



# FIGHT TO SAVE NHS



photo Senan

- **Trade unions must call national NHS demo now**
- **A mass campaign including workers' strike action**

**‘W**e are ready for a fight to save our NHS.’ That’s the message of the 25,000 who marched in Lewisham in January to save their A&E, maternity and other vital services. It’s the message of the low-paid clerical and admin workers taking strike action against enormous pay cuts in the Mid-Yorkshire Trust hospitals. And it’s the message of anti-cuts campaigners fighting to defend the NHS all across the country.

A serious fight is definitely needed if we are to save the National Health Service. It will require a major campaign that clearly says no to all cuts. A national trade union-led Saturday demonstration must

be called as soon as it can be properly prepared - evidence from Lewisham and elsewhere shows that people would respond in their hundreds of thousands, even if called at short notice.

It will require the linking up of the community campaigns with the strength that health workers have in their unions, as well as stepping up the pressure on elected representatives to oppose every threat to the NHS by standing against them if they vote for cuts.

As usual the millionaire Con-Dem government is acting in the interests of their millionaire private healthcare pals. The Social Investigations website reports on the cosy friendship between MPs and

their paymasters: “Over 200 parliamentarians have financial links to companies involved in healthcare and they were all allowed to vote on the Health and Social Care bill, turning it into an Act.” That Act lays the basis for the end of the NHS.

But such warm relations are not extended inside the NHS. Last December official figures from the NHS Information Centre revealed that the NHS workforce in England alone has fallen by almost 21,000 since the Coalition government came to power. And 34 A&Es around the country face closure or downgrading.

So the fight to save our much-treasured NHS is urgent.

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- Stop the destruction of the NHS. Repeal the Health and Social Care Act
- No cuts, closures or job losses in the NHS
- End the postcode lottery. We call for a fully funded, high quality service in every area
- Kick big business out of the NHS. Scrap the dodgy PFI deals and cancel the debts
- For a national trade union-led weekend demonstration against attacks on our health service
- For mass action to defend the NHS with trade union strike action at its heart
- For a new mass workers’ party to provide a fighting, political alternative to the pro-cuts parties

see page 5 for NHS campaign reports and news



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what we think

# Cracks in the coalition – we must take advantage of the divided enemy

**B**ack when the Con-Dem coalition government was young, and Nick Clegg and David Cameron were singing each other's praises in a rose garden, Cameron did show some foresight of the open warfare that is now rocking the coalition.

The Con-Dem coalition put in place grossly undemocratic arrangements for fixed five-year parliamentary terms, which mean that a vote of no confidence in the Commons no longer automatically triggers a general election.

A general election can still be triggered if a motion of no confidence is passed and no alternative government can be found; or if the motion for an early general election is agreed either by at least two thirds of the house or without a division.

These arrangements were clearly designed to keep the vicious austerity coalition in power for five years, irrespective of the mass opposition increasingly demanding that they depart.

It would be wrong, however, for the workers' movement to conclude that these constitutional 'iron bands' will necessarily hold the coalition together until 2015.

Senior Lib Dem minister, millionaire Chris Huhne, pleaded guilty to the charge of perverting the course of justice and resigned from parliament. "Never in British political history has a minor traffic offence produced such spectacular consequences" was how the Telegraph's Peter Osborne summed it up.

He warned of "what looks certain to become this century's most savage and bitter byelection. It comes at the worst imaginable moment, with the Coalition in partial meltdown, and party activists straining at the leash to get at each other's throats."

The trade union and anti-cuts movement needs to take heart from the divided, weak state of its enemy, and launch a massive

campaign to defeat it.

This government is implementing the most brutal austerity in 80 years, but it is clear that a mass campaign could defeat it. The need for a 24-hour general strike, as the next step in that campaign, has never been clearer.

The divisions in the government have not spilled into the open on the issue of austerity or cuts. However, they reflect the extremely shallow social base of both governing parties. The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds now has more members than all of Britain's political parties combined!

## Crisis of British capitalism

The Tory Party, which was a mass party with more than three million members at its peak in the 1950s, has been in decline ever since. Since Cameron became Tory leader in 2005, its membership has halved to 130,000. The Lib Dems have also lost at least 5,000 members since they entered the coalition government, while their electoral base has been severely eroded.

Ultimately, the capitalist parties' shrinking membership reflects the long-term crisis of British capitalism. These parties act in the interests of a system which, even before the start of the 'great recession', meant stagnating wages and increasing hours for the majority.

Over the last five years British capitalism has delivered an average 15% fall in real wages, with no prospect of a return to healthy growth. The capitalist parties are rightly associated in the minds of the majority with economic crisis, cuts, sleaze and corruption. The MPs' expenses scandal still hangs like a stink over Westminster.

The current splits in the coalition are coming to the surface as the different forces with-

in it scramble to try and secure their future careers. There is more than a hint of rats and sinking ships!

The Lib Dems came into open opposition to the Tories by voting against the boundary changes because, if implemented, it would have increased the number of their MPs that will be culled at the next election. It sums them up that they are not showing equal determination when it comes to stopping further cuts against the poorest, however.

It now appears that, despite claiming they would not do so, the Lib Dems will be prepared to accept the coalition proposing new benefits cuts, on top of the misery that has already been planned.

Clearly, only building mass opposition to cuts will force home reality to the Lib Dems – that their careers are on the line not primarily because of boundary changes – but because they are part of a government that has made millions of people's lives a misery. And the more cuts the Lib Dems sign up to, the harder the electorate will take its revenge at the ballot box.

## Tory splits

The Tory Party itself is also riven with open splits. Cameron had hoped that, by promising an in/out referendum on Europe after the next election, he would be able to temporarily quiet the 'little Englander Tories'. However, as recent events have shown, the most reactionary section of the Tory Party have been given confidence by Cameron's concessions to them and are continuing to threaten the current Tory leadership's rule, and could, at a certain stage, lead to a split in the Tory party.

Cameron had hoped that, by agreeing gay marriage rights, he could recreate the illusion he first conjured back in 2005, that the Tories

were no longer the 'nasty party'. Instead he has once again split his party down the middle and revealed to the world how little the Tory party has changed on social issues.

When the general election is called, which could be this year, many workers will vote Labour, hoping a Labour government would be 'less bad' than the current lot. However, New Labour is not exempt from the distrust the majority feel for capitalist politicians.

According to polls, all three major political parties have negative trust ratings, with 46% not trusting Labour leader Ed Miliband. Labour's policy of 'cuts, but more slowly' does not create enthusiasm, as the low turnout in

Dave Nellist, Socialist Party member and registered leader of TUSC, was an MP for nine years and only took a worker's wage, a model for the kind of MPs the workers' movement needs in the future.

recent byelections has shown. New Labour's membership increased in the wake of the 2010 general election from an all-time low of 150,000 to around 190,000, but is still at historically low levels.

The Tories make every effort to divide us – workers from unemployed, young from old, etc. But the best way to defeat this divided government is to be united.

The workers' movement needs a new mass party, which opposes cuts and puts forward a socialist programme, standing in the interests of the working class and not the capitalists. The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition is important preparation for such a mass party.

# A strategy to save our NHS

Continued from page 1

Let's be clear, these ruthlessly pro-cuts, pro-privatisation Con-Dem politicians feel the pressure of the powerful mood to defend the NHS. Health campaigner Eoin Clarke has published video footage from a 2010 general election hustings where Jeremy Hunt "boasted that he has fought to defend local hospitals from closure and wards from closure and he gave the impression that he is opposed to local closures".

Chris Grayling, pushing through privatisation of the prisons, is involved in a campaign against the threat of closure of Epsom hospital, claiming outrage that decisions are being made by people based in London!

But can we trust him and other MPs who make local exception to the cuts plans? The Guardian reported that following Hunt's appointment to health he "personally intervened to encourage the controversial takeover of NHS hospitals in his constituency by a private company, Virgin Care".

Con-Dem hypocrites act so brazenly partly because they feel confident they can repulse criticism from the Labour opposition. Labour MPs are associating themselves with local campaigns to defend local hospitals and services. But Hunt responded to Labour's support for the Lewisham campaign by pointing out that Labour closed or down-

graded 12 A&Es when in office and downgraded nine maternity units.

Explaining why health campaigners have taken the step to set up a new political party the website of the National Health Action party says: "none of the main political parties can be trusted with the stewardship of the NHS, because they all believe in using the flawed market model to deliver healthcare."

Socialists agree with this and campaign for a new mass workers' party that can stand candidates who say no to all cuts – in the NHS and all our public services. We hope the NHA will coordinate with the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition to maximise opposition to the health attacks.

The Socialist has previously pointed out that Labour could have made the Health and Social Care Act redundant by announcing that a future Labour government would renationalise, without compensation, all areas of the NHS taken over by private companies under this Act but they have not pledged to reverse privatisation.

Instead it appears that Labour politicians, like the Tories, are content to merely put up a stand in their individual constituencies. But Socialist Party members in Wales and elsewhere are challenging this and winning support for the idea that the only effective way of fighting for decent local services is to fight for decent local services everywhere –

ie to oppose all cuts and closures.

Community campaigns, including organisations such as Keep Our NHS Public, and fighting in the elections are important parts of the fight for our NHS. But key to the fight will be the participation of health workers taking strike action and using the unique power and position they have to challenge the Con-Dems and their private healthcare associates.

## Workers' role

The admin and clerical workers in mid-Yorks have so far taken nine days of strike action against a vicious employer who is attempting to make them pay for the money lost to the Trust through PFI scams. Over 200 have joined the union in the course of this campaign, convinced by the experience that uniting and fighting is the best way to stand up to bully bosses and cuts.

