



# the Socialist

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## APRIL 2013:

# TORY CUTS BLITZ

## WE MUST STOP THEM!

**Peter Taaffe**

Socialist Party general secretary

The axe is about to be wielded again and this time it is a huge one. 'Black April' will see a further round of government-imposed savage austerity, which will alter the very fabric of life in Britain:

"Cuts as far as the eye can see," is how the Guardian put it. We are assailed by a blizzard of horror stories of the effects of the cuts that have already taken place, or of the ferocity to come. Not since the 1930s has the cold cruelty of the British ruling class been so much on display.

Limiting benefit rises to 1% will push 50,000 disabled people into poverty. Even the flint-hearted ministers in this government have admitted that the bedroom tax will affect 440,000 disabled people and will cost nearly £14 a week extra on average, literally ruining hundreds of thousands if not millions of lives among the most downtrodden working class and poor people.

And, as the Daily Mirror pointed out, four people are already being made homeless every hour. Eighty thousand children live in temporary housing. Labour MP Frank Field, who shamefully supported Tory welfare 'reforms' in the past, is now moved to advocate "civil disobedience" in opposition to the bedroom tax. He is not suggesting he would personally adopt such methods. Heaven forbid! He proposes instead councils should knock down walls within their properties, thereby reducing the number of 'bedrooms'!

The long-term scale of the cuts was spelt out in an item tucked away in the weekend edition of the Financial Times: "The public sector share of the workforce is set to fall by 2018 to its lowest level since the welfare state began in the 1940s."

John Philpott, director of the 'Jobs Economist' consultancy, said: "The public sector would lose 700,000 jobs during the current parliament and 1.1 million between 2010 and 2018. The projected total fall will cut the public sector workforce by a fifth."

In the face of such an onslaught a mighty resistance is needed.

### THE SOCIALIST PARTY SAYS:

- No to all cuts and privatisation
- Prepare for a 24-hour general strike, mobilising the massive potential power of the trade unions, to launch a determined anti-cuts battle
- Build a new mass party to represent workers and all suffering under austerity and to provide a fighting, political alternative to the pro-big business, pro-cuts parties
- For a socialist alternative to cuts and capitalism with a democratic socialist plan of production based on the interests of the overwhelming majority of people - not a tiny super-rich elite

See pages 2 and 3 for more on the cuts and how to resist. This article continues on pages 6 and 7



# the Socialist

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## Build the fight against the bedroom tax

Many thousands of council and housing association tenants will have their housing benefit cut – losing 14% of the full housing benefit eligible rent for one ‘spare’ bedroom or 25% for two or more – unless they move to a smaller home! There are not enough smaller properties for all those who are allegedly ‘under-occupying’ their homes. The bedroom tax is an attack on the right to social housing. The Con-Dems aim to drive people into the private rented sector - which is more expensive and will drive up housing benefit costs. But already the anger and opposition is making itself felt in meetings and protests across the country.

### 5,000 march in Glasgow

**Matt Dobson**  
Socialist Party Scotland

Over 5,000 people from across west Scotland and beyond marched in Glasgow on Saturday 30 March against the bedroom tax but also against the impact of savage austerity in all its forms.

The demonstration was led by disabled protesters. 80% of those hit by the bedroom tax have a disability.

People of all ages turned out, lots on their first ever demonstration. Many wanted to concretely discuss building a campaign to defeat the bedroom tax but also alternative ideas to the failure of capitalist-driven austerity.

Many crowded around Socialist Party Scotland stalls, queuing to sign our petitions and to discuss with us.

The turnout for the demonstration was greatly assisted by the scores of public meetings in the weeks preceding. Socialist Party Scotland helped to pioneer many of these.

The sheer size of the demonstration became clear as the march entered George Square, several hundred had already gathered there.

The rally speakers raised the memories of the poll tax struggle but also the rent strikes of the early part of the 20th century and the immortal Red Clydeside movement.

#### Socialist speakers

Three Socialist Party Scotland members spoke at the rally. Jim McFarlane from the Bin the Bedroom Tax campaign in Dundee set the tone of the rally: “The example of the campaign in Dundee which has forced the SNP council to concede that they will not evict for one year shows we can win.

“But one year is not good enough! Every council and housing association must commit to no evictions.

Campaigners are looking for ideas to counter this vicious attack. One lesson of the poll tax struggle was to get organised.

Then there are a number of tactics that can be deployed, including: Councils and councillors must refuse to implement housing benefit cuts. Dundee council has said it won't implement the bedroom tax for a year. Brighton council has said it won't evict. Tenants can appeal to adjudication against the bedroom tax as a decision on their housing benefit. Thousands of people appealing at the same time will clog up the system.

#### Edinburgh

In Edinburgh the anti-bedroom tax demonstration attracted up to 2,000 people, including disabled people, students, anti-cuts campaigners, political activists and trade unionists.

The demonstration marched from St Andrew Square to the Scottish Parliament where a number of speakers gave graphic descriptions of what the Con-Dems' austerity programme was doing to the disabled and poor of Scotland.

**Jimmy Haddow**

The councillors and MSPs have to choose which side they are on. If they aren't prepared to stand with us they should stand aside and we should stand against them.”

Davey Churchley from the Black Triangle Disability Rights Campaign highlighted the impact of this hated tax on disabled people.

Brian Smith, Glasgow City Unison secretary, called for councils to set needs budgets and for the government to bail out housing associations to meet the cost of the Bedroom Tax. He called on the trade union movement to throw its full weight behind the campaign and called for a 24-hour general strike.

Over 200 people packed into the Glasgow City Unison offices for a West of Scotland federation meeting after the rally. Tommy Sheridan spoke about the anti-poll tax struggle, in which he played a leading role, and the need to now build an all-Scotland anti-bedroom tax federation.

