



# the Socialist

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Issue 753

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Hospital closures... horsemeat scandal... housing benefit cuts... hypocritical MPs...



## TIME TO FIGHT THEIR CUTS AND LIES

**Dave Griffiths**  
West Midlands Socialist Party secretary

**T**hey say we are what we eat. If so, HELP! Given what's been revealed about our 'food' no wonder many think Britain's 'gone to the dogs'.. or whatever animal it is.

The truth is few will be shocked that dodgy food comes from the pursuit of profit. The logic of supermarkets, councils, hospitals, etc, putting price before everything else has been revealed. As one supermarket boss - whose burgers

weren't beef - said: 'we have to produce food for poor people.' At least he's right that poverty is part of the problem.

Saving money was the excuse for what happened at Stafford hospital. It's the excuse for the bedroom tax that promises mass misery. And it's the excuse for all the cuts and privatisation - slashing services and making a mint for the millionaires. Only the maddest Tory thinks that all the cuts won't lead to grief.

### Help change a rotten system

Scandal after scandal shows our lives are not safe in their hands. You're

probably not shocked that MPs still have their noses in the expenses trough, that they 'fiddled' at a rate 20 times more than benefit fraud.

Yet these hypocrites decide laws based on their lousy morals. Then the fuss dies away. Little changes. No wonder people are cynical. While few of us are surprised; the question is what are we going to do about it all?

We need a voice - none of the main parties can be relied on to stand up for us in any way - that's clear. That's one of the reasons the Socialist Party, with working class fighters in the RMT transport union and others, is trying to build a mass

party that gives ordinary people a voice through the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition.

Of course we don't want horsemeat masquerading as beef; we don't want poison in our food. Testing will tell us what's in it - and should be done - but we can't ensure what we get is either as labelled or nutritious while food is produced by multinationals for profit.

Like most free market-worshipping newspapers the Independent suggests the solution lies merely in inspection, ie we pay more to protect ourselves from them and leave the profits of super-rich private firms untouched! At the same time

they all support cuts.

The common feature to these scandals is capitalism, a system based around production for profit and exploitation of the billions - us. Until we own and control our food production and services our safety won't be guaranteed. Until the greed and inequality that drive this system are ended, and MPs are paid one worker's wage - not three - then it will go on.

Only we can change it, and only if we organise. Some of us are already organised in the Socialist Party - why don't you join with us?

**See page 5 for more on the food adulteration scandal**



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# the Socialist

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## Government on the back foot after workfare ruling Escalate action to fight for real jobs

Claire Laker-Mansfield

Youth Fight for Jobs

“I am not going to give way on this” was the reply of Tory work and pensions minister Iain Duncan Smith (IDS) when confronted with the government’s defeat on workfare at the court of appeal. Backed into a corner, embarrassed by the ruling, IDS and his government remain determined to plough ahead.

Wild accusations of ‘job snobbery’ were thundered at Cait Reilly, the geology graduate who beat the government in the courts last week. She had been forced to abandon career-relevant volunteering to do unpaid work in Poundland.

After all, when you’re in the supermarket and you can’t find the item you want “who’s more important – the shelf stacker or the geologist?” railed the minister.

### Insulting

Shop work is, of course, very important. That’s why people should be paid a decent wage for doing it. That’s why the insulting, patronising rubbish IDS spouts is such a slap in the face for shop workers everywhere.

Your job’s important (IDS has

graciously confirmed) it’s just not worth a penny. In fact, you should be grateful to the bosses of multi-million pound companies for allowing you the privilege of helping generate their profits. So grateful you’ll be willing to do it for nothing.

But despite IDS’s bluster, this ruling is profoundly problematic for the government. Not, in the main, because of the legal aspect of the judgement, which ruled only on a technicality. The government has already said it will change the rules to get around the judgement.

### Impact

No, the ruling was damaging because of the blow it has dealt to the idea that these schemes are anything other than what they are – a form of modern slavery.

It’s damaging because, once you cut through the reactionary rhetoric about scroungers and skivers, any ordinary person can see that forcing someone to work for nothing is not only deeply unfair, it undermines one of the more basic principles of a so-called democracy – a day’s pay for a day’s work.

It was this fact that meant the (numerically relatively small) protests which took place on this issue in 2012 were able to have such a



Youth Fight for Jobs protesting against workfare in 2012 photo Senan

big impact on the schemes, causing several companies to run a mile. Companies knew that their complicity in workfare was the opposite of ‘good PR’.

The government was nervously looking over its shoulders, anxious that, given the right ingredients, small protests might cascade in to

big ones. Nervous that those forced to work for nothing might find common cause with the low-paid workers their free labour is designed to cut across.

This ruling should spur on the fight against workfare. We must demand the government immediately shuts down all unpaid work

schemes and provides a rebate to those who have lost benefits as a result of them.

Youth Fight for Jobs’ ‘Sick of Your Boss?’ initiative can help link the struggle of unemployed people with that of the underemployed ‘precarious’. We aim to keep up the pressure on exploitative employers with protests and occupations, and build towards action on a larger scale.

### Trade unions

It’s vital that the trade unions take up the issue of workfare as well as the super-exploitation faced by so many young workers. If allowed to continue both will undermine the hard-won pay, terms and conditions of all. Right now, the government is on the defensive. That means now is the time to escalate action. Join us, get involved and help build the fightback today.

Also see  
socialiststudents.  
org.uk for updates  
from the Sussex  
student occupation

## Getting organised can change things for low-paid workers

Hannah Parker

After months of illegal shift patterns and being expected to work without breaks under a bullying management at my workplace (as previously reported in the Socialist), things are looking up.

The minimum-wage bar staff called an all-staff meeting with management to discuss the disgraceful working conditions we were facing.

I worked the night the company who run my pub took the most money it has ever in its history. The manager on duty was offered a bonus. But, as me and my workmates have discussed, he didn’t pull a single pint or serve a single plate of food that night! So why is he getting the bonus and we aren’t even getting paid for our breaks?

The line from management was that we were the lowest of the low, it’s what we should expect as bar staff and if we didn’t like it we could leave and there were hundreds who could take our place.

But we have shown we’re not as disposable as they’d like to suggest. During the staff meeting we were offered a number of concessions. The changes haven’t been properly implemented yet and we are going to need a fight to have what we were promised put in place.

It is starker than ever now that to make them stick to their word the workers must join a union that can support us and ensure the changes



90% of bar workers live on the minimum wage

are made while also helping us move forwards. This is a positive and big step for young people with little previous knowledge of the role of a trade union in the workplace.

The Youth Fight for Jobs ‘Sick Of Your Boss?’ underemployment initiative has a huge role to play now in my workplace. We need to build on the confidence the workers have found from taking on management once. ‘Sick Of Your Boss?’ can show that young people in small workplaces do not have to fight alone.

### Wider struggle

Although making gains in a workplace can have a positive effect on the staff there, this has to be linked to an on-going struggle against Con-Dem austerity.

All the positive changes in my workplace and in others taking up similar struggles don’t change the

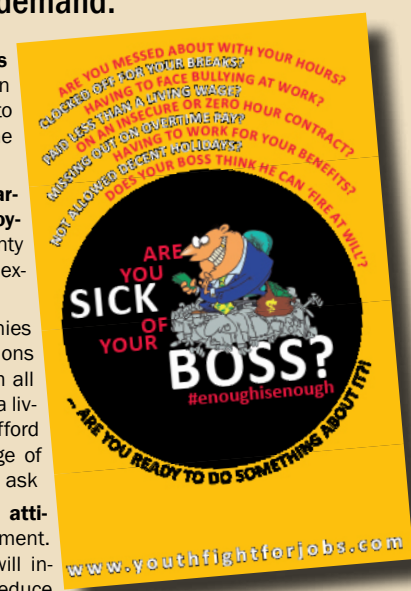
fact that 90% of bar workers live on the minimum wage. We are low-paid despite the unsociable hours, the dangers of the job and the added costs and difficulties of working late nights such as needing taxis or having to walk home alone at night.

Young people are stuck at the bottom of the heap and in recent years have seen huge reductions in their working conditions and an increase in bosses who ‘fire at will’. Sky-rocketing unemployment is used to intimidate young people into not fighting back against unpaid overtime and long shifts without breaks.

The fight for decent rights, a decent wage and against the squeeze of living standards from both big businesses trying to increase their profits and the government will not be won one workplace at a time but by workers, young and old, fighting together!

### Enough is enough! We demand:

- **Decent tea and lunch breaks** and no being ‘clocked off’ when we take one. It’s not possible to work long shifts without some time to breathe
- **Give us proper contracts, guaranteed hours and full employment rights.** No more uncertainty and insecurity dressed up as ‘flexibility’!
- **Pay us enough to live** - Companies which make the bosses millions are paying us (who make them all that money) pennies. We want a living wage which is enough to afford the basics in life. A living wage of £10 an hour is not too much to ask
- **Stop the bosses ‘fire at will’ attitude,** backed up by the government. Making it easier to sack us will increase unemployment – not reduce it!
- **We won’t be used as cheap or free labour** on apprenticeships, internships and work-for-benefits schemes. A day’s work deserves a decent day’s pay
- **We have the right to get organised at work** - Trade unions are there to help give workers protection and fight to improve our conditions. In this country there is a legal right to join a trade union. Despite this, workers who try to get organised are sometimes penalised by their bosses. We say the right to organise is fundamental – full trade union rights now!
- **Scrap the anti-trade union laws** - We have a right to try and improve our conditions and stop the bosses that ‘make us sick!’ It’s up to us to democratically decide how we do this. If we want to go on strike or take action then that’s up to us, the courts should not stop us
- **Build democratic campaigning trade unions** - We want trade unions that will fight our corner. That means representing us in the workplace, defending us if we’re under attack and, crucially, helping us use our collective strength as workers to fight back
- **No to benefit cuts** – Attacks like this affect all of us, not just the unemployed. Thousands of low-paid workers rely on benefits. Don’t let government lies divide us!



Are you sick of your boss? Join the campaign ...  
Text ‘join’, plus your name and post code to 07749379010 and we’ll get in touch!  
Twitter – @youthfight4jobs Facebook – ‘Youth Fight for Jobs’

# Stop social cleansing Cap rents, not benefits

Paul Kershaw

Camden council in London has announced plans to move poorer families out of the capital to places as far away as Bradford, Leicester and Birmingham, saying it can no longer afford to house them.

Camden is contacting 761 households, 2,817 people, who may be affected by the government's benefit cap, which will limit total welfare payments to £500 a week for families later this year.