Support from around the country is reflected in the more than £23,000 that has poured in to their strike fund account from trade unionists and campaigners. Even Unison general secretary Dave Prentice was encouraged to pay the picket line a visit. "The message today is that these wonderful Yorkshire lasses are staying strong and standing together – and by doing that, we can defeat these proposals," he declared.

But the Unison leadership has utterly failed to bring the membership together despite the immense at-



photo Iain Dalton

tacks being rained down on health workers. In the South West of England, 20 NHS Trusts have formed a 'cartel' and plan to increase workers' weekly hours with no extra pay, cut shift payments and reduce sick pay and annual leave. One trust in Northern England has sacked 5,500 staff and re-engaged them on worse employment contracts.

Unison must urgently call a mas-

sive Saturday London demo against any attacks on the NHS, coordinating with other unions and health campaigns. It must support workers forced to ballot for strikes against intransigent employers. If health workers were to take national strike action, and make it clear to the public they were fighting to save the NHS, it would receive massive public support.



# Childcare plans spell disaster

**John Cosgrove**  
Liverpool Socialist Party

The recent proposals from Tory childcare minister Liz Truss to “cut red tape” and “map out the government’s childcare aspirations” may sound good, but in reality will translate to a poorer service, job losses and an inevitable increase in child safety issues.

The government believes the solution to high childcare costs is to increase the child to carer ratio, meaning one carer could look after a larger group of children alone – one worker could be responsible for six toddlers. They claim that by decreasing staffing costs and increasing subsidies, private nurseries could plough their increased revenue into lowering childcare fees.

### Cuts

However it’s more likely that the owners of the nurseries will take this opportunity to increase their own profits. It’s no secret that private nursery owners often cry poverty and claim that the subsidy they receive only just covers their costs – in reality meaning a profit but not as large as they would like.

Also, the attacks on Sure Start services are continuing, resulting in cuts and closures. So more and more parents are going to have to resort to private nurseries, potentially allowing nursery bosses to increase fees.

If you’re low paid or unemployed and are entitled to free childcare provision, then you’ll have no choice but to look for the cheapest



One adult could be responsible for up to six toddlers under the new proposals

nursery, putting your child’s welfare behind what you’re able to afford.

As a parent the biggest thing I worry about is my child’s safety

The government says that increasing the education of childcare employees, (introducing a requirement for them to have a GCSE in English and Maths), will offset the

increased workload and decreased staffing levels.

As a parent who’s two year old will be starting nursery in May, I can’t deny having better educated staff would be brilliant for her, especially in her formative years. But the proposed changes to regulations will mean staff may be better educated but will have little to no time to pass that on.

As a parent, the biggest thing I worry about is my child’s safety. If there are fewer staff looking after a larger group of children, that spells a recipe for disaster.

# Brutal cuts announced in Cardiff

**Andrew Price**  
Cardiff Against the Cuts

Last May voters in Cardiff turned out in massive numbers to throw out a council run by a coalition of Liberal Democrat and Plaid Cymru councillors beginning to implement the cuts demanded by the Con-Dem government.

Last week the now Labour-controlled council announced a package of cuts which many will see as a harsh punishment for those who loyally supported Labour last May.

Under the proposals the council will:

- Slash its 2013/2014 budget by £22 million
- Cut 300 council workers jobs
- Sell off the Flat Holm, an island in the Bristol Channel, ending immediately funding for school visits there
- Close a council-run riding school used mainly by disabled children
- Close a swimming pool and a leisure centre in Splott and Plasnewydd- two predominantly working class areas in the city
- Reduce opening hours for libraries and leisure centres in mainly working class areas
- End respite breaks for parents of disabled children
- Cut subsidies to Cardiff buses

All over Cardiff voters will be asking why a Labour-controlled coun-



photo Paul Mattsson

cil is contemplating such shameful cuts.

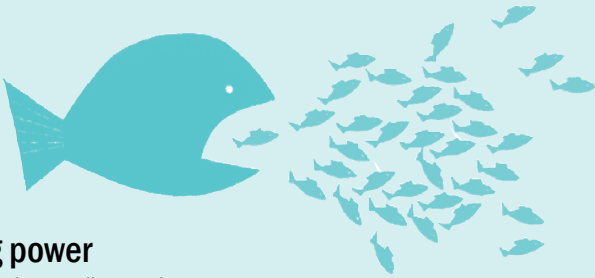
### Opposition

In the past, had a Labour-run council contemplated a fraction of such cuts, all hell would have broken out in the Cardiff Labour Party. Not any more, as it appears that both the party and the vast majority of its councillors are prepared to quietly do the Tories’ and Liberal Democrats’ dirty work for them.

Cardiff Against the Cuts, a body established by Cardiff Trades Council, unites trade unionists and community groups with those representing the disabled in a campaign to oppose all cuts introduced by this vile government.

It now falls upon us to build a mass campaign of opposition to all council cuts in the city, and to show the councillors that if they are not prepared to defend the communities that elected them, they will be cast aside and replaced by those who will.

# Them...



### Spending power

In the last decade spending on cinema and theatre tickets has dropped by a third and spending on foreign holidays by 16 to 34 year olds has fallen by £922 million.

It’s no surprise that ‘luxuries’ are falling off the priority list – the Intergenerational Foundation has shown that spending power for the under 30s is declining rapidly. And Shelter recently pointed to one of the big reasons why – last year rents in London jumped by 4.8% while wages fell.

Allowance.

It’s all money in the pocket for the profiteers.

### Value for money

Remember the line that privatisation and competition lead to the best prices for the customer?

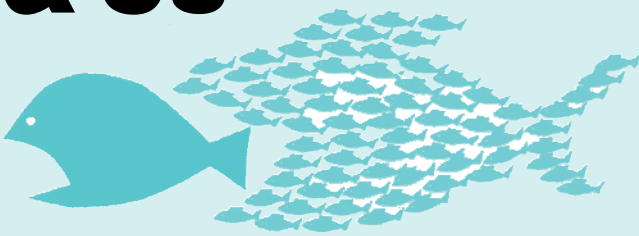
Well train fares on some of the busiest routes have risen up to three times faster than the cost of living since privatisation. The cost of a single ticket to Manchester from London for example has increased by 208% since 1995 (compared to overall RPI inflation of 66%).

### Night on the town

Tamara Ecclestone, daughter of Formula 1 boss Bernie Ecclestone, knows how to have a good time. She spent £30,000 – more than the average yearly salary in the UK – on a night out. Among other lavish drinks, she ordered 28 bottles of Cristal champagne from Aura nightclub in Mayfair, at a mere £465 each.

Tamara was only with two friends at the time, but the generous celeb shared the fruits of her £30k around – even sending a bottle to the paparazzi outside.

# ...& Us



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

## What we saw

On hearing that they were losing their jobs because the company had gone into administration, HMV workers took over the company’s official twitter account:

There are over 60 of us being fired at once! Mass execution, of loyal employees who love the brand. #hmvXFactorFiring

Sorry we’ve been quiet for so long. Under contract, we’ve been unable to say a word, or – more importantly – tell the truth #hmvXFactorFiring

Under usual circumstances we’d never dare do such a thing as this. However, when the company you dearly love is being ruined...

...and those hard working individuals who wanted to make hmv great again, have mostly been fired, there seemed no other choice.

Just heard our marketing director (he’s staying folks) ask ‘how do I shut down Twitter?’ #hmvXFactorFiring

## What we heard

A letter in last week’s Independent reported that in Merthyr Tydfil, Les Miserables’ last scene with workers mounting the barricades to wave red flags was met with loud and prolonged cheering.

It’s worth remembering that the Paris barricades came just a year after workers in Merthyr staged their own insurrection, disarming militia sent from Brecon and holding the town for a week against the military. Arguably, this was also where workers first adopted the red flag (a sheet dipped in lamb’s blood). Coincidentally, the same day the letter appeared, a fork lift truck manufacturer owned by a US private equity firm announced the closure of its Methyr factory with 200 more workers added to the already huge toll of unemployment in Merthyr.

Hopefully, those cheers in the cinema are the music of the future, rather than Russell Crowe’s singing.

**Geoff Jones**  
**Llanelli and West Wales Socialist Party**



Join the fightback! Join the Socialists!

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# Fight London fire service cuts

Paula Mitchell recently interviewed Paul Neale from the London FBU about London mayor Boris Johnson’s plans to press ahead with swingeing cuts to the London fire service.

**Boris Johnson has overruled the decision made by the London fire authority. What has been the reaction of firefighters to this?**

Unfortunately the vast majority of firefighters fully expected this old Etonian, who has never had to endure hardship in his life, when he didn’t get his own way to just bully his way through. This isn’t the first time we’ve had to deal with political bullies, but he like others won’t be held accountable for this, it will be left to us to deal with the aftermath

**What are the FBU’s plans now?**

All of us now have a part to play with the FBU being at the centre of it. Those stations threatened with closure have already started excellent campaigns. We will hold various demonstrations across London

**Do you think there will be**

**strike action to defend jobs and stations?**

Nothing can now be ruled out as this is just the start of job losses and station closures with many more on the table.

**What support can other trade unionists, socialists and the public give?**

We ask that everyone, regardless of whether your local fire station is earmarked for closure or not, does the following: Go online and email your MP/local councillor.

The links can be found on London FBU website or twitter @dontshutfirestn.

Sign our petitions which can be found at fire stations. Look out for any events we are holding and come and support us. Contact local/national newspapers via their letters section voicing your concerns.



Marching against fire service cuts in 2010 photo Suzanne Beishon

## Labour cuts better than Tory ones?



‘Fight all cuts’ should be the message from union leaders photo P. Mason

At a recent Unison south east regional conference a resolution was moved by Southampton district branch for debate on how Unison should fight the cuts. The resolution correctly laid the blame for cuts with the Con-Dem government but called for Unison to link up with the Labour council - which is currently implementing the Con-Dem cuts.