Reflecting the interest in Socialist Party Scotland, 250 copies of the Socialist were sold at the demo. Twenty people filled in cards to join and for more information about Socialist Party Scotland. £300 was raised for the fighting fund, including the sale of 150 anti-bedroom tax badges.

Tenants can ask the council to look again at the decision, to revalue their home, for more time to write to the DWP tribunal service, and apply for discretionary housing payments. Knowsley Housing Trust decided it would lose less money if it reclassified some housing so tenants didn't have to pay the bedroom tax. Tenants can join some HAs by buying £1 shares and attend board meetings to push this policy. An anti-eviction army is needed in every community to counter eviction threats.

**Roy Farrar**

- Scrap the bedroom tax - reverse all welfare cuts!
- Build support for those who cannot or will not pay this unfair, unjust tax!
- No evictions for bedroom tax-related arrears
- Housing associations and councils must refuse to evict all tenants that fall into rent arrears
- For a massive programme of social house building and renovation to provide affordable homes for all



Part of the Glasgow demo photo Jim Halfpenny

### Warrington rebel councillor speaks out

**Andy Ford**  
Warrington Trades Council

Around 30 anti-bedroom tax protesters, nearly all new to political activity, assembled outside Warrington Town Hall on 30 March.

The meeting was addressed by rebel councillor Kevin Bennett, the first Labour councillor in the north west to vote against Labour council cuts. Kevin described the calls he is getting from constituents in his deprived ward of Fairfield and How-

ley, from people who just do not know what they are going to do as the bedroom tax and other welfare cuts come in.

Those attending ranged from those who simply cannot afford this latest cut, to trade unionists outraged at the treatment of the poor and vulnerable. There was much disgust at the constant demonisation of the unemployed and disabled people.

A Warrington Against the Cuts group has been formed, and can be found on Facebook.

Kevin faces a Labour Party disciplinary hearing on Thursday 4 April for daring to vote against the cuts. A lobby in his defence has been called by Warrington Trades Council and Unite the Union North West political committee. Many of the bedroom tax protesters said they would be there.

Thirty people took part in a Lincoln bedroom tax protest organised by Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition campaigners.

### Leeds tenants say hands off our homes!

**Iain Dalton**  
Leeds Socialist Party

Across Leeds, Hands Off Our Homes has been organising community meetings of up to 50 people in opposition to the bedroom tax. The campaign has the backing of Leeds TUC, GMB and Unison local government branches, Unite Community and other trade unions locally.

Around 8,000 are affected in the

city, a large number of them single people who the council had a policy of placing into two-bed flats which would have otherwise been empty. There are only around 50 single bedroom properties available in the whole city.

Saturday 30 March saw a demonstration called by a few local Labour councillors and 'Labour Left'. Yet apart from standing at the front of the protest when the press took photos, they gave no lead and didn't

even address the protest.

People queued to sign our petition, calling on the council not to evict tenants, to refuse to implement the bedroom tax and instead embark on a serious council house-building programme - the council house waiting list in Leeds is around 27,000.

**Join the Leeds Hands off our Homes Anti-Bedroom Tax Demo on 20 April. Assemble 12pm, Victoria Gardens (outside the Art Gallery)**

### Little fight on offer from Labour in Swansea

**Ronnie Job**  
Swansea Socialist Party

Around 70 protesters rallied in Swansea on 30 March as the fight against the bedroom tax in the city got underway.

Two Labour MPs, Geraint Davies of Llanelli, addressed the rally. Both demanded that the bedroom tax be scrapped, unlike shadow cabinet

member Helen Goodman.

Goodman has stated the Labour Party should impose a reformed version of the bedroom tax on households that refused a transfer to a smaller property.

I spoke on behalf of Swansea Trades Council to call for the Labour council to refuse to implement the bedroom tax.

Geraint Davies suggested removing partition walls to make properties single bedroom. But a property

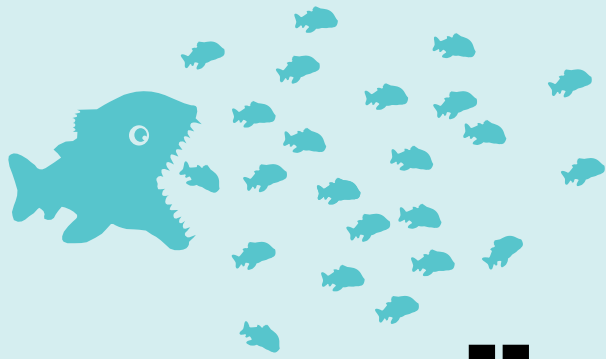
has as many bedrooms as the landlord says without the need to tear down walls.

I challenged councillors present to publicly commit to refusing to evict people for being unable to pay the bedroom tax. None were willing to make such a commitment.

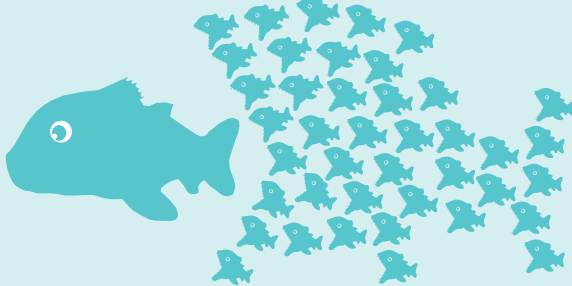
The Swansea Anti-Cuts Campaign meets on 3 April to look at pressuring the council and other social housing providers and defending tenants.



