order your copy from www.socialistbooks.org.uk



Northern Ireland: Flag issue turmoil illustrates failure of the 'peace process'

Trade unions must offer a clear cross-community, anti-sectarian class alternative

Ciaran Mulholland
CWI Northern Ireland

Turmoil over the issue of the flying of the union flag has now continued across Northern Ireland for six weeks. The protests, involving the blocking of roads, petrol bombs and frequent rioting, began on 3 December when Belfast City Council voted to fly the flag over City Hall on 17 "designated days" rather than 365 days a year.

On some nights as many as 80 roads have been blocked. The police have used water cannon and fired potentially lethal plastic bullets and over 100 protesters have been arrested.

The worst violence has occurred in East Belfast where the local Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) appears to be acting independently of the central UVF leadership.

Democratic Unionist Party (DUP - the largest unionist party) leader, and First Minister, Peter Robinson has stated that the protesters now only represent a "thin layer of unionism".

Robinson's party played an important role in kicking off the trouble when it and the second largest unionist party, the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP), together circulated 40,000 leaflets on the flag issue in the run-up to the City council vote. This was despite the DUP and UUP on Lisburn City council quietly agreeing to the same arrangement for flying the union flag.

Now the leaders of the main unionist parties are trying to regain control of the situation. They are desperate to simultaneously play the card of sectarian division in order to maintain their vote, but also wish to play the role of responsible bourgeois politicians seeking to provide stability and social peace.

While the total numbers involved are relatively small there is no doubt that the issue has acted as a lightning rod for widespread dissatisfaction with the peace process which has built up over time in the Protestant community. There is a sense that "everything is going in one direction", that is, Protestants are losing out to Catholics.

Progressive Unionist Party (the PUP is linked to the UVF) leader Billy Hutchinson has argued "Sinn Féin [the largest nationalist party] are acting outside the spirit of the Good Friday Agreement". This is the reason that the PUP have given for reversing their previous conciliatory approach on the flags issue.

Extreme right winger Jim Allister of the Traditional Unionist Voice (TUV) has condemned Sinn Féin's "aggressive cultural war". Allister's

party is small but this assertion rings true for many more Protestants than those who are prepared to directly support him.

At the same time many Catholics continue to believe that they are subject to sectarian discrimination. They hold that they are dealt with more harshly by the police. They know that they are more likely to be poor and unemployed than Protestants.

The real problem is that the peace process, established by the 1998 Good Friday Agreement, has failed to deliver for working class or young people whatever their background. Under the structures established by the Good Friday Agreement it is assumed that everyone belongs to one or other of two mutually exclusive communities.

While all sections of the Protestant community have been affected by the flag issue it finds its sharpest expression in the most deprived working class areas. The rioting and the road blocks are in part a distorted form of class anger directed at the unionist political establishment represented in the Assembly and on the Executive.

Under capitalism, all that is possible is a sharing out of political power and a sharing out of poverty and unemployment.

Unionist parties

While the protests have been mainly organised through social media, a leadership has emerged over the past weeks and is attempting to assert itself. On 3 January the "Ulster Peoples Forum" (UPF) was launched to represent this new layer. Willie Frazer was elected as its spokesman.

The UPF has adopted two key demands: "A return to direct rule because of the failing of our political representatives" and "the Union Flag to be flown from every council building across Northern Ireland".

Such strident demands are designed to put pressure on the mainstream unionist parties (the DUP and UUP) and to carve out a base for Frazer and his allies.

The UPF has counter-posed itself to the "Unionist Forum" convened by the DUP and UUP and which also involves the PUP and the Ulster Defence Association (UDA)-linked Ulster Political Research Group (UPRG).

The Unionist Forum is a transparent attempt by the DUP and UUP to gain control of what is a confused and fluid situation.

Many unionist politicians have argued that the mobilisation of sufficient numbers of Protestant voters will reverse the flag decision. Some have taken this argument further



There is a widespread sense of unease that Northern Ireland is being dragged back to its more violent past

and raised the question of unionist unity or a single unionist party. Such unity may amount to little more than the DUP swallowing the UUP almost whole.

The UVF-linked PUP has had a very high profile throughout the protests and could gain electorally as a result. It has reported an influx of new members.

The PUP is strident on sectarian issues and is shortly to announce a programme of "cultural counter-attack" and "re-Britification". Simultaneously it constantly raises issues of class, pointing out that all working class people are suffering.