Surrey County Unison branch moved an amendment expressing disappointment at Labour’s cuts budget and calling for support for the two rebel councillors who are calling on Labour councillors not to vote for cuts.

Rather than ensuring a robust debate took place on the issues, the regional leadership ruled the amendment out of order on the grounds it interferes with ‘branch autonomy’.

Southampton delegates then distributed a newsletter attacking Surrey branch, the Socialist Party and criticising the rebel councillors.

Paul Couchman, branch secretary Surrey Unison, speaking in a personal capacity, explained: “Southampton brought their motion to conference for discussion and our branch was engaging in that. Unison members have a responsibility to support and advise each other across branches, regions and service groups.

“Debate on the union’s position on Labour and fighting the cuts was undemocratically obstructed. Despite these manoeuvres delegates spoke critically against support for Labour with a third of delegates failing to support the Southampton motion. Socialist Party members in Unison will continue to argue for a fighting strategy to oppose all cuts.”

The Southampton Labour Party newsletter states that the core argument is “a Labour council is better than a Tory one.” Those Unison members receiving redundancy notices from Labour-led councils this month are not likely to see the difference.

## Attempts to force Unison branches to affiliate to Labour

**A West Midlands Unison activist**

The article by Andy Bentley in issue 750 of the Socialist ‘There is an alternative to cuts!’ was spot on. It was very encouraging to hear that a Unison branch had suspended its funding to Stoke Labour Party – quite right when they are aiding and abetting the Tories in attacking our members.

However I was shocked to see a letter to my Unison branch dated 24 January from the Unison regional organiser for the Affiliated Political Fund (APF)/Labour Link. This gave just over two weeks’ notice that unless objections were raised by those members (about 1/3 of membership) who pay in to the APF, the region would automatically affiliate our branch to the local constituency Labour Party. If they didn’t hear back from the branch then they would affiliate us anyway.

It also states clearly that the branch committee, the democratic body of the branch which involves lay officers and stewards has absolutely no authority to make any decision. So we have a Labour council attacking us here, poised to vote through 800 job losses and the regional officials want to us to hand over more money to their party!

This is yet another example of the depths the Unison bureaucracy will stoop to, to try and maintain the abusive relationship with the Labour Party. This year’s national



N30 photo Paul Mattsson

**We cannot always publish the names of Unison members because of the history of witch-hunting of socialists and activists in that union. The Socialist supports the fight for democratic and fighting unions**

executive elections give us a chance to elect Unison activists who have a completely different view of how our union should be run. The Socialist Party is a key part of the ‘Reclaim the Union’ slate and we urge all Unison members to support it.

## Workers tell Bromley council: “We won’t sign up to your plans”

**Glenn Kelly**  
Bromley council staff side secretary, personal capacity

Last week saw the biggest workers’ meeting in the history of Bromley council (south London) as 300 packed into the council chamber for a lunchtime meeting and then another 80 attended a meeting at 5pm.

I had called the meeting in response to the council issuing every worker a letter asking them to opt

out of the national terms and conditions. They are offering a one-off payment of £200 each, costing £900,000, and a 0.7%-1.7% pay rise, costing £1.2 million. They are promising to protect existing terms and conditions for two years.

The workers want to reject this offer. This is significant when you think we haven’t had a pay rise for three years and this year nationally the employers have offered 1% but with attacks on terms and conditions.

I had invited representatives of Unison, Unite and the GMB to

address the meeting and we now have the two biggest unions (Unison and Unite) not only supporting the call for workers not to sign up to the deal, but both have now began a consultation ballot with their members calling on them to support the call for strike action.

The council is using carrot and stick tactics, saying ‘sign by 11 March and we will give you the money and a pay rise, refuse and we will sack and re-engage everyone.’

Despite the threats, over 100 workers handed in their letters to

me at the meeting, signed to say they wouldn’t agree to change their contract and more are arriving each day. This alone legally now forces the council to carry out another three months of consultation, buying us more time to build for strike action.

The campaign shows that if a lead is given, workers are willing to fight to defend their pay even at a time of massive cuts. This is a lesson our national leaders need to learn and not use the cuts as an excuse not to fight for a decent pay rise this year.

### In brief

#### No privatisation

PCS members at the Ministry of Justice in Manchester (MoJ) staged a well supported two hour walkout last week. This was in protest at plans to privatise the court fines collection service. The government wants to hand this over to notorious private bailiff operations. Research done by PCS shows that there were over 25,000 complaints made against such firms in the last year. The idea that replacing a publicly accountable service with an unaccountable private one will offer “value for money” is viewed as a sick joke by most MoJ PCS members. The campaign against privatisation will continue and judging from the determined mood of the members on the Manchester picket line the government is in for a fight.  
**Alex Davidson**

#### Greencore

500 Unite members working for the food company Greencore in Hull have taken a day’s strike action to demand a living wage. The company provides food for supermarkets. In the last few years, the workers agreed to give up some terms and conditions for 18 months. Their reward for being loyal is broken promises and poverty wages. When the 18 months were up, management told the unions: “You’ll never get your terms and conditions back”. Various attempts have been made to get management to back down including negotiations and tribunals. The tribunal found in the workers’ favour but, despite having to pay damages, the company has refused to reinstate the terms and conditions. If management don’t back down then, in the words of one worker: “We’ll be back for two days next time”  
**Mike Whale**  
**Hull NUT**

#### Blacklisting

The BBC have found that at least 111 workers in Wales were on the illegal blacklist run by the Consulting Association. This mirrors the situation in England and Scotland where skilled construction workers have been consigned to a life of unemployment and poverty for just being a union rep or raising concerns about health and safety. The UK Contractors Group claims that there is no evidence of blacklisting still going on. But one way of helping to purge this illegal practice from the construction industry would be for local authorities and other public bodies not to give contracts to firms involved in blacklisting.

#### Strike ballot

Transport union RMT has announced that staff working on London Underground’s (LU) “Trainpeople” agency contract have voted unanimously to strike. LU inherited a contract with the Trainpeople agency in 2007. In breach of agreements with unions, for five years LU continued to use agency staff in LU uniform while Trainpeople paid them as little as £6.75 an hour. Trainpeople staff joined RMT and organised for equal rights with permanent staff. Then, without warning, LU terminated its contract with Trainpeople. A number of protests have already taken place around London but now the RMT’s executive will consider when to organise strike action.



# Revolt against pay cuts strengthened at Mid-Yorkshire NHS

## Yorkshire Socialist Party members

Mid-Yorkshire NHS Trust admin and clerical workers in the Unison union took five days of strike action against pay cuts from Monday 28 January to Friday 1 February. The mood of the pickets remained strong throughout the week and, if anything, hardened as the week progressed.

The highlight of the week was the Trust board lobby on the Thursday morning. Over 150 strikers turned up and burned copies of their new contracts in front of the local press. This was shown that evening on the local ITV news and received widespread publicity elsewhere.

We also sat in on the Trust Board meeting and heckled the board as they rubber stamped the directors' actions. "I can't believe their arrogance," said one striker.

HR director Briggs said his down-banding (pay cut) proposals had

met 'overt staff resistance supported by the trade unions', ie they'd rejected it and balloted for industrial action to fight it!

Briggs said the Trust had offered two preconditions for discussing any alternative - that the union call off further strikes and agreed to work towards saving £500,000 from the admin and clerical budget, excluding the voluntary redundancies the trust had already secured.

These redundancies have already caused havoc. There's evidence medical secretaries have been hired via an agency to deal with the workload.

When Briggs announced that the Trust is expected to make 4-5% cuts each year, heckles included "You're gonna cut our pay again then", "Cut your own pay", and "Sack Ernst & Young".

The latter, one of the 'big four' accounting firms, were paid £425,000 in December alone, almost as much as the Trust say they need to save.

Unison general secretary Dave Prentis visited the picket line on the Friday morning. Under pressure from the pickets and strike committee members, Prentis said he'd support a Trust-wide ballot, promised financial and staff support for the strike, and to write a letter to members urging them to vote for strike action!

Remarking on the new members of the branch, Prentis said that the strike was "the best way to recruit".

So far, 162 dismissal and re-engagement notices have been sent to members.

The Trust admitted to the local press that they have not received one back so far, showing that workers are solidly refusing to back down.

The strike has achieved nationwide publicity and should encourage other NHS workers to fight back. Now we need Prentis and Unison to live up to the branch-wide ballot promise to allow a trust-wide strike to defeat this vicious management.



On a well-supported picket line photo Iain Dalton

## Lewisham hospital protests continue

### Roger Shriver

The main road outside Lewisham Hospital was noisier than usual on 31 January as car, bus and lorry drivers beeped their horns in support of angry protesters. Tory health minister Jeremy Hunt had just announced that Lewisham hospital accident and emergency department and maternity services would remain open but face huge cuts.

South London Healthcare Trust (SLHT) which runs hospitals in Woolwich, Bromley and Sidcup is also being dissolved, leading to more massive cuts, closures, job losses and cancelled operations.

25,000 people had joined a protest march in Lewisham only five days earlier. This massive community resistance clearly had some effect as the government appointed special administrator Matthew Kershaw had been considering closing these services completely.

Kershaw had argued that the A&E, staffed by GPs and nurses, should be replaced by an urgent care unit that could only deal with less seriously ill people. Hunt, under pressure from the marvellous protests, said that Lewisham A&E would remain as a smaller service but with the aim of more serious cases being eventually shuffled off out of Lewisham. The plan has been described as a 'glorified 24/7 GP practice'.

NHS workers are angry at these serious cuts, so are the patients of today and tomorrow. All these life-



On the January demo photo Paul Mattsson

threatening attacks are due to financial problems at SLHT which, like many hospital trusts, ran up against the Private Finance Initiative (PFI), where private firms like banks and construction companies get to own and run hospitals - interest repayments in the trust have reached £61 million a year!

