

Breadline Britain...



KICK OUT THE CUTS COALITION

“I'm 24 and an undergrad at university. I'm also a mother. Since I started at university I have had nothing but hell from the system. I'm currently homeless and my eviction has caused me and my son so much heartache.

I can't afford the rent - I'm not allowed any extra benefits because I am doing a full time course which is actually 12 hours a week.

I have been passed from one organisation to another and still, no one is willing to listen to me.

I'm living on £82 a week at the moment because my finances are in turmoil.

I'm not currently receiving any other financial supplements because again, I'm being passed through all the red tape.

I wonder how many other mothers are in my situation whose voice can't be heard through all the noise of paper pushing. I want to build a good productive life for me and my son but it is apparent that there are flaws within the coalition's infrastructure; as a result, I'm currently conducting my degree from a pile of bin-bags and boxes.”

Stjarna Perry

Hundreds of thousands of young people could write a letter like Stjarna's (left), giving heart-rending experiences of struggles to study, have somewhere decent to live, find a job with reasonable pay and conditions, and have access to adequate childcare and other support services.

All of these needs should be satisfied by right, so that young people can develop their potential free of terrible hardship and stress, and can look forward to the future with expectations, enthusiasm and confidence.

But as Chancellor George Osborne prepares his next budget, responding to the needs of Stjarna, and others like her, won't even figure on his radar. He and his partner-in-crime Prime Minis-

ter David Cameron have again declared that "there is no alternative" but to continue with vicious, life-destroying cuts. The other two main parties also refuse to pledge to stop and reverse the brutal cuts being made.

Those suffering cuts will be sickened to see the wealth of the 1% piling up - billions in bankers' bonuses, hoarded cash piles and dodged taxes.

It is only us socialists who say firmly and clearly that there IS an alternative, cuts can be rejected; and that young people, indeed all working people, pensioners, the unemployed, carers, those with incapacities, and all others, have a right to a decent future and that we must unite in a determined struggle to achieve it.

Continued on page 2



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Growing demand for alternative to cuts

Continued from page 1

Even as the economy shows no sign of recovery, Cameron and Osborne have been sticking to their mantra that there's no link between austerity and lack of economic growth. They still repeat the increasingly unbelievable assertion that austerity measures are laying the basis for renewed growth.

A socialist alternative to cuts doesn't get a hearing in the mainstream media, and over the years of first the Labour government's cuts, followed by the present coalition's cuts, the central message churned out by the main parties has been that cuts have to be made to reduce the public deficit.

This propaganda has had an effect, but now, after five years without any real economic recovery and with the deficit remaining high, a significant shift in attitudes is underway. An Observer poll last Sunday reported that 58% of people thought that cuts are harming the economy and only 20% considered cuts to be necessary.

This change is aided and echoed by an increasing cacophony of unease and questioning about the speed and effect of the cuts by some economists, media commentators and politicians.

The Office for Budget Responsibility watchdog that was set up by Osborne himself, last week wrote to Downing Street to complain about being used by Cameron to suggest that cuts are not damaging growth. The OBR argued the opposite, that austerity has reduced GDP by 1.4% over the last two years.

Lib Dem business secretary Vince Cable has called for increased government borrowing to generate funds for spending on public works, especially infrastructure, housing and skills. His comments were applauded by two former members of the Bank of England's monetary policy committee, David Blanchflower and Adam Posen. Another former member of that committee, Sushil Wadhvani, advocated a 'helicopter drop' of vouchers to stimulate consumption and tax incentives to encourage investment.

The British Chambers of Commerce has partly diverged from fellow bosses' organisation the CBI by saying that if the economy doesn't return to growth within six months the government should borrow more to fund "massive" business tax cuts as a "shock treatment".

Even 43 Church of England bishops including the new Archbishop of Canterbury joined the chorus, writing a letter to the Sunday Telegraph condemning government attacks on welfare benefits.

But driven by their ideological zeal, Cameron

and Osborne's approaching budget will mainly contain more of the same, with Osborne preparing to be more specific on who will be the victims of the £10 billion tranche of cuts for 2015-16 that he spoke of in his autumn statement. Minor concessions will be thrown in as a very see-through smokescreen, perhaps on fuel duty and the personal tax allowance, along with some reshuffling of the cuts burden.

Bloated wealth of 1%

Cameron and Osborne have a dwindling chance of decisively winning a second term, considering Labour's consistent lead in the polls, their divisions with the Lib Dems and the electoral threat from UKIP which came second in the Eastleigh by-election. So why not continue to slash and burn, to do the utmost for their big business agenda?

Added to their weakness is their own party's infighting, with pressure from the right flank against the EU and for even more severe cuts to welfare, education and NHS spending to lower taxes and cut the "bloated state", as former defence secretary Liam Fox put it.

The obscene bloating however lies in the global sovereign wealth funds that are predicted to grow by \$1 billion a day this year, to reach \$5.6 trillion, much of which passes through the

City of London. Or the trillions sitting idle in the banks and vaults of big business. Or the seven figure pay, pension and bonus packages of top executives.

Tory member of the Treasury select committee David Ruffley said regarding bankers' bonuses: "We cannot be seen to be against the wealth creators. If we attack them we just kill the goose that lays the golden egg". We are also told that "the markets" won't "tolerate" higher public spending, that they would be "unsettled"; as if the markets are supernatural monsters, out of the control of humanity.

It is in fact workers who lay the golden eggs, by creating the real wealth in society. And the 'markets', chaotic though they are, serve the interests of capitalism, a system that has long outlived its usefulness and isn't ordained to remain forever.

It isn't surprising that more and more people are taking an interest in the ideas of socialism, which would mean public ownership of the key sectors of the economy - including finance - under democratic workers' control and management, along with a planned economy. Then, the production and provision of goods and services, and the tax system, could be geared towards satisfying people's needs, rather than feeding an orgy of enrichment for the small layer at the top of society.

Victory: TUSC strikes a 'real chord' in Maltby



Successful TUSC candidate Joe Robinson (left) with Shaun on a TUSC stall in Maltby photo Alistair Tice

TUSC candidate Joe Robinson, 21-years old, was like a breath of fresh air as the winning candidate in the Maltby town council byelection, taking 60% of the votes cast.

The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC)'s appeal to trade unionists and socialists went down well in this strong working class community.

It might only be Maltby Town Council. It was only a byelection. There's only 3,000 electors. Only a 16.5% turnout. And only two candidates.

But you can only beat the opposition put in front of you, and on 7 March Joe did just that. Standing for the TUSC, Socialist Party member Joe was elected by 303 votes to 201.

His opponent was an 'independent' candidate without a description on the ballot paper; in reality the Labour candidate whom the ruling group on Maltby town council had tried to co-opt when a vacancy arose.

But Joe collected the ten signatures necessary to force a byelection,

and TUSC ran an enthusiastic and visible campaign with two ward-wide leaflets, posters and several high street stalls.

Local issues such as the bowling greens, tennis courts, parks and the High Street were linked to the need to make a stand against ConDem cuts including those passed on by Rotherham borough Labour council.

Fighting against cuts

Our main issue was TUSC's ongoing campaign against the draconian cuts being proposed at Rotherham hospital.

TUSC had lobbied the January hospital trust board meeting with 3,000-signature petition, gaining much media publicity and making links with the hospital trade unions.

Maltby is now an ex-mining town as the pit is just shutting with the loss of 550 jobs. A quarter of its population has left in the last decade.

A small Labour clique has run the town council for decades and the

BNP temporarily won a borough council seat four years ago.

Interestingly, postal votes accounted for nearly 80% of the votes cast with nearly half the registered postal voters actually voting.

This shows that TUSC's first leaflet struck a real chord with disillusioned Labour supporters.

This victory must be just the beginning. Joe's co-campaigner, 17-year old Shaun Barratt, has joined the Socialist Party and wants to stand as a TUSC candidate next time. They want to build a party branch here.

This year is the 40th anniversary of Clay Cross council's defiance of the Tory Housing Finance Act in 1973.

Clay Cross was an Urban District Council with a population of only 10,000 yet made an historic stand.

Maltby is bigger than Clay Cross, and who knows, this byelection victory could be the start of something much bigger for TUSC.

Alistair Tice
Socialist Party Yorkshire secretary

As Warrington council votes on cuts: Rebel defies the pro-cuts Heinz 47

Hugh Caffrey
Socialist Party north-west regional secretary

Kevin Bennett in Warrington has joined the growing number of rebel Labour councillors voting against Labour-run authorities carrying out the coalition government's cuts.

Warrington council plans to make £30.1 million of cuts over the next four years; with 54 redundancies and outsourcing of council services.

Kevin says: "It is wrong that we should be in the firing line when all of this is a result of vicious funding cuts by this Tory-led coalition government."

While Kevin alone opposed the cuts, the handful of Tory councillors abstained and the little knot of Lib Dems voted for them. In Warrington there is now one anti-cuts councillor and 47 pro-cuts councillors arranged for their own conveniences into three parties!

No cuts

"This council could safeguard jobs and services for the next 12 months by using reserves and borrowing," explained Kevin.

"This would buy time to build a fightback against the government. But Labour councillors are refusing to even consider this option. That is a disgrace!"

Kevin pointed out that millions of pounds are being poured into additional reserves and costly projects while borrowing is being slashed.

Kevin tried arguing against these cuts within the Labour group but was threatened with disciplinary action. "I tried to put my alternatives forward to the Labour Group but the deputy chair (Councillor David Keane) shut me up."

However, strong support for

Kevin against disciplinary measures has already been agreed within the Unite union north-west region, of which Kevin is a leading lay activist. Warrington trades council is extending its full support.

Alternatives

"All I hear is the same mantra 'there's nothing else we can do', but there are alternatives out there," said Kevin.