The Labour council warns that most of these families have three children and will need to find on average an additional £90 a week for rent to remain in their homes when the cap comes in.

Camden say they regret the move. But rather than acting to protect working class people by launching a mass campaign against the cuts and setting a budget based on the needs of the community, they are implementing a policy of social cleansing.

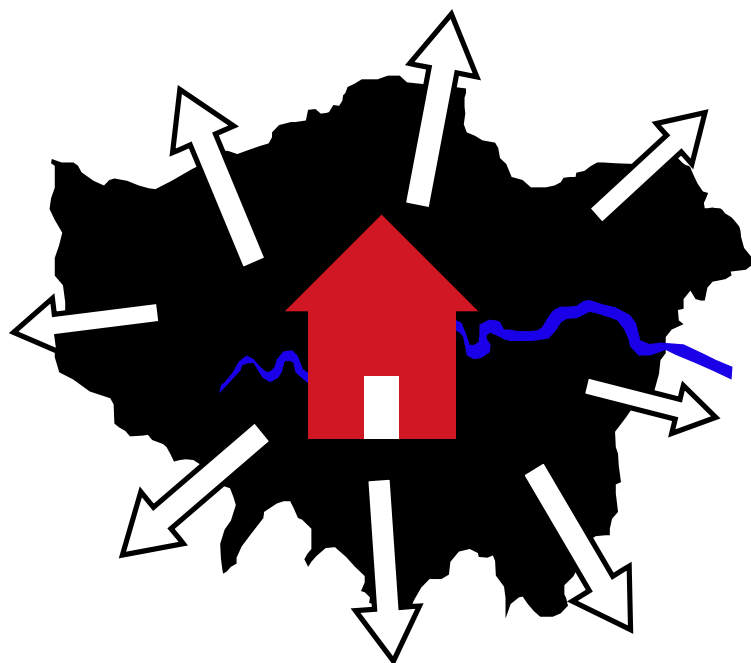
Other London councils are developing similar plans and four (Haringey, Enfield, Croydon and Bromley) will be trialling the new arrangements from April. Westminster has estimated that 2,327 local families will be hit.

A single mother was quoted in the press saying: "I want to stay where I am for my children's education. What it seems like is the government just want London for the rich."

## Benefit myths

It is not even the case that people's problems will ease when families are forced out. Bradford points out that it has 20,000 people waiting for social housing, 10% overcrowding in some areas, and a severe shortage of school places, especially in the areas where these families are likely to end up.

The government has defended the policy saying: "It's not right



See [www.londonersforcedout.com](http://www.londonersforcedout.com)

that benefit claimants can receive higher incomes than families who are in work..." repeating the false idea that claimants are not workers. But the benefits system has become a mechanism for subsidising low-paying employers.

It is true that rents in inner London

"What it seems like is the government just want London for the rich."

are sky high - rents of three bedroom homes in Camden are at least double the government's maximum welfare payment of £340 a week for such properties in north London. But it's landlords, not tenants, who get rich.

If your job is in London it's likely that a rent that was once affordable

has become unaffordable as rent outstrip wages. The average rent in London increased by 6.7% last year. A minimum emergency step would be to cap rents instead of benefits. Most European and North American cities control rent.

## Fighting councillors

Two Labour councillors in Southampton have stood up for working class people by refusing to implement cuts but have been expelled from Labour. No councillors in Camden have had the courage to stand up against cuts and social cleansing.

Support Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition candidate John Reid (regional secretary of London Transport for the RMT transport workers union) in the Camden council byelection on 14 March as a voice against cuts and social cleansing.

See [www.tusc.org.uk](http://www.tusc.org.uk)

# Action needed to end caste discrimination

Senan  
Tamil Solidarity

The first employment tribunal to deal with caste discrimination was dismissed recently after the judge 'recused' herself from the case. Sound like an 'excuse'? With it, caste discrimination appears to have been 'rescued'.

The caste system, a brutal remnant of feudalism, is based on discrimination against certain 'groups' who are considered to have a lower status in society.

According to news reports a young 'inter-caste' couple in Coventry faced systematic discrimination - 110 alleged instances - due to the 'oppressed-caste' background of the husband.

Vijay Begraj was allegedly called derogatory names relating to his caste status. A colleague told him he was lucky to have a job as a solici-

tor because in India he would be a cleaner. When they sought justice, the couple found that they could not rely on the capitalist justice system.

The windows of the house of an anti-caste activist who gave evidence were smashed. The case collapsed after it was reported that two police officers involved in the case met the judge to hand her documentation.

## Threat to lives

Caste violence is a real threat to lives. Last December in a small rural village called Dharmapuri in India 268 poor people's huts were burned down by a violent mob of upper-caste men. Every year there are tens of thousands of victims of this brutal bigotry.

One prominent proponent of caste discrimination is the infamous Gujarat chief minister, Narendra Modi of the right-wing BJP, now tipped as the next prime minister of

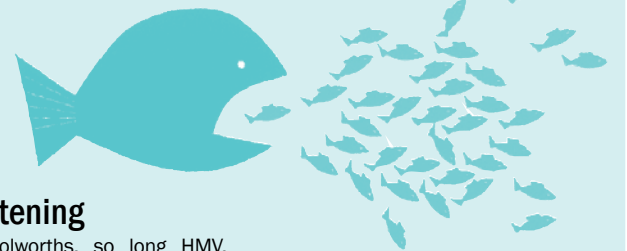
India and favoured by western governments for his implementation of neoliberal policies.

Caste discrimination exists in the South Asian communities in Britain. Hindu-only schools, promoted as part of the government's undermining of state education, are run by upper-caste wealthy individuals and discriminate against those from an oppressed-caste.

Some Hindu temples in the UK prevent oppressed-caste Dalits entering the inner parts of the temples. Inter-caste marriages often suffer violence. And, like Vijay, many oppressed-caste workers face prejudice in the workplace. This must be fought.

The Socialist Party says no to all discrimination on the basis of caste, race, sexuality, sex, religion, disability and all other forms of discrimination. Caste discrimination must be recognised and challenged, including with trade union action.

# Them...



## Belt tightening

Farewell Woolworths, so long HMV, sayanara Peacocks. We've said goodbye to a whole host of high street chains over the last five years as shoppers have had to tighten their belts. But not all companies are affected equally. Designer fashion company Yves Saint Laurent saw a 59% increase in sales last year. PPR, the luxury group that owns YSL, Bottega Veneta and Gucci, made €1.8 billion profit. So who is it who's not having to belt-tighten? A clue lies in the fact that the most expensive handbag available from Peacocks costs £16, while at Bottega Veneta it's £3,165.

## Where's the cash?

According to the Economist, the world has:

- 50-60 tax havens which offer light regulation, low/no taxation and secrecy
- 2m companies use them
- 1000s of banks, funds and insurers do too
- \$20 trillion or more is stashed there

## Poverty gap

A Save the Children report has shown a growing poverty gap in education. 60% of the children interviewed said they were prevented from joining in some educational activities because of money. By GCSE level, there is a 34% gap between attainment of children from low income backgrounds compared to better off classmates.

## Unpaid carers

More than one in ten people provide unpaid care for disabled or elderly family members, friends or neighbours. As local government and health budgets are attacked, people have no choice but to pick up the slack. The figure doesn't even include unpaid care for young children. The largest increase from 2011 to 2012 was in people providing more than 50 hours of unpaid care a week.

## Snow money

Retail sales in January fell sharply after the Christmas rush. We were told it's all the fault of the snow - people just couldn't venture out to the sales they'd otherwise be spending hundreds of pounds each at. But a poll on the Guardian website shows 93% of people actually didn't shop because they had no money, regardless of the weather!

Becci Heagney



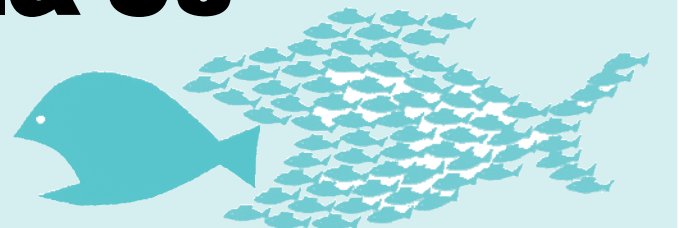
£3,165  
Most expensive bag at Bottega Veneta

£16  
Most expensive bag at Peacocks (1/198 of the price)

## Bubbly?

It's not just clothes where this divide is obvious either. January saw a 2.6% fall in year-on-year food sales. It's unsurprising to find people are cutting back on food when we remember that 83% of teachers say they see children come to school hungry in the mornings. And yet figures reveal that Britain is set to be the biggest importer of champagne by 2016. It's expected that 126 million bottles will be drunk in that year. Obviously some people are still able to celebrate in style.

# ...& Us



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

## @tweets this week

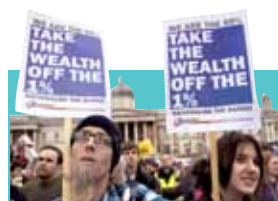
**Nancy Taaffe**  
BBC News - Decision on NHS North West London A&E closures due #Unison and other unions should call a London #strike

**Tony Saunio**  
#r4today Horsemeat scandal now affecting 12 countries. Multinational market out of control. Another market failure.

**Helen Ridett**  
More workers shot in a South African platinum mine. Why? The bosses are under threat from a growing mass movement #solidarity #DSM

**NSSN**  
The Mirror's reporting Manchester as the place worst hit by #bedroomtax. Could be £529 extra a year for one spare room

**dazprocter**  
£13billion paid out in city bonuses in 2011-12 would of been enough to stop all the council cuts twice over that year :( #TUSC #Eastleigh



Join the fightback! Join the Socialists!

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# PCS branch supports call for 24-hour general strike

Tony Mulhearn, one of the 47 Liverpool councillors who fought and scored a major victory against Thatcher's government in the 1980s, addressed a 120-strong meeting of the Cheshire branch of the PCS (Public and Commercial Services union) on 13 February.

He emphasised the attacks being made on civil servants, including the erosion of wages, pensions and union facility time, all under attack while the wealth of the Con-Dems' friends continues to spiral upwards.

He linked these attacks to the privatisation of the NHS, closure of libraries, demonisation of disabled

people and the unemployed, giving examples of appalling acts of callousness for which this government is now noted.

He told the meeting that workers' share of wealth in Britain has declined by some 20% in the last 30 years, while the wealth of the top 1% has increased by a corresponding amount.

He posed the question sharply that if there was a general election tomorrow and Labour were elected, they would continue with Con-Dem policies, with the exception of secondary issues like restoring a 10p rate of tax.

