



# Fight for every job ACTION CAN STOP CUTS

**Rob Williams**

National Shop Stewards Network (NSSN)  
chair

**T**he civil service union PCS has just scored an important victory in the fight against cuts. 43 of its members working in the Department for Work and Pensions were threatened with compulsory redundancy, the first time these have been threatened in the DWP. Some were due to lose their jobs on 31 January.

But the union called a ballot of all PCS members in the DWP proposing strike action if the redundancies were not withdrawn. It was not the easiest of ballots to organise across an 80,000-strong department over the Christmas period about an issue which initially affected 43 workers.

But PCS members voted by two to one for action, giving the union's negotiators a powerful weapon to use in negotiations. Now all the compulsory redundancy notices have been withdrawn.

PCS members, like most other workers face threats to their jobs, rising workloads and pay freezes and cuts, while living costs are rising. But this victory shows that action gets results. It also shows the need to build on this and other victories against the Con-Dems' austerity agenda by coordinating strike action across the whole of the civil service. This would then be a platform to unite action across the public sector and beyond.

The PCS has called a national industrial action ballot starting on 5 February and ending on 4 March. 250,000 civil servants will have a chance to say no to the government's attacks and organise for strike action against them.

Workers in all unions should campaign for their union to adopt a fighting strategy against the cuts. The NSSN lobbied the TUC general council on 11 December to call on it to set the date for coordinated strike action up to and including a 24-hour general strike.

The passing of the POA motion at the TUC conference in September (which we also

lobbied) forced the TUC to consider this type of action.

The general council agreed that all TUC-affiliated unions would be asked for their opinions. We know that at least some unions have been writing to their branches for members' views. Please do not pass up this opportunity to let your leaders and the TUC know what you and your members want.

The Con-Dems try to pit those on benefits against people in work. They say that benefits shouldn't rise quicker than wages; therefore they are slashing the benefits for the most vulnerable in society. Our solution is to pay workers more, break the pay freeze and fight for a living income for all.

Recent figures from Oxfam give a glimpse of how we could pay for these: closing tax havens worldwide would yield \$189 billion in additional tax revenues. Combining this with nationalisation of the banking system, utilities and major corporations would raise huge resources.

This shows that workers' pay is the yardstick for all working class people and explains why mass strike action, properly prepared and explained, would be very popular and effective.

## Vote yes for action against the pay freeze and cuts

John McNally, PCS national vice-president said: "PCS is urging members to vote YES in this ballot to send a clear message - we will no longer tolerate a pay freeze that is causing real misery nor accept cuts in terms and conditions solely designed to prepare the ground for mass privatisation.

"PCS would prefer to be fighting alongside other unions. Whatever happens PCS will implement a campaign strategy, in full consultation with activists, that will cause maximum disruption through industrial action with the aim of bringing the employer to the negotiating table."



photo Paul Mattsson



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# Manchester: fightback needed in city of extreme poverty

**John Booth**

Manchester Socialist Party

More than half of Greater Manchester's population – 1.6 million – could soon be struggling below the poverty line, according to the Greater Manchester Poverty Commission, with 600,000 people already living in "extreme poverty".

I have been working as a bricklayer since I was 15 years old. I was a shop steward at 18 and blacklisted during building strikes and the jailing of the Shrewsbury Two. But I have never witnessed such attacks on the working class as those happening today – even under Thatcher.

My concern is not for myself, but for the youth of this city and their chance of a job, a future, and a life. I do not in any way condone the 'Manchester riots', but I understand the frustration and anger behind them and I anticipate this action will be repeated – unless the trade union and socialist movement shows direction.

The housing stock of Manchester is a complete shambles. We see professional footballers living in multi-million-pound houses – the working class masses are forced to dwell in run-down, back-to-back terraced houses. It would be logical to renovate these and build new affordable housing, which would provide work for builders and give young people real apprenticeships as opposed to working for nothing for workfare in the likes of Tesco, stacking shelves.

On 16 August 1819, 80,000 Mancunians protested against unemployment and poverty and for democratic rights. 18 people were killed and 700 injured. Today, almost 200 years later, the people of Manchester must prepare themselves for a fight even bigger than the Battle of Peterloo to stop these savage cuts and fight for a political voice for working class people.

We need to show the capitalist system, a system of pure greed, that we do not accept cuts. We want a change of system, to one of fairness and equality. That system is socialism.



But no councillors want to play photo Paul Mattsson

## New Labour council continues Con-Dems' dirty work

**Alex Davidson**

Former Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition candidate

On 16 January, Manchester council leader Richard Leese announced yet more cuts on top of the devastation already wrought. The proposals, to axe another £80 million on top of £170 million already being cut, include 830 job cuts and several library closures.

Leese claimed that they could not use the council's reserve funds to protect services. But the council's own figures show just over £21 million in unallocated reserves, on top of this £5 million is set aside to cover PFI debts. Total reserves stand at just over £238 million.

This money should be used to prevent any immediate cuts while fighting for more funding.

All Labour councils are carrying out huge cuts to services and jobs while trying to evade responsibility. It is of course true that the Tory-Lib Dem government is slashing the local authority budget, but some councils are often going further than even the Tories are asking for. Labour-run Knowsley council is planning to privatise or outsource all services.

So what should councillors from a party that is supposedly based on

the working class and trade union movement be doing in this situation? There are examples of Labour councils that refused to pass on government cuts to provide inspiration for those looking to resist today. Poplar council in the 1920s, Clay Cross in the 1970s, Lambeth and Liverpool in the 1980s all refused to bow to pressure from central government and the Labour Party leadership.

If several local authorities defied the Con-Dems it would destabilise what is a very unpopular and weak government. But, if they also made a clear call for their stand to be linked with workers' struggle in the unions they could inspire millions of working class people.

Sadly it does not look like many Labour councillors will do so. In Southampton the two rebel, anti-cuts councillors have been expelled from the Labour Party, but they have huge local support and have been backed by Unite union leader Len McCluskey.

An alternative has to be found that will represent working class people and fight for our communities. That is why the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition was formed. TUSC intends to stand widely this year in the county council elections on a programme that rejects all cuts.

## Would you like to stand for TUSC?

It is less than two months before nominations open for the May 2013 local elections – so all Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition supporters need to get the 'Appeal for Candidates' out as far and wide as possible.

See the TUSC website – [www.tusc.org.uk](http://www.tusc.org.uk) – for more info and to order the four-page appeal leaflet. That's also the place to go if you would like to stand

as an anti-cuts election candidate.

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.

**Read more about TUSC and the Southampton rebel councillors on page 8**



# Bristol mayor says 'out with the new, in with the cuts'

**Robin Clapp**

South West Socialist Party secretary

When Bristol businessman and former Liberal Democrat George Ferguson reinvented himself as an 'independent' and won the mayoral election in November, he claimed his success signified: "a new way of doing things."

"I want to use that mandate to go and ask the prime minister and the government in general for more powers for Bristol and for more resources."

The city had bucked the national trend by voting in an earlier referendum to have an elected mayor. Only

28% turned out to vote in the subsequent election.

Had the proposal been to sack all the cutters and mediocrities who keep the council benches warm, polling stations would still have queues outside them today.

The new mayor is now singing a different song and guess what – it's that old standard 'We have no alternative to cuts'.

Revealing himself to be just one more professional politician who faithfully executes the wishes of his Westminster masters, Ferguson has announced that another £35 million will be cut from this year's budget, to be followed by an eye-watering £65 million by 2017.

He expresses frustration that prime minister David Cameron seems unwilling to reward his electoral success by increasing Bristol's grant, but in the next breath wags his finger and warns that nobody will escape the pain, including the most disadvantaged.

### Honeyed words

Gone are the honeyed words that promised a new approach to running local government.

Instead he's endorsed the closure of care homes and daycare centres, is handing out 100 redundancy notices, chopping another 250 posts and hiking up council tax by 2%.

Some children's centres face the axe and a new swimming pool in east Bristol is being mothballed.

The Labour Party locally is in turmoil. When Ferguson dangled a cabinet seat before them, they eagerly accepted, before being instructed by Labour's national leaders to stay away from this car crash waiting to happen.

Their leader then promptly resigned, and having had an interim leader, they've now dredged up a former leader to become the new leader.

Reluctantly exiled from the cabinet, they nonetheless continue to loyally belt out Ferguson's cuts chorus, never hitting a discordant note.

In an act of opportunism that has caused several notable resignations from their ranks, the Green Party – with just two councillors – has joined Ferguson's cabinet (nothing to do with the £21,000 cabinet salary of course).

This is despite Ferguson's two-fingered salute to these new allies – he's scrapping a proposed new recycling centre!

Trade unions, along with Bristol Anti-Cuts Alliance, are gearing up to lead the fightback.

Ferguson's 'man of the people' populism may backfire, as the fury of those same people turns to organised resistance against Cameron's mayoral mouthpiece.



# Fight the unfair bedroom tax!

**Tracey Farrell**  
Harlow Socialist Party

**T**he Con-Dems' bedroom tax, due to be introduced this spring, is not just another attack on the unemployed but also on working people who, like 93% of new claimants in 2010 and 2011, are forced through low pay and massive private rent costs to rely on housing benefit.