"I don't believe we should increase council tax, which will only raise £1.4 million, especially when we are able to boost our reserves by £2.5 million.

I'm all for saving money for a rainy day, but at the moment it's pouring down out there.

When it's a choice for some of our residents to decide whether to keep warm or eat and the added indignity of having to go to food banks to feed their families, then I know whose side I'm on. We should be creating jobs not cutting them.

This administration is acting 'as agents of the coalition', and we need to stop burying our heads in the sand and listen to what the alternatives are.

The economy is bumping along the bottom and who will the economic crisis bear down on the most with soaring food and energy prices, yes you've got it - the poorest households.

If, as Labour councillors, we try to back away from saving local services, we should recognise that by voting for massive cuts we will in effect be voting to abolish ourselves. After all, if the services go, what is the point of having surplus-to-requirement back bench councillors anyway?"

Please send messages of support to Kevin: kevinbennett396@btinternet.com or 07789 617 386.

Scrap the bedroom tax for all!

Paul Kershaw

From April the 'bedroom tax' will mean that social housing tenants with spare rooms will have their benefits cut. This will hit 660,000 households including many disabled people and low-paid workers. Tenants are faced with an impossible choice of moving from their family homes or being left with a much smaller income.

Many will simply be unable to find smaller homes in the social sector because they don't exist. For example, in Newcastle 6,637 families are hit but there are only 50 one-bed homes available. Some will be forced to move to privately rented flats which, because they are more expensive, will actually mean they need more in benefits.

There has been a wave of opposition from working class communities. On Merseyside 'One Vision Housing' provoked protests by trying to force tenants to sign a disclaimer accepting that they would face legal action if they didn't pay rent as a result of the bedroom tax.

The resistance has already had an effect with the government saying it will introduce exceptions for families with severely disabled children and adult children in the armed forces as well as counting foster children in room allowances.

Unworkable

Some councils and landlords have seen how unworkable the tax is and

660,000 households will be affected

have made concessions and come out publicly against the tax. Faced with a growing protest movement,



One of the many bedroom tax protests that have taken place

Dundee council has passed a motion agreeing not to evict as a result of arrears caused by the tax for a "transitional period of one year."

The policy has been justified as a means to use the social housing

There has been a wave of opposition from working class communities

stock more efficiently - given the shortage, why should people have a 'spare' room? But the shortage is a result of government policy.

This government came into office claiming it was committed to "get Britain building". In fact, house-building figures released in February show an 11% decrease in the number of new homes started in the last year, down to just 98,280.

In 2010, the government cut spending on social housing and promised that de-regulation and freeing up the market would increase house building: it didn't!

Even the CBI, the 'bosses union', has called on the government to spend £1.25 billion on building 50,000 new homes.

Writing in the Guardian, Zoe Williams recently highlighted the fact that as government support for building social housing has fallen the benefit bill has increased, and house building has collapsed. As she put it: "Let's build more homes - who wouldn't vote for that?"

Build TUSC

But it is hard to vote for it when none of the major parties stand for it. Some Labour politicians have spoken out against the hardship caused by the bedroom tax but they accept the idea of both a bedroom tax and a benefit cap - they just say they oppose this one.

That is the importance of building the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition as an alternative, arguing for homes not profit. Nationalising the banks and using them to support a programme of house building would put building workers back in work and offer a real prospect of solving the housing crisis.

Welfare Reform Act will impoverish hundreds of thousands

Vicky Perrin

Next month sees the implementation of much of the coalition's Welfare Reform Act as they ramp up their relentless and brutal ideological attack on the welfare state.

This 'simplification' of the benefits system is not about providing a better system or improved support for vulnerable citizens.

This year the government wants to cut £18 billion from the welfare bill through the introduction of Universal Credit, capping families' benefit entitlement, cuts to housing benefit, incapacity and disability benefits and tax credits. This will drive hundreds of thousands of unemployed and working poor families further into poverty.

A study of councils estimated that 133,000 households in London, where rents are sky high and where the £500 benefit cap is set to be piloted in four boroughs in

£18bn is being cut from the welfare budget

April, will no longer be able to afford their rent if the changes are implemented.

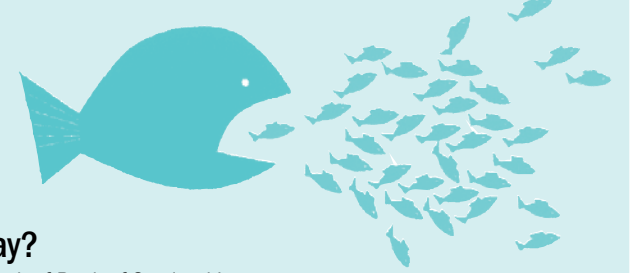
The government has made full use of its allies in the right-wing media running scandalous 'benefit

scrounger' stories at every opportunity. Meanwhile the real scroungers in big business, the likes of Starbucks and Amazon along with the rest, dodge an estimated £120 billion in tax every year. Collecting this would wipe out a massive chunk of the annual deficit.

As the true scale of the cuts begin to sink in with mass redundancies across both private and public sectors, foodbanks, soup kitchens and emergency breakfast provision in schools are becoming the disgraceful and growing norm.

We need mass campaigns involving whole communities, benefit claimants, workers, young people and backed up by the weight of the trade unions to defend the benefit rights won by movements in the past.

Them...



Equal pay?

The Royal Bank of Bank of Scotland is 83% owned by the government. That means that we're paying for the bank's £390 million fine for rigging interest rates. Meanwhile, 95 RBS bankers took home at least £1 million in 2012. Glad to see they're feeling the pinch. Though RBS is at the lower end of bankers' rewards. HSBC paid 204 bankers £1 million or more.

At Barclays, 428 people were paid at least £1 million in 2012, more than its £290 million fine for rate rigging. 1,338 were paid over £500,000. But these aren't the bank employees you meet at the counter - most Barclays workers are paid less than £25,000. So, instead of letting the same few crooks manage the vaults, the banks should be fully nationalised under democratic workers' control and management, with compensation only paid out on the basis of proven need.

Bob Severn

Not poor enough

The government's stinginess has been revealed in recent figures that show that many children who live in poverty still aren't poor enough to be afforded free school meals. In 57 of England's parliamentary constituencies, more than 60% of those living in poverty have a family income that is too high to qualify. This is despite a number of surveys and teachers organisations raising concerns about the number of children hungry at school. Giving free school meals to all children whose family receives welfare benefits would cost £500 million a year - a drop in the ocean compared to annual tax avoidance by the super-rich alone.

Childcare costs

Childcare costs are rising at nearly twice the rate of inflation. In 2012 the average weekly cost of childcare went up by 6% while inflation was officially 2.7%. As wages stagnate, jobs are shed and increases in benefits are capped, more and more families are struggling with childcare costs which,

for many, amount to more than rent or mortgage payments.

A full-time place at nursery for an under-two now costs £11,000 a year while the fastest rising costs was for after school clubs for older children, which increased by 9% last year.

Farage/Murdoch meeting

Ukip might find it difficult to be seen as the 'radical opposition' it would like to be if it carries on as it's going. After all, you have to fit into a certain mould to be invited round for tea with Rupert Murdoch as leader Nigel Farage was recently.

Farage said: "He's a remarkable bloke. I enjoyed meeting him enormously but the political content I am going to choose to keep private." But the Telegraph reported that Farage told Murdoch he would consider a coalition with the Tories if Cameron stepped down as leader. So his only problem with the Tories is Cameron. Not so new and different then.

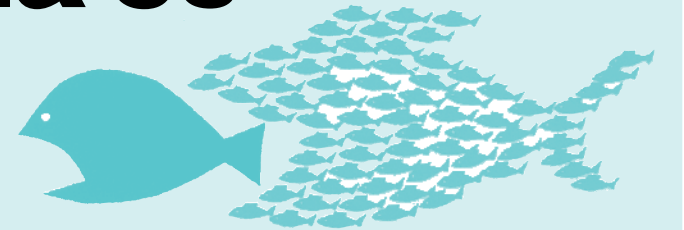
We're all in it together

The 'myth of the week' on the PCS website is "we're all in it together". The union points out:

The top 10% of households are a staggering 850 times wealthier than the bottom 10% Half of UK households have just £400 in net cash at hand, compared to the £123,200 held by this top 10% The ONS found that while the top 10% had pension savings averaging £742,000, the bottom 50% of households have just £4,000

To add insult to injury, increases in how much MPs pay towards their own pension scheme have been suspended this year despite rises for nearly all public sector workers Two thirds of the cabinet are millionaires. Prime Minister David Cameron is estimated to be worth at least £3.8 million, Chancellor George Osborne £4.5 million, defence secretary Philip Hammond £8.2 million, and many more

...& Us

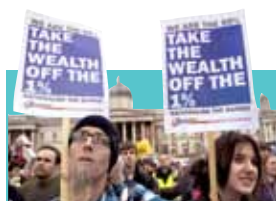


Have you got news for the 'fishes'? Email: editors@socialistparty.org.uk

What we heard

Disgraced former Tory defence secretary Liam Fox claimed recently that: "The great socialist coup of the last decade was making wealth an embarrassment. It is not. It is the prize for aspiration and hard work, and its side effects are higher tax revenues, more jobs and more investment."

Hmm...among other problems with this, there's plenty of wealth around (the latest Forbes Rich list showed that there are now 1,426 billionaires with a net worth of \$5.4tn) but we're still waiting for the jobs and investment bit...



Join the fightback! Join the Socialists!

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20 March: PCS calls budget-day strike

Defend pay, pensions and conditions

A PCS member

After a ballot result of 61% in favour of strike action, the civil service union PCS national executive has announced a campaign of industrial action to fight back against attacks on civil servants' pay, pensions and terms and conditions.