Welcome as that would be, without a challenge to the basic neo-liberal character of capitalism and without the repeal of the anti-trade union laws of which New Labour was so proud, it would make little difference to workers' wages and conditions. He linked this with the call for the establishment of a new mass workers' party.

He called for maximum support for the call for a 24-hour general strike, that is presently under consideration by the TUC.

His speech was met with prolonged applause, with workers who had 20-30 years' service comment-

ing that he spoke 'common sense' and it was a pity that thousands weren't there to listen to the alternative policy.

The meeting voted unanimously to support PCS policy of support for a 24-hour general strike and unanimously for the PCS's call for strike action in defence of wages and conditions.

- 250,000 PCS members across the civil service are also voting in a national industrial action ballot over cuts to pay, pensions and terms and conditions. That ballot closes on 4 March.

## Hospital workers rally against attack on pay and hours



Contractor Initial is trying to cut the pay and hours of 36 domestic staff at Whipps Cross hospital, east London. On 18 February a large number of hospital staff and other trade unionists protested against this at the hospital gates. Unison branch secretary Len Hockey said: "domestic staff play a vital role in keeping the hospital free from infection. They barely have enough time at the moment to get the job done." photo Suzanne Beishon

## Prison officers protest outside parliament

Bob Severn

The POA prison officers' union held a lobby of parliament on 13 February against prison closures, overcrowding and privatisation.

Seven more closures were announced by Con-Dem justice minister Chris Grayling in January.

POA assistant general secretary Joe Simpson told the Socialist: "The POA is here today to protest against closures. We believe that this is a knee-jerk reaction by government.

"They keep telling us that that there is headroom for 6,000 [more prisoners]. We've asked them where these places are.

"Instead of closing prisons, why don't they end overcrowding? How are we supposed to take part in the 'rehabilitation revolution' when we're crowding people into prisons like warehouses?"

"So we've come here today and brought our comrades from the prisons that are being closed to put their case to parliament."

There were speeches from POA national chair PJ McParlin, POA general secretary Steve Gillan, left Labour MP John McDonnell, Ian Lawrence from the NAPO probation officers' union, and Austin Harney from the PCS civil servants' union. National Shop Stewards Network



Part of the POA protest photo Bob Severn

chair Rob Williams got one of the loudest cheers when he spoke of the need to unite the trade union movement in a 24-hour general strike.

Rob praised the POA's 'motion five', which called for the TUC to look into the practicalities of a general strike, and was passed at last year's TUC congress.

The TUC is now carrying out a survey. Rob said: "We don't need a survey, we need them to name the date!"

## Struggling against poverty wages at Churchill

Elaine Brunskill

Churchill cleaners from the Tyne and Wear Metro have stepped up their battle for a decent living wage. Building on rock-solid strikes over the course of 2012, the strike which started on 15 February is for seven days.

One of the strikers told the Socialist that RMT reps from the Churchill dispute had been down to London to meet up with their union, RMT's executive committee and the decision was made to ratchet up the ante and put on a week-long strike. The striker went on to say: "If this doesn't budge them then we'll be looking at a two-week strike or potentially a month."

The striking cleaners, who are on the minimum wage, are angry that Churchill is attempting to enforce a 0% pay award. It has repeatedly made the claim that it cannot afford

to increase the wages of their cleaning staff, yet the rubbish cleaning company has doubled its profits in the past five years, making almost £7 million from the exploitation of low-paid cleaners.

While Churchill cleaners receive no sick pay, no pension and don't even get travel concessions on the Metro they clean, the company's highest paid director has had a salary increase of more than 18% in the last five years. No wonder the feeling among the strikers is "enough is enough" and there is clearly a mood of determination to see this battle through.

The seven-day strike coincided with Newcastle's march and rally to Save our Services. On the demo the strikers made a big impact flying RMT banners high. It was clear that the Churchill cleaners have a lot of support in their struggle against poverty wages.

## No pay cuts at Thera!

A Thera employee

On 16 February, members of South Derbyshire Unison healthcare branch held a day of action in support of its members in Thera East Midlands, who are facing massive attacks. The workers support people who have learning difficulties and challenging behaviours.

Derbyshire Thera employees and their partners gave out leaflets to the public and encouraged them to sign petitions of support. Trade unionists from Derby and Nottingham turned out in support including, Jean Thorpe, a Unison national executive member.

The Thera workers were protesting against the introduction of a draconian contract. This would cut the pay of those transferred from the NHS by over £300 a month. Workers already on a Thera contract have not had a pay rise for over four years so we are fighting for a pay rise for them.

In 2010-11 Thera made a surplus of £2.1 million. In the same year all staff got a memo saying there would be no pay rises in the organisation. Yet in those years the executive directors' remuneration went up! Four of them were already on over £100,000 a year.

In 2011 Thera East Midlands did a restructure which meant a section of employees, mainly nurses, had wage cuts between £10,000 to £20,000. Now Thera are coming for the support workers.

This time we are preparing for industrial action. We hope soon to move to an official ballot. We have already had a high vote for action in the consultative ballot.

The day of action was a success. It was on Radio Derby every hour. Support workers came away more determined and confident and are now eager to cast their vote for action.

We thank all trade unionists and members of the Socialist Party and their paper for their support.

### In brief

#### Education dept strike

PCS members at the Department for Education have voted to strike over a threat to 1,000 jobs and six offices. In a ballot of 1,800 workers, 63.3% of those who voted supported strike action and nearly 90% in favour of other industrial action. Education minister Gove is clearly using his own department as a test bed for severe cuts in the civil service and increased privatisation.

#### BBC action



The Leicester picket line photo Steve Score

Pickets were out early in Southampton on 18 February as part of a national strike at the BBC over compulsory redundancies. Nationally 30 jobs are under threat by the end of March. Over 2,000 jobs are being cut across the BBC as part of the euphemistically titled Deliver Quality First programme.

Tom Hepworth, FOC NUJ BBC South, said: "Locally four have been given notice of redundancy. Experienced journalists are being put on the scrapheap when plenty of posts are unfilled and the BBC is advertising externally.

"The cuts planned, if they go ahead, will make the BBC unrecognisable. You can't get quality journalism on the cheap". Dominic Blake, FOC NUJ BBC South, commented: "The BBC is wasting vast sums in redundancy payouts by forcing people out of their jobs whilst advertising other vacancies. It is a callous way to treat loyal staff, and a cavalier use of public money".

Union members are determined to defend their jobs, pay and conditions as part of defending quality journalism at the BBC.

Nick Chaffey

#### Halesowen college

Striking lecturers at Halesowen college in the west midlands marked Valentine's day with a giant card, featuring the message "No Love Lost" and the names of 12,000 supporters who have so far signed the petition against the victimisation and sacking of four maths lecturers for trade union activity. College management have used results and targets as an excuse to bully lecturers. One of the four, UCU branch secretary Dave Muritu, spoke to the Socialist:

"I'm really heartwarming to see the branch standing up to bullying management. If these sackings go unchallenged, no teacher is safe"

Nick Hart

# Food adulteration - government cutbacks and capitalist profits

In the wake of the horsemeat scandal it's clear that food manufacturers, supermarkets and government ministers cannot be trusted to provide and ensure healthy food. Ten companies dominate global food production and the drive for profit comes first. Big business politicians are generally obedient to the demands of the super-rich manufacturers. Profits soar while health problems mount up and industry employees suffer attacks on working conditions. Low pay denies millions from buying high-quality food. And unsustainable agribusiness production is wrecking the environment.

Dave Ingham

According to the Food Standards Agency (FSA), horsemeat has been found in one in every 75 beef products available in the high street, as well as in cottage pies sent to 47 schools in Lancashire and ready meals sent to hospitals in Northern Ireland.

The FSA was established in 2000 as a watchdog on food safety and nutrition, in the wake of the BSE scandal a few years earlier. Part of its remit is to monitor the three million cattle, 13 million pigs, 19 million sheep and lambs, 70 million fish and 800 million birds that are slaughtered every year in the UK for human consumption.

Food writer, Joanna Blythman accused the FSA of having an "unduly cosy relationship with the food companies, bio-tech companies and large retailers". As if to demonstrate this the former CEO of the FSA, Tim Smith, is now Tesco's Global Technical Director.

Staff numbers at the FSA have dropped by 42% from 2007-2010 reducing meat inspection costs by £13.5 million, and since then a further 13% of staff have been axed. Its budget has been cut by £44 million since 2010.

On her blog Blythman comments further: "Now, providing a food-processing company has a paper trail that appears to demonstrate 'due diligence' and conforms to 'quality assurance' schemes, supermarkets take its products on trust. So unless a whistleblower tips off the authorities or obvious casualties line up in the form of poisoned con-

sumers, any funny business in the factory goes undetected."

Moreover, council environmental health teams, which are responsible for inspections of food retailing, fast food and restaurants, have also been squeezed.

According to Environmental Health News spending has been cut by "32% since 2009, outstripping cuts in most other service areas." Most workplaces can be expected to be inspected somewhere from every six months to every two years.

Having worked in a supermarket with fresh meat prior to these cutbacks, then I can honestly say the thoroughness of the inspections were less than exemplary.

In the one inspection I witnessed in my two years working full-time at a supermarket they obsessed over whether our chiller was actually as cool as it was supposed to be rather than the flagrant hygiene issues just metres away from them. My store manager was forever pulling me away from hygienic cleaning duties.

## Profit margins

Some commentators have suggested that horsemeat is being used as a replacement for Desinewed Meat (DSM), which itself was a replacement for Mechanically Recovered Meat (MRM), also known as 'pink slime'. This is produced by removing residual meat from animal bones by high pressure water.

The difference between the two is that DSM is removed at lower pressure retaining some structure, but both are a far cheaper source of 'meat' than actual cuts. DSM was reclassified as a form of MRM around a year ago which means it can no

longer be listed as meat.

It's quite telling that a former FSA specialist, Dr Mark Woolfe, was quoted in the press saying that DSM "was a perfectly good ingredient for value products".

In essence he is saying that low-quality food is adequate for those on low incomes who have to buy value products. He then goes on to justify companies using horsemeat as they searched for similarly priced 'meat' to protect their profit margins.

## Flawed system

Horses are also slaughtered in Britain, some of which are for domestic human consumption, but mainly for export.

The UK government's system of passports for horses is meant to identify what drugs they have been treated with over their lifetime, including the anti-inflammatory drug phenylbutazone (Bute). In high enough concentrations Bute can have severe side effects in humans. However, the passport system is deeply flawed.