The Alliance party, the target of loyalist wrath after it used its casting vote in Belfast council to limit the flying of the union flag, had made marginal gains in recent elections. However its victory in the East Belfast Westminster seat at the last general election was in large part accidental. Thousands of Protestant working class voters lined up behind the Alliance Party in order to deliver a bloody nose to Peter Robinson who was mired in a corruption scandal at the time.

Demographic change

While most of the rioting has involved Protestant youths battling with the police there has been a number of clashes between Catholics and Protestants especially at the Short Strand/Lower Newtownards Road interface area.

Dissident republican paramilitaries have consciously intervened to stoke the fires of sectarian division "offering" to "defend" the Short Strand. The SDLP and Sinn Féin encourage Catholics to view this issue as a simple one of "democracy", often employing strident and sectarian language.

In their view Belfast is now a majority Catholic or nationalist city and consequently the union flag should come down. This reflects the argument that demographic change is inexorably moving in one direction. At a certain time a tipping point will be reached and the majority of the

population of Northern Ireland will be Catholic. Sinn Féin essentially holds that Protestants should "accept reality" and "move on".

This line of argument displays a profound amnesia. For three generations Catholics in Northern Ireland refused to recognise the "democracy" of Northern Ireland.

In their view they had been coerced into an artificial statelet and they would not bow down and accept this situation. They were perfectly justified in this stance. Why now do nationalist and republican politicians assume that Protestants must accept the formal democracy of losing their majority position in the North, despite their fears of what a capitalist united Ireland would mean for them?

Political alternative

The picture is in many ways bleak but this can change, and change quickly. The trade unions are best placed to bring together workers in the workplaces and communities to discuss contentious issues, as well as burning class questions, and where possible initiate cross community, anti-sectarian committees that can counter sectarianism, including sectarian attacks on either community, and offer a class alternative.

Against the current background of conflict sectarian politicians continue to impose cuts on all workers. Northern Ireland will be hit harder than anywhere else by cuts in welfare payments.

The abolition of the public sector body which is responsible for housing, the Housing Executive, was announced by DUP minister Nelson McCausland, on 9 January. The Assembly continues its deliberations over the future of the Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA) but clearly intends to make sharp cuts in this vital student allowance.

Large-scale working class opposition to the cuts has already been expressed on the streets and in the workplaces in 2010 and 2011. But since 30 November 2011 there has

been a lull in the class struggle.

There is no doubt that the vast majority of workers and young people are opposed to the violence. There is a widespread sense of unease that Northern Ireland is being dragged back to its more violent past. In each community there are many who are consciously anti-sectarian and who see clearly the role of the sectar-

The issue has acted as a lightning rod for widespread dissatisfaction with the peace process... in the Protestant community

ian politicians. The majority of both Catholics and Protestants however are divided on the issue of the union flag.

So far there has not been an opportunity for the working class as a whole to give voice to its opposition to the violence. There has been two "peace" demonstrations in Belfast city centre each drawing crowds of about 1,000. The organisers have insisted that the protests are non-political.

Such an approach will not succeed in mobilising working class people from either community. The issues are very much political.

Twenty years ago the Socialist Party pioneered an approach on the issue of contentious parades which focused on recognising the rights of each community, but also on the over-arching right of the working class as a whole not to be dragged into conflict. A similar approach should be taken now.

However, if a political alternative is not built, then reactionary, sectarian groups can develop further and gain support. A new mass party of the working class, which actively combats sectarianism, is urgently needed.

See socialistworld.net for the full, in depth, version of this article

Committee for a Workers' International (CWI)

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



The CWI website contains news, reports and analysis from around the world.

www.socialistworld.net

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.

Workers' MPs?

MPs want to raise their salary by £20,000 (32%). In an anonymous survey MPs said they deserved £86,250 a year. Our entire political elite is out of touch and plagued by arrogant self-interest.

I'm a shop worker and Usdaw shop steward who received a 2% pay rise last year, it would be unforgivable if MPs awarded themselves a 32% pay rise. Other public sector workers, who like MPs are paid by the taxpayer, have suffered pay freezes, pay cuts, job losses and attacks on their pensions.

I wrote to my MP, Labour's Nia Griffith, asking how she responded to the survey. Nia is also part of the 'Udaw group of MPs'. But Labour doesn't support striking workers and poses no real opposition to the most vicious government since before the war.

Trade union members' dwindling wages should not go to a party of big business but to a party accountable to, and fighting for, workers and their families. Unions should disaffiliate from the Labour Party and aid the building of a new mass workers' party!