The bosses have started a war over the NHS. The working class should lead the fightback but more than petitions, protests and demos are

needed. Growing numbers of health workers are calling for industrial action such as strikes.

This is a stay of execution but not a reprieve. The opposition has been loud but, so far, muted from the labour movement's leaders. A concerted programme of strikes, community protest and demonstrations - including a national protest against NHS 'reforms' - could beat the Con-Dems' local and national plans for the NHS

## Whipps Cross workers prepare for fight against jobs and pay cuts

### A Whipps Cross hospital worker

On 1 February a lunchtime union meeting of over 80 domestic and portering day workers at Whipps Cross hospital, east London heard about the branch's plans to fight the threatened pay and hours cuts.

The consultation document issued by the contractor, Initial, says that 41 jobs are affected. The plans, described by Initial as "Phase One" and in the document as the "initial steps", are only the start. The company is threatening the pay and hours of every domestic, porter and switchboard worker in Whipps Cross in other potential 'phases'.

The meeting launched a petition aiming for 1,000 signatures which members were urged to get filled in. A survey asking members to vote yes to be balloted for strike action



A previous battle... photo A Hill

has been posted to members.

Strike action to stop the cuts was overwhelmingly supported by a show of hands at the meeting.

## Whipps Cross: A decisive fight

The Socialist issue 750 report on the 1997-2006 struggle of workers at Whipps Cross to defend the NHS, and the wages and conditions of workers reveals a model of how to organise. The drawing together of traditionally organised workers and workers entirely new to organised labour, and the method of highlighting the shared interests of all workers, irrespective of their background or level of skill, is a model which should be absorbed by all socialist activists.

The pushing back of the sustained onslaught by bosses who used every device in the book, with the assistance of right-wing trade union bureaucrats, could only be achieved by forging the maximum solidarity of the work force. This stands as a magnificent demonstration to other sections of NHS workers who are facing death by a thousand cuts.

Whipps Cross again emphasises another lesson which is: that while the power remains with the capitalist class any victory is temporary. They will bide their time and ruthlessly test out the weaknesses of the workers, usually in conjunction with narrow-minded trade union bureaucrats, and then move to claw back any concessions they were forced to make.

Nevertheless, the wonderful example of Whipps Cross should be stored in the collective memory of the working class and applied continuously, a role very effectively played by the Socialist Party.

**Tony Mulhearn**

Read the article: [www.socialistparty.org.uk](http://www.socialistparty.org.uk)

## Scrap PFI, not our hospitals

### Simon Carter

Despite widespread public opposition, in October 2011 the then health secretary - Tory Andrew Lansley - confirmed the closure of A&E department and maternity services at King George Hospital in Goodmayes, near Ilford, east London.

This closure was a cost-cutting exercise by the local health

trust, saddled with an exorbitant 36-year PFI contract on the new Queen's Hospital in Romford. The health trust is one of 22 NHS trusts nationally identified as being in severe financial difficulties due to PFI costs.

Queen's, which opened in 2006, replaced two previous existing hospitals but has fewer beds and staff. Moreover, due to poor management and overuse of agency staff, the PFI hospital could not cope

with the local population's health-care demands.

A Care Quality Commission (CQC) report in 2012 slammed the hospital for "unacceptably poor care".

So, despite running down services at King George, the health trust has had to keep its A&E open until the CQC is satisfied that Queen's can cope. Meanwhile managers at Queen's are imposing a 'cap' on admissions to its A&E 'at busy times'!



# Southampton: “People will look for ways to fight back”

## Organised fightback needed to save council services

**Nick Chaffey**  
Socialist Party Southern regional secretary

“Multiple failures” is how the government’s own financial watchdog, the National Audit Office, has described the crisis facing council budgets across the country. It is estimated that by March 2015 councils will have had £9 billion cut from their budgets by the Con-Dem government of millionaires. The ‘posh boys’ are seeking to further enrich their friends in big business through mass privatisation of our services.

At the sharp end the poorest and most vulnerable are being asked to pay more through cuts. With a staggering 200,000 council jobs lost since 2010, leaving remaining workers with a huge increase in workloads and having seen a three year pay freeze, there is huge anger at the failure of the government’s austerity agenda and the prospect of further cuts in jobs and pay.

For working class people, the answer is clear - these cuts are unacceptable. When a lead has been shown by the trade unions, the response has been immense - millions of workers took strike action against attacks on public sector pensions in 2011. And industrial struggle is not the only weapon available to workers. There is an increasing struggle taking place to force action from inside the council chambers around the country.

### Pressure on Labour

Labour MP David Blunkett has warned of disorder or disillusionment in the face of the cuts. This reflects the hapless position of the Labour Party leadership when what is urgently required is courageous leadership to channel the anger in an effective national campaign to halt the government’s plans and protect jobs and services.

Labour council leaders from Liverpool, Newcastle, Birmingham, Nottingham, Sheffield, Leeds and Manchester wrote to the government warning that vital services will no longer be protected. Even Tory councillors have joined in, quail-

ing in the face of the anger their party’s cuts have invoked.

While just a few councillors have been prepared to take a stand, they are a beacon to those who want to fight and a painful embarrassment to those Labour councillors who wring their hands but ‘reluctantly’ carry out the Con-Dem cuts.

Every attempt is being made by Labour and their allies in the unions to wipe an alternative to cuts from the political map.

But who can doubt that the resources exist to fund local council services when a handful of bankers in the city of London were rewarded with bonuses in 2011 of £13 billion? This is more than the council cuts nationwide over five years.

The potential exists to channel the growing anger into a movement that could halt the government’s cuts. This would mean councils refusing to implement the Con-Dem cuts and putting forward ‘needs budgets’ to meet the demands of the local community.

Such budgets could be put together by council unions, the wider trade unions and local communities to create jobs, build affordable council housing and provide services for the young and old.

### Excuses

Labour hides behind claims that such a stand is ‘illegal’ and Eric Pickles, minister for local government, will send in commissioners to implement the cuts. In fact changes to legislation make it easier for councillors to take a stand. Councillors can no longer be surcharged unless they are found guilty of financial crime for personal gain.

Huge support for defying the cuts, with mass demonstrations backed up by strike action, would make it incredibly difficult for Pickles to remove democratically elected councillors. And a movement on this scale would be able to stand again

Rebel councillors speak out: watch video interview with the Southampton Two at [www.tusc.org.uk](http://www.tusc.org.uk)

and replace those who were removed if needed.

Across the country this month, council budgets will be set. Labour councils are set to do the Con-Dems’ dirty work again. But in Southampton, Hull and Stoke, cracks have begun to appear, with individual councillors refusing to vote for cuts. Under extreme pressure, facing mass opposition, how many other councillors may seek to join the fightback?

This could take place side by side with an increase in industrial struggle too. With the wider attacks on the NHS and benefits, the battle of local authorities could be a means of uniting opposition to all cuts and mobilising the trade unions for national coordinated action in the form of a 24-hour general strike.

### Alternative

If any Labour council utilised the powers at its disposal to protect jobs and services, it would gain the backing of millions of working people, desperate to score a blow against austerity. If a future Labour government committed to restoring reserves and borrowing by councils which averted cuts, the destruction of local authorities could be stopped.

But given that Labour has now fully embraced capitalism and stands in the bosses’ interests, such a stand is very unlikely.

Like the Unison members in Stoke who have suspended their payments to Labour, trade union members entering the fray will look beyond the excuses of Labour councillors and seek out a road to fight and a political voice for that struggle. The Socialist Party is prepared to stand shoulder to shoulder with all who do and will argue for any alternative to Labour to adopt a socialist programme.

Trade unionists, campaigners and socialists have to stand against councillors who are not willing to stand up to the Tories. And those councillors who are, face being gagged and expelled from the Labour Party.

Such developments raise the urgent task to unite all those opposed to cuts to offer a clear political alternative to austerity. The continued development of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition is an important step towards this.



Southampton council workers marching against attacks on pay and conditions

## Interview: Southampton rebel councillors

### How will the council budget cuts affect your area?

Don Thomas (DT): The very people who put Labour in power will feel the biggest impact of the cuts - the young, unemployed, workers and the elderly. It is an absolute betrayal. We have not reneged on our promise; we said we would stand up and fight. We’ve done that from day one and will continue to do so.

Keith Morrell (KM): We stand full square with Unite and Unison in fighting job cuts. Council staff fought a magnificent battle against the previous Tory administration’s attack on their pay and conditions. But over 500 council jobs will have gone since Labour took over last May.

We have not reneged on our promise; we said we would stand up and fight. We’ve done that from day one and will continue to do so

Now it’s young people who have taken up the fight with a determined campaign across the city against the proposed axing of the entire youth service. That alone is proof that if this Labour council followed their example and launched a campaign against the Con-Dem government, they would have no problem in mobilising massive support.

### What are you proposing as an alternative to the cuts?

DT: Buy some time by refusing to carry out Con-Dem cuts and protecting all jobs and services, and then explain to council staff and service users that a campaign can develop across the country which would force the Con-Dems back and restore funding to local government.

KM: The administration should instruct officers to explore every available option - use reserves, borrowing powers, free up revenue by capitalising expenditure. No stone should be left unturned to keep services going.

to explore every available option - use reserves, borrowing powers, free up revenue by capitalising expenditure. No stone should be left unturned to keep services going.

### Labour councillors say they have no choice. What do you say to them?

DT: People have been bludgeoned by the press and the government into thinking that there is no alternative. It is the biggest lie of all that they have no choice. They do! Don’t vote for cuts!

### Where will the money come from to fund local authorities?

KM: The government’s austerity programme of debt and deficit reduction is a smokescreen for an attack on working class living standards in the interests of profit.