If you have the audacity to remain in the home that you have emotionally and financially invested in, where the child you have shared access to or your teenage children can live with you post secondary school, where your grandchildren and your guests can stay as you grow old, then be aware – they will literally starve you out. Research in Wales has found people planning to cut meals to cover the tax!

Under the new rules, from April council and housing association tenants who have one 'spare' bedroom will have their housing benefit cut by 14%. Those with two bedrooms will lose 25%.

A family will be punished for 'under-occupying' even where every bedroom in the home is in regular use. For example, benefit will be cut where under-16s of the same gender have been given their own bedroom, rather than being forced to share. Children under ten are expected to share regardless of gender.

Separated parents will be punished for keeping a 'spare' bedroom for when their children visit. Foster parents will receive a cut because, for benefits, foster children do not



**This is the second home of Tory Lord Freud, responsible for the bedroom tax - any spare bedrooms in there?**

count as part of the household. Couples who sleep apart due to a

Research in Wales has found people planning to cut meals to cover the tax!

medical condition are also under attack.

In my town Harlow, the council has offered tenants the following advice: if you are unemployed you should get a job, if you are employed

you should increase your hours, or take in a lodger, or move to a smaller home.

What world does the council live in? Over 2.5 million people are looking for work. More than three million workers – 10.5% – are under-employed and want to work more hours. And locally, as the council has virtually no one-bedroom properties to move you to, it's a box room in a shared private house.

Harlow Socialist Party has decided to take action against the bedroom tax. We urge everyone to fight this disgusting attack, and to galvanise anger and outrage against the coalition.

## Changes to ESA: more attacks on disabled people

**Matt Gordon**  
Bristol Socialist Party

On 28 January changes to the Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) come into force that will see hundreds of thousands of sick and disabled people at risk of losing vital benefits.

These changes were tabled as 'minor clarifications' at the end of 2012 and have not been discussed by parliament, but in reality they completely change how ESA is awarded and will have a huge impact on some of the most vulnerable people in the country. Sick and disabled people will have their individual needs ignored and the support needed to manage their conditions could be withdrawn – instead they will be told they are 'fit to work'. This alone will be devastating for many, without even asking the question, fit to work in what jobs?

ESA was introduced in 2008 under Labour and was claimed by the government to improve the chances of getting those with long-term illnesses and profound disabilities back into work. In reality this benefit is awarded, or not awarded, via the deeply flawed and heavily criticised Work Capability Assessment



photo Paul Mattsson

(WCA), administered by notorious French company Atos.

The changes to the WCA will give the 'healthcare professionals' at Atos even more power to withhold benefits. Assessors will now make judgements not just about a condition as it is at the time of the assessment, but about how that condition might 'improve' on the basis of medication, treatment or adjustments, whether or not these are suitable or easily available on

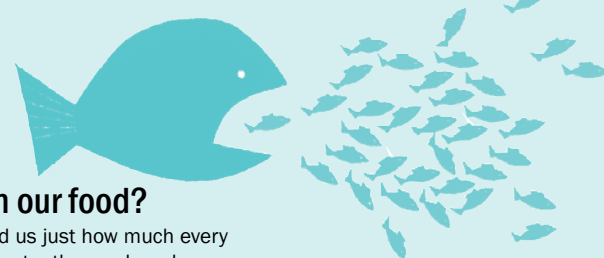
the NHS. And these judgements can be made without the opinion or wishes of the claimant being taken into account.

Disability groups have drawn attention to the so-called 'imaginary wheelchair' aspect of the WCA test, where the assessors consider the improved ability to work if the claimant were to use a wheelchair – without discussing the suitability of a wheelchair or considering whether they are compatible with a particular workplace or their availability. This aspect of 'imaginative guesswork' will be extended to hearing aids, guide dogs, walking sticks and prosthetic limbs – so it is not just imaginary wheelchairs, but imaginary dogs and limbs as well!

These changes show that the Con-Dem government is not only out of touch with the hardship faced by sick and disabled people, but increasingly out of touch with reality itself.

Ordinary people live in the real world and not the imaginary world of the millionaire cabinet. We cannot 'imagine' the coalition out of existence, but we can stop the cuts by building a mass campaign that links the struggles of the disabled and unemployed with those of workers under attack.

## Them...



### What's in our food?

Tesco showed us just how much every penny counts to them when horsemeat was found in its beef burgers, as well as in those of other supermarkets including Iceland, Aldi and Lidl. Of 27 burger products 23 contained pork and ten contained horse, and out of 31 beef meal products, 21 tested positive for pig DNA. Horsemeat accounted for 29% of one of Tesco's burger products that had been tested. It's like the 19th century when food adulteration was prolific with sawdust being added to flour, and lead being used to colour cheese as retailers sought to bulk out their profits. We need the nationalisation of the major food production, distribution and retail companies under democratic workers' control.

**Dave Ingham**

### Access all areas

38 companies, including some of the world's biggest oil, pharmaceutical and telecoms giants, have been co-sying up to government ministers as part of a 'strategic relations' initiative. 698 face-to-face meetings have taken place under the current government as part of the scheme! And now it's set to be expanded, giving another 30 companies a ministerial 'buddy'. Presumably the trade unions and anti-cuts campaigns will be included in this second wave...

### Make work pay

Despite all the talk of 'making work pay' the Con-Dems' approach to public services is keeping a huge number of people stuck at home. A new report predicts that as many as 2.8 million parents who would like to work are forced to stay at home because of the rocketing cost of childcare. One in four parents who stay at home with young children would prefer to go back to

work – rising to 40% in London. The same report suggests that in the last three months alone the cost of childcare has risen by 6%.

### Cost of not studying

As the deadline for university applications approaches, there is no sign of a pick-up in the number of students applying to start studying this autumn. This is unsurprising of course – £9,000 fees are enough to put off most people.

There's nothing to be done though – students 'have' to contribute more when the country is in such financial trouble...don't they? A study by the group Million+ has suggested that, in the long run, falling student numbers could actually cost the economy up to £6.6 billion!

### Hard times

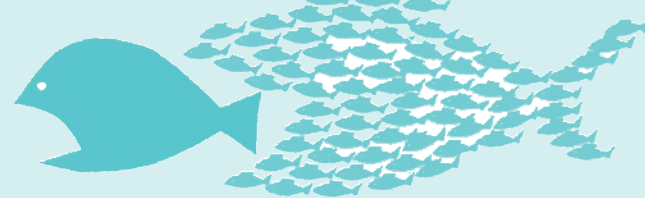
Winter is a hard time when finances are on the edge. LSL Property Services has revealed that missed rents were the highest in December as people struggled to make ends meet over Christmas – a total of £326 million unpaid. And apparently it's not just individuals who suffer 'cliff-edge poverty'. The four days of snow that hit Britain in mid-January could be enough to tip the economy into the long-dreaded triple-dip recession.

### Coming clean?

The tax haven that is the Cayman Islands – part of the remains of the British Empire – is threatening to do away with secretive tax dodging. Reason to celebrate? Well, not really. Instead the Cayman Island Monetary Authority is planning for a 'transparent' light tax regime. So now the 9,438 domiciled hedge funds based there can openly flaunt their billions of pounds of tax-savings in our face.

**Bob Severn**

## ...& Us



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

## What we saw

TWO DAYS AGO JESSOPS LEFT ME, ALL THE BEAUTIFUL PEOPLE WHO WERE WORKING WITH ME IN THIS STORE, AND OTHER 1370 PEOPLE WITHOUT A JOB. I DON'T KNOW WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR IT. I DON'T KNOW IF IT IS ONE PERSON, ANOTHER COMPANY, A BANK, OR MAYBE ALL OF THEM. BUT I KNOW WHY. MONEY. GREED. AND EVERYTHING ELSE COMES AFTER. SO NOW, WHILE FEW PEOPLE MADE MONEY ON THAT, WE ALL HAVE TO LOOK FOR ANOTHER JOB.

ALL THE BEST

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# Packed teachers' meeting calls for national strike action

**Martin Powell-Davies**

Executive member of the National Union of Teachers (NUT)

Nearly 300 NUT reps from schools across London packed into the NUT's national headquarters on 19 January for the London regional briefing about our campaign to oppose Tory education secretary Gove's Performance Related Pay (PRP) plans.

The huge turnout on a wintry Saturday spoke volumes about the determination of teachers to fight Gove's attacks. The frequent applause for reps calling for national strike action also made clear what the meeting wanted the national executive to vote for when we meet again on 24 January.

NUT general secretary Christine Blower introduced the discussion. She went through the detail of Gove's attacks, pointing out that Gove wants to make all progression dependent on 'performance'. Linking the two main battles we are engaged in, she also pointed out that slower progression up the pay scale through PRP would also mean a lower career average pension on retirement.

Most of the two-hour meeting was then thrown over to the floor. Louise Cuffaro from Newham was one of a number of reps who explained how the 'brutality' of management in some schools was fuel-



Teachers on strike against cuts in Rotherham photo A. Tice

ling teachers' anger. Louise, just as many other reps concluded their remarks, called on the national executive to vote for national strike action. There was a clear understanding that one-day's action would not be enough. Most applause was given to

reps who proposed escalating from an initial one-day action to a further 48-hour strike.

National executive members were invited to speak at the end of the meeting. I agreed that reps had been right to say that we needed to go out

and explain our case to the public. I, and other NEC colleagues, called on reps to approach the public with confidence, remembering the support our pensions action in 2011 had received from most parents. After all, opinion polls show the public trust teachers a lot more than they trust politicians!