Scott Jones, Llanelli

Value for money

Labour MPs reckon they're worth £77,000 a year?! Tories think they're worth £97,000?! The Tories are good value when you consider what they get done for their class. On that basis Labour MPs hardly even deserve the average worker's wage!

Alec Price

Stop privatisation

Harmoni, the largest private sector provider of out of hours GP services in the NHS is facing allegations that its service in London is putting patients in



photo Paul Mattsson

danger and is regularly unsafe.

The coalition government is putting more and more NHS contracts out to competitive bidding. Private companies circle like vultures looking to cherry-pick lucrative NHS services to give their shareholders a handsome profit.

Many times out of hours clinics have operated with staff shifts unfilled. From 26-30 November "shifts were unfilled overnight at a Harmoni clinic in St Pancras, with no qualified medic or nurse to see patients", says the Guardian. Privatisation is undermining the NHS's ability to look after patients properly. The public should protest against this attempt to destroy the NHS or we could end up with the nightmare scenario of America's medical system which leaves tens of millions of people with no access to health care. Stop the NHS privatisation juggernaut.

Dylan Murphy, Huddersfield

Corporate Harmony

Harmony Gold, South Africa's third largest gold mining company, has unlawfully locked out and evicted Kusaalethu mineworkers whose fight gives a beacon of light for working class movements worldwide.

Harmony's chairman is Patrice Motsepe, whose sister is married to the National Union of Mineworkers founder but now Lonmin board member, Cyril Ramaphosa. Motsepe also chairs African Rainbow Minerals, whose CEO is former Lonmin senior executive, Mike Schmidt.

Another board member is the former president of Mozambique, Joaquim



South African miners

Alberto Chissano who saves his conscience by offering advisory services to the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. What a transformation for the former leader of the Mozambique Liberation Front (Frelimo)!

Other Harmony Gold board members have similar commitments to 'humanitarianism'. Corporate harmony is the name of the game: but workers who try to disrupt the flow of corporate profits always face their capitalist employers' wrath.

Harmony Gold's workers are attacked for challenging their bosses. Harmony's owners recognise the immense threat that an organised workforce represents to sustainable exploitation. Remember that international solidarity and organisation are key.

Michael Barker

See socialistworld.net for article by a South African socialist

Salary none

In April 2011, just after his betrayal of students over university fees, Nick Clegg said that, with immediate effect, any interns working for Lib Dem MPs would receive 'proper remuneration'. But our local paper revealed that the Lib Dem MP for Manchester Withington was advertising two internships, one for campaigns and one for casework, for NO PAY. Both jobs appeared on the w4mpjobs website with the same description 'salary: none. Volunteer'.

So nearly two years later it's still happening, and young people are expected to work for the air they breathe. As the Intern Aware pressure group says: 'Working for free is expensive, and people in Manchester should not have to work for free to get ahead'. Clegg still bangs on about increasing social mobility but won't even put his own house in order.

The Lib-Dems had a surprise win in Withington in 2010, which has a high student population, after their promise to cut tuition fees. So it's even less likely that this particular Lib Dem MP will still be around come 2015. His name? That's the best bit: John Leech.

Gerry Powell

Capitalism - Forever blowing bubbles

Peter Taaffe reviews the "Bubbles and bankruptcy: Financial crises in Britain since 1700", free exhibition at the British Museum, Room 69a, until 5 May

The connection between the British Museum and the ideas of scientific socialism as formulated by Karl Marx lies in his use of the British Library's considerable facilities - which used to be on the same site as the museum itself - to write such epochal works as *Capital*. The British Library has been at its new, separate site since 1998.

This small but interesting exhibition indicates, in a sense, a return of Marx's ideas, in his analysis of the workings of capitalism to the place where they were first formulated. This of course is not the intention of the exhibition organisers. But it cannot be entirely accidental that squeezed between exhibits showing the influence of Greece on Rome - and the achievements of the Etruscans - this exhibition is put on at this time.

It indicates a renewed interest in discovering the historical roots of the present financial crisis. It is clearly connected to the present devastating crisis of world capitalism. Moreover, it shows clearly that there is nothing new in the present situation.

The world has seen it all before but not on the scale that we witness today. The tulip mania in the Netherlands of 1637 - described as "the first speculative boom" - ended in tears and anticipated what has been repeated many times since.