The loopholes in the law that big business exploits to avoid paying tax on their profits should be closed up - billions would flow into the exchequer if that was done.

### What is your message locally and nationally to those facing cuts?

DT: Don’t get angry, get active. We need to bring together all those affected by the cuts. We have strength in unity.

KM: We have had tremendous support since July when we first voted in full council against cuts in local services. Ordinary people in their hundreds have contacted us. We seem to have released a pent-up frustration in ordinary people that they weren’t being listened to. At national level we’ve had backing from the RMT union and from Len McCluskey, general secretary of Unite, personally.

It’s early days, and there’s a lot more work to be done, but we know that as the cuts begin to take their toll, people will look for ways to fight back.

Working people, and organised labour in the form of the trade unions, need to find a political voice that the Labour Party is failing to provide.

**Budget demo**  
**1pm, Wednesday 13 February**  
**Civic Centre, Southampton**



Southampton youth services face complete decimation

Since announcing its draft budget in November, opposition has grown to Southampton Labour council’s cuts proposals, especially among youth workers who face the complete decimation of the service they provide.

While protests and campaigning have forced the council to save a small number of clubs, £16 million of jobs and services will still be cut. This has angered the two main unions representing

council workers – they have both publicly criticised the Labour council.

It is essential that the unions now exert maximum pressure and call on Labour councillors to refuse to implement the Con-Dem cuts.

But where councillors carry on voting through cuts workers, campaigners and service users must prepare to stand ‘no cuts’ candidates against them.

## “Why do they like picking on young people?”

Southampton City Council has announced plans to close all youth support and play services next year.

By stopping crucial preventative interventions now, the burden on more expensive services will increase because of anti-social behaviour and youth crime, more difficult access to training for unemployed young people and increased social exclusion of vulnerable groups.

Youth workers in Southampton are being advised by managers to place themselves on the redeployment register before the cuts have even been agreed. That means they could be redeployed and leave the service within weeks, causing it to collapse.

One youth worker, known as “Leg-end” by local kids, said: “I feel torn as I don’t want to give up my senior club and my teen parents work. I feel like I am betraying young people by filling in the redeployment form. To be honest it brought me to tears. I do know that whatever happens, I will still fight for youth support work.”

### Consultation

Revised proposals suggest that the city council will pay the rent and utility bills of three clubs for one year only but have not released anything to suggest that staff will be saved which is like keeping open a school but not supplying teachers!

A consultation put together by youth support workers has revealed young people’s thoughts and feelings regarding the proposals.

When asked their thoughts on the council’s proposals, responses included: “Why do they like picking on young people? We have nothing on this estate” “Maybe we could close the civic centre!” “No one really cares about young people, especially the decision makers.”

On the effect of the closures for young people in the areas: “There will be lots of criminal damage.” “There will be more arguments at home!” “We will get criminal records and won’t be able to get a job”

**A Southampton Unison steward**

## Young people fight for their youth clubs

Southampton’s young people are gaining confidence after a series of protests in the run up to the setting of the council’s budget. We have chanted in the public gallery, lobbied councillors and presented our case in the council chamber.

The deputation to the council was made up of seven people passionate about their youth service. Shamefully three cabinet members,

including the council leader and the cabinet member for children’s services, were absent - showing a complete disregard for those affected by these cuts.

Afterwards Jamie Mayer who uses Woolston youth club said: “I think it is going to be really difficult for the local youths that go to the club. The youth workers have been really helpful to me, they have been amazing”.

Youth Fight for Jobs is determined not to be beaten. We know that on 13 February when the budget is voted on, all councillors will have the opportunity to vote for the proposals put forward by the two rebel councillors. Even after this date it is not over. We will do whatever it takes to save our services!

**Josh Asker, Southampton Youth Fight for Jobs**

## Stand Up for the South Coast

In late November, Stand Up for the South Coast, a coalition of trade union activists, socialists and those on the left was formed.

Stand Up for the South Coast decided at its first public meeting that there was a need for a coordinated effort against the social cancer cuts being proposed by the Etonian elite and a mobilisation of grass

root activists in the south was essential.

The group embarked on its first demonstration in Southampton on Saturday 26 January. About 70 people congregated in the city centre. The event received attention from local press. Outside the shopping centre activists handed out leaflets explaining the effect of cuts.

The action was joined by Keith Mor-

rell, who has been labelled a ‘rebel councillor’ for representing the people in his ward and fighting for lifeline services in the community along with fellow councillor Don Thomas.

Stand Up for the South Coast will next visit Portsmouth on Saturday 23 February.

**Daz Procter, RMT council of executives**



The rebel councillors campaign against the closure of their local swimming pool photo Southampton



# Hacked off by the capitalist press?

## Support the Socialist with a May Day greeting

Bob Severn

On 22 January, less than two months after the Leveson Report was published, billionaire media magnate Rupert Murdoch welcomed Chancellor George (née Gideon) Osborne and London Mayor Boris Johnson into his Mayfair apartment. The ‘Murdochgate’ phone hacking affair exposed the power and corruption – including bribery of police officers and others – exercised by top staff at News International titles and other capitalist papers. Embarrassed by the Tories’ close links to the Murdoch press, the government launched the Leveson Inquiry.

But now the two top Tories have Murdoch back in their dinner party circuit. Is anyone really that surprised? These old Etonians and Murdoch share the same aims – of increasing the profits of big business, of making the working and middle classes pay for the bankers’ crisis, and attacking any workers who fight back against that agenda.

The right-wing press complain of ‘union barons’ when it is their owners that are the real barons that support the attacks on our living standards through the destruction of public services, cuts in jobs and wages and the ripping up of workers’ terms and conditions.

That’s why we need a paper that fights for the majority. Our ‘reporters’ are working class people actively involved in the struggles they report, from workplaces, communities, universities, schools and colleges.

We report the victories that show that if you fight back you can win – from construction workers’ disputes in Britain, to Lonmin miners in South Africa.



A Socialist seller on the 20 October TUC demo photo Senan

And the Socialist doesn’t just report workers’ strikes and the anti-cuts movement, but puts forward a strategy to defeat the cuts and to fight for a socialist alternative.

### Back the alternative

We appeal to all readers to help back the Socialist with a May Day greeting this year. Unlike the pro-capitalist press, the Socialist is not backed by big business money, but relies on funding from its readers and supporters.

May Day greetings mark International Workers Day, 1 May, the day when the first US-wide general strike took place in 1886, in demand of a maximum eight-hour working day.

Can you send in a May Day greeting from, for example, your trade union branch, shop-stewards group, anti-cuts campaign, Youth Fight for Jobs group, Socialist Students society, or Socialist Party branch?

Email bobsevern@socialistparty.org.uk or phone 020 8988 8781 for more information or to give your greeting. You can also give your greeting online at www.socialistparty.org.uk/mayday. The deadline for greeting messages is 10 April – pay by this date for a 25% discount.

**Greeting prices include: £500 for a whole page (£375 before 10 April); £300 for a half-page (£225); £170 quarter-page (£127.50); £90 one-eighth (£67.50); £50 one-sixteenth (£37.50); £30 1/32 (£22.50); £20 small box (£15).**

## Building the fightback

### Socialist Party regional conferences

#### East Midlands

East Midlands Socialist Party (SP) held a successful and inspirational regional conference on Sunday 3 February. We started with a video of campaigns and events we have been involved in during 2012, from picket lines and demonstrations to campaign stalls and public meetings. Hannah Sell, SP deputy general secretary, introduced ‘worldwide austerity and workers fight back’. We heard about the tragic consequences of austerity on the working class but also about the determination to struggle to stop these attacks. Particularly inspirational was hearing about the launch of the new mass workers’ party in South Africa. This was linked to building the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) in Britain and our demand for a 24-hour general strike, as well as the increase in new international members in the East Midlands. We held workshops on work in the trade unions, among young people, among women and building SP branches.

A report from regional secretary Steve Score reflected on the campaigns we’ve been involved in and we discussed plans to develop branches in new areas over the next year. Karen Seymour, regional fighting fund organiser, gave an excellent fighting fund appeal which raised £180. Members left the conference feeling our ‘batteries had been recharged’ and well prepared to take part in and lead bigger movements against austerity this year.

Becci Heagney

#### Yorkshire

Around 50 people attended this year’s Yorkshire Socialist Party regional conference, held in Leeds on 2-3 February. A trade unionist involved in the Mid Yorkshire NHS Trust strike introduced a report from that dispute. This inspirational struggle against pay cuts shows how workers are prepared to fight back against austerity.

In the session on Britain, London SP secretary Paula Mitchell highlighted the SP’s role in leading struggles against the cuts and offering a clear alternative to working class people. Yorkshire organiser Iain Dalton outlined the key priorities of youth work, SP branch development and trade union work. Workshops on each of these themes examined how the party can build across the region through political education and branch activity. The second day of the conference was introduced by Judy Beishon, CWI International Secretariat. Judy highlighted global turmoil and instability arising out of the crisis of capitalism, but also the potential for building mass revolutionary parties, as was demonstrated in South Africa. We held workshops on Greece, Israel/Palestine and South Africa.

The fighting fund appeal raised an excellent £607.

Michael Docherty  
Harrogate Socialist Party

#### Southern

On 27 January, SP members from across the southern region met up for a conference in Southampton. CWI International Secretariat member Clare Doyle spoke on world perspectives with encouraging reports on South Africa and China, among many other important developments taking place in the international arena. There were three well-attended commissions: youth and student work, trade unions, and women and socialism. In the commission I attended, trade union work, there was strong emphasis on supporting the National Shop Stewards Network. Unite’s ‘community’ membership was discussed and it was generally agreed that if it was linked to a programme in defeating the government cuts, it could be valuable in uniting the unemployed and the disabled into the struggle.