Secondly, I responded to the understandable disappointment from some reps that the NASUWT teaching union had made clear that they were not prepared to take strike action at this stage.

I explained that we had to recognise that their leadership seem unlikely to shift that position at present. However, if we give a lead, as we did over pensions in June 2011, they may be forced to reconsider.

Some NASUWT members may vote with their feet and join the NUT. Outer London NUT executive member, Dave Harvey, made a similar point and also spelt out that the executive were considering calling action on 13 March, to coincide with a Europe-wide day of action against austerity.

At the end Marilyn Bater from the chair asked those in support of national strike action to raise their hands. The vote seemed to be unanimous! Surely everyone on the NUT national executive will now take note and vote for national strike action.

• For more see: [electmartin1.blogspot.co.uk](http://electmartin1.blogspot.co.uk)

## In brief

### Metro strike

Transport union RMT has announced that cleaners working for Churchill on the Tyne and Wear Metro will strike again for 24 hours, starting on 23 January. The strikers are lobbying the Transport Authority in Newcastle on 24 January.

This battle against poverty wages has resulted in 12 days of strike action by the RMT members. The company employing the workers, DB Regio, have 'offered' 0% pay awards to these workers on the minimum wage, while doubling its profits in the past five years. Now they have withdrawn all previous 'offers' and want any future negotiations to be via Acas.

The RMT is arguing that the regional passenger organisation NEXUS and Newcastle city council should intervene in this dispute.

### Blacklisting

After a number of revelations about the blacklisting of construction workers by McAlpine and Skanska, there is to be a debate in parliament over the issue. The two companies have not admitted directly to blacklisting workers on the Olympics project but they paid for over 25,000 checks by the Consulting Association at the time of maximum recruitment to the Olympic site. In fact senior staff at both companies have held positions in the Consulting Association, which operated the blacklist.

Bosses at Crossrail are also under investigation by the Greater London Assembly. This follows the effective sacking of 28 workers after their reps raised concerns about health and safety.

### Shrewsbury pickets

Ricky Tomlinson is one of the Shrewsbury pickets, jailed for picketing in the 1972 building workers' strike. He is calling on the government to release the documents relating to the trials in 1972. Justice secretary Chris Grayling has announced that the documents will not be released and the situation will not be reviewed until 2021. The documents are being withheld under legislation which relates to national security. There will be a press conference in Westminster on 23 January at which Ricky will be speaking alongside TUC general secretary Frances O'Grady, Unite and Ucat general secretaries Len McCluskey and Steve Murphy, Ken Loach and MPs Tom Watson, Steve Rotherham and David Hanson.

### Strike ballot

Civil servants, members of PCS in the Department for Education, will be balloting for industrial action against cuts. The cuts threaten 1,000 jobs and six offices. Last week it emerged that DfE bosses played a game using party hats to discuss their cuts plans. The permanent secretary has refused to apologise. These cuts are clearly an attempt by education secretary Michael Gove to use his department as a test bed for draconian cuts as part of his scheme to privatise education with academies and free schools.

### Website

For more reports on trade union and workplace issues see the Socialist Party's website: [www.socialistparty.org.uk](http://www.socialistparty.org.uk)

## Victory at Runcorn Thermal Power Station

**Hugh Caffrey**

Hundreds of construction workers at Runcorn thermal power station have won major concessions from the employers following several days of unofficial action over deeply inadequate on-site 'welfare facilities' such as toilets and the canteen.

The action has also created one new job! Numerous messages of solidarity were sent by trade unionists from across Britain.

Mass meetings each day voted on whether to continue the action, and eventually voted to accept the latest offer from the employers.

A worker on the site reports: "We've sent a clear message to the gaffers that they'd better start listening to us, stop taking the piss and start getting on with things. Basically, we've got everything we wanted."

"When we walked out on Monday 14 January there was no admission of anything and the gaffers just said: 'Get back on site because the facilities you've got are good enough!'"

"They've gone from that, to them undertaking that they will make the improvements we asked for, which are: increasing the toilet facilities on the site; making sure facilities are properly maintained and cleaned (they're employing an extra cleaner) to a standard accepted by the stewards and safety reps; daily inspections of the welfare facilities pre-shift to make sure they're up to standard; weekly planning meetings of gaffers and stewards and safety reps



Recently, building workers have been winning important victories on many sites photo Wales SP

to make sure that the welfare facilities are suitable and sufficient for the manning levels on the site; £250 paid to every worker on site towards covering the loss of earnings during the action.

"There was a further meeting of the stewards with the gaffers about the outstanding issues such as cold-weather gear. When we've raised this previously some of the companies have baulked at the cost but have now decided they will act on them."

"The £250 is subject to no further unprocedural action. But the most important thing is that we've shown the gaffers that we're a united workforce, we mean business and if they want us on the site then they'd best give us the conditions and the recognition that we deserve."

## Bolton hospital - fighting mass redundancies

**Andy Ford**

Unite NHS rep

Bolton Hospital announced the redundancy of around 500 staff in November, along with a proposal to dismiss and re-engage nursing staff on longer shifts.

I spoke to one of the union reps at the hospital: "The redundancies were announced on 13 November - 500 staff out of 5,500 - along with a proposal to dismiss nursing staff and re-engage them on 11.5 hour shifts with two half-hour unpaid breaks."

Over the following weeks the threat of dismissal and re-engagement was withdrawn and instead three wards are going onto a voluntary pilot of the longer shifts. Of course some managers went out to the staff, telling them the unions had agreed that they could be forced onto it, and the joint unions had to insist that it actually was voluntary.

Between November and December the local stewards held mass meetings all across the hospital - members attended when they could get away from busy wards, clinics and labs.

"When the redundancies had been formally issued in November we found mistakes in the process - they had issued redundancies, but the formal consultation papers weren't ready. The unions called an all-reps meeting with management - we had a really great showing of reps from all over the hospital, excellent unity between the different unions, and they eventually got the papers out 14 December."

"But then we found ourselves trying to do 21 formal consultations in the week before Christmas

- it was bordering on the impossible. HR were rushing all over the hospital, as were the reps, as well as trying to do our own jobs. And HR are set for 20% redundancies themselves!"

Management at the hospital tried to push their plans through by setting a deadline of 18 January for union submissions, which was rejected by the joint unions. There were numerous questions about the impact on quality of care, and of the impact on equality of staff.

"It looks to us as if each department has been told to find a certain sum of money out of staffing budgets to cover the Trust's deficit - Nursing loses 6% of its staff, Allied Health Professionals (radiographers, dieticians, physiotherapists) lose 15%, Estates and Facilities (maintenance, porters, domestics) lose 20% and Admin and Clerical lose 20%."

These percentages seem to reflect the tired old idea that some cuts - to the 'back office' are more acceptable than cutting the 'front line'. No! All cuts must be opposed.

There is huge anger among the staff. After years of penny-pinching 2-3% efficiency savings it has suddenly emerged that the Trust is £38 million in deficit because of artificial problems in contracts for the hospital for clinical work it has done.

The deficit is entirely an artefact of the internal market. The Trust even had to borrow £8 million from the government to pay staff wages!

People are fighting back. A march before Christmas brought hundreds of workers together with the public and patients, and another protest has been called in January to coincide with a royal visit to open a maternity unit - just as 50 midwives face redundancy!



# London fire protests result in vote against station closures

**Paula Mitchell**

London Socialist Party secretary

**W**ith over 1,000 firefighters loudly demonstrating outside, the London Fire Authority (LFA) voted by nine to eight against closing 12 fire stations, remove a further 18 engines and cut 520 jobs.

However, Tory London mayor Boris Johnson, “who has ultimate power over the fire authority,” said he will “ensure” the consultation over the cuts continues.

Clearly fuming at this victory for firefighters and the public, Johnson threatened: “I am of course always willing to listen to submissions, but it’s quite clear today’s decision offers nothing positive, indeed it demonstrates a complete lack of leadership... This consultation will continue as planned. I will be issuing a mayoral directive to ensure it does.”

At the outdoor rally on 21 January, several firefighters and speakers pointed out that the first fire crew to arrive on the scene of the Vauxhall helicopter crash was from Clapham, a station earmarked for closure.

In fact, every fire in London over the preceding week was responded



**Socialist Party member Martin Powell-Davies of the NUT**

to by apparently ‘unnecessary’ fire crews!

The depth of this scandal was shown by a Lakanal House tenants association speaker. Six people died in a horrific fire at the Southwark tower block in 2009, into which the inquest has just opened. An engine was to be removed from the station opposite.

Firefighters want support and welcomed Labour politicians who spoke to the lobby. At the last London Assembly elections Labour’s Andrew Dismore defeated hated Tory chair of the fire authority Brian Coleman, with the support of the Fire Brigades Union (FBU).

To applause he pledged that the Labour representatives on the fire authority would vote against all closures and cuts.

However he also said that “there is money in the GLA that can be moved around to save the service,” which unfortunately could imply that cuts in other public services would be acceptable.

The West Yorkshire FBU secretary gave the lessons of their own fight against station closures: “And I have to say these were cuts by a Labour fire authority - shame on them!”