# Them...



# ...& Us



# Black April

The front page headline of the Guardian called 1 April "The day that Britain changed". A number of the Tories' hated flagship policies are now in force, or due to be implemented later this month. We get more cuts to jobs, services and benefits, while the rich get tax breaks and are handed privatised services to make a profit from. The 'them and us' system has never been so clear.

## Council tax benefit

Council tax benefit, run by central government, has been replaced with council tax support, run by local authorities... with a 10% cut. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation says that 150,000 households will be £300 a year worse off. The cut will hit the worst off, basically meaning a huge council tax increase for the poorest - 300,000 benefit claimants could fall into poverty as a result.

58 local authorities are maintaining current levels of support - but many of these are financing this through cuts elsewhere. Councillors should refuse to implement this cut or any others and spearhead a mass campaign to demand more funding from central government - just like socialist-led Liverpool City Council did successfully in the 1980s.

nobody pays the tax anyway (because he won't make them) or because it will encourage investment in job creation (it won't).

The super-rich should pay high taxes and the extra revenue used to invest in jobs and services in the public sector.



**150,000** households will be £300 a year worse off

## 50p tax rate

While we get hit with the bedroom tax and cuts to council tax benefits, the rich are having cuts too... to how much tax they have to pay. The rate of tax for top earners will be reduced from 50p to 45p in every pound earned. Chancellor George Osborne can't quite make up his mind - it's either because

## NHS

Primary Care trusts are being disbanded and replaced with Clinical Commissioning Groups (GP consortia) which will now be responsible for £60 billion of the NHS budget. They will commission local services from 'any willing provider' - including voluntary and private bodies.

Government privatisers claim this will make sure the best service is provided. They said the same about trains and utilities.

They claim GPs will be at the heart of the system and this will benefit the patients they know so well. But only a few will actually be involved and the system will be dominated by corporate giants who will drive down services in order to offer lower prices and win the contracts.



Hundreds of thousands of workers marched against cuts on 20 October 2012 photo Senan

We need action from NHS trade unions, backed up by community campaigns, to defend a nationalised, free, publicly run healthcare system.

## Cap on benefit increases

Increases in benefits, previously linked to inflation, will now be capped at 1%. With inflation running at nearly 3%, this is a cut to income for the poorest. While the pay of chief executives continues to rise and more and more banks reveal shocking lists of those paid over £1 million, the low-paid and unemployed will struggle more and more to afford basic necessities.

## Benefit cap

From 15 April the benefits that a household receives will be capped at £26,000. It is estimated that cuts to benefits will push 200,000 more children into poverty.

People shouldn't complain so much though, minister for work and pensions, Iain Duncan Smith, assures us that we're mistaken and actually the cuts are perfectly fair. In fact, he could live on £53 a week himself. Hundreds of thousands rushed to sign an online petition asking him to give it a go.

We need benefits that are enough to live on - why should those out of work or super-low-paid because of this government's policies have to live in poverty? And the best way to reduce the benefit bill is not to cap benefits but to cap rents and raise the minimum wage.

## Disability Living Allowance

Disability Living Allowance will be replaced by Personal Independence Payments (PIPs), including a cut of more than £2 billion a year. PIPs are assessed face-to-face by hated contractor Atos. They examine people's ability to do day-to-day tasks, without taking note of conditions which vary at different times.

By 2015/16 500,000 people will

lose PIPs. The new criteria also mean only people unable to walk more than 20 metres unaided will be eligible for financial help towards mobility.

Paralympic gold medalist swimmer Tara Flood said: "The PIP process is fundamentally flawed. I can't imagine anyone delivering it in a way that isn't de-humanising. The impact will be so shocking. Twenty per cent of disabled people who receive this support are going to lose it... I'm terrified."



## Legal aid

Thousands have lost their entitlement to legal aid as maximum household income to be eligible has been reduced to £32,000. Anyone earning over £14,000 will be subject to a means test. The cut will particularly affect access to family law, immigration and employment cases.

## Granny tax

The government is at pains to stress that it's looking after the elderly - pensioners are protected from the council tax benefit cuts, for example. But nobody is spared from the Con-Dems' axe. Changes in the way tax-free allowances are calculated will leave 3.6 million people £68 a year worse off and 360,000 who turn 65 this year £268 worse off.

## High rents

Of course, everyone is suffering from limited financial support from the state. The wife of the new governor of the Bank of England, is finding her £5,000 a week housing allowance very difficult to work with - she complained that rents are just too high to be able to find anything for that amount.

This is while a cap on housing benefit is being introduced that amounts to one tenth of that and will see 56,000 families each lose £4,836 a year.

Solving the housing crisis requires an immediate cap on rents and investment in a huge programme of council house building.

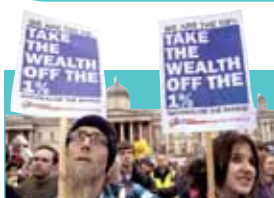
## The future

'Black April' introduced some devastating cuts. But, if the Con-Dems get their way, this will be just the start. After last month's budget, the Treasury wrote to all government departments to tell them to prepare for up to 10% more cuts which may be announced in the June spending review.

We've also had predictions that economic recovery will take many years. The Bank of England has even told major UK banks to raise £25 billion if they want to guard against likely losses.

The majority in Britain and around the world can't put up with 'many years' more. We have to fight back now to stop all cuts, bring down the government and build a socialist alternative to austerity.

We have to fight back now to stop all cuts, bring down the government and build a socialist alternative to austerity



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# Call for national strike narrowly defeated at NUT conference

## Joint teachers' strike starts in north west on 27 June

**Martin Powell-Davies**  
Member of the NUT national executive

Teacher's union NUT conference has voted overwhelmingly to back the priority motion on "Protecting Teachers, Defending Education", thus endorsing the plan of action agreed with the other main teaching union, NASUWT. This means that, at long last, a calendar of strike action, starting with a regional strike in the North West on 27 June, is set to begin. However, the main debate was over an amendment proposing that we start our action with a national NUT strike on 26 June.