7,000 of these passports were issued by the Spotted Horse and Pony Organisation after it had its license to do so withdrawn in 2008 by Defra, a government department. This is just one of over 75 organisations which can issue such licenses.

According to the Ulster Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals around 70,000 horses are untraceable in both the North and South of Ireland.

With the suspected involvement of criminal gangs, horses worth as little as £10 (due to drug treatment) are being sold to slaughterhouses with false passports and identifica-

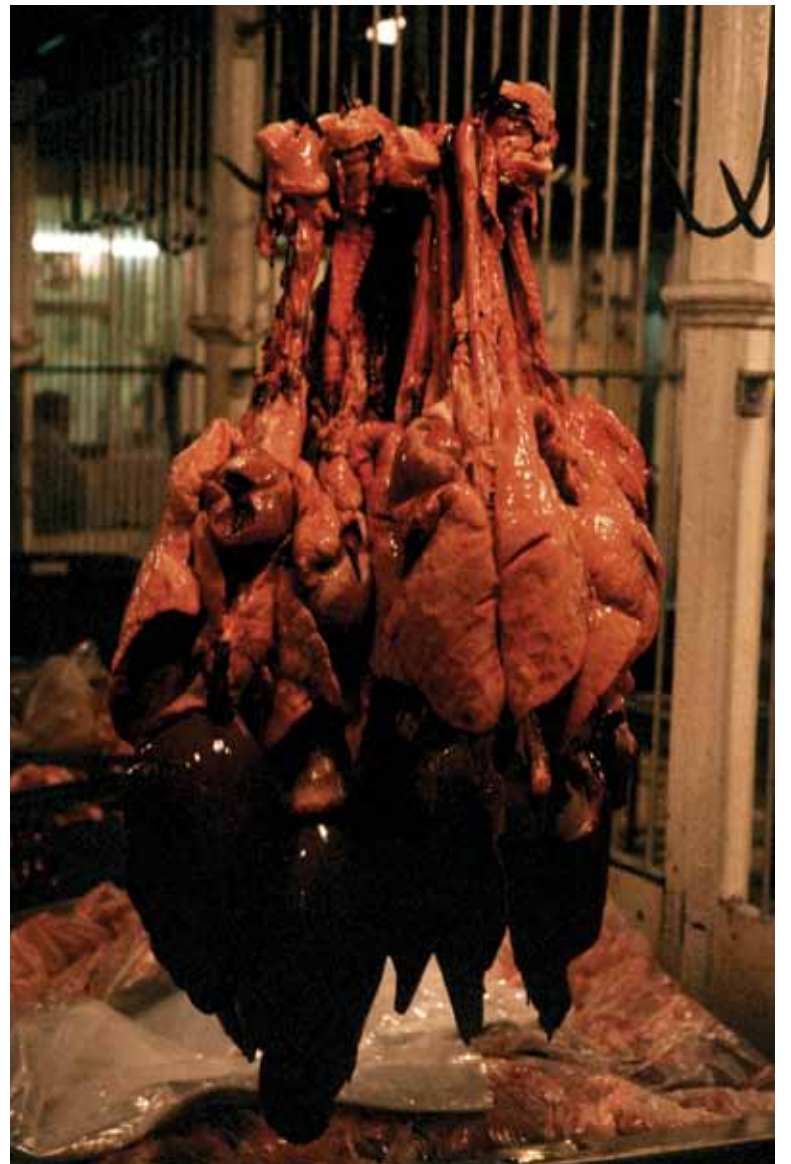


photo Paul Mattsson

tion microchips for up to £400.

Although it is highly unlikely that sufficient levels of Bute are present in the horsemeat to seriously affect humans, a bigger potential danger is contamination by bacteria such as salmonella from 'back-street' abattoirs.

As long as capitalist companies, driven by the profit motive, produce our food then that profit will always come first, before quality and our

health and safety.

A lax regulatory system and cutbacks in inspections, means that the horsemeat scandal and previous food scares clearly won't be the last.

Only a nationalised food industry, under democratic workers' control, alongside taking other key sections in the economy into public control would allow resources to be devoted to making sure our food is safe and correctly labelled.

## Self-regulation: 'Like having the burglars install your locks'

Emma Smith

Calls for a tax on fizzy drinks have sparked hurt outrage among manufacturers. How could they be accused of doing anything wrong when all they want is to bring health and happiness to the world!

The Academy of Medical Royal Colleges proposed testing a 20% tax for a year and said that the estimated £1 billion it would raise could be used to help fund weight management programmes. Obesity, which sugary drinks contribute to, affects one in four adults.

The response from the British Retail Consortium, which includes Burger King, McDonalds and KFC, was reported in the Guardian: "It's wrong to demonise any particular type of food or food outlet. What our members are hugely engaged in is encouraging healthy balanced diets and giving customers the choices and information they need." Ahem...

For the Con-Dem government 'self-regulation' has, unsurprisingly, been the name of the game to tackle health-related issues.

But self-regulation is a sick joke. One academic writing for the *Lancet* commented: "It is like having the

burglars install your locks. You think it might work and you are safe but you are not."

This is not the only way the food industry influences government. Huge amounts are spent on lobbying politicians to delay or prevent regulating policy that can damage profit, regardless of its effect on health. The Independent reported that Tesco spent five years and £4 million opposing the introduction of the red, amber and green "traffic light" system for the labelling of food's nutritional values - the preferred method of the Food Standards Agency.

In the US, with a food industry worth \$1.2 trillion annually, food inspections are being privatised, ie allowing self-regulation by the industry. Producers can set the guidelines for testing.

One example of the fatal consequences was reported by *Salon* last October: "A Colorado melon farm was audited by a for-profit inspection company in 2011 with top safety ratings, just before its fruit was causing the deadliest outbreak of foodborne disease in the US in

nearly 100 years."

Internationally big business food production is burrowing its way into policy-making and gradually (or rapidly) poisoning us all for their profits. We can't trust them to self-regulate. We can't trust capitalist politicians to resist their lobbying

and regulate them to ensure our health.

The only way to do that, as well as taking measures to protect the land and the environment, is for food production to be democratically owned and planned to meet need, not profit. That requires socialism.

- Sales of soft drinks across the world have more than doubled in the past decade, to \$532 billion; in India, Brazil and China sales of fizzy drinks have more than quadrupled.

- Sugary drinks accounted for at least 20% of America's weight gain between 1977 and 2007, according to research at the University of California, Berkeley.

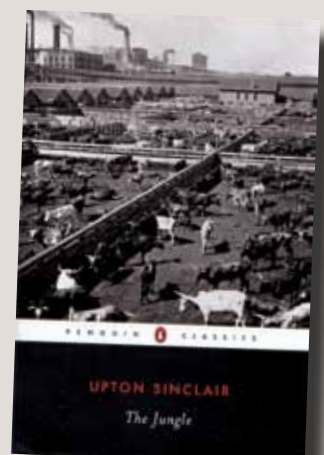
## Socialist Books

- **The Jungle** by Upton Sinclair. The book which changed US food law £8.99
- **Stuffed and Starved** by Raj Patel £8.99
- **Belching Out the Devil: Global adventures with Coca-Cola** by Mark Thomas. £7.99

Please add 15% Postage and Packing.

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# Fighting for a real alternative to cuts

Working class people all over the country are facing vicious cuts in council services. Labour councils are generally responding by wringing their hands and making the cuts anyway. But in Southampton two councillors, Don Thomas and Keith Morrell have refused to do this and have made an important stand against the cuts. They have been expelled from the Labour Party as a result. On 13 February they put an alternative budget to the council, which the council tried to gag. But as the reports below explain, a protest before and lively interventions in the council meeting made sure the cuts budget was exposed and an alternative posed. The fight against the cuts goes on!

## Lessons of Southampton - councillors have a choice

**Clive Heemsker**  
National election agent, Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC)

Is it true that councils really have 'no option' but to pass on the Con-Dems' cuts? That's the argument being made by Labour councillors as they meet to set their 2013-14 budgets.

A core policy of TUSC is that when faced with government cuts to their funding, councils should refuse to implement them. It argues that the best way for councils to mobilise the mass campaign that is necessary to roll back Con-Dem austerity would be for them to set budgets that meet the needs of their local community and demand that the government makes up the shortfall, like Liverpool council successfully did in 1984.

But to save jobs and services now while building such a campaign, TUSC would support councils using their reserves and prudent borrowing powers to avoid passing on the Con-Dem cuts.

But is even this 'buying time' strategy possible? What about local government legislation that commits councillors to setting a 'balanced budget'? Wouldn't council officers step in and set the budget themselves? All these questions have come up in the anti-cuts struggle in Southampton.

### Winning support

When TUSC's policy was first raised by Socialist Party members in official consultation meetings late last year Labour councillors baldly dismissed it as 'not possible'.

But it began to win support from council workers and service users. And when the 'rebel two' councillors Keith Morrell and Don Thomas submitted a draft budget amendment to increase Southampton's 'unsupported borrowing' by £22 million, council officers were forced to respond.

The rebel councillors' proposals met the legal requirements of a balanced budget at least for the 2013-14 financial year - it was not a 'deficit budget'. But the council's chief financial officer (CFO) would not endorse it as a 'prudent budget capable of implementation'.

He argued, for example, that South-



Keith Morrell (left) and Don Thomas photo Southampton SP

ampton was not in a sufficiently 'dire financial position' to successfully apply for a 'capitalisation direction' (government supported borrowing to fund day-to-day 'revenue spending'), one of the alternative budget proposals.

Consequently council officers advised the Mayor - an elected Labour councillor - to make a chair's ruling that the amendment would not be debated at the council's budget-making meeting and that's what he did.

But it could have been debated. The myth of the all-powerful officers was shown to be just that - it was councillors who closed off the debate.

Even the legal guidance all the Southampton councillors received - and this is standard everywhere - made it clear they had the power to "determine whether they agree with the CFO's statutory report issued under section 26 of the Local Government Act 2003". That means, of course, that if there are genuinely different assessments that could be made, councillors can make them.

Before the meeting Keith and Don wrote to every Labour councillor ask-

ing them to use the legal power they had to at least allow their amendment to be debated. The officers were, inevitably, making a political assessment of their proposals. So "it's worth asking", they wrote, how many CFOs in November 1990, just before the fall of Thatcher, "began drawing up budget proposals for 1991-92 confidently predicting that, just four months later, the Community Charges (General Reduction) Act would have gone through parliament, cutting the last poll tax bills by £140 and increasing government support for local authorities by £4.3 billion (nearly £7 billion in today's money)?"