The biggest applause was for RMT general secretary Bob Crow, who said in reference to the bank bail-outs: “you won’t see an investment banker with a hose!” The crowd cheered when he said that, apart

**Matt Wrack: ‘The Treasury are handing the rich £3 billion. The cost of the fire service is £3 billion. So don’t say there’s no money!’**

from a few honourable exceptions, Labour has been “miserable and disgraceful”; they roared when he called for a one-day general strike.

This call was backed up by Socialist Party member Martin Powell-Davies of the teachers’ union NUT executive, who called for unions to coordinate action into a 24-hour general strike.

FBU general secretary Matt Wrack rounded off the rally. He pointed out that the cut in the top rate of tax would more than pay for a quality fire service:

“The Treasury are handing the rich £3 billion, and the cost of the fire service is £3 billion. So don’t say there’s no money!”

He called on all members to prepare for a fight. With Johnson’s cuts consultation continuing and London Fire Brigade claiming £45 million still needs to be slashed, that fight is still on.



**FBU general secretary Matt Wrack** photos Neil Cafferky

## ‘Cuts would take us below critical safety limit’

Paul Neale, London Fire Brigades Union southwest area organiser and 27 years a firefighter, spoke to Paula Mitchell.

**“T**he mayor claims response times won’t be shortened. But instead of engines, they are looking at using specially adapted minis to attend incidents!

So when they talk about the first vehicle on the scene it’s not necessarily a fire engine.

It’s possible you could have a mini within six minutes and then after eight minutes a fully crewed fire engine turns up.

There was a report by management that we were stretched to our limits with the riots and terror attacks. Cutting us further means we’ll go below the safety critical limit and the people of London won’t have the service they need or deserve.

God forbid when the first person dies, and even more if it’s a child. Will these people be held accountable for what’s happened?

They come out with facts and figures about deaths in fires to justify cuts, but what they don’t say is that they’ve changed the way they record fire deaths.

They’re making these cuts and yet they’ve wasted so much money. Lon-

don Fire Brigade spent £15 million on a fire house for training that can’t be used. They built it at Southwark training station, in a smoke-free zone so it can’t be used for fires! When it was used the cabling melted. Apparently the police are using it now.

They privatised the fire engines. They’ve changed the company so many times its unreal. They might as well have done the competitive tendering process with a musical chairs system.

We’re using engines that are 15 to 20 years old. Now the fleet has changed hands again and Babcocks own it. Babcocks also got the contract for training. The in-house bid was overlooked for whatever reason. Babcocks is doing all the recruitment. It’s preparation for full privatisation.

There’ll probably have to be compulsory redundancies, they’re not getting enough numbers for voluntary. We have to fight this.

With all the cuts from the government, I think we all need to come out, we need a general strike.”

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## London copter crash ‘accident waiting to happen’

**Steve Nally**

Brixton Hill Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition candidate

“An accident waiting to happen,” was how one of my tower block neighbours summed up the Vauxhall helicopter crash.

Anyone who lives by the river Thames has seen a big increase in helicopter traffic and occasions when they seem too close for comfort.

This will get worse as more towers for the wealthy are built on London’s riverfront.

On 16 January, freezing fog meant that I could not see the top of the building that the helicopter struck.

London City airport was cancelling flights and the Woolwich Ferry wasn’t operating, so questions need to be asked as to why a helicopter was allowed to fly. Even the police helicopter was grounded.

### Clapham fire station

Lives were saved because fire crews arrived on the scene very quickly including those based at Clapham fire station. Yet that station is now up for closure which will inevitably mean more avoidable deaths and slower response times.

But London Fire Brigade management have ordered FBU members to remove posters informing local residents of the closure of the station

and what it will mean to them.

Helicopter flights across London also need to be reviewed. Flight records show that the peak use of such flights takes place when the Royal Ascot races and other similar events take place, which indicates that helicopter flights are used more for ferrying the rich around than for practical purposes.

That helicopter landed yards from a railway line, a school playground a petrol station and supermarket. Things could have been much worse.

No fire station should be closed and helicopter flights across London should be restricted to emergencies and practical purposes, not a plaything for the rich.



# USA - the centre of global capitalism

## Workers start to demand change

In November 2012 Kshama Sawant, a member of Socialist Alternative, the Socialist Party's counterpart in the USA, stood in Seattle in the election for a seat in the Washington state house. She stood against Frank Chopp, the speaker of the house and a leading Democrat. After a lively campaign which inspired workers and young people all over Seattle, she won a tremendous 29% of the vote – over 20,000 votes. One paper commented: "Sawant nearly topped the combined national votes of all the socialist candidates in a single district!... Make no mistake: Sawant and Socialist Alternative made history in Seattle." Kshama recently spoke to Paula Mitchell for the Socialist.

### What were the highlights of the election campaign?

The way in which our election programme has been received. We ran openly as socialists and we had a very small budget compared to our Democratic Party opponent. We campaigned against the massive budget cuts that are going on in education and healthcare in the state, as they are in the rest of the country.

We argued for the full public funding of social services like health and education. And we said the way to start do that is to tax big corporations and the super wealthy.

Even the people who said 'I'm not going to vote for you' supported our programme. This confirmed that it was the right time to run. The door has been kicked open by this campaign. It shows that there is a huge opening for the left.

On election night a spontaneous rally broke out. It was mainly a celebration about the winning of the marriage equality initiative, which was a huge victory for the LGBT community.

These were mostly Democratic Party supporters. They played Obama's victory speech on the radio and the mood was euphoric. There were nationaistic chants of "USA! USA!" But when we spoke at the rally there was no hostility. Every time we said the word 'socialist' there were loud cheers from the crowd.

That confirmed our analysis that things are not straightforward. People may vote for Obama but at the same time be hungry for change.

### What do you think your vote represents?

The fact that we are in a completely transformed period. People may not be ready to vote for a socialist candidate in the US, but they clearly want change. This is especially true in the aftermath of the Arab revolutions, the Wisconsin uprising and

the Occupy movement.

Even a year and a half ago I don't remember people talking about class or poverty or inequality in a way that they're talking now. The word capitalism never used to be mentioned. Once people are open to naming the system that exists now, that opens the door to saying we need a different system.

People are looking for alternatives on the left. They are sick and tired of the attacks on their living standards by both the Democrat and Republican parties. They are extremely angry about the fact that politics in the US is completely dominated by big corporations and the 1%. The idea of a grassroots campaign succeeding in any way is really exciting for people.

### What are your expectations for the future?

I think that Obama and the Democrats will at first make an appearance of fighting for the interests of their constituents. Rather than make an all-out attack on social security and Medicare and Medicaid in order to solve the so-called fiscal cliff, Obama might have a softer approach.

But he's not going to be able to go very far with that because ultimately it's the corporate agenda that he's there to fulfil.

If you look at the economic projections all over the world, the temporary boost that the US economy got is not going to last very long. The growth rate projections are bleak.

Inevitably the burden will be put on the working class. In a way people are going to be much clearer about this process under Obama than if Romney had won. That would have given an excuse for people to say it's a Republican agenda.

Obama has come back for four more years. Lots of people are saying: 'He needs time. He doesn't have to worry

about re-election so he can show his true colours as a genuine radical.' But they will find this isn't happening and the larger attacks on living standards will continue. This will fuel protest. I think state level protests against budget cuts are definitely on the cards.

Fast food workers have had walkouts in New York City. They are demanding \$15 an hour minimum wage and the right to unionise without retaliation.

These demands are far more than any trade union leadership would raise today. It shows a sign of the working class taking matters into its own hands. And we are going to see more of that.

### How did you first get involved?

I was always looking for something. Growing up in India I saw poverty and misery around me. Yet I could see that there's more than enough resources to give a good minimum standard of living for everybody.

At the same time there are extremely wealthy people. That whole contradiction had been plaguing me.

You often run into liberal organisations or single issue organisations who don't really offer you an analysis of why that poverty exists.

Then when I moved to Seattle in 2008 during the presidential elections there was this whole furore about Obama – 'Obamamania'.

This was extremely troubling to me. If you look at the record of the Democratic party you can see where their allegiance lies – big corporations and the millionaires and the billionaires.

I was supporting Ralph Nader's campaign as an individual because I thought that made sense.

I went to a couple of rallies and I saw these dynamic speakers from another organisation called Socialist Alternative and I just realised that every single word they said made complete sense to me. So I approached them and that was it.

...things are not straightforward. People may vote for Obama but at the same time be hungry for change



A campaign poster



Kshama Sawant photos Socialist Alternative

### What are Socialist Alternative's current goals?

As a nationwide organisation we would like to take the implications of this result further. In Seattle we're planning to run one or maybe two candidates for the city council. We've invited the broader left in Seattle to join us in an electoral coalition.

We will work with people who want to run against the Democrats on a pro-worker, anti-budget cuts agenda.

In Minneapolis we've been doing some great work with a campaign called Occupy Homes. This fights against foreclosures [repossessions] of people's houses. It has had some successes even though it is still quite small. So we might run one of our members who has been involved in Occupy Homes as a candidate. We might stand in other cities as well.

2013 is likely to be a changed year of struggle. We are very likely to see social movements but with a strong class struggle element to them. Whatever election campaign we run we will orientate towards those struggles.

### Are there differences between the US and Britain?

The United States has a different political

consciousness than Europe.

Europeans will notice that the thinking may be somewhat conservative and less open to the idea of having social welfare programmes.