After an impassioned debate, in which the evenly-divided applause for respective speakers left everyone guessing as to the final outcome, the amendment calling for this initial one-day strike was eventually narrowly defeated on a show of hands.

The text of the amendment had been agreed at a packed meeting of the Local Associations National Action Campaign (Lanac) meeting on 29 March, with nearly 200 delegates in attendance.

To confidently build the region-



More workers are wondering when they will be able to strike together photo Naomi Byron

al action, details of the proposed calendar of action after the summer break urgently need to be announced by the NUT and NASUWT leaderships.

We don't want to be just hitting the headlines in the North West in June, we want to be hitting the national headlines - as really only a

national strike can achieve.

I would have hoped that the NASUWT could have been persuaded to participate in an additional national strike in June. Even if they had only felt able to stick to the previously agreed plan, the NUT would not have been acting alone on 26 June. We could have sought to coordinate

the action with other unions, not least the PCS civil service union.

Unfortunately, PCS general secretary Mark Serwotka did not call on the NUT to join with other unions in taking coordinated strike action on 26 June. Instead, at a fringe meeting following the Lanac meeting, he intimated his support for the joint NUT/NASUWT plan of action and cautioned against conference taking any decisions that might jeopardise that plan.

Regrettably, those arguments were taken up by the national executive speakers opposing the Lanac amendment to help argue against joint national action with the PCS.

It is now unlikely that national NUT/NASUWT strike action will take place until November 2013. The North West regional strike on 27 June will, however, still see a start to at least some kind of calendar of action, with further regions taking action in September and October. We must make absolutely sure that this is, indeed, just the start of an ongoing and escalating campaign, continuing until our objectives are achieved.

**For more see:**  
[electmartin1.blogspot.com/](http://electmartin1.blogspot.com/)

## Hackney: Give us scale 5 now!



Part of the lively picket line outside the schools

**Brian Debus**  
Hackney Unison member

Fifty teaching assistants at Horizon and Downsview special needs schools in Hackney, east London, were on strike on 26 March to protest at the failure of management to implement a single status (re-grading) agreement worth £2,000 a year to these low-paid workers. The Unison members are all part-time and term-time only workers, so are on between £15,000 and £17,000 a year.

The 30-plus on the occasionally noisy picket line chanted: "What do we want, Scale 5; When do we want it - Now". As one of the strikers commented: "Everything's going up, food, travel, childcare, energy bills. Inflation is at 3.2% and our wages are not going up".

The job description and the evaluation procedures were done jointly by management and the trade unions and were signed off as scale 5. Now, a year later this has still not been implemented.

This strike is seen by the workers as a last resort. Staff report that when they refused to accept being paid on scale 4 they were threatened with job cuts and redundancies by management. One HR staff member claimed their job was not 'challenging'.

"Being head-butted, scratched, bruised, spat at, is a normal part of the job, yet that's what management say. We do understand the nature of the job and the inherent risks, and these need to be included in our job descriptions.

"What is not acceptable though is the failure of management to provide a 'duty of care'. When we are injured they never call an ambulance, we have to call and pay for a cab ourselves. We are never allowed to accompany that member of staff even though they might have been traumatised by the incident. The duty of care to staff is zero".

No such worries for the executive principal who is reported to be on £100,000 a year. Staff on the picket line commented that they rarely see her in the school and that she appears to have an aversion to dealing with parents' problems and staff issues, and generally keeps away from the children.

There are three other senior managers, two of whom are consultants, all reported to be earning at least four to five times the salary of the teaching assistants. At the same time a massive investment into the school buildings is taking place.

This is to be welcomed, but for a fraction of the money spent on this and the senior managers' salaries this dispute could be settled. If not, expect more strikes next term.

## Yorks ambulance strike



Yorkshire ambulance workers on a 24-hour strike on 2 April over cuts, derecognition of the union and the downgrading of patient care photo Iain Dalton

## Defend Crown post offices

**Leeds Socialist Party reporters**

On 30 April around 15 pickets assembled outside St Johns Centre crown post office in Leeds as Communication Workers Union (CWU) members took strike action over plans to close or franchise 76 offices across the country, including Crossgates in Leeds, as well as opposing a pay freeze going on since 2011.

As CWU rep, Richard, explained to us the pay deal they are negotiating was due last April. Post Office management dragged their feet, finally offering an unconsolidated £1,000 lump sum with strings attached terms and conditions, which was to last for three years - an insulting offer which has been rejected.

One of these terms was acceptance of the plans to close or turn into franchises 76 post offices, 20% of the crown post office network.

This is a continuation of plans in the direction of privatising postal services. In 1990, the Post Office's banking arm, Girobank was privatised, and since then aspects of Post Office and Royal Mail work (the entities were officially separated in 2012) have been opened up to competition. This has undermined the service, particularly where companies have taken bulk contract work but rely on Royal Mail to take post 'the final mile', effectively subsidising private operators.

As elsewhere in the public sector, privatisation means a lower quality of service for customers, driving down of terms and conditions for staff and huge profits for their new owners at our expense. The postal service should be re-integrated, and run as a democratically controlled public service for the benefit of society with the profiteers kicked out now!

### In brief

#### Thera East Midlands

Joe Warner, the (now former) managing director of Thera East Midlands has resigned. Unison members who are in dispute with the company had been wondering where he was! We understand that he tendered his resignation around four weeks ago. Unison members at Thera East Midlands have refused to be cowed by management threats and voted overwhelmingly for strike action in the consultative ballot. The official strike ballot result showed over 82% voting for strike action in defence of their terms and conditions.