"Isn't it for elected councillors to judge whether the crisis for public services in the city is 'sufficiently dire' for the steps we propose to be taken?", Keith and Don asked. Evidently not, as the Labour councillors backed the Labour Mayor's ruling.

Nothing can hide this lesson of Southampton. Councillors have a choice. There are alternatives to implementing the cuts. And Labour councillors chose not to take them.



Lobbying the council to save youth services photo Pete Mason



Council workers build the campaign photo Nick Chaffey

### In the local press

**Extracts from Southampton's Daily Echo, after the council meeting:**

"[Keith Morrell said:] "The trade unions were instrumental in getting Labour elected and I think there's a lot of disappointment among their members that Labour isn't delivering."

"Labour promised to protect jobs and to protect services and obviously they're not."

"There's a lot of union members who are angry, frustrated and probably unsure where to go - they put their faith in Labour."

"The trade unions should be doing more, if only to reflect what their members want from them."

"The pair are now working to form a local group so that they can field anti-cuts candidates across the city during the next election."

## Councillors' contempt for workers exposed



Southampton council workers striking against pay cuts in 2011 photo Paul Mattsson

**Gavin Marsh**  
Southampton Socialist Party

"He's done a Damascus!" shouted a Unite activist from the visitors' gallery. Unfortunately he was not referring to a dramatic change of heart by the Labour leader of Southampton City council, but the phoney radical phrases being spouted by councillor John Hannides, mover of the Tory budget.

Earlier in the day over 200 young people, youth workers and local authority workers had protested noisily ahead of the much anticipated budget-setting meeting. Everyone then crowded into the visitors' gallery to watch events unfold.

First up was a delegation from Youth Fight for Jobs, supported by youth workers and young people. Josh Asker urged the council to stand up for the young people of Southampton and have the courage and conviction to fight against the cuts. A youth worker explained that their service was "a necessity not a luxury" and publicly thanked Keith Morrell, Don Thomas and the Socialist Party for their support during their campaign.

Then it got down to the detail, with council officers setting the scene. They stated that Keith and Don's budget amendment was "incapable of implementation" and "illegal" warning that the council "can only do what the law allows us to do".

Keith Morrell replied to this: "I respect the time and consideration that officers have spent with us looking at our proposals, but at the end of the day they are using their professional judgement on a political situation. We feel that this can only be resolved by putting it to the test."

At this point the mayor ruled the amendment out of order, prompting an eruption from the gallery.

Simon Letts, Labour cabinet member for resources then moved the Labour budget. "I take no pleasure in moving this..." "Sit down then!" someone interrupted.

Some of the barracking was insistent and the mayor threatened to clear the gallery. Letts snapped back at one protester labelling him a "Marxist or communist."

Struggling to finish his speech

over the noise he ended: "we have listened with sincerity to the people and I commend this budget to the house." "I commend it to the dustbin" someone replied.

Next up "with a heavy heart" was Sarah Bogle, cabinet member for children's services who invited us to see the "silver linings in this situation". "80% of youth workers are losing their jobs" interjected one from Newtown Youth Centre.

Finally councillor Warwick Payne, cabinet member for housing and leisure services, informed us that the archaeology department had been saved, with job losses and no funding, and that this "slimmed down look" was a "perfect example of our way of doing things... our brand of socialism!"

### Don and Keith speak

After the merry-go-round of the collective cutters, Don Thomas and Keith Morrell had the opportunity to speak. Don began: "I remember being on the campaign trail with my fellow councillors, we warned residents that the re-election of a Tory administration would devastate local services. It's ironic that it is not Tories carrying this out but a Labour council."

"It is nothing but dishonest and your budget will be judged at the ballot box across the city. We are not puppets of the government"

"The coalition is peppered with U-turns and if a campaign was waged to fight them to give us our money back we could force another one. The money is there - a 50% tax on banker's bonuses, closing down the loopholes on corporation tax avoidance and cancelling Trident, for example."

"You should not vote for cuts today. Our campaign to save services starts in earnest tomorrow."

Keith followed adding: "Our budget is not a silver bullet to magic away all our problems, but an option rather than caving in. The strategy of keeping your heads down isn't good enough. The fightback could have begun today but you have not acted. You have surrendered the field but we will not give up."

In contrast to the other speakers Don and Keith were listened to intently and loudly applauded

afterwards. Immediately after, with no discussion, the respective budgets were put to the vote with Labour winning a majority.

A youth worker from the gallery, interrupted: "Can I just ask a point of clarification? Did you just vote on these proposals? Is that it? I have to go back to my club and tell the young people what has happened."

The mayor, with an irritated huff, replied: "Yes we have just passed the Labour budget."

A chorus of disapproval rose up from the gallery. "There are now three unelectable parties in this city" shouted out one worker.

As protesters rose to leave, a young woman called out to the Tory leader: "you were on Facebook and twitter, you weren't even listening."

This charge could also be levelled at Labour councillors who were busy doodling, tweeting, and looking at photos and magazines throughout the proceedings. A youth worker caught this shameful lack of respect on his mobile, threatening to send it off to the local paper.

Outside the chamber the debate continued with councillor Sarah Bogle being confronted by youth workers, understandably angered by the contempt that had been shown to them.

"If I was talking and some young people were messing around with their phones I would say 'put them away, you need to feed back to your colleagues that this is very disrespectful'."

Another councillor tried to apologise for doodling during the youth deputation saying: "It helps my concentration". "Well I've just lost my job" the youth worker replied.

In the pub afterwards there was a real sense of optimism. "It feels like a battle has been won even though the wider issues still need to be fought. The doors of the youth clubs will still be open as opposed to boarded up."

The council has been forced, through relentless pressure by Save Southampton Youth Services campaign, to draw back from complete closure and that in itself is a significant success. "We have got the message across to the next generation that if they stand up for what they believe in they can win."

## Eastleigh byelection "Oh you're TUSC, a real socialist!"



Photo Daz Proctor photo TUSC

### Southampton Socialist Party

The campaign for TUSC candidate Daz Proctor has kicked off in earnest. We are getting a great reception in our challenge to all the wannabe seat warmers. Daz has explained that his candidacy is different - rather than being just another career politician he promises to be a workers' MP on a worker's wage. Instead of pocketing the large MP's salary he would put the extra cash into funding the fight against cuts. On Saturday 16 February we were out on the streets of Eastleigh mixing it with other parties. The Lib Dems and Ukup were out in force or was that farce! The Tories were scuttling about looking busy and intent, but leaflet-lite.

### Labour angst

As for Labour, well no sign, save for a bloke with a rosette (apparently an ex-councillor), who crossed the road to our stall and proceeded to unburden his angst. He tried to clothe himself with some verbal radicalism but was questioned about the role of the Labour council in nearby Southampton. His response to the expulsion of the two anti-cuts councillors in the city was to accuse Keith Morrell of being "a Tory" who "speaks with a forked tongue" and Don Thomas of "being ill!"

Daz has compared the byelection to a travelling circus, swooping in to town, but they'll all be gone by Friday, after the vote on Thursday 28 February. But, he points

out, the trade unionists and socialists who make up TUSC will still be there fighting the cuts. A Lib Dem supporter approached one of our activists saying "Oh you're TUSC, a real socialist."

Another TUSC campaigner was asked: "Where is the money coming from, you can't take it off the bankers?" "Well they \*\*\*ing took it off us" was his reply! The next day was something else entirely - a hustings. TUSC was up against the heavyweight hopefuls of Ukup, whose candidate was stuck in a double default position of the EU and immigration, shoving it into as many answers as possible.

'Mogadon Mike' of the Lib Dems, is so named that farce! The Tories were scuttling about looking busy and intent, but leaflet-lite.

As for the Tory candidate, she has an uncanny ability to put her foot in it at every turn.

In a three minute intro it's pretty tough to get your message across, especially to an audience primarily composed of coalition faithfuls from some of the more affluent parts of the constituency. Nevertheless, we managed to get a smattering of applause after repudiating the lies of austerity and voicing the disgust and disenchantment that local people had towards the self-serving political elite.

A local activist conducted a small vox pop afterwards, reporting people saying "that TUSC bloke spoke a lot of sense."



The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) is an electoral alliance that stands candidates against all cuts and privatisation. It involves the RMT transport workers' union, leading members of other trade unions including the PCS, NUT and POA, and socialist organisations including the Socialist Party.

**The rebel councillors' alternative budget proposals and the letter to the Labour councillors can be read at <http://www.tusc.org.uk/press180213.php>**

# 3,000 march against Newcastle council cuts

Paul Phillips

On Saturday 16 February Newcastle saw an excellent demonstration of up to 3,000 people. Anti-cuts groups, community groups, trade unions, students and others gathered at the Centre for Life in Newcastle for a lively march going past services which are going to be devastated by the city council.

Newcastle city council is planning to make £100 million of cuts over three years which are going to see the loss of all our youth services, closures of pools and libraries as well as other services.

At the end of the march we had a rally with speakers from different anti-cuts organisations.

Lizi Gray from Youth Fight for Jobs sent a clear message to the council: "It is better to break the law than break the poor."

Another speaker was Steve Hedley, assistant general secretary of the RMT transport union, representing Churchill Metro cleaners who started a seven-day strike that day.



RMT members on the demo photo Newcastle Socialist Party

He raised the need to stand candidates against Labour councillors implementing cuts.

The 'Stop the Cuts - Save our Services' demo was a grassroots based initiative having the backing of most anti-cuts groups in and around

Newcastle and unions including the PCS and RMT.

There's a follow-up meeting on 2 March at St John's Church in Newcastle, where the Socialist Party believes we should establish an anti-cuts union.

## Socialist Party campaigning news

### Third branch launched in Coventry

Coventry North Socialist Party, the third branch in the city, met for the first time on Wednesday 13 February.

Attendance at the existing branch meetings had regularly exceeded 30. So after discussions within each branch, the proposal to form a new one was passed unanimously at a city aggregate.

Socialist Party work in north Coventry in the last couple of years has seen encouraging results. For example, in Radford ward at the last local election we comfortably beat the racist BNP and came within 60 votes of the Greens.

With ten at our first meeting, we discussed local campaigning issues and decided to start building for our first public meeting on 20 March.

80% of the Con-Dems' cuts are still to come - and Labour's only message is "too far, too fast". We're confident we can establish a solid base of support, by opposing all cuts and showing the need for a socialist society, run in the interests of the majority, not the 1%.

Glen Watson

### Super Saturday in Birmingham

'Super Saturdays' have kicked off 2013 with a record five stalls in sunny Birmingham. Thanks to the hard work and dedication of 12 comrades, including three from the national 'party building' team, we raised £120 fighting fund and sold 82 papers, smashing our targets.