But if you look at opinion polls on things like the need for healthcare, publicly funded childcare and good quality education accessible to everyone. Also issues like whether society should be more equal, you will see that the American working class are well to the left of both the Democrat and Republican parties.

The views of ordinary people and their needs are not being represented in any way by the political parties that gain power.

I think that people everywhere in the world including your readers should notice that this phenomenal result in Seattle has happened in the centre of the global power of capitalism.

What's to stop it happening elsewhere? It should happen in a more striking form everywhere else in the world.

That's the wonderful thing about being connected internationally. That's the message of socialism, it's internationalism.

The interests of the working class in Britain are closely tied to those of the working class in the United States.

If we can get results like this, you can too, and probably even more.

Rather than organising a single restaurant or chain, the campaign is aiming to organise the entire industry in New York City

## New York: Fast food workers rise up

Jesse Lessinger  
New York City, Socialist Alternative

On 29 November 2012, workers at dozens of fast food restaurants in New York City walked off the job, formed pickets outside and raised demands for higher wages, better hours, and union rights.

It is a myth that fast food jobs are just for youth looking to make some extra cash. There are nearly 50,000 fast food workers in New York, and for many it's their only means of earning income for themselves and their families.

They work for minimum wage of \$7.25, and many depend on food stamps and other government assistance. With so little weekly take-home pay some are forced to live in shelters. In fact, McDonald's is reported to have recruited workers at homeless shelters.

In Midtown Manhattan, where workers from Burger King, Wendy's, KFC, and other restaurants walked out, the super-exploitation of fast food workers stands side by side with all the glitz and glamour of New York City high-end commerce, shopping, and tourism.

But now these heroic workers are taking a stand and we as socialists give them our unconditional support. One of their demands is for \$15 an hour. This is significant, as many low-wage battles have called for more modest pay increases.

\$15 an hour in New York City is not enough to live on, especially for those with families, but it's an enormous step in that direction.

### More workers in struggle

Fast food workers are not the only ones taking bold measures to fight for better conditions. There have been actions at upwards of 1,000 Walgreens across the country, with workers demanding union rights, no retaliation for speaking up, better hours, and \$13 an hour in pay. These actions were not just one-off events, but are part of an ongoing campaign.

Fast food companies are expected to bring in \$200 billion in revenue in 2012. Walgreens' revenues in 2011 totalled \$477 billion with \$15.7 billion of that being pure profit. The Walgreens family alone now owns as much wealth as the entire bottom 40% of families in the US. This obscene wealth is not created by smart business people making smart business decisions, it comes off the backs of their highly exploited workers, who are rewarded for their hard work with poverty wages.

In New York there have been a number of battles to organise low-wage workers, predominantly among immigrants. Six grocery stores have been organised in



Fast food workers have launched a bold campaign for \$15 an hour

Brooklyn. There are now four recently unionised car washes as well. They are fighting for higher wages and back pay. Also, workers at a Hot & Crusty bakery staged an occupation and 55-day picket to win union recognition.

But fast food companies and Walmart are much bigger employers. They will continue to fight tooth and nail to prevent a union from forming. The actions received media attention all across the country and even forced McDonald's to issue a statement saying they were committed to a dialogue to be an "even better employer". Do they really expect us to believe that?

It will take more than just bad publicity. The Fast Food Forward campaign is a step in the right direction. Rather than organising a single restaurant or chain, the campaign is aiming to organise the entire industry in New York City.

We'll need strikes and walkouts at hundreds of fast food stores with visible pickets backed up by thousands of Occupy and trade union activists and other supporters. This will require preparation. Workers need to form their own workplace committees and link them together to develop a strategy and coordinate action.

### Youth Fight for Jobs and Education

Youth Fight for Jobs and Education is a campaign calling for a mass government programme of job creation to end the misery of widespread youth unemployment. We reject any notion that increased insecurity, poorer conditions or low pay for young workers will in any way help to alleviate joblessness. In reality it will have the opposite effect! Youth Fight for Jobs are campaigning for decent, secure employment which pays wages that cover the costs of living. We are campaigning among young workers on the following demands:

- Give us proper contracts, guaranteed hours and full employment rights.
- Decent tea and lunch breaks and no being 'clocked off' when we take one.
- Pay us enough to live – for a living wage of £10 an hour.
- Stop the bosses 'firing at will' – for job security.
- Stop using young people as cheap or free labour on apprenticeships, internships and workfare.
- For the right to organise at work – scrap the anti-trade union laws – no victimisation!

For more information see: [www.youthfightforjobs.com](http://www.youthfightforjobs.com)  
Contact YFJ on: [youthfightforjobs@gmail.com](mailto:youthfightforjobs@gmail.com), ring 020 8558 7947



**Socialist Party national youth meeting**  
9-10 February  
London  
Email  
[clairelaker@socialistparty.org.uk](mailto:clairelaker@socialistparty.org.uk)  
for details and to book a place



### Forced to choose between a doctor and a shelter

11% of African-American and 17% of Latino households are at imminent risk of foreclosure. Half of all home foreclosures are caused by medical expenses, forcing millions of families to choose between a doctor and shelter.



# Southampton

## Give youth a future!

### Southampton Youth Fight for Jobs

Opposition is growing to the destruction of youth services in Southampton. If the cuts go ahead the council will provide nothing.

Youth workers, young people and parents know what a serious impact this will have, especially for deprived areas of the city where there will be nothing to do and nowhere to go.

Led by a group of determined youth workers and Unison members, the launch of Save Southampton City Youth Services, organised a demonstration outside a recent council meeting attracting over 70 young people, workers and supporters.

Anti-cuts councillors Keith Morrell and Don Thomas came and joined us in solidarity. People came from all over the city including the Newtown centre and the Zoe Braithwaite centre.

### Overwhelming response

In recent weeks there have been regular campaign stalls in the city centre where the response has been overwhelming. The council is undertaking a consultation process at the moment but refused the campaign an opportunity to speak at the council meeting.

Undeterred, campaigners took to the public gallery and made an appeal to councillors not to vote for cuts. A chant of “No Youth Cuts!” broke out as the campaign marched out.

We will be returning to the council on Tuesday 29 January at 4pm to show a film made by the campaign and explain to the councillors what the impact of the cuts will mean.



photos P Mason



## East London school rejects ‘academisation’

**Linda Taaffe**  
Waltham Forest NUT (personal capacity)

Parents, governors and teachers have all proclaimed a definite “No” to converting their school Thomas Gamuel Primary in Walthamstow, East London to an academy.

The school, that is located in the middle of a big housing estate with all the inner city problems of poverty, has come under pressure to convert in the coalition’s drive to hive off state assets.

After an initial vote of governors not to proceed at that moment, a consultation exercise was carried out. Often this is no more than a token nod in the direction of democracy.

In this case around 70 parents

turned up for a presentation from both sides - and were not at all impressed with the suits! Then a poll was organised to gauge parents’ attitudes. The result was 168 against and six for. Success!

However, this will probably not be the end of the story. The next step could be for Gove’s Department for Education to apply pressure from the top. They might try to throw out existing governors, many of whom have served in that capacity for many years. Then they would unceremoniously replace them with a more cooperative ‘interim board’, who will take the decision to convert.

However, with the teachers in NUT prepared to strike, the parents up in arms, and governors well unhappy, we reckon the campaign will be starting from a good

platform to fight Gove’s academy stormtroopers!

### National committee

The Socialist Party’s national committee met on 19 and 20 January and agreed the British Perspectives document to be discussed at the party’s 2013 congress. The document will be available to Socialist Party members through their branches in the next week. The congress will be held on 2-4 March. 15 February is the deadline for branch resolutions, delegate lists and deposits and booking crèche places. 22 February is the deadline for branch amendments to resolutions and for congress visitors’ details.

## Building an anti-cuts voice in council elections

### Lambeth

New Labour-led Lambeth council called the Brixton Hill byelection for 17 January, minimising scrutiny of their cuts programme with a short election campaign period.

In near zero temperatures, the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition campaign – supported by the local anti-cuts movement - was enormously positive.

Despite the short campaign, the whole ward was leafleted with two-thirds canvassed. Unlike many elections, TUSC received coverage in the local press and 80 people heard our candidate speak at a hustings meeting organised by the Brixton Bugle.

A complication was that the purely propagandist Socialist Party of Great Britain also stood. However the combined TUSC and SPGB vote was 4.2 %.

The campaign raised TUSC’s standing. We finished above Ukip, despite that group’s continual media coverage.

Crucially the campaign has given TUSC authority to call a meeting to coordinate an anti-cuts challenge across Lambeth in the full council elections in 2014.

### David Maples

#### Brixton Hill

Labour	1593	62.6%
Green	344	13.5%
Lib Dems	274	10.8%
Tories	164	6.4%
TUSC	72	2.8%
Ukip	63	2.5%
SPGB	34	1.3%
Turnout		22.8%

### Wirral

In December a local campaigner presented a petition of 8,000 names against the cuts to Wirral council. Addressing the Labour council, he said “they’re laughing at you,” referring to a Tory motion accusing the Labour council of

cutting too far, too fast.

It seems the local Tories oppose every specific cut proposed, but support cutting £109 million from a £287 million budget.

Wirral held two byelections on 17 January - called with a week’s notice, nominations closed on 20 December. This cynical move limited campaigning against the cuts.