Over the next three months, the union's 260,000 members will be taking up to three days of action, which will include everything from half-day walkouts, targeted group action, to short of strike action with the intention of having maximum disruption for the employer.

This is kicking off with a one-day national strike on 20 March to coincide with budget day, a budget which will undoubtedly mean more austerity and misery for the working class.

The average PCS member has

lost roughly 17% of their pay in real terms over the last decade. This is on top of the attacks to public sector pensions. Now the government has proposed changes to civil service terms and conditions that include cuts to annual leave and a more draconian performance management procedure, among a range of other detrimental changes.

As we have seen across the public sector, these changes are part of a long-term process, led by the Cabinet Office and the Con-Dem coalition to prepare the civil service for privatisation.

The PCS, led by a fighting left leadership, is refusing to bow down to attempts to make its members pay for the ideological cuts driven by a cabinet of millionaires. PCS is calling on other unions to join them to say no to all cuts and defend workers' conditions and public services.



Outside the Sheffield education dept offices on 7 March photo Sheffield SP

Hundreds join education dept protest

Robbie Faulds

PCS Education group president

Hundreds of PCS members in the Department for Education poured out of offices across the country on 7 March as they staged a mass two-hour walkout. They are fighting back against a vicious onslaught of job cuts, site closures and changes to terms and conditions from the government and top management.

In London, over 100 staged an

impromptu protest outside the office for half an hour after the walkout, with mass pickets at the Sheffield, Darlington and Manchester sites. Reports of tumbleweed blowing through the Runcorn office corridors have yet to be confirmed.

The strike action follows the first week of an indefinite work to rule, as union members seek guarantees over jobs during a re-organisation which will see the loss of over a quarter of the workforce. Many feel

the department is being used as an ideological test ground for wider civil service cuts, with no meaningful consultation taking place with the union over the cuts.

Half the department's 12 sites are due to be closed, with decisions being made without any proper analysis. This has descended into farce, with staff from the Runcorn office being asked to move to a location which is on the site of the proposed high speed rail terminal in Manchester.

The dispute also covers an imposed performance management system which 97% of members rejected, as they say it is designed to stigmatise staff, is discriminatory and represents a license to allow management by fear.

The walkout shows the huge anger among the union membership, and a show of their determination to fight back against the constant attacks being waged against their jobs and the vital services the department provides.

Save our fire service!

Chris Newby

On 16 March, firefighters and supporters will be out in force protesting against London mayor Boris Johnson's plans to cut £50 million from London's fire service.

After twice rejecting Johnson's plans, as reported in a previous issue of the Socialist, under legal threat from Johnson, the London fire authority have agreed to a consultation on these cuts which will mean 12 fire stations closing, 18 engines going and 520 firefighters losing their jobs.

These cuts will have a devastating effect leaving five million Londoners in 20 boroughs having to wait longer for a fire engine to arrive.

As part of their campaign, London Fire Brigades Union (FBU) are calling on firefighters and supporters to go out on a mass leaflet this weekend. Firefighters at Clapham fire station (one of the stations threatened with closure) have or-



ganised a demo on 16 March. This follows on from a packed meeting of over 100, angry at the threat to close their fire station.

Further meetings have been planned around London to build support for the campaign against these cuts.

We say no to any cuts in London's fire service and reverse the privatisations. The Socialist Party backs the FBU's campaign against all cuts to London's fire service, including strike action if necessary.

The demonstration in Clapham should also be used as a step towards organising a London-wide demo in defence of London's fire service.

Dundee demo against construction industry blacklisting

Philip Stott and Leah Ganley

150 construction workers, their families and supporters took part in an anti-blacklisting demonstration in Dundee on 9 March. Dundee was chosen for the protest partly because construction giant McAlpine, one of the firms associated with the Consulting Association (CA), is a major contractor on the Dundee waterfront project.

The CA drew up lists of over 3,000 workers in the construction industry who were deemed, as one blacklisted worker described it, as NAAP - Not At Any Price to be employed. Local retired electricians Francie Graham and Stewart Merchant suffered as a result of this blacklist.

Workers came from across Scotland and as far afield as Manchester. Len McCluskey, Unite general secretary, also sent a message of support to the rally.

At least 20 construction companies used the blacklist, including McAlpine. As Jim McGovern Labour MP, who sits on the Scottish Affairs select committee that is taking evidence on the blacklisting issue, commented on Saturday: "during the 1950s communist

witch-hunts in the US, at least McCarthy faced the people he was persecuting, but McAlpinism is more shady and sinister."

Trade union activists and the Blacklist Support Group have played a key role in helping to expose the extent of the criminal actions of the construction giants. As well as demanding a full public inquiry, they are also calling for no public contracts for firms named as helping to operate the blacklist.

It's a scandal that after uncovering 16 years' worth of criminal activity by the construction companies, only one company has been fined £5,000 for a breach of data protection.

Now the pressure on the SNP government and Labour and SNP councils has to be stepped up. The trade unions also need to ensure a major recruitment drive in the construction industry. They should set up registered lists of unemployed construction workers and campaign for employers to use these lists for hiring.

Saturday's demonstration was the start of a series of blacklisting protests to demand justice and ensure that there are no more victims of the profit-hungry multinationals' greed.

South East Region of the TUC conference: "Resisting Austerity in Europe and the UK" Saturday 16 March

- International crisis, international resistance: Speakers include Paul Murphy MEP Ireland
 - Austerity in Britain: Speakers include John McNally PCS
 - How trade unions can fight austerity: Speakers include Matt Wrack FBU, Joe Simpson POA, Max Hyde NUT, Paul Moffatt CWU, Gail Cartmail Unite, and speakers from Unison, UK UnCut. Chair Martin Powell-Davies
- More details and registration: Joanne Adams jadams@tuc.org.uk 020 7467 1218**

In brief

Rail cleaners strike



Churchill cleaners striking in Newcastle photo E Brunskill

Cleaners working for Churchill on Arriva Trains Wales will be on 24-hour strike on 16 March. The RMT members have voted by 9:1 for action over pay and terms and conditions.

At the moment Churchill are refusing to negotiate and have not offered any improved pay deal. They have even tried to fund any pay award by making workers redundant.

Churchill have doubled their profits over the last five years, yet only pay these cleaners the minimum wage. Wales play England in the Six Nations Rugby on 16 March.

PO workers vote to strike

Members of the Communication Workers' Union in crown post offices have voted by 88% to strike over pay and job security. The 4,000 staff members working in the 373 crown post offices are angry at the company, Post Office Ltd's, refusal to negotiate. Other staff in the Post Office, including postmasters, have received pay rises but counter staff have received nothing since April 2011.

Blacklist Support Group

The AGM of the Blacklist Support Group will be held on 23 March at 10.30am. Speakers include Len McCluskey, Unite general secretary and Paul Kenny, GMB general secretary. Blacklisted workers Steve Acheson, Frank Morris, Jerry Hicks and Dave Smith will also be speaking.

The main demands of the campaign include: justice for the blacklisted workers and no public contracts to be awarded to blacklisting firms.

- 23 March, Faraday House, Old Gloucester Street, Holborn, London.

Bus workers strike

Bus workers, members of Unite, working for Go North East are striking over pay. After a 60% vote for action, the drivers will strike for 24-hours on 15, 18 and 23 March. They are angry that they are only paid £18,000 a year, less than half of what the Tyne and Wear Metro drivers earn. They have already rejected a 2% pay offer.

Website

For more trade union and workplace reports, see the Socialist Party's website: www.socialistparty.org.uk



**Come to the 7th annual national NSSN conference
Saturday 29 June, 11am-5pm
Camden Centre, Judd Street, London WC1H 9JE**

Speakers include Mark Serwotka, PCS general secretary, Billy Hayes, CWU general secretary and Steve Gillan, POA general secretary.

Send your name, union and contact details to: info@shopstewards.net

Send your fee of £6 per person, payable to National Shop Stewards Network, to PO Box 54498, London E10 9DE

Student occupation continues at Sussex

Now trade unions must take action

Jack Poole
Brighton Socialist Party

Over four weeks ago, following a mass demonstration of hundreds of students and campus workers at Sussex University against privatisation plans, a management centre was occupied and is still held by students.

Management plans to outsource most non-teaching staff, including catering, will affect 235 workers, meaning their jobs will be open to the vultures in the private sector.

Profit over service

One such vulture is well-known in the area already - private contractors Sodexo took on the contract of cleaning staff at Sussex County Hospital and shortly after announced nearly 100 redundancies and didn't pay workers over Christmas.

This is the sort of company that is likely to be in discussion with Sussex University management about the contracts on offer. For profit-seeking companies, privatisation represents a new feeding trough; for students and workers it represents an attack on conditions and services.

The ongoing occupation has given



photo Brighton and Hove Socialist Party

en the campaign new life - demonstrations, marches and flash occupations are now a common sight on Sussex campus.

One previous demonstration dumped a beheaded effigy of the hated vice-chancellor Michael Farthing outside his office!

Unfortunately, the trade union leadership on campus remains linked to this opposition through

words alone. Their dismissal of the prospect of strike action and reluctance to properly organise their members against the plans remains an obstacle for the campaign.

This failure has given credence to the idea that is popular with some layers of student activists - that trade unions are irrelevant, slow to act and immovably bureaucratic.

Socialist Student members on

campus have consistently pointed out that while the leaderships of these unions are proving themselves a block on what's necessary, trade unions are not immovable!

In 2012 the 'sparks', construction electricians in Unite, won a famous victory against pay-cutting construction bosses. Their determined and unofficial rank-and-file organisation and action acted as a

lever to force the Unite leadership to call national action - securing the success.