Five 'join' cards were filled out by highly

enthusiastic people, interested and keen to get more involved with the Socialist Party. We spoke to hundreds of people across the city, including many health and other public sector workers, all angry about the cuts and sneaky privatisation in the NHS.

Safina Bi, Birmingham branch

### Chingford opposes fire cuts

Waltham Forest Socialist Party members, campaigning against fire service cuts, have sold 200 copies of the Socialist over four weekends in Chingford, north east London.

Over £200 has also been raised in fighting fund in the constituency of Tory welfare-axing minister Iain Duncan Smith.

The campaigning will continue. Despite the London Fire Authority twice rejecting proposals to axe 12 fire stations, Tory London Mayor Boris Johnson is trying 'every legal avenue' to make his burning desire come true.

### Congress Appeal

The Socialist Party is holding its 2013 Congress on 2-4 March. Help the Socialist Party build the fightback against cuts and for a socialist alternative by donating to the Congress finance appeal.

Every donation is welcome. Speak to your Socialist Party branch secretary, fighting fund organiser or treasurer about your donation, phone 020 8988 8777, use the form below or go to [www.socialistparty.org.uk/donate](http://www.socialistparty.org.uk/donate) (please label your donation 'congress appeal').

## Get involved

I'd like to join the Socialist Party  I'd like more information about the Socialist Party

## Donate

I'd like to donate £ \_\_\_\_\_ to the Socialist Party please make cheques payable to Socialist Party

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## 'Tax the rich' demands hit a nerve in Cumbria

Daniel Thorburn  
Carlisle Socialist Party

"Tax avoidance isn't illegal, I do it every year." That's what Eddie Martin, leader of Cumbria county council, said after we pointed out that the £120 billion of taxes avoided, evaded and uncollected by the rich every year could pay for all the services being cut.

That's what we would expect from a Tory - but in Cumbria the Tories and the Labour Party are in a coalition!

Carlisle Socialist Party collected thousands of signatures opposing budget cuts and presented them to the 14 February council meeting.

Moving our petition, Brent Kennedy demanded that Labour should fight the unfair cuts rather than doing the government's dirty work.

Our comments about taxing the rich must have hit a nerve. Tory councillor Richardson interrupted with the words, "I'm not going to sit and listen to this," and promptly departed!

Stewart Young, head of the La-

bour group, said that he agreed with the petitions 'at a national level' and favoured a higher tax rate for the rich, but that Labour was a "democratic socialist party" that had to follow the democratic process.

Democratic process? Neither the government nor the Lab-Con coalition in Cumbria have a mandate. And there is nothing socialist about Labour cosyng up to the Tories and passing £20 million worth of cuts onto workers and service users.



## Socialist Students holds first North West conference

Hugh Caffrey

Socialist Students held an excellent first north-west conference on 16 February, bringing together student activists from Salford, Stockport, Lancashire, Liverpool and Manchester.

Guest speaker Ian Pattison outlined recent student struggles around the world. Movements in Quebec and Chile, together with the Indignados movements in southern Europe, the 'Arab Spring' revolutions and the mass strikes in Greece and South Africa, all have lessons for students in Britain.

Mass youth and graduate unemployment, said Ian, "is becoming a revolutionary issue across the world". Organisations like Socialist

Students can act as a lever to a wider student struggle, and inspire industrial action by organised workers.

Discussion centred on how to build effective student organisations, including challenging the right wing in student unions and the NUS.

### Making plans

Our second session heard reports from Socialist Students across the region. Members at every university in the North West have taken part in all the national events and many local ones too.

Plans were agreed for closer work between Socialist Students groups, launching Youth Fight for Jobs groups, and developing new student groups.

The meeting closed by agreeing to hold these conferences regularly, and to build for local public meetings.

We're holding three 'Greece in Revolt' public meetings as part of Katerina Kleitsa's speaking tour, on Wednesday 27 February as follows:

Salford: 12-2pm, University House, Salford University Peel Campus

Manchester: 3.30-5pm, Manchester University Student Union, Oxford Rd

Liverpool: 6.30-8pm, the Casa (downstairs), 29 Hope Street, L1 9BQ

More information: 07769 611 320

or [manc\\_sfe@hotmail.com](mailto:manc_sfe@hotmail.com)

Go to [www.socialiststudents.org.uk](http://www.socialiststudents.org.uk) to see all 'Greece and Portugal in Revolt' national speaking tour details

## Nepal: The forgotten revolution

On 17 February, the Committee for a Workers' International and Greenwich Socialist Party held a meeting to discuss the revolution in Nepal. The south London meeting was attended by around 25 people, mostly from Plumstead's large Nepalese community.

The meeting was kicked off by Awatar who outlined the situation in Nepal. He explained that since the monarchy was overthrown in 2009, the country has been in deadlock.

The Maoists, who led the guerrilla war against the king, have failed to complete the revolution.

He explained that the only way forward for the working and poor

masses in Nepal is to transform society along socialist lines and make an appeal for workers worldwide to support them.

Paul Callanan, Socialist Party organiser in Greenwich, talked about how Nepal fits into a changed situation internationally as revolutions and revolts are occurring across the world against austerity.

He also appealed to the people in attendance to join the fightback locally.

It was agreed that we would organise further meetings to keep the discussion going. Nearly half those attending for the first time expressed an interest in joining the Socialist Party.

Greenwich Socialist Party

Mark International

Workers' Day this

year with a May Day

greeting in the Socialist

and help fund the paper

that fights all

cuts.

See

www.

socialistparty.

org.uk/

mayday for

more info



## SOCIALIST PARTY FIGHTING FUND

	£ target	£ received	January-March 2013	Deadline 29 March 2013
Wales	2,300	1,428	██████████	██████████
East Midlands	1,550	559	██████████	██████████
West Midlands	2,100	718	██████████	██████████
Southern	1,200	348	██████████	██████████
North West	1,200	345	██████████	██████████
South West	1,400	365	██████████	██████████
Yorkshire	2,900	752	██████████	██████████
London	6,100	1,088	██████████	██████████
Northern	600	99	██████████	██████████
Eastern	1,200	164	██████████	██████████
South East	750	96	██████████	██████████
England & Wales	3,700	248	██████████	██████████
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>25,000</b>	<b>6,215</b>	██████████	██████████

# South Africa: Democratic Socialist Movement conference

## Hardening solid gold

DSM reporters

About 60 delegates and visitors from across South Africa's platinum and gold mines, townships and villages, gathered on 9-11 February in Benoni, east of Johannesburg, for the Democratic Socialist Movement's (DSM) national conference.

The DSM is the South African section of the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI), the socialist international organisation to which the Socialist Party is affiliated.

At the end of a weekend of discussing the lessons of last year's Marikana massacre and the strike wave that followed; inspiring reports of the DSM's interventions in struggles throughout the country; and the details of how to move forward in building the DSM as a revolutionary party, all members are taking back to their branches a steely determination to build the organisation into a true force this year.

The crisis of world capitalism is reflected in the most brutal of ways in South Africa (SA). The opening discussion on world perspectives, introduced by comrade Peter Taaffe, general secretary of the DSM's sister organisation in England and Wales, the Socialist Party, was an enormous inspiration to the comrades gathered.

The discussion on South African perspectives reflected an organisation thoroughly rooted in struggle, in particular in workers' struggle. The conference heard reports from



The recent farm workers' strike won a significant pay rise

the various strike committee members and mineworkers who attended as delegates and visitors. The discussion had to both reflect on the lessons of the past seven months of struggle and consider the looming new clashes in the mining industry.

The farm workers' struggle - which recently won a 52% increase in the still pitiful sectoral minimum wage - and student and community struggles featured in a wide-ranging discussion, which also noted the ruling African National Congress's (ANC) detachment from a reality that is looking more and more grim on both the economic and social fronts.

The role of a revolutionary party and how we go about building it in SA in the next weeks and months were key to the discussions. Alec

Thraves, from the Socialist Party introduced an important session on building the revolutionary party.

### Targets

The conference adopted a target of reaching 300 paid-up members by September.

The delegates unanimously affirmed the DSM's and mineworkers' committees' initiative to build the new Workers and Socialist Party (WASP) as a broad socialist party in response to the lack of a working class' political voice which was apparent in the aftermath of the Marikana massacre.

The members who attended the conference are now back in their areas, spearheading the preparations for WASP.

The many messages of support from CWI sections across the world were an enormous inspiration to the conference. The support by the CWI internationally to the SA section reinforced the sense of responsibility and sacrifice that must guide all members in the period ahead.

The conference was in many ways a re-birth of the CWI in South Africa. Based on the new and old members gathered over the weekend.

We are confident that the DSM will be able to catch up with history - by continuing to grow its small forces into a true revolutionary party that can constitute the backbone of the beginnings of the WASP as well as the workers' committees which have to be strengthened to take on the offensive the mine bosses and the ruling class are preparing.

### 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:



### Malaysia: Government faces toughest election ever

Opposition victory possible for first time but workers and youth lack a genuine alternative.

Ravi, CWI Malaysia

## Striking workers meeting hears speeches from visiting CWI members

Sean Figg  
Johannesburg

Hundreds of striking municipal workers meeting in a Pretoria park loudly cheered, sang and toyi-toyed after hearing speeches from visiting CWI members Peter Taaffe and Alec Thraves.

The strikers waved CWI flags and constantly interrupted the speakers with repeated applause after offers of international solidarity were given, alongside an explanation of the capitalist crisis and its impact in Britain and across Europe.

Peter's vision of a socialist South Africa and the role of DSM in initiating the Workers and Socialist Party (WASP) was enthusiastically welcomed.

After the speeches the strikers surrounded Peter and Alec, toyi-toying, shaking their hands and shouting "Viva DSM, Viva CWI". They then marched out of the park, through the city streets to protest at their dismissals at the council offices.

The following day several hun-



Peter Taaffe and Alec Thraves with striking municipal workers photo DSM

dred Harmony Gold mineworkers, who have been locked out of their shaft since December held a mass meeting to hear a report back from negotiations between their new un-

ion Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union (AMCU) and the company.

Before the report back Alec was invited to bring solidarity greetings

from DSM/CWI. He explained that CWI sections around the world have been bombarding Harmony Gold with emails protesting at the lockout and the disgusting treatment of the mineworkers.

After Alec's speech the AMCU committee members thanked DSM/CWI for their tremendous support and said that they would most likely be seeking further assistance from DSM/CWI with future confrontations at other shafts.