#### Bus workers' solidarity

On 27 March two American school bus drivers, along with officials from the Teamsters and Unite unions visited the HQ of National Express Group (NEG) in Birmingham. They were there to deliver a letter to the chief executive criticising NEG's US subsidiary's anti-union practices, demanding that the company respects their human rights and recognises their union. They held a protest outside and also planned to protest outside the company's AGM in London. The two women drivers spoke to me about the appalling conditions the US employees have to endure. On Tuesday of the same week Unite reps met with National Express West Midlands management in Birmingham in order to discuss the latest round of attacks on our pay and conditions. The details won't be revealed to drivers before a branch meeting on 15 April. A genuine international campaign of solidarity backed up with the threat of coordinated strike action would have the potential to force a successful outcome for both groups of workers. It is now down to the members to raise the issue and put pressure on officials to act.

#### A National Express bus driver

#### BBC strike

Around 45 trade unionists, members of Bectu and NUJ, walked out of the BBC office in Leeds on 28 March in protest at compulsory redundancies as part of the latest round of BBC cuts, as well as growing reports of bullying management at an increasing number of BBC offices.

The BBC strikers were in high spirits and held a short rally outside the offices after walking out. Yorkshire NUJ NEC member Adam Christie brought them greetings from the national union and reported on messages of support for their dispute coming from as far away as Australia.

- At BBC Salford Media City the strike was well supported, with over 200 out.

- About 15 people joined the picket line in Bristol and reported that their colleagues were coming out of the building in droves. They were supported by other local trade unionists. NUJ members said they hoped the BBC would be unable to put out the local news programme.

#### Website

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



# Sussex University: occupation over but campaign continues



On the 25 March demonstration photo Serena Cheung

**Jack Poole**  
Brighton Socialist Party

After nearly two months, the student occupation at Sussex University has ended in eviction by police at the request of university management. Events over the last couple of weeks show that this is not the end of the campaign.

On 27 March, with less than 24 hours' notice, 200 people gathered on Sussex University campus to protest against management's attempt to get a court injunction to end the student occupation of a conference centre.

## Police

For over a month, this conference centre has been the base for the anti-privatisation campaign at Sussex. The campaign has organised dozens of marches, including a national demo on 25 March which saw up to 2,000 students and workers angrily

descend on management offices.

The demonstrations on both 25 and 27 March were faced by a police presence not previously seen by the campaign. On the protest against the injunction, riot vans waited in the car park and FIT officers (responsible for gathering information) were stationed on the roof of management's building.

## Management rattled

It was clear that the huge demonstration on 25 March had a big effect on management. Weekly demonstrations and the formation of a rank and file union organisation doesn't make privatised services attractive for potential contractors.

Despite management gaining the injunction, it hasn't been easy for them to evict the occupation, which remained strong and continued to show how quickly protesters could mobilise support. Nearly a week later, on 2 April, police moved in to support the eviction.

But it is clear the campaign

doesn't end with the eviction. Occupation is a tactic in the campaign against privatisation, it is not an end in itself. Other tactics can now be further explored.

## Strikes

This must include strike action by workers on campus which will be an essential part of a successful campaign. Students can strike as well, ideally joint action between workers and students would escalate the campaign going into the new term.

Attempts to crush the movement through force will strengthen the resolve of students and workers to fight management's brutal privatisation programme and defend education at Sussex for the future.

**The annual conference of the National Union of Students is taking place 7-10 April. See [socialiststudents.org.uk](http://socialiststudents.org.uk) for plans and reports from Socialist Students members taking part**

## Interview: Wirral Youth Theatre cuts



Youth service cuts are another hurdle for young people photo Paul Mattsson

On 5 March Wirral Labour-led council voted through £42 million worth of cuts as part of £109 million projected cuts over three years.

At the lobby of the council that night, Lauren, 20, from one of the services affected, Wirral Youth Theatre, spoke passionately against the cuts. A Socialist Party member spoke to her later:

### What is Wirral Youth Theatre?

We cover a range of arts and are an inclusive group, open to all young people from age 13, including able bodied and those with a physical or learning disability.

We provide peer education and support building social and communication skills; we work with many young people who are anxious and transform their confidence to enable them to play a full role in the community.

We also provide valuable educational theatre, tackling issues such as drugs, domestic violence, and

discrimination, taking these issues to other young people.

### What will the cuts mean to Wirral Youth Theatre?

The project will face closure, which leaves me angry and frustrated. It's not just about the short-term impact on those young people currently involved, but the longer-term impact.

Politicians talk about kids causing trouble on street corners, but this is a project that directs passions into something positive. It can make a big difference for an individual's sense of self-worth and have a positive impact upon the wider community. They are not looking at the bigger picture.

### Does politics interest young people?

Politics affects every aspect of our lives, and young people need to be more involved in politics. We're made to feel that our voice is not important, that we have no real role, but we have a lot to say and a big contribution to make.

When we speak up it's portrayed that we are being aggressive; I'm not being aggressive, I'm being assertive. Young people can make a real difference.

## Sick Of Your Boss: young people in work – your stories

### Student midwife

I'm a first-year student midwife at a Birmingham NHS trust. I was well aware of the realities of the job before I started the course, from the grave responsibility of ensuring mother and baby are alive and well, to dealing with abusive families and social services matters, to coming home drenched in all manner of bodily fluids.

I'd be truly thankful if the nature of the job was all that I had to come to grips with, but the environment where

Midwives are burning themselves out

I work, along with millions of other NHS workers, heavily reflects the cuts that the current government claims are both necessary and admissible.