An effort to unionise more of the affected workers, to sweep aside the current leadership and push for strike action would give the campaign the crucial tools it needs to win.

While the student campaign can and is putting enormous pressure on management, strike action would shut down the campus and have more chance of forcing management's hand.

Rank-and-file

This has been recognised by some and a "pop up" union has been organised. This aims to organise the currently un-unionised workers who struggle to afford the membership fee of Unison. This doesn't need to be separated from the existing trade unions - instead it should be used as a lever on the leaderships.

The campaign continues at Sussex. 50 people demonstrated in the snow on 12 March. The message of students and workers uniting to fight privatisation is growing on campus and if realised to its maximum potential, could strike a blow against the profit hungry plans of management and their big business mates.

Defend the right to protest

Justice for Alfie?

Sam Morecroft
University of Sheffield Socialist Students



Alfie Meadows

Alfie Meadows, who suffered brain injuries as a result of his treatment at the hands of the police during the 9 December 2010 student demonstration, has been cleared of violent disorder charges following his second retrial on Thursday 7 March.

Zak King, another student, was also cleared of all charges. The jury delivered a unanimous 'not guilty' verdict after hearing the two recount seeing police attacking protesters indiscriminately, using batons and shields to strike people, even in cases where they had already been beaten to the ground.

Their lawyer, Matt Foot, who has also defended four other student protesters, has described the increasing use of Section Two of the Public Order Act covering violent disorder as an "attack on protest."

Draconian policing

Alfie and Zak were the last of 58 young people to be charged with violent disorder in the aftermath of the 2010 protests against university fee rises, and their acquittal should be celebrated by anyone who values the right to protest.

Disgracefully only 19 of the 58 young people charged with offences following the 2010 student demonstrations have been totally exonerated, and 12 have received custodial sentences.

Even for Alfie, justice has not yet been done. Not one police officer has suffered any punishment for their actions that day, despite the fact that around 30 protesters

were treated for head wounds and Jody McIntyre, who suffers from cerebral palsy, was filmed being thrown from his wheelchair by police.

Now that his trial is finally over, the Independent Police Complaints Commission must stop making excuses and deal with Alfie's complaint against the police. Will this lead to justice? Or just another whitewash?

The reaction of politicians and the police to the student demonstrations in 2010 was designed to send a clear message to young people that protesting against the vicious Con-Dem attacks on education would not be tolerated. We must continue our struggle against fees and cuts, fighting for properly funded free education and the restoration of EMA.

We must also be prepared for the possibility of further police violence. We must stand in solidarity with the victims of police violence, defend the right to protest without exception, and campaign for the abolition of Section Two notices.

Victory for attendance policy campaign at UEL

Kyle Williamson
UEL Socialist Students



Automatic de-registration has been defeated by the campaign

On Wednesday 6 March, Socialist Students and members of the Scrap the Unfair Attendance Policy campaign at the University of East London (UEL) met with management to challenge them over the draconian attendance policy.

We managed to win a partial victory on the 'three strikes and you're out' rule that meant students were being automatically de-registered from a module if they were late or absent three times.

Management agreed to look at having students meet with their personal tutor instead of being de-registered automatically. This means that students and staff will be able to discuss progress before any action is taken. As lecturers are already overworked, we argued that management must cut lecturers' workload for this to happen and they said they are considering it.

Campaign continues

There are other demands that the campaign must continue fighting for, including an end to the 15

minute cut-off time. They said that this shouldn't be an issue as students should simply leave earlier. This is an unacceptable statement to make, especially when a lot of students have to commute into university because of sky-high rent prices of university accommodation.

We are still hopeful we can

make management agree to all of our demands. We will be holding meetings of the Scrap the Unfair Attendance Policy campaign and organising protests starting on Tuesday 19 March which will send a message to the vice-chancellor that he cannot continue to impose this unpopular policy.

Building Socialist Students in Manchester

John McFarlane
Manchester Metropolitan Socialist Students

The freshers week last September resulted in an explosion of membership of Socialist Students at the two universities in Manchester.

We meet every week on Friday and have hosted film screenings and meetings on topics like the history of socialism in Manchester, fascism, and Bolivarian socialism in Venezuela. We have also been

running regular stalls on both campuses, campaigning for the scrapping of tuition fees and the writing-off of student debt.

We hosted the first North West Socialist Students conference in February, where links across the region were strengthened and plans made for building in the future.

Recently, we have hosted guest speakers including Becci Heagney for the Rape Is No Joke campaign and Katerina Kleitsa, a Greek socialist who spoke on the real effects of EU-imposed austerity, the

role of the left and the growth of the far right in Greece.

We also took part in the Reclaim the Night march organised by various feminist and LGBT groups across Manchester - a really vibrant and energetic night that all but shut down the main road into the city for a couple of hours!

In the year ahead we plan to register the society at Manchester Metropolitan University and have a big push for membership as part of freshers week 2013.

www.socialiststudents.org.uk

Energy starvation and climate change

Alternative energy and socialist planning needed



A coal-fired power station in China

Geoff Jones

A spectre is haunting the world, the spectre of irreversible climate change. But at the same time the world is in the grip of a desperate hunger for energy. Every year we generate and use more and more, producing new products while people in rich countries are cajoled to throw away old ones.

In Britain, energy consumption has stayed fairly constant over the past 30 years, because nearly all consumer goods are imported. The energy used to make these goods is, for example, produced in China, one of the reasons why their demand for energy has skyrocketed. But the need for more energy is not just a demand of the 'greedy West'.

As workers in the developing world organise and find a voice, they demand the goods that we take for granted - refrigerators to preserve food, electric light and heaters. Roads, railways, decent housing, all need more energy, even though new technologies can do something to slow the growth in demand - mobile phones can replace expensive landline systems; LED lights use a tiny fraction of the power needed by incandescent bulbs.

The table shows the worldwide growth in energy supply. But that increase comes at a huge potential cost. The concentration of carbon dioxide and other 'greenhouse' gases in the earth's atmosphere is increasing.

That increase will lead to a global temperature rise with results that could be catastrophic for humanity. Worldwide, 87% of our energy is produced by burning non-renewable fossil fuels - primarily oil, gas and coal - which all generate carbon dioxide.

In Britain the proportion is almost the same, while the Con-Dem government is committed to sourcing a mere 15% of energy from renewables by 2020. In energy production, just reckoning on more of the same will lead to catastrophe.

Energy sources today

Today, most of our energy is produced by big companies with only one goal - short term supply and higher profits. For oil, suck up to Middle Eastern sheikhs, or turn agricultural land into polluted wasteland.

Only when pollution came nearer to home, in the Gulf of Mexico, did the US dominated oil industry have second thoughts - for a moment.

For a generation, world oil supplies have been dominated by the dictatorships of the Persian Gulf, with Saudi Arabia producing nearly a tenth of the world's oil exports. In a desperate search for other sources, oil companies drill offshore, moving into deeper and more dangerous waters.

A supreme irony is that global warming itself is melting the polar icecap, opening up the Arctic's huge oil and gas fields for exploitation which will mean further catastrophic increases in global temperatures.

Strip mining of tar sands in northern Canada, a filthy and energy wasteful process, provides 20% of US oil imports. Now there is a proposal to produce a toxic wilderness the size of Saudi Arabia in the



Producing highly dangerous radioactive waste, nuclear power is no alternative photo Paul Mattsson

Canadian North, carrying oil in pipelines west to the Pacific coast and thence to China (a proposal which is generating massive protests).

Some see 'biofuels' as an alternative source, but this involves destroying huge areas of rain forest in Latin America and turning over land in the USA and elsewhere to maize production for fuel. This land could be used to provide food.

After oil, natural gas is the second biggest source of energy in the UK, third after coal and oil in the world as a whole. In the 1980s and 1990s the Tories used North Sea gas fields to shore up their failing capitalist economy. Now those supplies are running out - in 2011 gas imports exceeded home production for the first time.

Worldwide, production is still increasing but reserves are obviously finite. What is more, there is nothing to stop exporters arbitrarily increasing prices (as Opec did, hiking oil prices by 70%, in 1973), or cutting off supply completely as Russia did with gas for Ukraine in 2009.

The new panacea is 'fracking' - fracturing deep layers of shale to release gas. In Britain, Con-Dem ministers have jumped to allow private firms to dash ahead, even after an early experiment triggered minor earthquakes and a real risk of ground water pollution.

Tories talk about 'cheap' gas, but the gas produced will be traded on the world market and will increase in price with international trends. In any case, a recent report suggests that the cost of extraction will be higher than present world gas prices.

Finally, coal. China is the world's big-

...there has been minimal interest by governments or big energy companies across the world in developing systems which would be non-polluting and would not produce greenhouse gas

gest coal producer, mining three times as much as the USA and six times as much as India, the next two biggest producers. Since the Tories all but destroyed the British coal industry in the 1980s, Britain has imported twice as much coal as is mined here.

Worldwide, the International Energy Agency predicts that, on present trends, coal will be the biggest source of world energy by 2020 and that if this trend continues, the world's climate could rise by a catastrophic six degrees by 2100.

Nuclear power, widely seen 50 years ago as a non-polluting source of cheap energy has long lost its magic, as nuclear reactors using systems designed to produce nuclear weapons, leave behind mountains of highly dangerous radioactive waste.

In Sellafield the store of highly poisonous waste is equal in volume to 27 Olym-

pic swimming pools, and the authorities have no idea what to do with it (or even where some of it is!).

Systems using less dangerous materials could be built, once again, governments and private companies are not willing to make the long-term investment required. Meanwhile the possibility of efficient pollution-free systems using nuclear fusion (rather than fission) has proved a mirage, retreating as technology appears to get closer.

Carbon capture?