James Bibey  
Bracknell Socialist Party

## Tamil Solidarity looks at 65 years of ‘independence’ in Sri Lanka

Akila Kumar and Senan  
Tamil Solidarity

Around 100 people attended the Tamil Solidarity meeting at Queen Mary University, east London, on 4 February – Sri Lanka’s independence day – entitled: “65 years since independence – who benefited?”

Tamil Solidarity supporters, students, trade unionists, activists from the British Tamil Forum and other organisations were present.

The first discussion gave a brief historical background to independence and what followed from it.

Tamils, and the majority of the Sri Lankan population, gained little out of the ‘transfer’ of political power from the British Empire to the local elite.

The meeting discussed campaigning plans, including a protest at the Commonwealth Business Council, as the Commonwealth meeting takes place in Sri Lanka this year. The potential role of boycotts, particularly tourism boycotts, was also debated.

Rob Williams, chair of the National Shop Steward Network, and Tracy Edwards, from the PCS civil service union, spoke about the role of the

trade union movement, which has been an essential part of building Tamil Solidarity.

Paul Callanan, from Youth Fight for Jobs, urged Tamil students to join other students in campaigning for free education and against cuts and privatisation.

The discussion was opened up, allowing others to contribute their ideas, thoughts and disagreements. Speakers responded to questions about Tamil Solidarity’s work.

Student volunteers came together at the end of the meeting to form an action group.

See [tamilsolidarity.org](http://tamilsolidarity.org) for more

## Planning for the Planet book launch



Pete Dickenson introduced a discussion on his book, **Planning for the Planet – How Socialism Could Save the Environment**, at the Brick Lane bookshop in Tower Hamlets, London, on 31 January. Another talk will be held at the Housman’s bookshop in Kings Cross on 27 March. Contact 020 8988 8777 for more details and to book your place, or to get your copy of the book. Order your copy now to get a special offer of £7 including postage and packaging. See [www.socialistbooks.org.uk](http://www.socialistbooks.org.uk)

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## SOCIALIST PARTY FIGHTING FUND

	£ target	£ received	January-March 2013	Deadline 29 March 2013
Wales	2,300	1,095	<div></div>	<div></div>
Southern	1,200	259	<div></div>	<div></div>
North West	1,200	246	<div></div>	<div></div>
West Midlands	2,100	354	<div></div>	<div></div>
Yorkshire	2,900	266	<div></div>	<div></div>
Northern	600	54	<div></div>	<div></div>
Eastern	1,200	105	<div></div>	<div></div>
London	6,100	524	<div></div>	<div></div>
East Midlands	1,550	132	<div></div>	<div></div>
South East	750	59	<div></div>	<div></div>
South West	1,400	86	<div></div>	<div></div>
England & Wales	3,700	112	<div></div>	<div></div>
TOTAL	25,000	3,298	<div></div>	<div></div>



# South Africa: Battle for control of mining sector

**Weizmann Hamilton**

Democratic Socialist Movement  
(DSM – CWI, South Africa)

The threat by mining giant Anglo American Platinum (Amplats) to close four shafts, sell one mine and lay off 14,000 mineworkers in their Rustenburg operations is an open challenge to the entire working class. It would be the largest retrenchment by a single company in the history of South Africa.

A 60-day moratorium on their retrenchments cannot be trusted.

The real motive of the mining bosses is to crush the militancy that rocked the mining industry after the Marikana uprising (see [socialist-world.net](http://socialist-world.net)). It is a desperate attempt to restore the balance of power in the mining industry which, for the latter half of 2012, had shifted in favour of the workers.

It follows the earlier decision by Harmony Gold to illegally lock out 6,000 workers from the Kusasalethu Mine in Carletonville. A similar announcement of retrenchment left workers who had travelled thousands of kilometres from as far as Lesotho, Mozambique and the Eastern Cape, stranded in the rain without food or shelter.

Emboldened by the muted response to the Carletonville offensive, the mining bosses have opened up a second front in Rustenburg. Hostilities have resumed after the festive period and the working class must respond accordingly.

The significance of the capitulation of the Lonmin bosses last year went far beyond the salary increas-



The massacre at Maikana exposed the collusion between the mining bosses, the NUM, and ANC government

es. They were compelled to condone the collapse of the authority of their 'baas boy' union [ie a bosses' union], the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM), to sign an agreement outside of the provision of the collective bargaining system for the first time, and, worst of all from their point of view, to bestow recognition on the strike committees set up by the workers independently of all the unions.

This is why it was greeted with

such hysteria and condemned by big business as well as the NUM. The NUM leadership's initial reaction to the threat of retrenchment was to echo management's threats. They continue to swallow the argument that the retrenchments are being forced on management due to a combination of circumstances out of their control and the unreasonable demands of the workers.

Instead of exposing management's hypocrisy and mobilising for mass action to defend jobs, they are using the moratorium to peddle the illusion that the differences between the bosses and workers can be resolved by negotiations.

In fact they are disarming the workers. It is ruled out that any alternative jobs created through management's proposals would absorb 14,000 workers.

The real attitude of the mining bosses is revealed by Harmony Gold Chief Executive, Graham Briggs. Quoted in *Business Day* (15/1/13) he said: "The tables have turned. It is us the company, which has demands on the tables now,

not the unions'.

This is an orchestrated strategy to break the defiance of the workers, re-establish the authority, especially of the NUM, as a collaborator in the maintenance of "discipline" over the workers, to co-opt Amcu [an independent miners' union] and to break the back of the independent strike committees, and to restore the pre-Marikana dictatorship on the mines.

## Fabulous profits

Despite the decline in demand for platinum, fabulous profits have been made across the mining industry in this period. According to the Labour Research Service, in 2011, the nine mining houses made a combined profit of R39 billion.

This would have enabled Lonmin to pay each worker R88,000 and still make a profit and explains why despite widespread denunciation of the workers' demand for the an increase of R12,500 (£890), management signed an agreement very close to it.

## Mining bosses profit - workers suffer

- Harmony made R2.5 billion profit for the year ending 31 March 2012. It increased its net operating profit by 80% from R3.3 billion to R5.9 billion for the period 2011/2012.
- According to Amplats' own figures, in the first half of 2012, the four shafts earmarked for closure achieved increases in labour productivity and output of 20% and 30% respectively.

- Chief Executive, Chris Briggs, earns R7.3 million a year even after being forced to forego his bonus of 50% of his salary (because the company failed to prevent fatal accidents).
- The wage gap in the mining industry is 390 to one, and the average worker would have to work 325 years to earn what a CEO earns in one year.

# Building a party to represent the working class

After 19 years of bending the knee to big business, the mining bosses rightly see the African National Congress (ANC) government as their stooges.

Mining managements derived great comfort from the ANC's Mangaut conference in December 2012. In a pitiful attempt to appease international capitalist investors, ANC delegates not only finally shut down the nationalisation debate, even the word "nationalisation" was erased from the economic policy documents.

From the reaffirmation of the youth wage subsidy, the endorsement of road e-tolling and, and the adoption of the neoliberal National Development Plan, to the election, with an overwhelming majority, of the butchers of Marikana – Zuma, Mthethwa and Ramaphosa, the bosses had every reason to celebrate.

But the bosses have misread the situation. In the eyes of the mineworkers, Marikana had exposed

the role of the ANC (and indeed of the whole Tripartite Alliance ie the ANC, the Congress of South African Trade Unions - Cosatu - and the Communist Party) as a strike-breaking conspiracy.

From the Marikana experience the mineworkers had drawn profound political conclusions. Determined to reclaim their class and political independence, jointly with the Democratic Socialist Movement, mine workers' strike committees from several mines founded the Workers and Socialist Party (WASP) on 15 December 2012 at Bokoni Mine in Limpopo.

## Bosses' tool

The latest action by the mining bosses again exposes the role of the ANC as a tool of the mining bosses to the entire working class. It will reinforce the political process that commenced as early as during the ANC's very first term in office (as revealed in Cosatu's 1998 survey

which found that at that time already 30% of shop stewards wanted Cosatu to form a workers' party and to contest the elections) - the steady erosion of electoral support.

Over the past few years this process has accelerated with the ANC's 66% parliamentary majority masking the decline in its electoral support in the overall population to 34% of the eligible voting population in 2009.

The warmth that the Zuma faction feels following its overwhelming majority inside the halls of Manguang, will be replaced by the icy cold wind of an alienated working class determined to find its own voice, its own programme, its own party in the WASP.

WASP will be built through struggle. In the lead up to its launch on Sharpeville Day, 21 March 2013, it will lead a campaign to fight threatened retrenchments on the mines by calling for a general strike.

As part of the mobilisation WASP has initiated a million-signature

campaign. Disillusioned with the ANC, but not offered an alternative by any of the other pro-capitalist parties in parliament, 12 million people did not vote in the last election.

WASP will offer these voters the radical anti-capitalist fighting alternative by attempting to unite all the struggles of workers on farms for better wages, in communities against corruption and for better services, and among students against financial and academic exclusion and for free education in a general strike in solidarity with the mine workers.

- For a general strike to defend jobs
- Nationalise the mines under democratic control and management of the working class
- For national minimum wage of R12,500 a month
- Recognise the independent strike committees
- Build the Workers and Socialist Party into a mass militant fighting socialist party

## The Committee for a Workers' International

The Committee for a Workers' International (CWI) is the socialist international organisation to which the Socialist Party is affiliated.

The CWI is organised in 45 countries and works to unite the working class and oppressed peoples against global capitalism and to fight for a socialist world. For more details including CWI publications write to: CWI, PO Box 3688, London E11 1YE. email [cwi@worldsoc.co.uk](mailto:cwi@worldsoc.co.uk)

## www.socialistworld.net

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



## Egypt: Mass demonstrations and brutal state repression

Only the organised working class can chart a way forward.