This was followed by another 'disaster' in 1697 involving land in Panama which left "Scotland financially ruined". Marx drew on such experiences to explain the credit system beyond its 'limits' but which then



The exhibition includes badges and photos from the Occupy movement photo Paul Mattsson

generates financial bubbles accompanied by "the pleasant company of swindlers": reckless financial gamblers.

This was followed by the famous "South Sea Bubble" also described as the first major speculative boom. This in turn generated popular satires - beautifully illustrated here - such as "The Bubble Melody" and the "South Sea Ballad". The 19th century also saw the 'railway mania' with massive debts piled up, which resulted in an economic crash.

Convict of the Exchequer

Even a Chancellor of the Exchequer, John Aislabie - the equivalent of George Osborne today - was involved in speculation and ended up in prison. There is a tremendous cartoon showing the Bank of Eng-

land - "the Old Lady of Threadneedle Street" - lecturing naughty boys, obviously meant to represent the capitalists and the bankers, who behind their backs hold playing cards.

Little has changed today it seems; the governor of the Bank of England, with Ed Miliband in the supporting cast, admonishes the banks and the capitalists for not behaving more 'responsibly'. In vain!

The exhibition closes with badges, symbols and photographs of the 'Occupy' movement in London. While providing no answers, this exhibition nevertheless is very useful as well as entertaining in a sometimes vivid form. It also shows that capitalism and speculation go together like peaches and cream. It should teach those who visit it that we need a more rational system than archaic capitalism.

Don McCullin - Fighting for a better world

David Beale

"McCullin" is a 90 minute documentary film about one of the world's greatest living photographers, Don McCullin.

The fundamental empathy for and dignity he gives to his photographic subjects - mostly the victims of poverty, war and starvation - is explored in depth in this profoundly moving film.

These are images that the rich and powerful do not want you to see, since they expose crimes committed in the name of greed, exploitation, imperialism and bigotry.

Following his exhibition at the Imperial War Museum in 2011-12, this film is as much about the man and his view of the world as his photographs.

If you saw the 2011 exhibition or read the accompanying book, 'Shaped by War', the film adds much more to our understanding of McCullin and his work.

In many respects it is confession-

al, and is striking in its integrity. He describes how he often felt guilty, sometimes even ashamed, that he had taken particular photographs of death and starvation. However, he never became hardened to the events he witnessed, always respecting those he photographed.

On one occasion in south Vietnam, McCullin and a group of journalists witness an execution in the street. He is shocked and disgusted by the journalists' awful, inhuman reaction and refuses to photograph the dreadful event.

There are many other occasions when McCullin puts his camera aside, not infrequently risking his own life to assist victims other journalists would photograph.

Don McCullin is now 77. Since the 1980s he has only occasionally visited war zones, increasingly photographing landscapes near his Somerset home. This is evidently a necessary therapy for the dreadful things he has witnessed but these images have a haunted beauty, shot as they are in black and white like

These are images that the rich and powerful do not want you to see

most of his other photographs.

Although too late to be included in the film, McCullin went to Aleppo in 2012 to photograph civilian victims of the Syrian civil war, many of them children.

I was privileged to interview Don McCullin in 2011 for the Socialist. I was convinced then that he was saying something profoundly important for socialists and to all those who believe it's worth fighting for a better world.

This film confirms that beyond doubt. It might not be shown in many of the big cinemas, so take the first chance you have to see it.

See the film trailer at: www.curzoncinemas.com/films/details/1465/mccullin

Fighting the austerity agenda 'Action gets results'

John McNally

Vice President, Public and Commercial Services Union (PCS)

The coalition government's austerity programme is being increasingly exposed as a disaster for all but the business and banking elite.

Tory strategists now assume theirs will be a one-term government. That is one reason for their scorched earth policy. They know that if Labour is elected, its embrace of austerity policies will mean a 'safe pair of hands'.

The civil service is again in the firing line. A leaked letter from the Cabinet Office says: "If the reforms are implemented, the Civil Service of the future will be smaller, flatter, more unified, more digital, more accountable for delivery, more capable, better managed, and ultimately - more fun to work for".

This management-speak gibberish cannot conceal the real intention - to cherry-pick what services can be squeezed for profit and discard the rest. Everything will be up for attack according to ministers, including annual and flexi leave, sick pay, mobility, probation, discipline and grievance procedures, as well as travel and expenses and trade union facilities.