The delivery suite is permanently understaffed. Even when there are 'enough' midwives on shift (where everybody who was put down to work that day turns up) the staffing is never adequate to provide the

care that women need and deserve.

One-to-one care is essential during labour, not just for the safety of mother and baby, but also to provide the reassurance and encouragement women need to accomplish the mammoth feat of giving birth.

How can midwives provide such a necessary service if their efforts have to be shared between three, four, five labouring women at a time?

The wellbeing of the mothers and babies we care for isn't the only thing at stake. Midwives are burning themselves out, as their high workload often means they don't get a toilet break, let alone a chance to take the lunch break they are entitled to by law.

As a result, long-term sick leave is at an all-time high, and I have no doubt that the stress of dealing with an often dangerous workload on a day-to-day basis is contributing to these rising figures. This contributes further to the unavailability of midwives, and ultimately inadequate staffing levels, in a vicious circle.

### Are you Sick Of Your Boss? Enough is enough!

#### We fight for:

- Decent tea and lunch breaks
- Proper contracts, guaranteed hours and full employment rights
- Pay us enough to live
- Stop the bosses 'fire at will' attitude
- We won't be used as cheap or free labour
- We have the right to get organised at work
- Scrap the anti-trade union laws
- Build democratic campaigning trade unions
- No to benefit cuts

See [youthfightforjobs.com](http://youthfightforjobs.com)

### Warehouse worker

In the run-up to Christmas I had a three month contract (in theory renewable) at a warehouse. About 100 of us worked there, over two shifts.

There were two basic jobs – pushing a trolley around the building to get a list of orders to fill, or spending a whole shift packing the orders and sending them off. This was done next to the loading bay and sometimes the bay doors were open so these workers were freezing cold.

### Sackings

The warehouse was on an industrial estate between two towns - there are very few jobs in rural areas. I used to get a lift to work and back, there were about ten people I could get a lift from when I started.

People would get sacked in the course of a shift, so sometimes I found my return lift gone when it came to leaving. By the end of my time there it was down to a couple of people for a lift.

In the warehouse the lighting was dim but the employer said there was

no legal minimum. Sometimes the toilets were cleaned while we were having a break so we could not use the loo.

We were paid £6.40 an hour for 37.5 hours a week. But staff who came in via an agency got less and the agency seemed to get a cut of their wages. Quite a lot of people had to have another job as well.





**Peter Taaffe**  
Socialist Party general secretary

Continued from page 1

The labour movement, particularly the trade unions, is witness to the effects of the cuts. The civil service trade union PCS has already lost 50,000 members – with more cuts to come – and has mounted ferocious resistance. At a local level a determined battle has been conducted by anti-cuts unions to prevent the closure of libraries, youth clubs, care centres, etc. The attacks on public sector workers and services are being carried out not just by Tory councils, but also by 'Labour, yes Labour' councils.

The labour movement, the trade unions and other working class organisations, mobilised three quarters of a million people to march on 26 March 2011 in opposition to this slaughter of precious gains. And it was not just trade unionists who demonstrated on that day. The 'middle layers' of society, as well as pensioners, disabled people, young people, etc, were drawn behind the trade unions, who represent the overwhelming majority of the 'people'.

Many were not even in a trade union but were profoundly affected by cuts while others opposed the demolition of the welfare state on principle. This was followed by the 30 June 2011 strike and demonstrations involving public sector unions such as the PCS, NUT, AIL and UCU. The POA prison officers' union walked out and Nipsa in Northern Ireland also took action.

This in turn was followed by 'N30', the two-million strong 30 November 2011 public sector pensions strike; even the First Division Association of top civil servants joined in! Then there was 10 May 2012, involving PCS, Unite in the NHS, and the lecturers' UCU in strike action.

This was followed up by the TUC-led march against austerity on 20 October last year, when three general secretaries, Lenny McCluskey of Unite, Bob Crow of the RMT transport union and Mark Serwotka of the PCS all called for a one-day general strike. This was met with thunderous acclaim at the Hyde Park closing rally.

The central role, the authority, of the trade unions was crucial in such a wide mobilisation of opposition to the cuts. The natural next step posed was to speedily organise a mighty demonstration of working class power through a 24-hour general strike.

**One-day strike**

So great was the groundswell for organising such a strike – with the National Shop Stewards Network playing a crucial role – that even some right-wing union leaders at the TUC's annual conference were dragged kicking and screaming into supporting it, at least in words, while doing everything they could to sabotage its implementation.

But as Shakespeare said: "There is a tide in the affairs of men. Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune... And we must take the current when it serves, or lose our ventures." The right-wing trade union leaders, led by Prentis of Unison and others, backed away from a strategy for action which would have represented the wishes of their own members and the labour movement.

Some, even on the left, prevaricated with the notable exception of the PCS and some other left unions who have resisted all cuts through action. Consequently, the momentum that was required to organise a general strike has been momentarily lost.

But the anger and determination to resist the cuts has not dissipated. In fact, the mood to resist has been shown in huge demonstrations such as the march to save Lewisham hospital, as well as in a series of strikes in recent weeks. These strikes, which seem to be mushrooming, have sometimes been victorious, as with the DWP workers in the PCS where the promise of strike action over the threat

of compulsory redundancies forced the management to retreat. Similar small but vital strikes have been won by hospital and other workers.

The anodyne phrase, "austerity", does not adequately explain what the ruling class have in store. A civil war – sometimes a one-sided civil war – is being pursued against all the rights and conditions of the working class. To give it its right name, 'austerity' is planned poverty.

And when the full implications of what the government is proposing hit home, we can expect colossal resistance, a virtual uprising, or even a number of revolts taking place throughout the country. The mass of meetings and protests against the bedroom tax, which has an element of the poll tax, that have taken place is symptomatic of what is to come. But the question that is posed is who will lead this movement to a successful outcome of the struggle and how will it be led.