Coal, oil and gas all need more and more expensive, dangerous and polluting processes to extract them, while all producing ever more greenhouse gases. Global emissions of carbon dioxide have increased from 20 Gigatons a year in 1990 to nearly 30 Gigatons a year today, with nine Gigatons emitted by coal fired power plants alone.

Climate change cannot now be stopped, but it could be slowed by capturing emitted carbon dioxide and storing it. But this would require research and development of feasible systems which would cost money and cut the profits of energy companies.

Governments have talked about the need for carbon capture and storage (CCS) but more research is needed into practical systems and the number of CCS plants already in operation is tiny in comparison to the problem.

Worldwide in 2011 there were 16 large scale integrated CCS plants capturing in total less than a thousandth of the amount generated. More are in the plan-

ning stage (particularly in China) but in many cases government investment is not forthcoming.

In Britain, for example, the Longannet CCS plant which would have captured around 1.5 Megatons a year was scrapped in 2011 because the Spanish owners of Scottish Power and the Con-Dem government could not agree on support for the project.

Although Ed Davey, the Con-Dem energy secretary talks grandly of 'great opportunities' in CCS for industry, there is currently little research and no operational large-scale CCS system in Britain.

There is an alternative

There is an alternative to indefinite increase in use of fossil fuel. In fact, back in November 2009 an article in the well-known US journal Scientific American showed how using today's technology alone, it would be possible to meet all the world's energy needs using renewable and non-carbon dioxide producing energy sources. What are these sources? Primarily solar power, wind power and water power.

...the world is in the grip of a desperate hunger for energy

Solar power - electricity generated by photovoltaic (PV) panels - is already familiar, from pocket calculators to rooftop arrays on houses. The dramatically falling cost of PV materials now makes industrial scale power generation competitive.

In California, for example, nearly two Gigawatts (GW) of solar power has been installed. This is partly in large scale 'solar farms' but also on the roofs of homes and businesses feeding their own needs. This 'distributed power generation' has the great advantage of cutting down on transmission costs.

It has been adopted in Germany and was one of the aims of the last UK government, providing a 'feed in tariff' to give a boost to British solar PV firms (now cut by the Con-Dems). Of course California is a special case, with an ideal climate and acres of desert for solar farms, but the idea is being taken up in other continents.

In Ghana, for example, a single solar project will provide 155 Megawatts (MW) of power - 6% of Ghana's total needs. A huge project, the Desertec initiative, aims to provide 15% of Europe's power needs from solar farms in North Africa via cables under the Mediterranean.

This has run into major problems, not least because Africans have questioned why, when they are desperate for power, should they be shipping it to Europe, but the project shows that this scale of energy generation is practical.

Wind power has become the most demonised source of renewable energy. Leaving aside myths about offshore wind farms terrorising dolphins and killing migrating birds, wind energy is usually pictured as unreliable and expensive. In fact, neither is the case.

A recent study (by respected research group Cambridge Econometrics) has shown that offshore wind turbines suffi-

cient for a quarter of British energy needs would cost very little more overall than the equivalent using gas, while in addition producing tens of thousands of jobs in the construction industries.

Systems are needed to store energy to be used when there is no sunshine or wind, but it can be done. To the charge that winds are not reliable, we should answer that in the long run the wind is far more reliable than Russian oligarchs, or Arab sheikhs.

Hydroelectric power, using turbines driven from huge reservoirs, is the oldest form of large scale renewable power generation.

In 1930s USA, the Tennessee Valley Authority was set up as a Federal hydro-power agency against bitter opposition from power companies, to provide work, and cheaper electricity from a network of huge dams.

In China, the Three Gorges Dam across the Yangtze River provides 22.5 GW of power. But that dam displaced some 1.3 million people and caused significant ecological damage.

On the other hand, ocean, wave and tidal power are huge and completely under-used sources of power, especially for an island nation like Britain. In Europe there is one large-scale system, the tidal barrage on the French Rance Estuary which has been working since 1966 producing 240 MW of power.

But grandiose projects like the Severn Estuary tidal barrage, which it is said could produce 5% of Britain's needs, are almost certainly not the best option. A majority of the construction industry could be tied up in it for years and it would have unforeseen environmental consequences.

On the other hand, a network of tidal generators as proposed by Friends of the Earth, would produce as much power but with far less environmental damage. Finally, the development of generators using wave power has been all but ignored by both government and energy companies.

In all, there has been minimal interest by governments or big energy companies across the world in developing systems which would be non-polluting and would not produce greenhouse gas. Although research into even newer technologies may offer still more effective solutions in the future, and should be fully resourced, the problem must be dealt with urgently.

In Britain, New Labour and Tories' obsessive reliance on private industry will mean the worst of both worlds. On the one hand, carbon dioxide belching coal-fired power stations must be closed and multinational firms have refused to invest in new nuclear or conventional generators.

On the other, governments have failed to make a real commitment to non-polluting energy sources or serious energy saving.

They hope to rely on gas-fired power stations, either importing gas or using polluting and possibly dangerous 'fracking'. Either way, fuel prices will inevitably increase, meaning even more people forced into fuel poverty.

And the head of the industry regulator Ofgem predicts that in a few years we face power blackouts, not seen since the 1974 miners' strikes.

What should socialists do?

First, we can place no faith whatsoever in the capitalist system to avert the threatening catastrophe.

In Britain we must demand:

- An immediate end to 'fracking'
- The renationalisation of the power generating and distribution industry to enable a plan for carbon capture and to phase out the use of fossil fuels within as short a time as possible
- A major re-orientation of the 'defence' industry to the production of wind and solar power generators, where necessary nationalising the big firms, with compensation only on the basis of proven need.
- A national commitment to expanding distributed power generation on all new housing and industrial units
- A big expansion of a nationalised public transport system, particularly the rail network, to cut polluting road transport
- A major publicly owned and funded research and development effort into wave and tidal energy generating systems

Internationally:

- Join with workers' organisations, indigenous and environmentalist groups to oppose disastrous developments such as tar sands extraction and planting of 'biomass' crops
- Support the struggles of people in low-lying countries, particularly in South East Asia, who will be displaced and further impoverished by rising sea levels and climate change
- Fight for an international energy plan for people's needs, using renewable resources

Approximate average annual energy consumption (TeraWatt hours)		Increase 2000-2012
China	35,000	230%
USA	30,000	0
India	6,000	80%
UK	1,600	0
World	160,000	40%

1 TeraWatt hour = 1,000,000,000 KilowattHours (KWh)
(Statistics from the US Institute for Energy Research)

World energy sources 2010	
Coal	30%
Oil	33%
Natural Gas	22%
Nuclear	6%
Hydro	6%
Renewable	1%



Socialism Today

The Socialist Party's magazine
March 2013 issue includes:

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Britain's economic decline
- **Women on the front line**
International Women's Day marked by austerity in Britain, and violence in India
- **Hungry for profit**
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TUSC leads battle to save Mid-Staffs NHS

Andy Bentley

"This was our first ever stall in Rugeley," said TUSC candidate Paul Arnold. "We quickly ran out of leaflets and sold out of papers, but still carried on getting names to support our petition.

"I think we got around 180 names and I was inspired by people prepared to donate their pennies and pounds so that we could buy more leaflets to carry on our campaign.

"We are standing TUSC candidates to provide an alternative to the cuts agenda of all the main parties.

"The big parties, financed by millionaires, will try to dismiss us. The media will probably ignore us. But that will not stop TUSC from standing up for ordinary working class people."

When Staffordshire Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) campaigners, along with Socialist Party members, took the fight to defend Stafford Hospital to the streets of Newcastle, Stafford, Burton-on-Trent and Rugeley on 9 March, they got an excellent response.

We received massive support from hundreds of people incensed at the attempts by successive governments

to dismantle our NHS. NHS workers from Stafford, Burton, Cannock and other hospitals complained about management bullying.

Seven TUSC candidates were out on the streets fighting to defend our NHS. More than 700 people signed our petition. 500 leaflets were taken. 181 copies of the Socialist were bought, with just over £100 donated to our fighting fund.

Dozens of ex-patients told of the fantastic care they had received at these hospitals and were angry at right-wing media and Con-Dem government attempts to blame NHS workers for the recent problems. Many also condemned Labour's record.

A woman in Rugeley said: "Labour are trying to act as the saviours of the NHS, but it was under a Labour government that the scandal at Stafford Hospital started.

"The hospital had to get rid of more than 200 staff to be granted Foundation Trust status. It's a no-brainer isn't it? If you take out so many staff you are going to have serious problems."

Previously Staffordshire TUSC candidates have stood in two towns. This year we are standing in five, showing how TUSC is growing.

Camden byelection rally

The Camden public meeting on Thursday 7 March, in support of Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) candidate John Reid's council byelection campaign, brought together local trade union and workplace representatives, community campaigners and other working class people.

With London Socialist Party secretary Paula Mitchell chairing, the meeting was kicked off by RMT union general secretary Bob Crow. He expressed his personal support, as well as the RMT's official backing, for John.

On the campaign trail one of the key issues that comes up time and again is housing. Rising rents and the 'bedroom tax' are bearing down hard on working people in Camden, north London, with many being forced out of an area their family has called home for generations.

Isabel Counihan-Sanchez told how her family were evicted from their Brent home after their housing benefit was wrongly cut.

Isabel and her daughter Sarah outlined how their campaign has already won a partial victory in getting their housing benefit restored.



Bob Crow, Isabel Counihan-Sanchez, Paula Mitchell and John Reid photo N Cafferky

Sarah declared that if people are ready to organise, they can defeat similar injustices in Camden. Thanking the Counihans, John promised to use his position as RMT London Underground secretary to bring his union's support to the campaign.