Ministers, such as multi-millionaire Francis Maude, recognise that PCS's unwavering policy of 'No Cuts No Privatisation' has been at the heart of organised resistance to their austerity policies. PCS never accepted the 'need' for austerity and its campaign for an alternative based on tax justice, investment and job creation, derided as deficit denial, exposes the insanity of the market. That is one reason why the left-led PCS leadership is seen as public enemy No 1 by the government.

Attack on union rights

The Tories are wrong if they think cutting trade union facilities to below the statutory minimum will mean activists and members will let them destroy jobs, living standards and services. These attacks will breed a new, more determined generation of trade union activists.

These attacks, including attacks on the health service and other areas of the public sector, are only possible because of the abject crisis of leadership in the labour and trade union movement. Ex-TUC general secretary Brendan Barber has retired. He's off to enjoy his huge pension and pay-off while the millions of members he once sold out have had their pension rights stolen.

After being pressured, not least by PCS, into 'leading' the magnificent two-million strong public sector strike on 30 November last year Barber, in virtual open collusion with Tory minister, Francis Maude, tried to strangle the fight back by 'selling' the so-called Heads of Agreement. This was instead of organising further action.

At the TUC in September 2012, unions voted for joint coordinated action and also to discuss the "practicalities" of calling a general strike. Yet Barber, perhaps with an eye to future ennoblement, on the morning of the debate told the media a general strike wouldn't happen.

PCS has always argued, most recently by president Janice Godrich at the TUC general council before



Action has won concessions in some departments of the civil service photo Iain Dalton

Every union in the TUC has a current or potential dispute with their employer on jobs, pay or other issues such as privatisation. All that is required is for the TUC to call these unions together and name the day

Christmas, the most effective way to defeat the government's austerity policies is by joint coordinated action.

PCS will do everything in its power to build the widest possible coalition across public and private sector unions to oppose the austerity programme, including recently writing to all unions. We are flexible about plans to coordinate industrial action. But we cannot wait while these attacks on terms and conditions go ahead.

PCS will not stand back and allow the government to steal members' rights and continue yet another year of pay cuts. Some members are now facing a fourth year of pay freezes and living standards have fallen by an average of £1,200.

If this is not challenged then the government will think it can make it the norm for the next decade or more. This issue is the best opportunity to build coordinated action across the public sector.

PCS would rather negotiate but will ballot members in February if the government refuses our re-

quest for talks. The ballot will cover jobs, pensions, privatisation and all the issues covered by the previous national ballot. But it will also focus sharply on the assault on terms and conditions and pay. The ballot would be for discontinuous strike action and discontinuous action short of a strike. If the Tories think PCS is contemplating "protest" action they can think again.

They should understand now we will respond by organising the most effective programme of disruptive action the civil service has ever seen.

A vital part of PCS's response will be ongoing and developing disputes in the departmental groups. These will be coordinated by the national union. Major concessions, including increased staffing, have already been won by the union. PCS members in the Home Office, Driving Standards Agency and HMRC have all won concessions.

DWP members have also taken action and won significant gains in the contact centre dispute and the long-running Merseyside dispute. DWP members have voted by 2:1 in opposition to compulsory redundancy notices being issued.

Members in other public sector unions whose members also face attacks, will wonder why their leaders are not organising action.

General strike

TUC unions have been asked to set out their views on the "practicalities" of a general strike, from the motion moved by the prison officer's union POA and passed by TUC Congress. The responses of some 'leaders' are entirely predictable - they won't be supporting a general strike anytime soon, how could they ever explain that to Ed Miliband and Ed Balls?

Every union in the TUC has a current or potential dispute with their employer on jobs, pay or other issues such as privatisation. All that is required is for the TUC to call these unions together and name the day.

Whatever the leadership of the TUC decides at its next meeting, the demand for a general strike will not

go away. Most serious trade union activists and members now know a 24-hour general strike is the most effective way to start to take on this government.

Trade union leaders who are serious about organising action in a "coalition of the willing" should discuss coordinating their ballots - as was done for the N30 pension strike last year.

Attacks are increasing. But the resistance against austerity is also. The cowardly role of right-wing trade union leaders will be sharply exposed. PCS's fighting, campaigning leadership, along with its battle-hardened activists and members, will face the government attacks by fighting back. Campaigning works and action gets results.

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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Teachers: fight for strike action is on



Rotherham teachers on strike photo A. Tice

Education minister Michael Gove has declared that he is on a 'war footing' to drive through his attack on teachers' pay. We mustn't let him succeed.