But Labour still took a kicking - they lost Leasowe and Moreton East despite a ‘local celebrity’ candidate, with their share of the vote falling from 51% to 42%. In the safe Tory seat of Heswall, Labour’s vote fell from 18% to 13%.

The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) stood in both seats, with two young workers, Socialist Party members Mark Halligan and Greg North as candidates.

The timing of the elections meant we had limited campaigning time in seats we had never stood in before. We achieved 31 votes in Leasowe and Moreton East beating the Lib Dems and Greens, and 19 votes in Heswall.

Labour councillors continue to bleat about illegal budgets and district commissioners (regardless of the truth) while slashing jobs and services; we continue to build an anti-cuts movement.

### Jeff Dale

Leasowe and Moreton East		
Tory	1,620	50.5%
Labour	1,355	42.2%
Ukip	148	4.6%
TUSC	31	1.0%
Green	28	0.9%
Lib Dems	28	0.9%
Turnout		30.5%

### Heswall

Tory	1,254	58.8%
Ukip	460	21.6%
Labour	289	13.6%
Green	110	5.3%
TUSC	19	0.9%
Turnout		19.7%

Mark International Workers’ Day this year with a May Day greeting in the Socialist and help fund the paper that fights all cuts.

See [www.socialistparty.org.uk/mayday](http://www.socialistparty.org.uk/mayday) for more info.



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The CWI website contains news, reports and analysis from around the world. [www.socialistworld.net](http://www.socialistworld.net)



# Sahel: No to the war in Mali

## Imperialist intervention will deepen crisis and instability

**Cédric G  r  me**  
CWI

**T**he four-day hostage crisis at the In Amenas gas facility in south east Algeria and its bloody outcome have sent shockwaves internationally. The raid and the Algerian military's response led to the deaths of at least one Algerian worker, 37 foreign hostages and 29 attackers.

The group responsible for the attack, 'the Mulathameen Brigade', warned it would carry out further attacks on foreign interests unless the foreign military offensive in Northern Mali stopped. In the aftermath, Prime Minister David Cameron warned that the fight against terrorism in North Africa could go on "for decades".

Many people are legitimately repulsed by the actions of such reactionary jihadist groups. Numerous reports provide evidence of the gruesome methods of rule imposed by Islamist fighters in Northern Mali, with summary executions, beatings, amputations, torture, stonings and destruction of holy shrines.

This barbarism provides the main reserve of ideological ammunition to the defenders of the military intervention. Polls indicate that support for the war among the French population stands at over 60%.

For the moment, most media reports imply that the majority of Malians, particularly in the South, welcome the French intervention. At this stage many Malians might genuinely think and hope that the intervention by the French government could protect them from some of the horrendous armed groups who terrorise the Northern population.

### Ethnic tensions

However, it is very difficult to gauge the mood among the masses. This is particularly the case in the North, where both the Malian military regime and the French military are restricting journalists' access to the combat zones, including confiscating cameras and other material from some reporters.

At the same time the International Federation for Human Rights, Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International have documented cases of summary executions by the Malian army and pro-governmental militias.

In Mali a number of ethnic groups have been forced to coexist in an artificially-created state, established to serve the colonial masters' wishes and divide-and-rule tactics.

The ethnic Tuaregs, in particular, have long been subdued, and have seen their demands for self-determination and cultural rights systematically denied by Mali's central state. They have been scapegoated by successive Malian regimes in attempts to draw attention away from its inability to solve the problems facing the population.

Previous Tuareg rebellions have faced violent racist reprisals, including massacres and forced displacements of the Tuareg people. A new Tuareg revolt, precipitated by the Libyan crisis, exploded in the North at the beginning of 2012, but was rapidly sidelined by fundamentalist groups.

This unresolved Tuareg question is one of the underlying reasons explaining why entire army units of Tuareg commanders and soldiers in the North defected and joined



The military escalation in the Sahel, defended as a 'war on terror', is aimed at pursuing France's imperialist goals

the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA), an organisation based in northern Mali, bringing their weapons and equipment.

However, the Tuaregs cannot rely on the MNLA to defend their rights. Recently an MNLA spokesperson called for support for the French army's intervention. That followed the conclusion of an agreement with reactionary Islamist groups early last year. It is clear that the MNLA is prepared to make opportunist twists and turns in order to preserve its power and influence.

However, as the remaining Malian army, backed up by French troops, retakes control of towns and cities it had lost, collective punishments of the local population and bloody settlements of accounts with the Tuaregs particularly, are likely to happen. Some reports already point in this direction.

These examples unveil the dark side of a war promoted as for 'human rights' and 'democracy'. The reality is that the image of Mali as a beacon of 'democracy' and 'stability' never was. The regime, which has developed during the last two decades, was a corrupt, clientelistic and authoritarian power.

In addition, the devastating effects of its Western-backed neoliberal policies, which have notably allowed French capital to take major stakes in the Malian economy, have ruined the lives of many, dramatically increasing poverty, precariousness and mass unemployment.

The long-standing social marginalisation of the Northern part of the territory in particular, and the lack of investment and infrastructure in these areas have created an ocean of dire misery and a strong level of resentment and despair.

### Imperialist goals

This is fertile ground for the development of a quasi-lawless land, made up of a complex interplay of drug-smuggling mafia and armed militias, alongside al-Qa'ida type fighters, kidnappers and bandits of all sorts.

The military coup in March 2012, which led to the demise of Malian 'democracy', and upon which the current provisional government fundamentally relies, has reduced the legitimacy of those who hold power in Bamako, the capital, to zero.

Nevertheless, the request to intervene militarily made to the French



Imperialism carved up the planet

ruling class by these people is used to cultivate a version of events that says France has intervened because the Malian people 'asked' France to come to their rescue.

But Mali overflows with gold, uranium, bauxite, iron, manganese, tin and copper. Neighbouring Niger is the source of over a third of the uranium used in French nuclear power plants. In reality the military escalation in the Sahel, defended as a 'war on terror', is aimed at pursuing France's imperialist goals: guaranteeing a stable order to assist the continued looting of the region's vast resources, for the benefit of its multinationals and financial institutions.

All this sheds serious doubts on the proclaimed aim of a short military campaign of 'a few weeks'. As the British military has found in Afghanistan, it is one thing to invade a country and to have a few initial military successes, but it is another to pull out and then rely on a weak, unpopular, divided and corrupt army to regain control over an immense territory, without addressing any of the root social causes of the explosive situation that exists.

France may be unable to avoid a long engagement with its own military forces on the front line. As the number of civilian casualties rises, and the Western occupation and its abuses arouse bitter colonial memories, one of the side-effects might precisely be to fertilise the ground furthermore for jihadist groups and to attract new candidates to participate in the 'crusade against the colonial master'.

As the conflict goes on, and the dramatic consequences of this in-



Mali

tervention are exposed, a mood of relative acceptance will inevitably be replaced by questioning, reluctance and hostility; opposition will grow and become more vocal.

In France, the illusions that the foreign policy of the so-called 'socialist' government is fundamentally different to Sarkozy's will be dashed, and the ideas of President Fran  ois Hollande's reign marking "the end of Fran  afrique" will be seen for what they are, ie a cynical lie.

### No justification

Of course, socialists oppose jihadist and al-Qa'ida -type groups, whose poisonous right-wing Islamist ideology and methods are a deadly danger for the workers' movement and the poor masses generally. A place where teenage couples risk death by stoning if they hold hands in public is repellent to overwhelming majority of workers and youth.

These groups are riven with contradictions. Groups that carry out practices such as the amputation or whipping of people who smoke cigarettes are often

### socialistworld.net

See the website of the Committee for a Workers' International, the socialist world organisation that the Socialist Party is affiliated to for more international news and analysis

## We demand:

- Withdrawal of French troops from Mali and all of Africa
- For multi-ethnic and democratically-organised defence forces by the Malian population, in order to kick out the reactionary and fundamentalist militias, but also to resist any attempt at neocolonial military occupation in the North
- No to the state of emergency, for the reinstatement of all democratic freedoms in Mali
- The right to self-determination for the Tuaregs. All peoples of the Sahel and of the Sahara, as well as of the peoples within each country, should have equality of rights, and should decide their own future
- The wealth of Mali belongs to the Malian people! For democratic socialist nationalisation of the land and of the commanding heights of the economy. For the financing of a real economic development plan based on the needs of, and democratically controlled by, the Malian masses
- Down with the regime in Bamako. For a government of the workers and the poor farmers and the implementation of socialist policies to develop the country

themselves involved in cigarettes and drug smuggling.

These reactionary groups grow out of a rotten system, incapable of providing a way out and a decent life for the vast majority of the population, especially the youth. Fear, desperation for means of survival, or access to money, guns or protection motivate people to join these groups. In the absence of a strong, independent and united workers' movement, along with the poor, to deliver a perspective and programme for social and political change, these armed groups can continue to exist.

But none of this makes the military intervention more justifiable. Initial reports of French air strikes against the cities of Gao and Konna last week estimated there were between 60 and 100 people killed respectively in those two cities, including children torn to pieces by the bombs. French military officials warn that scores of civilian deaths are almost 'unavoidable' as the rebels are living among the population and using guerrilla-type tactics for hiding and supplies.