Aysha Zaki, CWI



## Hong Kong: Hunger strike for union rights

HKSM driving instructors sacked for forming trade union - solidarity needed

Jaco, Socialist Action (CWI, Hong Kong) [chinaworker.info](http://chinaworker.info)



## Greece: Bus workers' strike called off due to pro-government union factions

Sectarian tactics of Communist Party leadership prevents united left success.

Elini Mitsou, Xekinima (CWI Greece)



# Film review: Steven Spielberg's Lincoln

## A revolutionary war against slavery

**Patrick Ayers and Eljeer Hawkins,**  
Socialist Alternative (CWI supporters  
in the USA)

The US release of Steven Spielberg's *Lincoln* was situated between important events and anniversaries. 6 November 2012 saw the re-election of the first black president, Barack Obama, to a second term and 1 January 2013 was the 150th anniversary of the final implementation of the Emancipation Proclamation. Abraham Lincoln issued the final Emancipation Proclamation as a war measure. It declared "all persons held as slaves" within the rebel states "are, and henceforward shall be free."

The film focuses on efforts to pass the 13th Amendment [to the US constitution which abolished slavery] toward the end of the 1861-65 Civil War. After winning re-election in 1864, Lincoln took the opportunity in the final days of the outgoing "lame duck" session of Congress to pass the amendment.

Passage was not guaranteed. Lincoln had to deal with opposition in his Cabinet, his party, and also win support from some Democrats (who had been the main party of the slave owners).

The film clearly intends to highlight Lincoln's skills as a political leader in a period of crisis. Undoubtedly, a film about Lincoln's character in the limited context of the battle for the 13th Amendment is meant to amplify Lincoln's role in events.

### Masses ignored

By almost entirely featuring debates in the halls of power in Washington, the film is not able to explore the role of the masses in the historical process. Without the slaves, small farmers, workers, and others who were radicalised by events leading up to the 1861 outbreak of war - and even more so after - Lincoln would not have had a platform from which to lead.

To fully understand the qualities of Lincoln's leadership, it is vital to place his role in the context of the broader historical process. But the choice by the filmmakers of *Lincoln* to provide a narrow focus, without providing a full historical context, serves to render history as being made by great people ordained by a power greater than themselves.

"The struggle has broken out because the two systems can no longer live peaceably side by side on the

North American continent. It can only be ended by the victory of one system (chattel slavery) or the other (free labour)" wrote Karl Marx.

The Civil War ended in a revolutionary war against the slave-owning planters, who had dominated US politics for decades before the war. By abolishing slavery, the material basis of their economic and political power was rooted out.

### Second Revolution

This revolution was necessary because the first American Revolution - the war for independence from Britain - ended in a compromise between the capitalist ruling class in the North, and the slave-owning planters in the South.

With the invention of the cotton gin, and the development of the industrial revolution, demand for cotton lead to a rapid growth of slavery - and in a far more brutal form than before capitalism. This strengthened the slave-owning planters.

Due to the destructive effect of cotton plantations on the soil, planters were constantly in search of new land. This brought them into collision with the rapidly growing population of small farmers in the North who wanted new lands for small 'free soil' farms, not large slave plantations.

In 1854, small farmers and slave-owners fought a war in Kansas over whether the new state would be a slave state.

With the rapid growth of capitalism in the North, which had its own political agenda, the two systems - the chattel slave system and the free labour capitalist system - increasingly came into conflict. The refusal of the slave-owning planters to relinquish their power made a revolution absolutely necessary.

The industrialists were in a position to lead a historic movement against the slave owners, but they had to mobilise the masses to do it. The Republican Party was launched in 1854 out of a growing democratic movement against the "slave power".

Along with the small farmers and industrialists, the new party brought together abolitionists and workers' organisations that recognised an opportunity to build a powerful movement to crush the "slave power" and open the way for a radical transformation of society.

The Republican programme had a limited goal of stopping the spread of slave lands, but this was enough to herald a death sentence for the slave system.

Added to this opposition in the



The Civil War ended in a revolutionary war against the slave-owning planters

North, the slave owners constantly lived in fear of slave rebellions. With the growth of slavery to over four million human beings working in bondage, this fear became even greater.

The slave-owners were completely dependent upon racist ideology and a state apparatus that ruthlessly enforced its needs, including enforcing fugitive slave laws and repressing abolitionist agitation. Anti-democratic measures against abolitionists spread fears in the North that the "slave power" was a threat to democratic freedoms.

When Lincoln was elected president in 1860, the slave-owners had already decided that their only hope for defending their interests was an armed uprising against the North and secession.

This was the broad historical process leading up to Lincoln's election and the outbreak of war.

Lincoln's determination to abolish slavery before the end of the civil war was essential for the subsequent development of capitalism over the coming decades. This also led to the development of a powerful working class, the only class in history capable of establishing a society truly based on equality.

For these reasons, Karl Marx and his American allies supported Lincoln and the Union army during the war. "Labour in the white skin can never free itself as long as labour in the black skin is branded," wrote Marx in *Capital*.

Lincoln wasn't an abolitionist and did not set out to abolish slavery. He also held racist views.

Lincoln said in 1858: "I will say then that I am not, nor ever have been in favour of bringing about in any way the social and political equality of the white and black races, that I am not nor ever have been in favour of making voters or jurors of Negroes, nor of qualifying them to hold office, nor to intermarry with white people... I as much as any man am in favour of the superior position assigned to the white race."

But, Lincoln was a supporter of 'free labour' which was crucial for

mobilising the northern small farmers, tradesmen and workers, who volunteered to fight in droves.

Lincoln's thinking and actions were pushed by the intensifying social conflict pressure from below which was decisive in forcing him to adopt new bold proposals. Slaves themselves put pressure on the Union leaders to abolish slavery as a war measure, as they increasingly fled to northern lines in the course of the war.

### Radicalised

The Army represented some of the most radicalised sections of the northern workers and small farmers. It resembled nothing like the US Army today, which is built through a poverty draft. The Civil War was a political war, and the Union Army was politicised.

Although there was conscription, there were also thousands of willing volunteers, because they believed that crushing the "slave power" was important to the struggle for a better society. Members of labour unions, socialists and other radicals played an important role in joining and forming militias to become part of the Union army. Union soldiers overwhelmingly voted for Lincoln in the 1864 election.

Unfortunately, the black characters in *Lincoln* are used as caricatures lacking any real development, dialogue or influence on events. There's no mention or portrayal of

important African American leaders. Yet, the struggle by the slaves for their own social liberation was a decisive driving force of events that propelled Lincoln to ultimately abolish slavery.

The film also gives the false impression that the 13th Amendment came from Lincoln when in fact the Radical Republicans and abolitionist movement introduced the amendment in January 1864.

Lincoln allows us to re-examine the 16th president of the United States in a critical manner. It provides a background for further exploring the horrendous conditions African-Americans and working people were to face in the future, and the speedy rise of the US as an imperial capitalist nation.

The massive social struggles around the civil war bring up important issues that are played out in the continuing battles today to end racial, class, sexual and gender exploitation under US and global capitalism. 150 years after abolition of slavery, the working class and poor are still the true agents of revolutionary change on the stage of world history.

**See also - The end of the slave trade: Myth and reality by Hannah Sell in *Socialism Today* (April 2007)**  
<http://www.socialismtoday.org/108/slavery.html>



Spielberg's *Lincoln* film does not explore the role of the masses in the historical process

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# As Gove attacks teachers NUT leaders delay no longer - call action now

**Linda Taaffe**

Member of the NUT national executive 1998-2008

The national executive of the National Union of Teachers (NUT) recently voted by the narrowest of margins, 22-20, to delay strike action against education minister Michael Gove's performance related pay (PRP) proposals.

Now a lively, and unfortunately, sometimes acrimonious, debate has broken out among the left in the NUT. Some believe that most NUT teachers won't take action alone. They want the other big teaching union NASUWT to join them.

Socialist Party teachers say joint action would be great - but no automatic guarantee of success. And, more importantly, we cannot wait.

30 November 2011 (N30) - an historic day when 27 unions went out on strike to stop pension cuts - is an indication of what is possible.

However, this marvellous day was squandered because it was not followed through due to the faint-hearted leaders of some unions. The result has been devastating not only as pension cuts bite, but also it has helped undermine the belief that unions can ever win, even among some union activists.

## Desire for unity

The desire for everyone to act together is huge, and something we try to develop all the time. That is the reason why the National Shop Stewards Network and the Socialist Party campaign for the TUC to implement its congress decision to begin the first moves to organise a national public/private sector strike.

The fact that the NASUWT did not support this motion, even though the usually more cautious and sometimes downright treacherous union leaderships like Unison voted in favour, was an early indicator of their attitude towards strike action.

The NUT and NASUWT are currently running an "historic joint campaign" on workload, which is the number one burden facing all teachers. Yet this limited 'action short of strike action' has not affected the real workload of the vast majority of teachers. They are still putting in 60-70 hours a week.

Gove has openly declared war on teachers. The coalition defeated us on pensions, now they are coming for our pay, and in some areas are trying to break facility time agreements to further hamstring school unions.

The NUT leadership must immediately put all teachers on a war footing. We recognise that readiness to go for action varies. Union membership may be high with more than 250,000 in England and Wales, but active participation is very low. It is the job of leaders, not to accommodate to the slowest ship in the convoy, but to lead from the front and go all out to explain why action is the only way.

Teachers need to know that their leaders are determined, not half-hearted.

The mood of anger in the staff-rooms should be the barometer, not the fear at sparsely attended union association meetings. The union must gear all resources to wage a



**NUT members in 2000 (Linda Taaffe centre) leading a march against performance pay for teachers - a harkback to Victorian times when the NUT was formed** photo the Socialist

campaign to help teachers see why they need to be actively involved.