John attacked Camden council's plans to force 761 families out of the borough. "This is happening all over London. The super-rich want to force working people out of central London so they can enjoy it for themselves. "We will be forced out 50 or 60 miles

away and only let back in for a few hours a day to drive their trains, clean their streets and act as their domestic servants before being told to clear off out of the city once our shift finishes.

"I do not accept that Labour have no choice but to implement the cuts. We need councillors who are prepared to build a mass campaign to stop the cuts like they did in Liverpool and Lambeth in the 1980s."

The Gospel Oak byelection is on 14 March.

Neil Cafferky

Campaigning against the cuts

Ex-mining village shows it can still fight

Natara Hunter
Nuneaton Socialist Party

The pit has gone but the miners' spirit still remains in Keresley Village, an ex-mining community located within the boundaries of both Labour cut-voting councils - Coventry, and Nuneaton and Bedworth.

The library, the doctor's surgery and the post office are all under threat.

The nursery has been shut down, the youth club closed and its dedicated staff sacked.

We have no street lighting between midnight and 6am. Not that many of us are out now.

Our local Colliery Club, probably one of the last of its kind, was smashed to the ground within days of the proposed demolition of our village pub, the Golden Eagle - infamous as a 1984-5 miners' strike pub - being announced.

But local residents, young and old



30 children organised a protest to save their BMX track photo Shahrina Bishop

alike, have come out to show their opposition. Over 50 residents attended a public meeting organised by Nuneaton Socialist Party at short notice.

Within a day of the meeting, over 30 children organised a protest to protect their BMX track and demand

better facilities for young people.

Keresley's youngsters are taking a leaf out of their grandfathers' book, and are already asking questions about socialism as well as looking towards TUSC as a real voting alternative in this year's county council elections.

Newcastle council passes £100 million cuts

Newcastle's Labour-controlled council has passed a horrific £100 million cuts budget which will be implemented over the next three years.

The cuts include closing the city pool, many libraries, all youth services and severely damaging the arts fund.

Newcastle has already seen big

marches against the cuts and anger is increasing.

On Saturday 9 March, a very large lobby saw youth, pensioners, community campaigns, trade unionists and others expressing their anger against the council.

The protesters were let in to observe the cuts budget meeting, which went on for four and half

hours! Nick Forbes, leader of the council, argued against protesters in the gallery who shouted "set a needs budget" and "if you're against the cuts then don't implement them!"

The 'Stop the Cuts' group of anti-cuts campaigns in and around Newcastle will continue to campaign against the cuts being implemented.

Paul Phillips

Leicester's Streetlife won't be silenced

Homeless action group Streetlife spent the night of 9-10 March enduring the sub-zero cold and snow to draw public attention to Leicester council's brutal onslaught on the entire working class and on homeless service provision in particular.

The council proposes slashing the homelessness budget by a third over the next two years.

The nightlong protest held on the steps of the Town Hall meant

a sleepless night for many - something that the homeless are all too familiar with. The protest showed the raw grit and determination of people to oppose the Labour council's cowardly and totally unnecessary decision to implement the Con-Dems' cuts.

The sleep-out bolstered Streetlife's morale, and swelled their numbers for future actions.

Michael Barker

Kidderminster shoppers oppose tax dodgers



photo S McCauley

Worcester Socialist Party members held a stall in Kidderminster on 2 March, campaigning against corporation tax avoidance. 45 people signed the petition. £40 was donated towards the fighting fund and 23 copies of the Socialist were bought, with many good discussions reflecting people's anger and openness to new ideas.

People were well aware of the failure of companies such as Boots, Vodafone and Starbucks to pay tax. One man said how a clothing company he had worked at moved to Switzerland to avoid tax.

A number of people gave their details to find out more about joining the Socialist Party.

Nigel Gilbert

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SOCIALIST PARTY FIGHTING FUND

	£ target	£ received	January-March 2013	Deadline 28 March 2013
East Midlands	1,550	1,665	██████████	██████████
Wales	2,300	2,374	██████████	██████████
South East	750	751	██████████	██████████
Eastern	1,200	1,010	██████████	██████████
Southern	1,200	856	██████████	██████████
North West	1,200	829	██████████	██████████
Yorkshire	2,900	1,748	██████████	██████████
London	6,100	3,497	██████████	██████████
West Midlands	2,100	1,177	██████████	██████████
South West	1,400	728	██████████	██████████
Northern	600	170	██████████	██████████
England & Wales	3,700	406	██████████	██████████
TOTAL	25,000	15,216	██████████	██████████

Venezuela after Chavez: Which road for the working class?

Johan Rivas

Socialismo revolucionario (CWI,
Venezuela)

The news of Hugo Chavez's death brought thousands of Venezuelans rushing to Caracas's main square, the Plaza Bolivar, to lament. There was an inevitable outpouring of emotion and feeling of loss. But the massive crowds were also defiant and combative and made clear they would continue the struggle. They chanted: "Bourgeois make no mistake - here there is a revolutionary people!" and "Now, more than ever, revolution and socialism!"

For years, the right-wing bourgeois press called Chavez a "dictator". The hypocrisy and hostility of the right wing is an important factor when analysing the political situation in Venezuela. However, equally

We must continue to support and fight for a deepening of these reforms, while linking them with the need to fight for socialism

important is the role played by bureaucrats and opportunists inside the 'Chavismo' movement, who must be defeated.

It is these elements that want to deny the role played by the working class and mass popular movements in the revolutionary processes that have developed.

However, the nationalisations that took place after the failed right-wing coup in 2002 and the social reforms that brought millions of Venezuelans out of extreme poverty, were mainly due to the working class, the youth, the peasants and the poor who demanded these actions and supported their implementation. We must continue to support and fight for a deepening of these reforms, while linking them

with the need to fight for socialism.

Today the right wing is calling for "national unity" and the government is calling for "peace". But the unity we want to see, among the masses and real, lasting peace will only be possible with the defeat of capitalism, the dismantling of the capitalist state and introduction of a democratic socialist alternative.

The fact that capitalism and its state remain was recognised by Chavez. He said: "In Venezuela, we have advanced a lot, but there is still much to do, the capitalist structure is intact as is the bourgeois state". Unfortunately, he did not then conclude and explain what was necessary for fundamental change.

Despite recent events, the right wing remains on the offensive against the working masses. This is clear from the actions of the bosses and reaction for over a decade; financial speculation, ensuring the scarcity of staple foodstuffs and engineering high inflation, and de-industrialisation.

Politically, however, the ruling class is divided between the reactionary, even neo-fascist 'radicals' and the pro-democracy capitalist 'moderates', who are a majority on the right at this stage. Furthermore, the right overall cannot rely on a solid social support base to gather enough strength to defeat Chavism.

Crossroads

The government is correct when it says that the Venezuelan capitalist class is parasitic and that it lives on the profits of petroleum and the importation of the goods, services and manufactured products. At the same time, the government, who in its own way maintains this parasitic class, is at a crossroads.

The government tries to operate within the limits of capitalism, introducing economic measures, such as the recent currency devaluation that will put the weight of the economic crisis on the working class and the poor. But, at the same time, it is the working class and poor that the government relies on for its support.

However, enormous grassroots pressure, although with a confused



Chavez supporters in last year's presidential election contest

idea of revolution and socialism, can pressurise a post-Chavez government to adopt a more radical position. Failure to do so would only see it moving quickly to the right and to threaten the reversal of the reforms won during the last 14 years.

Presidential elections to determine who succeeds Chavez will take place in a few weeks. Although there is a very small chance that the right could triumph, this is highly unlikely and it is most likely that political control will remain in the hands of Chavismo.

It would be a mistake for the Chavismo movement to think that it can govern in the same way that Chavez did.

Both Nicolás Maduro (vice-president) and Diosdado Cabello (president of the National Assembly) know that, as the political leadership of Chavismo, they need to manage the situation with care.

The revolutionary Left today is fragmented and dispersed but there are at least small and significant steps to re-organise, as we have seen over the last six months.

An example of this was a national Bolivarian meeting of revolutionary organisations that took place over the last months. A section is working towards the construction of a political leadership to the left of the current leadership. This, together with economic uncertainty and a right-wing offensive, are challenges that the leadership of the ruling PSUV party will have to confront.

The right wing has been very careful not to initiate any radical actions that may provoke a social explosion. The perspectives for Venezuela are not certain. But to think that the death of Chavez means the death of Chavismo is an error, as it assumes that Chavismo will only move towards the right.

However, sections of the govern-

ment will attempt to go in this direction, to try and appease capitalism and imperialism.

The urgent task now is to fight for the conscious, independent self-organisation of the working class, the peasants and the poor. We must expose the bureaucratic, reformist contradictions of Chavismo, defeat the right wing and demand and fight for a revolutionary, democratic, socialist programme.

We cannot fall into the 'democratic' bourgeois logic of the government, of defending the 'sovereignty of the Fatherland'. This means rejecting the idea that the revolution is 'national' and making clear it is an international question.

We call and fight for the construction of a federation of revolutionary, democratic socialist nations across the Americas and further. It is only this that will guarantee the revolutionary triumph in Venezuela and beyond.

Portugal: Revolutionary spirit in fighting austerity

CWI reporters

On 2 March, under the slogan "Screw the Troika - the people are the best rulers", over 1.5 million people (out of a population of 10.7 million) reclaimed Portugal's streets, in what even the media has speculated may have been the country's biggest ever demonstrations.

The demonstrations sent a clear message to the Troika - EU, European Central Bank and International Monetary Fund - as their representatives visited Lisbon for the seventh time to oversee the brutal austerity cuts imposed on the country.

As well as the need to stop the Troika, hundreds of thousands in front of the finance ministry expressed their demand to bring down the government.