**Trade unions**

Up to now, resistance at national level has centred on the trade unions. The NSSN, by mobilising from below, exerted great pressure on the unions to take the leading role in this battle; it was the first organisation to call for and ceaselessly agitate for a national trade union-led demonstration.

Moreover, the structures within the trade unions, imperfect though they might be, allow ordinary members to exert pressure on policy in respect of the cuts and to propose effective action to oppose them.

Now the 'People's Assembly against Austerity' (PAAA) is seeking to supplant the trade unions as the main force at the national level in the anti-cuts movement. This will not have the authority to organise a 24-hour general strike. Only the trade unions together can prepare for such action.

Yet some trade union leaders seem to be voluntarily ceding leadership from themselves to organisations such as PAAA and UK Uncut. Is this because they are afraid, or half afraid, of taking full responsibility for the success or failure of the anti-cuts struggle?

The trade unions must be the central force not just an auxiliary. Of course, there can be scope for other organisations, such as the National Shop Stewards Network, to mobilise rank-and-file action from below, to put pressure on the official trade unions, even on right-wing trade union leaders. Such organisations can be a powerful lever on the unions but they cannot replace the authority of the trade unions.

Moreover, an emphasis on 'People' compared to 'trade unions' and clear working class-led opposition to the cuts signifies not a step forward but a regression compared to what has gone before in the anti-cuts struggle. However, more fundamental than the name adopted is the programme – or lack of it – and the organisations involved in the proposed 'assembly'.

There is no proposal for this 'Assembly' to be democratically structured or composed of elected delegates, with the right to put forward resolutions – for instance, for a 24-hour general strike – as well as unequivocal support for councillors who refuse to implement the cuts.

**Assembly**

Those councillors who implement cuts will be rightly considered as quislings by those affected. It is the workers and poor who will undoubtedly suffer horribly because of the cowardly refusal to make a stand, unlike the two heroic Labour councillors in Southampton and a few elsewhere.

Moreover, the proposed Assembly has been convened by individuals and organisations who refuse to take a clear opposition to all cuts. Organisations such as the Greens, represented by Caroline Lucas MP on the steering committee, are proposing to 'assemble' against cuts, but in practice the Greens have helped to carry through cuts.

This year, for instance, in Brighton and



The TUC demo on 20 October 2012 photo Claire Job

Hove council where the Greens are the largest single group and form the administration, £17 million worth of cuts, including compulsory redundancies, have been suggested. The Tories and the Greens proposed cuts budgets. This involved proposals to cut the council workforce's allowances, which workers naturally resist. The Greens, in the run-up to the council budget meeting, made it clear "they would impose the changes unilaterally, if there was no agreement with the trade unions." [Jon Redford, Socialist Party website]

At the same time, according to the Independent, not only will an Assembly take place, but also a march is proposed, which it is claimed, will be on the scale of the anti-war march in February 2003!

The anti-war movement holds vital lessons for today's battle against the cuts. One is on the question of political representation. To propose now a bloc with those who do not clearly come out against all cuts is to repeat the same mistake the leadership of the Stop the War Coalition, strongly influenced by the Socialist Workers Party and the Communist Party, made in the anti-war movement. They buried the anti-war credentials of Charles Kennedy, the then leader of the Liberal Democrats, by allowing him to speak at the 2003 demonstration in Hyde Park.

No criticisms or warnings of the likely future desertion of the anti-war movement by Kennedy and the Lib Dems were made by the leaders of Stop the War. Kennedy's participation undoubtedly boosted the Liberal Democrats politically by allowing them to present themselves as anti-war – until they supported the war once it began.

**Alternative to cuts**

The anti-cuts struggle should be organically linked to presenting a clear alternative, not just to the present coalition but to New Labour also. How is it possible to be against the cuts and then support, or remain quiet – as do some of the supporters of this Assembly idea – when Labour councillors weep crocodile tears, while 'reluctantly' implementing cuts? These 'Labour, yes Labour' councillors then use crocodile teeth on the working class by voting for job losses and reductions in vital council services.

Ed Balls has already stated: "My starting point is... we are going to have to keep all these cuts." Peter Hain, the ex-Labour minister, in a recent Guardian article expressed his "disappointment" that Labour backbenchers are already saying that a future New Labour government will have to remain within the "spending limits" that have been set out by the coalition government.

In other words, Ed Miliband and Labour's alternative is "austerity with a human face", which is no alternative at all nor will it turn out to be very humane.

Those such as Owen Jones, radical celebrity and writer, as well as some trade union leaders, who continue their support for the Labour Party as the vehicle through which the trade unions can act are profoundly mistaken. Miliband and Balls in government will work within the confines of diseased British capitalism and therefore disappoint the hopes of working people.

Despite Owen Jones's radical phraseology, he merely acts as a 'buckle' in the belt which seeks to link the anti-cuts movement – ultimately subordinating it – to the idea that salvation lies through election of Labour.

Owen is a worshipper of accomplished facts. He maintains that Labour has been the 'traditional' party of the trade unions and therefore forever it will remain so. History does not stand still; parties can be transformed by hostile political and social covenants to become the opposite of what they were at the outset. New Labour is now an unalloyed capitalist party.

The same arguments to justify continued work with New Labour were deployed by the Lib-Labs against Keir Hardie when he was fighting for the idea of independent working class political representation

through the creation of a labour party over 100 years ago.

Ken Loach, the socialist, radical film director, understands that New Labour represents a dead end and therefore it is necessary to seek a new road; hence his call for people to sign up to a new 'left unity'. By so doing, he has opened up a very welcome discussion on the need for a viable alternative to the Labour Party for working class people engaged in the anti-cuts campaigns as well as working people generally looking for an alternative to New Labour.