# Campaigning against the cuts

## Cardiff

Nearly 100 people braved the cold and rain last Saturday in Cardiff to protest against attempts to scapegoat benefit claimants for the economic crisis. Cardiff Against The Cuts put out a call for trade unionists, disabled activists, the unemployed and other campaigners to unite in the face of a determined attempt by the government to divide the growing opposition to its assault on the welfare state, by pitting those in work against those who are out of work. Cameron's lie that "we are all in it together" has never been so obvious. In the same week that benefit claimants were told that they deserve a real cut in their incomes, MPs claimed that they deserve an extra £20,000 a year - a 32% increase!

Osborne's call for us to turn on our neighbours when we're angry at the cuts is an insult to our intelligence. Even a child could see through the deception. That was made clear by Hannah Mainstone (aged nine), who spoke at the rally and explained how her family will lose money as a result of benefit cuts. "My stepdad Nathan is ill with sarcoidosis," she said. "The cuts have got to stop. They are taking money off the poor and giving it to the rich. It is not fair and it has got to change."

One slightly older activist, Mark, explained that his parents were long-term unemployed when he was a child in the 1980s. "Me and my sisters have all got good jobs now and my dad got back on his feet and works at the tax office. It wouldn't have been possible for us to keep things together if it wasn't for the safety net."

Backup from the trade union movement was out in force. Katrine Williams, chair of PCS Wales explained we need a united campaign. Phil Jones from the RMT brought greetings.

Cardiff Against The Cuts is holding its AGM, at 7.30pm on Tuesday 29 January in Transport House

**Ross Saunders**



**Hannah Mainstone speaking on the Cardiff Against the Cuts protest** photo Becky Davis

## North Yorkshire

The Tory-led North Yorkshire County Council has embarked on a series of "budget consultations" with the public over the impact of spending cuts in the region. The council has already begun to implement a £69 million cut in spending over four years, up to 2015.

However, an additional £24 million in spending cuts is now required over the next two years.

On 16 January the council held a consultation in Harrogate. At the meeting, the deputy leader of the council and the police commissioner (elected on a 13.3% turnout) spoke of the "inevitability" of cuts and the need for "difficult choices". We were even presented with what was described as a "graph of doom" to highlight the rising costs of social care for adults and were told that there needs to be a review of "every service the council provides".

These cuts will have a devastating impact on services and jobs across North Yorkshire. However, the self-styled "consultation" was nothing more than a propaganda exercise in trying to persuade the public to accept the cuts. Strangely, the "inevitable cuts" and the "graph of doom" have not prevented the council from giving the go-ahead to a £1.4 billion waste incinerator between York and Harrogate which has been condemned by both environmental campaigners and local residents.

Only 20 people turned up for the Harrogate meeting and five of those were local councillors. Socialist Party members attended and queried which local services the council was planning to cut. The council refused to respond.

They did concede that they could use their reserves (totalling around £30-40 million) to support their budget and would "consider" using "some" of those reserves in 2013/14.

However, there was no commitment to a wider strategy of using the reserves to ensure that no cuts would take place over the next financial year and building a campaign across the region to defend our communities.

**Michael Docherty**



photo Paul Mattsson

## Plymouth

In Plymouth the Labour administration has launched a consultation into ending child poverty.

Members of the Socialist Party in Plymouth have been frustrated to see that the only solutions offered within the introductory consultation booklet are: a) giving better benefits advice; and b) getting people on water meters! Our concern is that this is a window dressing PR exercise as opposed to a meaningful attempt to take real action. Nevertheless, we held a meeting to discuss real solutions to poverty in Plym-

outh and now intend to submit this to the consultation.

We want to challenge the idea that you can end child poverty without thinking about what is going on in the lives of their parents. We have then bullet pointed real suggestions from restoring EMA student payments, offering free breakfast clubs to school students, stopping the bedroom tax, ensuring that the council pay a living wage.

We intend to campaign on this issue in Plymouth to push for less posturing and more action.

**Tom Taylor**



photo Paul Mattsson

## Sheffield

Despite the snow, some 500 protestors marched and demonstrated against Sheffield council's plans to shut half the children's centres in the city. At the rally outside the Town Hall, parents and workers from the centres condemned the council's plans. More than a dozen Socialist Party members took part in the protest, collecting signatures against the closure of the children's centres and also for the council to set a 'needs' budget and fight the government.

The next stage is a lobby of the council, when a petition on the children's centres will be presented. Over 8,000 have now signed the petition, forcing a full council debate.

**Jeremy Short**

Read more anti-cuts reports at [socialistparty.org.uk](http://socialistparty.org.uk) and send reports of protests or short letters about how the cuts are affecting you to [editors@socialistparty.org.uk](mailto:editors@socialistparty.org.uk)

# Film review Les Miserables



**"It is a film about revolution and the appalling injustices of society"**

**Derek McMillan**

**L**es Miserables is a first class film. The momentum never stops and there are some fantastic performances by Hugh Jackman as Jean Valjean, Anne Hathaway as Fantine and Russell Crowe as Javert. The comic talents of Helena Bonham Carter and Sasha Baron Cohen provide a counterpoint to the serious side of the story.

"Les miserables" (powerful words inadequately translated as "the poor") are the focus of the original story - not a narrative that Hollywood was likely to be enamoured of. Tom Hooper concentrates on the romance at the expense of the social message, but not completely.

The story, based on a two-volume 19th century novel by Victor Hugo, is not miserable at all because it contains within it a message of hope that things can be changed.

## Revolution

It is worth comparing the revolutionaries in Les Miserables with those other revolutionaries in a 19th century novel - the blood-stained monsters depicted in Dickens' A Tale of Two Cities. Although the revolution of 1830 was defeated, Victor Hugo sees the revolutionaries as human beings and evokes sympathy for the cause for which they are fighting.

To say it is a revolutionary film would be pushing it. It is a film about revolution and about the appalling injustices of society but the message is about individual salvation through love.

The central character, Jean Valjean, is imprisoned for five years for stealing a loaf of bread, then another 14 for trying to escape - not an exaggeration of the penal code of the period. On release he is condemned to carry a yellow passport - an ID card which is as effective as a brand.

A priest seeks to redeem him with an act of kindness and (without retelling the whole story) the narrative rests on the consequences of that act of kindness.

Perhaps the most shocking aspect of the original story is the casting of a policeman, a perfectly respectable

upholder of the law with no sympathy for the poor, as a villain. We are accustomed to seeing 'crooked cops' but Javert isn't crooked. He simply enforces an unjust law because it is not his place to change it.

The most powerful scenes involve the street fighting in Paris during the 1830 revolution and the idealism of students and young people who are depicted as simply and selflessly fighting for the poor of their own city.

I am aware that people talk cynically about 'not a dry eye in the house' but it really is an accurate description of how people in the audience respond to this.

In the final scene the selflessness is rewarded when, with Les Miserables, they ascend to heaven.

The story, based on a two-volume 19th century novel by Victor Hugo, is not miserable at all because it contains within it a message of hope that things can be changed

Dickens, for all his compassion, would have had them going to the other place!

The same songs are repeated with a different emphasis at different times in the film but the message of what happens when society offers no future to the poorest members of the community could not be clearer. We really will all be in it together!

## At the end of the day

"At the end of the day there's another day dawning

And the sun in the morning is waiting to rise

Like the waves crash on the sand  
Like a storm that'll break any second

There's a hunger in the land  
There's a reckoning still to be reckoned and

There's gonna be hell to pay  
At the end of the day!"



# Book review: Planning for the Planet

## How socialism could save the environment

by Pete Dickenson

**Paul Moorhouse**

This book's theme is apparent before you pick it up. The cover bears a striking image of a polar bear marooned on an iceberg: summing up the devastation of global warming. As author Pete Dickenson explains in the preface, it builds on the Marxist analysis of capitalism's rape of our planet in his *Planning Green Growth* (2003) and Bill Hopwood and Martin Cock's *Global Crisis* (1996), as well as material in the Socialist Party's other publications. The first chapter brings up to date their analysis of the way profiteering continues to poison and irradiate the planet.

Pete, however, dedicates the much larger second chapter (and most of the remainder of the book) to what he calls "the critical threat of global warming". Writing before the devastation of Hurricane Sandy and the horrific bush fires in Tasmania, Pete analyses the arguments of climate sceptics and concludes by arguing the "need for urgent and effective action to reduce emissions", without which the continuation of life on the planet is threatened. He

persuasively argues that the only viable way to do this is harnessing renewable sources of energy: wind, water and solar power.

The new and important contribution of this book is the comprehensive way that Pete Dickenson uses socialist economic analysis to demonstrate not only that the profit system is responsible for global warming but that the market and private ownership of the means of production will be an insurmountable barrier to solving it.

In a chapter entitled 'How green will the capitalists go?', he analyses the Kyoto, Durban and Copenhagen summits and shows how their failure was rooted in imperialism and its crisis: "the costs of taking action were relatively small, but growing economic and political tensions between the principle capitalist countries prevented agreement": an analysis borne out by the subsequent failure of the 2012 'Doha round'.

Pete counterposes the alternative of a socialist programme for the environment to this capitalist disaster. He argues that socialist planning provides the only means to overcome capitalism's contradictions



The party is over for capitalism's plundering of the environment photo Paul Mattsson

and save the planet.