Too many teachers already struggle to cope with relentless workload. Stress levels, resignations and demoralisation are rising. If Gove gets away with his plans, teaching will become a truly horrendous profession for too many. But Gove's plans can - and must - be beaten. If we organise effectively, and put in place a firm programme of national strike action, then we can force this government to retreat.

This is no time for teaching unions to hesitate or retreat. We mustn't repeat the delays of last year, when further pensions action was postponed - giving Gove the chance to step up his attacks. If unions give a clear lead, teachers will respond to their call to action. In a National Union of Teachers (NUT) survey of its members, 84% said they were in favour of striking with the other main teaching union NASUWT, while 79% said they would be prepared to take to the picket line alone.

In December the NUT executive put off the decision on calling action until the next executive on 24 January. But pressure has been building for national strike action at least to start on a date later this term.

There is now some chance that the NUT could call national strike action on 13 March, a day that coincides with a European TUC day of action. There is no definite majority yet on the executive to go ahead for action on that day - so there is lots of lobbying to do!

NUT reps briefings have been called in London, Cardiff and Liverpool on 19 January, as well as a regional council in Yorkshire. Because of that, the meeting of the Local Associations National Action Network (LANAC) steering committee has been postponed. LANAC was formed last year by a number of NUT associations to campaign for the union to organise action. LANAC has said it will do everything it can to mobilise for the reps' briefings and organise to make sure that reps and associations are lobbying their executive members to call for action.

The NASUWT has regrettably made clear that they are not in favour of taking strike action this academic year. The debate is, therefore, about whether the NUT takes action independently this term - or not. It is our job to go out and explain the seriousness of Gove's attacks, and turn the undoubted anger in schools into action.

Martin Powell-Davies
Member of the NUT national executive

SHEFFIELD COUNCIL CUTS:

Fight back or we'll have nothing left!

Sheffield Socialist Party

Nineteen out of 36 children's centres and nurseries to shut; 14 out of 27 community libraries to be axed; £10.5 million sliced from adult social care; 600 more jobs to go; Stocksbridge Leisure centre to close... Even Don Valley Stadium, home to Olympic gold medallist Jessica Ennis, could be demolished!

These are the headlines in Sheffield after the Labour-run council unveiled what the local paper called the "deepest council cuts ever".

In the New Year, Labour council leader Julie Dore, along with Liverpool and Newcastle Labour councils, wrote to the Tory government warning that its savage cuts to local government funding would lead to "rising crime, increasing community tension and more problems on our streets... We urge them to stop... before the forces of social unrest start to smoulder." Yet they are making these cuts!

Councillor Dore has also said that "continuing government spending cuts will spell the end of the council as we know it". And still they cut!

And when Labour announced its budget, she said: "By the end of the decade, we will have nothing left other than statutory services and waste collection." Well waste collec-

tion is already privatised, now highways and street lighting have been sold off. And still they cut!

£50 million is to be slashed from the budget for 2013-14, on top of the £140 million already cut over the last two years. Most of those "savings" came from voluntary redundancies and management and administration costs. But the council admit that two-thirds of 'savings' this year will come from cuts in services and increased charges and fees.

So our Labour councillors wring their hands while spinelessly carrying out these Tory cuts which they admit will devastate the city. Well the Labour group may have no backbone but local people are beginning to fight back.

Campaign

The staff and parents from the children's centres threatened with closure are waging an inspiring campaign to save the Early Years' Service. 250 protested at the Town Hall in December and hundreds more will demonstrate on Saturday 19 January.

Daily petitioning has already secured the 5,000 signatures necessary to force a full council debate on 6 February.

This campaign has clearly got the council rattled. Last week, one Labour councillor started ranting and raving at a Socialist Party member



Save our early years' service! photo Sheffield SP

who was helping campaigners petition outside the Town Hall. How much more rattled will the council be if the trade unions ballot their members for strike action and the local community campaigns consider occupations of the centres to keep them open?

The Socialist Party is also proposing that the Trade Unionist and So-

cialist Coalition (TUSC), along with anti-cuts campaigns, should stand candidates across the city in 2014 to challenge all the councillors that

meekly carry out the Tory cuts. Now is the time to make a stand or, to use Julie Dore's own words, "we'll have nothing left"!

Join the Demo to Save the Early Years' Service

Saturday 19 January, 11am

Assemble: Devonshire Green, march to Town Hall.

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!