The AMCU negotiators then reported that management had conceded to almost all of the demands of the workers, the mine would be re-opening the following day and AMCU was being officially recognised as the main negotiating union.

Comrade Nqulo, one of the Harmony Gold mineworkers and DSM national committee member from Carletonville reported that he had sold 50 copies of our recently produced paper 'Izwi Labasebenzi' around the doors of his mineworkers township and continued his sales drive at the meeting with his CWI flag held high.



### Sweden: "A new period of unrest and struggle"

Optimism and new targets at Gothenburg Congress.

Kristofer Lundberg, Rattvissepartiet Socialisterna (CWI, Sweden), Gothenburg



photo www.indymedia.ie

### Ireland: Tens of thousands protest against austerity

Stark crisis of leadership facing the working class.

Eddie McCabe, Socialist Party (CWI, Ireland), Dublin

## Kazakhstan: Vadim Kuramshin faces 12-year jail sentence after appeal denied

Vadim Kuramshin, campaigner for prisoner rights and member of the Socialist Movement Kazakhstan, faces a 12-year jail sentence from the brutal regime of dictatorial president Nursultan Nazerbayev.

Campaign Kazakhstan reports on the latest assault on basic democratic rights.

The court in the city of Taraz, southern Kazakhstan, started and completed the appeal against

the 12-year sentencing of Vadim Kuramshin. The judge, Lyazzat Ramazanov, without any pretence of giving a fair hearing to Vadim, confirmed that the 12-year sentence should stay in place.

This is a complete travesty of justice. Vadim was originally tried on these charges during a seven-month jury trial ending in August last year.

Despite being put under huge pressure by the police and regime, the jury found Vadim innocent of

all but one minor crime, for which he was sentenced to a one year conditional sentence and released. He was, however, arrested again in December after the prosecutor appealed the sentence. The new sentence of 12 years was handed down in one day, and has now been confirmed by the appeal judge.

Apart from the clear breaches of procedure during the appeal, the arbitrary rejection of the original jury's decision, the threats to take disciplinary action against Vadim's

defence solicitors etc, demonstrate that the Kazakhstan regime is doing everything to ensure that Vadim's voice is silenced.

[www.campaignkazakhstan.org](http://www.campaignkazakhstan.org)

**Send urgent protests at this vindictive jailing of Vadim Kuramshin demanding his immediate release, to the Kazakh embassy in Britain: Ambassador Kairat Abusseitov, 33 Thurloe Square, London, SW7 2SD. [london@kazembassy.org.uk](mailto:london@kazembassy.org.uk)**



## the Socialist postbag

**Do you have something to say?**

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

**Second city – 'average cuts'**

Birmingham city council leaders have at last started campaigning against the cuts. They are going to ask Tory Communities Minister Eric Pickles to return £79 million that they think are 'unfair' cuts. This would then bring Birmingham council's cuts into line with the rest of the country!

They seriously expect people to get petitions signed so Birmingham can have 'average' cuts. We don't want 'fair' cuts – we want no cuts!

**Will Clarke**

**Benefits and ...**

Southampton Socialist Party recently ran a campaign stall outside the city's only remaining jobcentre. The main response has been surprise that anyone in politics is interested in the poorest and forgotten.

I have recent experience of a four-week benefit sanction, plus being barred from the jobcentre even for an inter-



photo Paul Mattsson

view, so the brutal system must be exposed for what it is – a multi-million pound clawback, theft by government, and a precursor to privatisation.

I lost the chance of an interview, the reason for the sanction. They are finding any excuse to steal your money. Socialists who campaign and give out leaflets at jobcentres will hear stories that will blow your mind.

**Mike King, Southampton**

**...losses**

I am 65 years old and was recently means tested and lost £20 a week off my pension credit benefit. They means test every penny in your savings account. I've been told I can have £16,000 in a savings account – sort of for a proper funeral. My mother died recently in a local nursing home, it cost £700 a week. Remember though 'we're all in this together'.

**Steve Draper, Grimsby**

**One Billion Rising**

Normally on 14 February people give and receive presents from the other half, however this year around the world people stood up demanding an end to rape and domestic violence. One Billion Rising is a global arts-based event, an act of solidarity and a catalyst for change. It says that we will not be indifferent to rape or accepting of rape culture.

One in three women around the world are beaten or raped in their lifetime. In the UK alone one incident of domestic violence is reported to the police every minute.



photo Paul Mattsson

With facts like these we had to do something.

So, in Coventry we stood up in the town centre and created some noise. We had organisations based all over the city dealing with rape and domestic violence daily who joined us for the event, standing with us to demand a stop.

I spoke to many people passing by who didn't realise the amount of support being offered around Coventry for people who have suffered this type of abuse. Overall we got a great reaction and ended the event with a dance.

If you want to know more about this global event please visit [www.onebillionrising.org](http://www.onebillionrising.org)

**Amelia Roberts**

**Rape Is No Joke week of action: 4-10 March**  
See [www.rapeisnojoke.com](http://www.rapeisnojoke.com) for more

**Foundation Trusts**

The drive to Foundation Trust (FT) status, involving staffing and financial cuts, at Mid Staffordshire Hospital led to 400-1,200 "excessive deaths" of patients between 2005 and 2008. At Basildon & Thurrock FT hospital, poor healthcare standards led to 400 "excessive deaths" of patients a year. This grim picture is common to several FT hospitals.

FT trusts are largely independent of the NHS and must compete for patients for funding or face going bust. The 2012 Health and Social Care Act lifted the cap on income from private health treatment in FT hospitals, which will probably result in higher tariff private patients being prioritised over NHS patients. FTs can also sell property and retain the cash. All NHS trusts will become FTs by 2014.

So who introduced FTs? Labour government health secretary Alan Milburn, back in 2002, claiming: "Foundation Trusts are the most efficient and highest quality NHS hospitals". Labour has remained quiet on the current Foundation Trusts furore.

**Simon Carter**



photo Paul Mattsson

## Review

**"It's time to take over the banks"**

Dave Murray reviews the new "It's time to take over the banks"

FBU pamphlet by Michael Roberts and Mick Brooks. Introduction by Matt Wrack, general secretary, FBU Available online at [www.fbu.org.uk](http://www.fbu.org.uk)

They say if you own a gun you can rob a bank, but if you own a bank you can rob a country. Of course this isn't true: most banks have very effective security systems that make traditional bank robbery almost impossible. It also understates the banks' power; they have, in recent years, robbed not a country, but a whole planet.

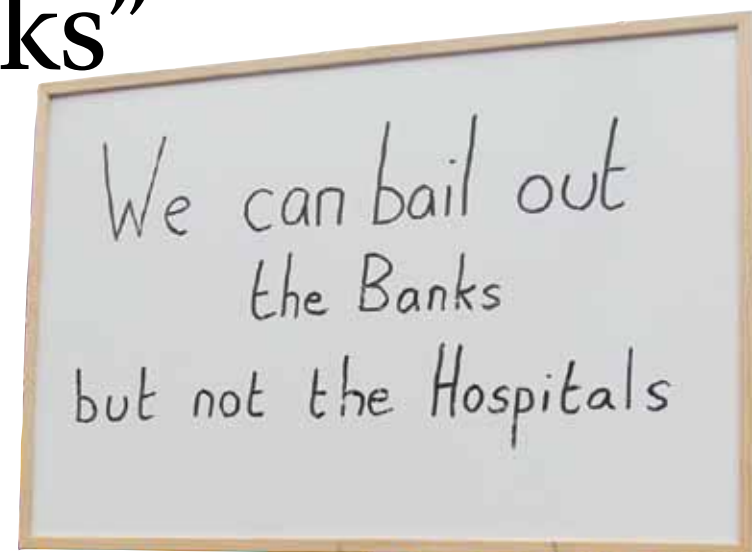
The great rip-off of 2008 was so vast that even Britain's right-wing press have to sound off against the robbers – I googled "Daily Mail greedy bankers" and got 482,000 results – while at the same time giving the nod to the bailout, along with every other "serious" commentator and politician.

This pamphlet reminds us that in the UK alone the upfront cost of the 2008 banking crisis was £289 billion in taxpayers' cash – over £80 billion more than the entire tax take from the finance sector between 2002 and 2008. The authors quote Bank of England chief Mervyn King: "Never in the field of financial endeavour, has so much money been owed by so few to so many".

**Recession**

The authors also show that the banks are largely responsible for the current recession. Their stranglehold on credit chokes off new productive investment, while the resulting fall in tax revenue and rise in unemployment and underemployment is responsible for the government deficit.

They remind us of the colossal scale of the big banks' literally criminal activities, such as manipulating interest rates, fraudulently selling PPI insurance, and laundering money for international crime cartels, not to mention the legalised theft represented by the mind-boggling money "earned" by those in the banking industry's highest circles (231 Barclays employees pocketed £554 million between them in 2011).



What is unusual about this pamphlet, though, is its conclusion that the major banks should be publicly owned and democratically controlled. Brooks and Roberts don't just leave it there.

They argue that under public ownership and democratic control, banks could have a healthy role in society, providing essential services in personal banking, giving loans to finance productive investment and turning away from casino-style speculation. This would be a marked contrast to the situation now where large corporations are sitting on mountains of cash and banks are refusing to lend to small businesses.

It would cost £55 billion to buy out current shareholders in the UK's big five banks, but Brooks and Roberts argue that it would be better to cap compensation and to pay out only on the basis of a means test.

In place of the existing boards, they call for boards on which bank workers, the broader labour movement and other "interest groups" such as mortgage holders and small businesses, would be represented. They unashamedly make a case for using a publicly owned banking system as a tool for economic planning.

While most labour movement leaders hang on the coat tails of Ed Miliband's "blue Labour" project, a serious proposal from a militant trade union to wrest the banking system from the hands of our ruling class is very welcome.

This pamphlet is subtitled "a contribution to the debate from the Fire Brigades Union". Matt Wrack says in his introduction that "it does not

claim that this measure alone will resolve the crisis or shift economic power into the hands of the majority." True, but this measure would

have to be a priority for any movement challenging the rule of capital.

The Socialist Party clearly stands for a socialist government taking into



photo Senan

public ownership not only the banking system but the top 150 or so companies that dominate the economy and run them under democratic working class control and management.

The pamphlet has limitations – the authors do not deal with the question of what kind of movement or party might act on their proposals, or what political and economic resistance the banks' current owners or their state agents might put up.

But, along with the motion passed at last year's TUC calling for public ownership of the banks, it is a positive contribution to assembling a political programme to represent the interests of the working class. It should be widely read and discussed.