He tackles head-on the environmental disaster which is the legacy of the Stalinist planning in Russia, Eastern Europe and Mao's China, arguing that socialism requires not only common ownership of the means of production but also workers' democracy. In Russia: "the destruction of the environment and the systematic poisoning of the population was a direct result of bureaucratic misrule".

He goes on to demonstrate that even the limited steps that capitalist economists have made to measure and control the impact of production on the planet have their roots in Marxist understanding of the economy.

Pete's exposition of the 'Commoner-Erlich Equations', used by environmental scientists to measure the impact of economic growth, is technically rigorous but presented carefully both to make them (relatively) accessible to lay readers and in such a way that the bits which I couldn't understand on first reading didn't get in the way of the bigger arguments! Rather than 'blind us with science' he carefully uses it to light the way.

The 'input-output' model of the Nobel prize-winner Wassily Leon-

He argues that socialist planning provides the only means to overcome capitalism's contradictions and save the planet

tief was derived both from his experience as a state planner in 1920s Russia and the theoretical model which Marx used to explain the reproduction of capital.

Pete explains how insights, derived from Leontief, into the environmental impact of deploying resources could be used as part of a democratic socialist plan. Using Leontief's model he also shows the barriers which private ownership and the nation state create to harmonious relationships between sectors of the economy, social classes, and humankind and our environment.

The book concludes by rejecting the false dichotomy shared by monopoly capitalism, bureaucratic

'socialism' and the 'limits to growth' school of environmentalism (including many 'Green Socialists'): between economic development to meet the needs of humankind and environmental sustainability.

Pete argues that, just as private property, competition for profits, and the nation state cause social alienation and economic dislocation, they also alienate us from the environment. Quoting Karl Marx's collaborator Friedrich Engels, he explains that we: "do not rule over nature like a conqueror of a foreign people... after the mighty advances made by natural sciences... we are... in a position... to control... our day to day production activities. But the more this progresses, the more will men not only feel but know their oneness with nature."

Viewed in this light, the polar bear on the front cover can be seen as a powerful metaphor not just for global warming but for the wider destruction brought by capitalism which leaves workers stranded and dislocated from the resources which could sustain us. This book makes a convincing case that only through common ownership and planning can we heal the damaging rifts in society and achieve a sustainable relationship with nature.



### Planning for the Planet

#### How Socialism Could Save the Environment

by Pete Dickenson  
**Special offer: £7**  
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### London book launch

Thursday 31 January, 7pm.  
Brick Lane bookshop, 166 Brick Lane, London E1 6RU  
Please reserve a place: info@bricklanebookshop.com,  
020 7247 0216 or Pete Dickenson: 07866 438779

## Leicester: Build a united campaign for community resources

### Leicester Socialist Party

Over a year ago an Islamic charity, As-Salaam, tried to buy a disused scout hut on Thurnby Lodge estate in Leicester, intending to use it as a prayer room and community resource, for Muslims and non-Muslims. As-Salaam was initially told by the council, who owns the land, that it had succeeded in the tendering process.

Thurnby Lodge is mainly a white estate, but has a growing Muslim community of Asian origin. An organisation was then set up by some local residents, called "Forgotten Estates" which campaigned against the scout hut going to the Muslim

group. They said they wanted it to be used for other purposes in the community.

The leadership of this campaign included members of the English Defence League (EDL) who are a far-right, racist organisation. The EDL have no real interest in defending local community facilities, but used the genuine feelings of people on the estate about the lack of community facilities to build some initial support.

As-Salaam suffered protests, threats and intimidation. The latest example is a frozen pig's head being left by the door of the community centre they currently use.

The response of the Labour mayor of Leicester was to prevaricate.

Months passed before a decision was reached. Meanwhile members of the Muslim community had to endure daily racial abuse and harassment. This also impacted on others who used the community centre, such as the pensioners at the bingo club.

Local Labour MP, Keith Vaz went even further and sided with the protesters, writing to the mayor putting pressure on him not to grant the scout hut to the Muslim group. Finally, after months of inactivity, the mayor proposed a "solution". As-Salaam was offered an alternative building, and the "Forgotten Estates" group have been given use of the scout hut rent free for the next two years.

However, this apparent attempt to resolve the deadlock is not as even-handed as it seems. Instead of being given use of a building rent-free, As-Salaam has been asked to pay £192,000 upfront for a 150-year lease or alternatively £19,200 a year!

As-Salaam would be happy to compromise on the building, but it cannot afford this ludicrous figure.

Members of Leicester Socialist Party recently attended a 50-strong public meeting organised by As-Salaam with the support of the trades council anti-racist committee. There was a unanimous demand that As-Salaam be given suitable premises at an affordable rent.

Socialist Party members pro-

posed that we organise mass united lobbies of the mayor to achieve that.

We have also pointed out the need to campaign against Labour cuts and to fight for decent community facilities for all the people in the area, regardless of their race or religion.

To build such a movement, we need to unite people from all backgrounds, to cut across the lies and racism of far-right groups like the EDL. With the support of Leicestershire Against the Cuts and the local trade union movement, we must campaign for a political alternative that argues that there is no need for cuts to community services and puts forward socialist ideas.



## Ystrad Mynach: Give us back our A&E!



**Jaime Davies**

A&E Needed at Ystrad Mynach Hospital campaign

**M**any people have been turned away from Ystrad Mynach hospital. One man told me that he took his child to the hospital because the child couldn't breathe properly. He was then told that nobody in the building was qualified to administer treatment and this meant a further 30 to 45 minute journey to the already over-crowded Royal Gwent.

So it is unsurprising that there was a great feeling of anger and willingness to fight as over 60 people attended a hospital campaign meeting in Ystrad Mynach on 15 January. The campaign is for a 24-hour doctor-led A&E in the new Ystrad Mynach hospital and is against the 'South Wales Programme'.

We have decided to hold a demonstration on 16 February through Caerphilly, the largest

town the hospital serves. We have made clear that the demonstration isn't an attack on the doctors and nurses working at the hospital but on the way the NHS is being run by the bosses and managers.

The 'state of the art' hospital does not have the services that local people were promised when it was being built. It is replacing the Miners Hospital in Caerphilly, a hospital that was built out of mine workers' pay and had a functioning A&E (which itself had been cut back to a 9-5 service in recent years).

The Miners was under threat of closure for many years but each time the closure had been stopped by a strong campaign. Mariam Kamish from the current campaign committee noted that: "The only reason they got away with shutting the Miners this time was because they promised us a 24-hour A&E led by doctors in Ystrad Mynach."

But Ystrad Mynach only has a minor injuries unit - people in the area who need an accident and emergency department can't be treated

there. People from Caerphilly, Blackwood, Bargoed, Ystrad Mynach, Rhymney, Newbridge and surrounding areas have to travel up to an hour further to the Royal Gwent hospital in Newport or Heath hospital in Cardiff.

The 'South Wales Programme' would make things even worse, with only four or five A&Es serving the whole of South Wales (a population of two million).

At the meeting, Lloyd James from the campaigns committee called for links with other hospital campaigns: "If we don't fight united, they will divide us and they will win."

**March 11.30am, Saturday 16 February, outside the old Miners Hospital**

**Lewisham Hopsital in South London is also facing big cuts, including the closure of its A&E. Demonstrate 12 noon, Saturday 26 January, Lewisham roundabout, near railway station.**

## Clerical staff strike at Mid Yorkshire Hospitals Trust

A further five days of strike action by admin and clerical staff at Mid Yorkshire Hospitals Trust is set to commence on Monday 28 January. This follows the breakdown of negotiations with Trust bosses on their proposals to 'downband' (ie cut the pay) of over 350 staff.

The Trust's previous derisory offer of between 18 months and two years pay protection for downbanded staff had been unanimously rejected by Unison and Unite members who work at Dewsbury, Pontefract, and Pinderfields Hospital in Wakefield.

Despite being informed of this, and of our desire to negotiate alternatives to downbanding, Trust negotiators refused to discuss anything other than protection and did not improve on the previous offer.

Prior to the meeting it had been revealed that three Medical Secretaries made redundant in December had been re-hired via the NHS Professionals agency in January due to unmanageable workloads! This highlights the incompetence of senior management and the ludicrous nature of the proposals made under their 'Admin and Clerical Review'.

The fourth day of next week's strike, Thursday 31 January, coincides with a Trust Board meeting at Pinderfields Hospital at 9am. There will be a strikers' lobby outside the venue and a Unison/Unite delegation will try to address the meeting. We welcome shows of solidarity and support from other trade union branches who can make it along.

We hope that our action can act as a beacon to NHS staff around the country facing a similar onslaught on their jobs and terms & conditions. The stand taken by our members needs to be replicated nationally if we are to successfully defend our jobs and services, and ultimately save the NHS.

**Dave Byrom, Mid Yorks NHS Unison branch chair (personal capacity)**

### What we stand for

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

**As capitalism dominates the globe, the struggle for genuine socialism must be international.**

**The Socialist Party is part of the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI), a socialist international that organises in over 40 countries.**

**Our demands include:**

#### PUBLIC SERVICES

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

- Free, publicly run, good quality education, available to all at any age. Abolish university tuition fees now and introduce a living grant. No to academies and 'Free schools'!

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

#### WORK AND INCOME

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

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

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

#### ENVIRONMENT

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

#### RIGHTS

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

#### NEW WORKERS' PARTY

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

#### SOCIALISM AND INTERNATIONALISM

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