These demonstrations, bringing together workers, the poor and soldiers in every town of the country, showed that the Portuguese people are up for a fight and are determined to force this government and its policies from the scene of history.

The task now is to build a movement strong and militant enough to bring down the coalition, armed with the necessary ideas and programme to chart a way out of the mass misery of the capitalist crisis.

A 24-hour general strike is needed as an immediate step towards an all-out struggle to bring down the government.

Last September, the same platform brought hundreds of thousands onto the streets, sending the government into disarray and forcing it to cancel important austerity announcements.

However, the momentum to force the government out was not seized upon. The same mistake must not be repeated.

Armenio Carlos, Secretary-General of CGTP (main trade union federation) said on 2 March: "Today it is clear that this government has no political legitimacy, has no moral legitimacy, has no ethical legitimacy to continue to govern... The government has become the problem that prevents the solution" (Euronews.com).

However, Carlos is not giving a lead, ie to implement the steps necessary to bring down the hated politicians.

The organisation of those who made history on 2 March into democratic committees of action in workplaces and communities; an immediate campaign to force the CGTP leaders into the calling of a general strike to bring down the government; the occupation of strategic buildings, the main workplaces, etc, are urgent tasks of the hour.

Alternative

Alongside this, the mass left parties (Left Bloc and Communist Party, who already share almost 30% in opinion polls) have been handed an historic responsibility to channel the movement through a political programme to end the misery of capitalism and austerity - ie to refuse to pay the debt, no to austerity, nationalisation of the banks and commanding heights of the economy under democratic workers' con-

trol and management.

Such a government could immediately inspire the struggles in Greece, Spain, Italy and all over Europe in a joint battle to end the dictatorship of the Troika and the markets.

The demonstrations were soaked through with the legacy of the April 1974 Portuguese revolution. Following on from the repeated singing of

"Grandola Vila Morena", in protest actions in previous weeks, the demonstrations ended with the mass singing of this hymn of the 1974 revolution, reflecting how 38 years after the event, the capitalist crisis has dragged revolution back onto the agenda.

The only lasting way to complete its legacy is to carry through the socialist revolution today.

Committee for a Workers' International (CWI)

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

The CWI is organised in 45 countries and works to unite the working class and oppressed peoples against global capitalism and to fight for a socialist world.

For more details including CWI publications write to: CWI, PO Box 3688, London E11 1YE. email cwi@worldsoc.co.uk



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

www.socialistworld.net

the Socialist postbag

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Education – system failure

As a student, I can't express how much I dislike our education system, where we're judged on how much syllabus material we can memorise and how much of that we can scribble onto an exam paper within a time limit. What we should be rated on is our actual ability in the subject. We should be graded by our teachers who are aware

cast their votes for jokers and fascists but not TUSC.

Well done to Daz for standing in a difficult national byelection and offering the only credible alternative to the mainstream Westminster claptrap. I hope the experience hasn't put you off and that you will stand again.

Lee Payne

Circuses but no bread

On 5 March, supporters of Lincoln Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) went to Lincoln city council's budget meeting, expecting a debate on the cuts being made with both sides presenting alternatives. Instead we saw Labour and Tory councillors bickering about whose fault the economic crisis was in a pathetic attempt to pass the blame.

Tory opposition leader Hilton Spratt proudly announced his facts were correct because he 'got them off a computer'. At one point the Tory opposition tried to blame everything on George Bush!

One councillor told us after the meeting they would gladly take a reduced allowance to lessen the cuts being made. Why then has this councillor taken no action to do this? Nothing is stopping them doing so.

When I proposed TUSC's short-term alternative of sourcing money from the reserves or reclaiming money stolen to fund bankers' bonuses, councillors



of our abilities and not by a board of self-righteous cronies who have never even met us.

When I was in Sixth Form, I was adamant on the need for an educational reform as myself and so many others, who were in the same predicament as many young people are today, were sickened by the current system. Now, after much thinking, travelling, reading, and attending lectures, I cannot agree more that socialism is the only way forward.

We cannot live under this capitalist regime anymore. We should be putting money into technology and raising living standards, but instead it sits in the hands of the greedy elite.

James Martin, Sandhurst

Eastleigh – was it us?

The Eastleigh byelection could have been an interesting contest of alternative parties. The Lib Dems are plagued with controversy, hardly anybody likes a Tory and Labour is a spent force no longer representing the working class.

The Nigel I-love-the-sound-of-my-own-voice Farage party was hotly tipped to pull in the protest vote and indeed it did, sending a warning to the big three in British politics. But we all know Ukup doesn't offer a credible alternative.

However, there was a credible alternative on the ballot paper - TUSC candidate Daz Proctor who offered the electorate real and sensible alternative policies. Unfortunately Mr Proctor finishing second to last, polling only 0.15% of the total vote and 3.4% of the combined alternative/novelty vote! Were the electorate put off by the word 'socialist'? Perhaps it's the association with trade unions which scares people off? Or could it be the word coalition that's the culprit? We all equate the coalition of political parties as a bad thing.

Do voters feel more at ease with grey men and women in grey suits? Perhaps they were put off by being canvassed by the party faithful in jeans and baseball caps? Or could it be, as some have suggested, the lack of access to media coverage? Whatever the reasons, the electorate bothered to turn out and



Councils - not necessarily a shining example of democracy

said that 'It isn't that simple'. Sure, it isn't an easy option but if Labour councils nationwide opposed the cuts, the public sector unions and TUSC would get behind them.

Readers of the Socialist should attend a local council meeting and see this political circus and the behaviour of the councillors.

Samuel Mumby

Canterbury cuts protest

On 21 March at 1pm the Archbishop of Canterbury is being formally enthroned, with all the pomp and ceremony that goes with it. Witnessing this will be Prime Minister David Cameron. A reception of Socialist Party, TUSC, trade unionists, Trades Council members and students will greet the dishonourable MP with protest on his arrival at the Buttermarket, Cathedral Gates at 11am.

Canterbury Trades Union Council has also called a public meeting with speakers including NUT national committee member Martin Powell-Davies, a Sussex uni occupier and other guests.

Seth Cruse

Film review

Spirit of '45



photo BBC

Katrine Williams, president of Cardiff Trades Council and Wales chair for the PCS civil service union, reviews Ken Loach's new film, the Spirit of '45, which opens on 15 March.

This film is a documentary, interviewing people who remember the mass movement to create the welfare state following World War Two. Ken Loach was asked after the film showing in Cardiff why he made the film.

"I want people to be angry," Ken Loach said. "This is not about history. It's about the fact that society doesn't have to be this way. We can seize control of the economy, protect the environment, share out the work. You can only plan what you own - collectively for the benefit of all! Another world is possible. My god, we have to change it."

The film shows the contrast between the poverty of the 1930s and the hopes and aspirations of the working class that there should be no return to these conditions. One contributor from Liverpool described his living conditions before the war, with all the children getting into a bed every night which was crawling with vermin. The happiest moment in his life was moving into a new council house.

Homelessness today

With the 50% increase in homeless families now and the attacks on housing benefits, it shows why the mass house building programme following the war was so important. In Wales some of the temporary accommodation, the prefabs, are still being lived in.

Tony Mulhearn, one of the Liverpool 47 councillors who stood up to the Thatcher government, was one of the film's interviewees. He gave a strong example of what politicians should be doing now to improve

working class people's lives. Liverpool city council in the 80s showed that the 'Spirit of '45' was not some historical event but an example of what working class people can achieve, tangibly in bricks and mortar, when we fight together.

The film does not give a total sense of the mass revolutionary wave in society with demobbed soldiers determined that after defeating fascism they should build a better world free from squalor and poverty. The 1945 Labour government was elected on a wave of confidence and pushed much further to the left than politicians originally planned.

The ruling class was terrified that the workers would take power in Britain and change society, and conceded unprecedented reforms with the nationalisation of gas, electricity, coal and transport and the creation of the NHS. All these made a massive difference to people's lives and showed the advantage and logic of providing services, utilities and transport planned on a nationwide basis.

The creation of the welfare state and nationalisation at a time when Britain was bankrupt shows what can be done now to stop all the cuts and invest in jobs and services. The ruling class can always find money when it is necessary to protect their system.

One Welsh contributor, Ray Davies, describes how following the death of his mother pregnant to the tenth time, the doctor told him that 'but for a pint of blood your mam would have lived'. You cannot have a more succinct description of why

we need a national health service free at the point of demand.

The film clearly shows the limitations of the way the nationalisation was done, just swapping the bosses for more of the same and with no workers' control. There were also concessions made to create the NHS, leaving private healthcare in place and "stuffing the consultants' mouths with gold".

Political

The creation of the welfare state was a massive step forward but only a glimpse of what could be achieved with workers' control and management of society.

The film exposes the current lack of a mass political alternative standing up for the working class. It lets the audience draw the conclusion that we need to build a new political voice. Loach was very clear in the questions after the showing that we need a new political formation representing the working class and that unions should turn the funding tap to New Labour off, as well as his support for TUSC.

Everyone should see this film. It clearly shows the massive gains that the working class made following the war, but we can also use the film to increase people's confidence and raise expectations about what we can achieve now.

Let's take the opportunity to leaflet all the audiences to get everyone more involved in the battles to save the welfare state and in the discussion about how to build a better society, a socialist society, which meets the needs of all.

Sold-out non-sexist comedy night

The London launch of Rape Is No Joke took place on International Women's Day, Friday 8 March, with 'No Laughing Matter' - a night of comedy without misogyny.

To a sold-out audience, an exciting mix of comedians showed that you can put on a night of progressive comedy to combat the increase in mainstream reactionary comedy.

Helen Pattison, a speaker from Rape Is No Joke, opened the night. She outlined that Socialist Students launched Rape is No Joke in response to the increasing anger of young women against sexism in society.