The prospect of real action forces the issues into focus. When our members go on strike it is headline news. The government and media try to turn parents against us, but we must answer the lies vigorously and go onto the offensive.

Working class parents know all about wage freezes and bullying bosses. Every strike day must be used to bring parents and the whole community to our side.

Once action starts we could encourage unions in other sectors to discuss the possibilities of organising joint strike days.

There is no middle ground between striking and not striking. No smart or imaginative way to strike without losing pay. Calling strike action means that after the first initial day of protest and demonstrations the real war begins. Teachers need to do whatever helps them win.

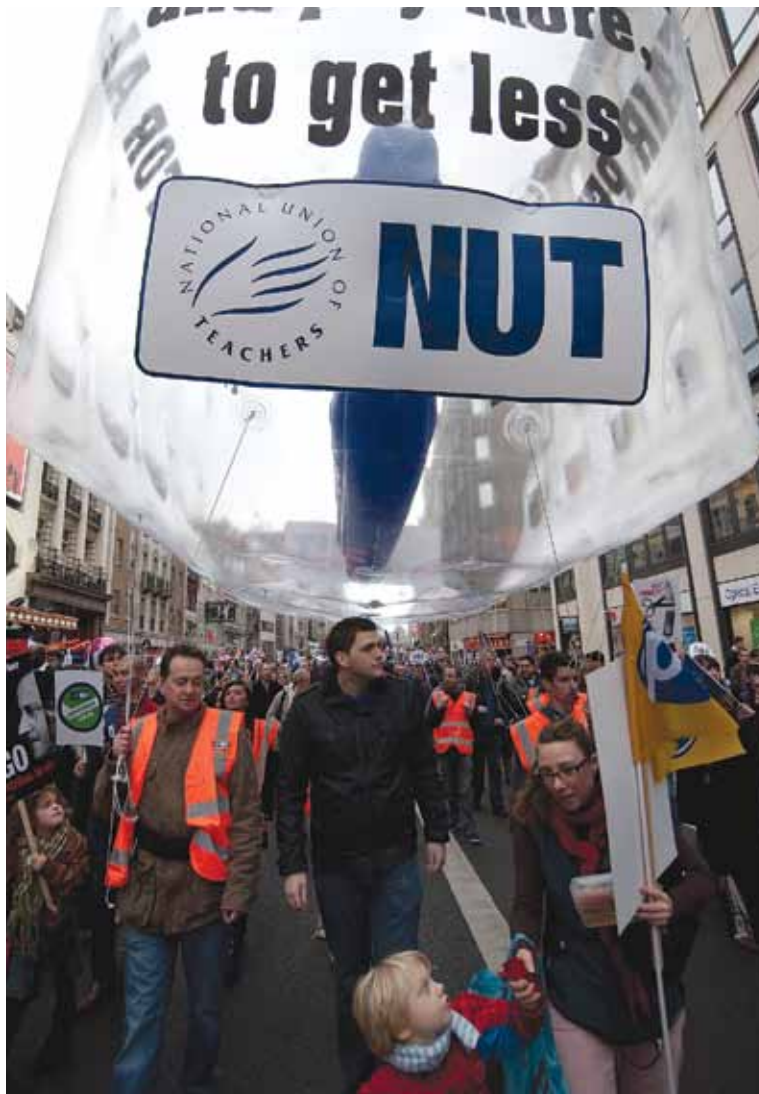
## 'Sparks' victory

Take a leaf out of the book of the battle of the 'sparks', construction electricians. After a long and bitter campaign last year of picketing and determined actions through Unite, they stopped ruthless and powerful construction companies from breaking national wage agreements that would see their pay reduced by 25%.

The NUT national executive members cannot delay. The campaign must get started now. We appeal to all teachers to come and lobby the executive on 27 February. The executive members alone have the power to launch a mighty force. Those lefts who object to this lobby are wrong. Why not lobby all executive members; why not engage them directly?

Those NUT members in Liverpool can also vote for Peter Glover in the current executive byelection to ensure the left is strengthened.

Some on the left are counterposing a lobby of Gove at the Department for Education on 13 March. This may be one useful way of getting teachers mobilised.



**On the N30 march to defend pensions** photo Paul Mattsson

But no matter how many hundred teachers turn out in Gove masks, and get TV coverage, the man and his government are not going to fall down and give in. It is the NEC that has the power to fire the starting gun for real action.

The NUT was formed in the latter part of the 19th century in the fight against PRP at a time when other sectors were establishing unions to stop greedy bosses driving workers into the ground. In times of economic upswing unions took action to win pensions, holiday and sick pay - and the NUT benefited too.

Now all these gains are under serious threat. The very existence of our union is threatened.

We read with admiration about past struggles for better pay and conditions. It is our turn to continue that tradition. The most reluctant teachers can learn to struggle - and the younger teachers can learn fast!

Lobby the NUT executive  
27 February 5pm, Hamilton House, Mabledon Place, London WC1H 9BD

## Derby: "No such thing as fair cuts"

**Becci Heagney**

Derby has seen an example of Labour politicians not keeping their word. After taking control of Derby city council last May by promising to defend youth services and council housing, the Labour Party have now voted for £63 million worth of cuts.

This massive cuts package includes closing the main youth advice service and a huge 83% reduction in the Supporting People budget, which provides housing support.

With no sense of irony, the Labour councillors organised an anti-cuts lobby prior to the council budget-setting meeting and then went in to carry out massive attacks on working class people in the city.



The leader of the council, Paul Bayliss, spoke at the rally and outlined the effect that austerity is having on ordinary people. In response to calls from workers and service users not to implement cuts, he replied that there was nothing that they could do. He told us he has launched a campaign called a 'Fair Deal for Derby' - basically calling for 'fair cuts'. There is no such thing!

Unfortunately, the councillors were supported by Derby Trades Council, including members of the Communist Party and the Socialist Workers Party, who maintained that the councillors have no choice but to do what the government tells them.

Socialist Party members attended the protest but with leaflets calling on the council to make a stand against the Con-Dem government. We recognise that the government is making savage cuts to local government budgets, for example to council tax benefit, but we also recognise that unless Labour refuses to pass these cuts on, they are doing the Tories' 'dirty work'.

We highlighted the heroic stand taken by councils such as Clay Cross in 1972 and Liverpool in the 1980s, who refused to implement attacks on the working class, to show that Labour does have a choice.

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**Bob Crow** General Secretary, RMT  
**Nancy Taaffe** TUSC candidate in 2012 GLA elections  
**Garth Beeton** FBV North East London Regional Chair  
**Okay Sahbaz** Day-Mer Centre (plus a day-mer youth speaker)



# CUT TAX DODGING NOT BENEFITS

## Make the 1% pay for their crisis



**Sophie Brooks**

I should be looking forward to becoming a first-time mum this year. Instead I'm looking over my shoulder at crumbling services and decimated benefits. These cuts are going to leave our family and millions of others with tough choices unless we do something about it.

The Con-Dems say we are scroungers, shirkers and skivers - hardworking taxpayers shouldn't have to stump up so much money to help 'us'. They say we need to cut back on our 'luxuries' and try to make 'us' feel guilty for needing help with our housing costs, our childcare and our food and utility bills.

But who are 'us'? 'Us' are workers whose wages don't meet even a basic standard of living - 93% of new housing benefit claims are from working households. 'Us' are the 2.49 million unemployed fighting it out for 489,000 vacancies. And 'us' are the disabled, elderly and most vulnerable who look to the state for help.

### Bedroom tax

This April the correctly maligned 'bedroom tax' and the changes to council tax benefits will be another blow to the poorest in society while the rich see income tax on their high earnings cut by 5%.

Housing Futures Research found that 42% of the 660,000 households to be hit by the bedroom tax already struggle financially. A

staggering 72% have disability and/or health problems. Yet the government wants to take 14% of your housing benefit if you are in social housing and deemed to have one 'spare room' and 25% for two or more.

This crazy attack will see people forced out of cheaper social housing because of a shortage of single bedroom properties, and into the private sector where soaring rents will mean their housing benefit claim actually rises!

### Council tax benefit

The government is also handing council tax support responsibility to local councils while cutting funding by 10%. Some bills will rise by £600 a year.

Over 74% of councils say they'll now charge people whose incomes are so low that they don't currently pay any council tax. The poorest working households could see a doubling of the amount they have to pay.

Not content with cutting corporation tax to 21% from April 2014, the government is making it easy for big business to cheat the system.

The 30 companies drafted in to help write new Controlled Foreign Company rules - that determine how companies can claim their business is in a tax haven even if their goods are sold here - have 3,000 subsidiaries in tax havens themselves!

While the government spends its time seeking to condemn, fine and sanction people over the 0.3% of benefits claimed fraudulently, more than £120 billion of tax continues

More than £120 billion of tax goes unpaid, mainly by the rich, every year

to go unpaid, mainly by big business and the rich, every year.

The four biggest accountancy firms employ 200 high-paid staff in their 'transfer-pricing' departments to assist companies in getting around tax law.

The tax office, HMRC, employs a measly 65 over-worked staff to chase these criminals! These 'big four' also make £490 million annually from public sector work!

### Them and us

The government says young people, the disabled, the low paid and the unemployed are leeches on society. Yet the fortunes of the super-rich 1% show that these cuts are not necessary.

The ten most expensive boroughs in London have a total property "value" of £552 billion, more than Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland combined. Big business has £800 billion locked away because they see no 'profitable' outlet for it.

This wealth should be used to fund the jobs and homes we need while stopping the attacks on benefits and services. But for that to happen, resources need to be publicly owned under the democratic control of the 99%.

### 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!