**Bosses take tax liberties**

This month US company Liberty Global took over Virgin Media. Having taken over 'losses' racked up by Virgin while constructing their cable network, Liberty will pay no corporation tax for the foreseeable future.

Although Virgin recorded three successive years of profit, they aimed to still offset these historic losses against tax. Apparently they have a lot of latitude in deciding this amount and chose a sum meaning they won't make profit quickly enough to be eligible for corporation tax, probably for 15 years.

Outgoing chief executive Neil Berkett is compensated for being re-

lieved of his duties by a \$78 million share allocation.

Had Virgin been paying corporation tax 'regularly' they would be paying about £100 million a year.



**LIBERTY GLOBAL**

Imagine the Con-Dems' outrage if ordinary workers asked to deduct travel expenses to and from work or interest on overdrafts and credit card debts against tax.

Those caught out over tax dodging constantly say they complied with all relevant local tax laws. But the tax regime is so 'business friendly' that there are hundreds of scams that businesses use that aren't open to normal working folk.

The main capitalist parties won't do anything about this. A workers' government must close these loopholes and take these companies into democratic public ownership.

**Clive Walder**

# Mid Staffs hospital scandal Cuts, PFI and big business to blame

**Andy Bentley**

Local Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) supporters and Socialist Party members were out in Stafford on 16 February, campaigning over the future of Stafford hospital.

The national media and government attempt to blame nurses, doctors and other staff for the horrific deaths of between 400 and 1,000 patients. Individual acts of neglect and cruelty should of course be investigated but the real blame for this disaster lies elsewhere.

For more than three decades Tory, Labour and now Con-Dem governments have pushed big business practices into the NHS.

To become a Foundation Trust in 2005, Mid-Staffordshire NHS Trust needed to comply with financial targets set by the Labour government. It had to 'overcome' a debt of £10 million while forking out more money on a private finance (PFI) deal to build a new entrance.

This was paid for with 160 job losses in 2006 on top of the 100 that had already been cut. But this 'successful' outcome for the Labour government and financial rulers proved to be a disaster for many patients.

Stafford Hospital is also 'saving' money by keeping its A&E closed at night and encouraging people to travel to the University Hospital of North Staffs which is between 40 minutes and an hour away.

Over 200 people signed our peti-

tion in just two hours, incensed at the way nurses, doctors and other hard-working staff at the hospital are being pilloried in the press and elsewhere.

TUSC in Stafford will be standing at least four candidates in May's local elections: Jim Reading, a teacher and NUT rep at a Stafford school, John, a Stafford NHS employee, Stafford disability activist Josie, and Scott Wilson, an ex-Labour Stafford councillor.

We will be standing against government and council cuts and privatisation, but also to defend Stafford hospital and its hard-working staff.

**We will be fighting for:**

- Stafford hospital to be fully funded by the NHS
- Adequate staffing levels to provide good quality care for all patients and the return of a 24-hour A&E department
- An end to Stafford's bullying management
- All NHS PFI deals and debt to be scrapped, with compensation paid only on the basis of proven need
- Kick big business vultures out of the NHS
- Axe the Health and Social Care Act
- For a national trade union-led weekend demonstration to save the NHS

**If you are interested in standing in Stafford as a TUSC candidate, want to help our campaign or just find out more call/text 07845 893 607.**



Mid-Staffs NHS has waved goodbye to 260 jobs since 2005 to pay for debts and PFI photo Paul Mattsson

## Caerphilly says 'bring back our A&E!'

**Mariam Kamish**

Over 200 determined campaigners marched through Caerphilly town centre on Saturday 16 February, demanding the return of a local A&E.

At the front of the march, young Jack Tibbett and his friend Ricky Denatale marched alongside the campaign banner with placards bearing a photograph of Jack's third cousin once removed: Aneurin 'Nye' Bevan with his fist in the air. Nye was Labour's health minister when the NHS was founded in 1948.

The significance was not lost on the crowd. Caerphilly comes under the Aneurin Bevan Health Board. It was the old Caerphilly Miners Hospital - and its A&E - that we lost when the new hospital was opened a year ago.

The local press carried massive articles about Saturday's demonstra-



Jack and Ricky, with the founder of the NHS photo Becky Davies

tion. We've also had TV coverage. Cerith Griffiths, chair of the Fire Brigades Union in Wales, brought the support of firefighters in the area.

People blame their councillors - of whatever party - for not warning them about the plans for the new

hospital. But that's the past.

The campaign is giving them a chance to redeem themselves. We're calling on them to back our call for Caerphilly borough council to hold a referendum, so we can vote on whether we get our A&E back.

## Free trade agreement means NHS privatisation

On 12 February top US politicians announced formal talks on a new EU/US free trade agreement. The same day health campaigners in Lewisham heard a speaker on the implications for the NHS of this and previous agreements.

Capitalist governments do the talking in trade agreements, but in the interests of multinational corporations. The biggest monopolies have long demanded control - for profit - of present day public services such as education and health. They say they

want liberalisation and harmonisation in the NHS, which sounds cosy, but Britain has already seen what this means in the Con-Dems' Health and Social Care Act.

Any new agreement would act to 'liberalise trade' in health services such as the NHS - in short, privatisation. We are already seeing a service based on improving health turning into a cash cow for bosses worldwide. And they intend to stamp on any attempts to stop health facilities being privatised or to check the multina-

tionals' activities. They want to give privateering firms the right to sue any government or section of government that limits their rights by refusing to hand over services, or introduce any laws that might, on purpose or not, limit future profits!

The workers' movement must support the struggle to save the NHS and demand that their leaders internationally tackle this drastic and undemocratic attack on our vital services. Privateers' hands off our NHS!  
**Roger Shrives**

## London NHS

### Whittington Hospital: Cuts plans leaked - anger pours!

People served by the Whittington Hospital in north London were shocked by downgrading plans leaked to local papers. These proposals could ultimately lead to the hospital's closure or merger with another.

Proposals include sacking between a third and a half of the workforce, reducing staffing numbers by as much as 570. The number of nurses would be reduced to 200 and inpatient beds halved to 177 and essential nurses' accommodation sold off, probably to land developers. The sale of the public land alone is intended to raise £17 million. All this in the name of efficiency!

A meeting was hastily organised on Tuesday 12 February. The meeting hall

could hold 200 people. 500 turned up! Sound systems were erected in overspill rooms to ensure all could participate.

The organisers of the meeting invited members of the board to attend in order to explain themselves. But this sharpened anger expressed by ordinary residents, users and workers present. Speaker after speaker rose to condemn the cuts. The chair took a vote on the proposals. All but three people opposed the plans.

A demonstration is now planned for 16 March. Trade unions should put themselves at the head of this campaign to kick this hugely unpopular government together with their local cronies.

**Nick Auvache**

### Kingston marches against closures

A vibrant turnout of 200 people marched from Kingston Hospital to Kingston town centre to protest at proposed hospital closures in south west London.

The protest was well received by the local community, who showed solidarity from cars and shops with honks and bouts of applause.

NHS South West London's plan to close two of the five hospitals in the region threatens Kingston Hospital's A&E, paediatric and maternity services. The move is part of government policy to cut frontline public services and privatise the most profitable aspects of

the NHS.

With no concern for the health and wellbeing of people in the local community, it is no doubt that moves like this will inflict real harm on the most vulnerable.

Speeches called for growing the movement locally, to increase the pressure on the local council and NHS South West London.

PCS civil service union officer Tracy Edwards called for further union support in campaigns to defend the NHS, highlighting that coordinated national demonstrations are critical.

**Rakesh Lal**

## Council budgets:

# 'WE NEED TO FIGHT NOW TO SAVE OUR SERVICES'

**A Unison steward**  
Coventry

"The next Labour councillor who tries to back away from saving local services should recognise that by voting for massive cuts they will in effect be voting to abolish themselves.

"After all, if the services go, what is the point of having these surplus-to-requirement back bench councillors anyway?"

The late Rob Windsor, a Socialist Party councillor in St Michael's ward, Coventry, pointed out in a 2010 article that there are no excuses for councillors not fighting the cuts.

But Coventry's Labour councillors don't fear for their positions - unlike those affected by the expected 800 job losses, on top of the 800 that have already gone. Budget cuts will be devastating: £61 million over the next three years.

On Tuesday 26 February councillors will face the choice of passing on more brutal cuts, or making a stand with the people of Coventry, trade unions and the communities, and defying the cuts.

Unfortunately - and perhaps unsurprisingly - the likelihood is that the cuts will be voted through, with crocodile tears and the claim 'we have no choice'.

Whole services will be cut to the bone. Others will disappear com-

pletely. When speaking about cuts of around £400,000 to services for vulnerable and homeless young people, St Michael's ward Labour councillor Jim O'Boyle stated the council is 'giving young people the best opportunities'!

The Labour council has engaged in a sham consultation exercise. They had an online survey buried on the council's website, and the main public consultation meeting was not advertised.

You only got an invite if you recently attended a 'ward forum'! Only three councillors attended, and said absolutely nothing throughout.

### There is a choice

One Unison member speaking in the meeting told them to study the history of their own party - Poplar, Liverpool, Clay Cross, all examples where councils said 'no' to central government, 'we won't do your dirty work'.

The Socialist Party has been prominent in calling on the council to set a 'needs' budget, based on funding services and jobs required by the people of Coventry, and to refuse to be collaborators with the Con-Dems.

The three main council unions, Unison, GMB and Unite, have called a Saturday demonstration to be followed by a lobby of the full council meeting.

Letters have called on councillors to draw a line in the sand - and unions have pledged to support any councillor who votes 'no' to cuts.

If the cuts go through on 26 February, the unions should begin balloting for action.

Nationally our unions need to organise a campaign of industrial action, including a 24-hour general strike. We don't have forever to save our services - we need to fight now.

We can't wait for well-paid cuts councillors to 'abolish' themselves. Workers and campaigners will have to organise to stand against them.

The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition, an electoral alliance, opposes all cuts to council jobs, services, pay and conditions.

TUSC candidates reject increases in council tax, rent and service charges to compensate for government cuts and, if elected, will vote against the privatisation of council jobs and services.

See pages 6&7 and [www.tusc.org.uk](http://www.tusc.org.uk)

### Demonstration against Coventry council cuts

Saturday 23 February, 10.30am  
Assemble Cathedral Steps,  
opposite Coventry University

### Lobby of council budget-setting meeting

Tuesday 26 February, 12.45-2pm  
Outside Council House,  
Earl Street



Council unions should ballot for national action photo Paul Mattsson

### 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!