Helen pointed out that jokes are not the biggest issue faced by women, but they represent an increasing trend of trivialising sexism and rape.

Tom Wells compered, with sets from Lily Levin, Flood Sketch Group, Bianca Arlette, Chris Coltrane and Anti-Duhring Battalion. Over £200 was raised for the campaign.



rapeisnojoke.com



Anti-Duhring Battalion
photo Suzanne Beishon

In the run-up to the Rape Is No Joke comedy night, London Socialist Party branches hosted a week of very successful International Women's Day meetings on a variety of issues including: 'Was Marx a feminist?'; a film showing of 'Made in Dagenham'; the 1888 matchgirls' strike and Rosa Luxemburg.

Suzanne Beishon

Three decades on We want the truth about Orgreave

Over the last few months, the endemic corruption of South Yorkshire police during the 1980s has been exposed by the revelations surrounding the cover-up of the Hillsborough disaster. The Hillsborough Independent Panel released their findings in September last year.

But it was not just at Hillsborough that corruption took place – there can be no doubt that a similar cover-up took place at British Steel's Orgreave coking plant, involving officers from the very same force.

The events of 18 June 1984 – commonly known as the Battle of Orgreave – involved almost 10,000 striking miners and 4,000 police. It was one of the most significant days of the 1984-85 miners' strike, in which the Thatcher government used all of the resources of the British capitalist state to smash the militant National Union of Mineworkers (NUM). Orgreave police battered miners with truncheons. 93 pickets were arrested, including NUM leader Arthur Scargill. Some of those arrested still have criminal records as a result of the charges brought against them.

The chair of the recently launched Orgreave Truth and Justice Campaign, Barbara Jackson, spoke to the Socialist.

Why has the Orgreave Truth and Justice Campaign been launched now?

The success of the Hillsborough campaign in finally securing an acknowledgement of the cover-up was a big inspiration. That showed that it might be possible to get justice for the victims of Orgreave too.

There has been a renewed interest in the issue following the BBC Inside Out documentary last year, in which police officers went on camera and stated that they had been told what to write in their statements. That led to Orgreave being discussed in Parliament, and to the formation of this important campaign for justice.

What are the aims of the campaign?

We want a full public inquiry, that's been the aim from the start. We want justice for the victims of Orgreave, for the miners and their families. But we also want to throw a spotlight on the political policing throughout the miners' strike.

Orgreave was not simply a case of a few rogue officers; it was directed from the top and was designed to break the strike through physical punishment, in order to deter miners from picketing. Mini Orgreaves were happening for a full year throughout the UK coalfields. We

believe that if we can open up the Orgreave case, the full extent of political policing in the miners' strike will be revealed.

How has the campaign progressed so far?

It's been mad! I'm exhausted. Every day we're receiving enquiries from the national press, who've been both interested and supportive.

We've also attracted a wide range of activists and supporters with strong connections to the miners' strike and to Orgreave.

The trade unions have been brilliant as well. So far 15 Aslef branches have donated to the campaign, and their national office is encouraging all branches to support it. Locally a Unite branch has pledged support and money, and we're now looking at building support for the campaign within Unison.

A printing cooperative in London has also been really helpful, and they've produced Orgreave Truth and Justice T-shirts which you can buy from our website, to support our campaign.

What are the next steps for the campaign?

We're holding a public meeting at the Showroom Cinema in Sheffield, where we'll be showing The Bat-



Miners and their supporters lobby the TUC to demand a general strike photo Militant

tle for Orgreave, which documents what really happened that day. That's at 2pm on Saturday 23 March. We're really hoping that this will attract young people to the campaign.

Why would you urge young people to attend?

People need to know their history, where they're coming from. The example the miners set is an inspiration to others who are fighting for their jobs and conditions.

After nearly 30 years, this film stands the test of time and it still has the capacity to shock. We want young people to see for themselves what the miners went through at the hands of Thatcher and the police.

What does Orgreave show us that is still relevant today?

Orgreave shows that when you are a threat and taking effective action, the state will use everything in its power to stop you. In situations like this the police act as the enforcers of the government.

At Orgreave, the police acted like a militia putting down an insurrection instead of a trade union dispute. The government's hands were all over the strike, directing the police through weekly and even daily cabinet meetings. Workers and trade unionists should always be prepared for this kind of violence.

What is the legacy of Orgreave?

Today Orgreave looks nothing like it did in 1984. The coking plant that Thatcher insisted would stay open is now closed.

When people who were involved in the miners' strike go back there they find it unrecognisable – the landscape has been transformed.

There's talk of renaming it Waverley, which is clearly an attempt to bury the memory of Orgreave. But the people involved will never forget – it's imprinted on their psyche.

Many feel unable to return there, the memories are just too traumatic for them. People who were involved often don't like to talk about it, almost like war veterans.

In 1984-85, British miners were forced to take strike action to defend their jobs and their communities. The media, Labour leaders and right-wing trade union leaders portray the strike as heroic but fated to defeat.

This is not true. Millions of ordinary working class people actively supported the miners, such as providing food and financial support. However, the Trade Union Congress (TUC) and the Labour Party leaders, especially Neil Kinnock, did not.

The TUC could and should have organised general strike action to support the miners and bring down Margaret Thatcher's Tory government. The strike is full of inspirational lessons for today's battle against austerity.

A Civil War Without Guns

The lessons of the 1984-85 miners' strike

by Ken Smith

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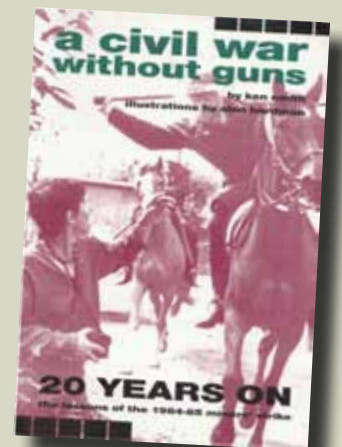
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Are you sick of your boss? Join the campaign!



The 'Sick of Your Boss' initiative by Youth Fight for Jobs aims to win decent jobs, pay and working conditions for young workers as part of rebuilding a fighting democratic trade union movement.

For more info, to get involved and for campaigning material text 'join', plus your name and post code to 07749 379010.

London protests will take place outside Starbucks on Thursday 21 March - assemble outside Oxford Circus tube at 1pm. A public launch meeting will take place on Sunday 24 March. Check www.youthfightforjobs.com for more details.

They find it necessary to repress the trauma they suffered as a result of the burning injustice that occurred that day, with the state using all of its power against its own people.

It wasn't just the police but the judiciary, the government, the whole weight of the state. Miners were arrested and dealt with in batches – often they were told to plead guilty. One miner said at the time it was like "supermarket justice". You were on a conveyor belt.

How can people support your campaign?

They can raise it in their union branches. They can demand that their MP supports Ian Lavery's Early Day Motion calling for a full scale

public inquiry into police conduct during the miners' strike.

We need people to write letters to local newspapers mentioning the campaign. Please contact us to support us and donate, and most importantly sign our petition for a full public inquiry.

We hold regular monthly meetings which we rotate around South Yorkshire and which are open to anyone. We're determined to fight for justice for the Orgreave pickets.

You can find out more about the Orgreave Truth and Justice Campaign by visiting www.otjc.org.uk or the Orgreave Truth and Justice Campaign Facebook page

STOP THE CON-DEMS RIPPING UP OUR NHS

- National union-led mass demo now!
- Strike action can save our health service



Roger Davey
Chair, Wiltshire and Avon Unison Health
(personal capacity)

In April the government's Health and Social Care Act comes into force, and with it, the potential destruction of the NHS.

It is the culmination of a series of reforms by successive governments - Tory, Labour and now the Con-Dems - that aimed to introduce a privatised system of healthcare, where the market allocates resources, and illness becomes a source of huge profits for ruthless multinational companies.

In essence, the Act will end the government's duty to provide comprehensive free healthcare for all, and will also mean the NHS is free from parliamentary control.

Instead, GP-led Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) will control finance, have

the freedom to decide who they treat, who provides the treatment, and what is free at the point of delivery.

CCGs will increasingly seek to take on healthy individuals whose needs are minimal, rather than the more vulnerable who would require numerous referrals and expensive care.

We are likely to end up in a situation where CCGs pick and choose who they want as patients, in a system that bears little resemblance to the NHS established in 1948.

With NHS finance being drastically cut, CCGs will increasingly look to restrict the provision of free care, with patients having to take out private medical insurance in order to access treatment.

Personal Care Budgets

With the advent of Personal Care Budgets (PCBs), individuals could transfer all their funds into the hands of a private insurance company. Many CCGs would be left with fewer patients and therefore face bankruptcy.

CCGs will be compelled to purchase care within a competitive health market, where major private health companies will seek to undercut the NHS in order to win the more lucrative contracts.

The only NHS organisations remaining will be Foundation Trusts that can

give private treatment to 49% of patients and are also vulnerable to takeovers and mergers.

In short, what we are seeing is the end of the NHS, and the establishment of a US-style system, where provision of care is provided by the private sector, with one level for the wealthy, and a basic substandard one for the rest of us.

Alongside privatisation, unprecedented financial cutbacks will see wards, services, and even hospitals close.

But these attacks can be stopped. The Unison health workers' union should launch a massive national campaign, utilising the huge potential power of the trade unions and working class communities.

Changing the wording of CCG constitutions, or a few meaningless concessions from the government, will not fundamentally alter the drive towards privatisation.

We must demand not just the complete abolition of the Act but the end of all cuts and privatisation in the NHS.

The first step in a struggle that has the potential to defeat austerity itself, should be a national demonstration followed by industrial action to defend every part of the health service from the threat of both privatisation and financial cutbacks.

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!