**Left unity**

But this is not the first time that Ken and others have sought to create a new left force. We have seen previous attempts to form a left party: Scargill's ill-fated Socialist Labour Party and the Socialist Alliance that Ken Loach himself was involved in. These failed either because of sectarianism – the completely intolerant approach of Arthur Scargill – or the equally narrow and ultimately opportunist approach of the SWP in the Socialist Alliance and in Respect.

Learning from this, the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) is the first serious attempt to create the foundations of a new movement expressing the voice of the working class for their own independent party. It is in the best traditions of the labour movement with a federal constitution, and, moreover, unlike other attempts, is firmly based in the trade union movement.

Therefore, any discussion that is opening up with Ken Loach and his supporters cannot ignore the importance of TUSC. Some, including many of those gathering around Ken Loach, are political grasshoppers leaping light-mindedly from one project to another. Their 'projects' invariably failed.

We do not need at this critical juncture miracle workers searching for an easy route to the solution of the problems of the working class. We need, instead, a mass movement to defeat the cuts – and the trade unions offer the best hope for the vehicle that can do this. On a political level TUSC also offers the best hope for furthering the process of creating a viable new mass workers' party.

**What do you think? Get in touch:**  
editors@socialistparty.org.uk



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# Don't miss May Day greetings deadline!

Bob Severn

The deadline for sending May Day greeting messages to the Socialist - 10 April - is approaching fast.

May Day greetings celebrate International Workers' Day while helping to fund the Socialist, the paper that fights all cuts.

International Workers' Day commemorates the first US-wide general strike which took place on 1 May 1886 and the workers who were killed due to the actions of the police.

To help drive through its austerity programme, the government - with the help of the capitalist media - tries to divide us, including by race, by nationality, by gender, by age, between the employed and unemployed.

## Socialist alternative

The Socialist fights for working class and middle class people to unite across Britain and internationally to make the bankers pay for their crisis. The paper puts forward a socialist alternative based on the needs of the majority, not the profits of a few billionaires.

Your May Day greeting can help show that workers, young people and the unemployed are uniting to fight back, and what issues you are

campaigning on. By doing so you'll help the Socialist continue to report that fightback and put forward a strategy to take the fight against all cuts forward, including the demand for a 24-hour general strike.

## Give your greeting

The Socialist appeals for greetings from, for example, your trade union branch, shop stewards group, anti-cuts campaign, Youth Fight for Jobs group, Socialist Students society, or Socialist Party branch.

You can use the pledge sheet to collect donations from supporters in your workplace or campaign group - use the contact details below to order your copy.

Greetings paid for by 10 April get a 25% discount, or you can send in your message now and pay later.

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

To give your greeting, contact bobsevern@socialistparty.org.uk, 020 8988 8781 or give your greeting online at www.socialistparty.org.uk

If you can't send the greeting in by 10 April, contact us ASAP and we'll see what we can do.

## Examples of 2012 May Day greetings

### Porters and health workers at Whipps Cross hospital, east London, send May Day Greetings to the Socialist newspaper

- Reject the pensions deal - For national strike action alongside other unions
- Defeat the Health and Social Care Act - For a national demonstration linked to a programme of industrial action to fight cuts and privatisation
- Kick out private contractors - Renationalise all PFI contracts. Compensation to be paid on the basis of proven need only
- For a minimum living wage of £10 an hour
- Abolish Foundation Trusts - For a fully funded, nationally integrated and democratically planned NHS - For the management boards of health facilities to be elected and run by health unions, the TUC and government
- Nationalise under workers' control and management the pharmaceutical and medical supplies industries and all private health facilities



A protest against trade unionist victimisation at Whipps Cross hospital photo S Sachs-Eldridge

### UCU Wales retired members branch

Sends May Day Greetings to trade unionists across the world



- ◆ Hands off our pensions. Retirement at 60 for all on final salary pensions
- ◆ Oppose all cuts in post-school education funding

Pam Hughes (chair), Norman Morgan (vice-chair), Andrew Price (secretary), John Martin (treasurer)

### Camden 3 RMT branch Socialist greetings on International Workers Day



*"Life is beautiful. Let us cleanse it of all evil, oppression and violence, and enjoy it to the full!"*

## TUSC Mary4Mayor campaign launched in Doncaster

Alistair Tice  
Yorkshire Socialist Party

It was not the easiest week to start the Mary4Mayor election campaign with snow and freezing temperatures and the Easter holidays.

But Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) supporters have been busy in Doncaster promoting our socialist anti-cuts candidate Mary Jackson and the 2 April election launch rally, with RMT rail union leader Bob Crow and former 'Liverpool 47' councillor Tony Mulhearn speaking.

Doncaster RMT, who are enthusiastically backing Mary, and other local union branches of Unison, Prison Officers Association, Communication Workers Union, Unite ex-Tesco drivers and South Yorkshire Fire Brigades Union have publicised the meeting, without all necessarily yet indicating electoral support.

Staff at the council offices and Jobcentre have been leafleted, along with bin workers who took successful strike action last year. TUSC supporters joined rail union members in leafleting against the McNulty cuts proposals and also spoke to CWU pickets on strike at the Crown

Post Office.

Campaign stalls have been held in Doncaster town centre, as well as Thorne (where Mary has lived for 40 years), Mexborough and Doncaster Royal Infirmary. There is real anger against the Bedroom Tax, rightly seen as victimising the poorest in society.

## No evictions!

If elected, Mary has promised that there will be no evictions in Doncaster for bedroom tax arrears and that she will look into reclassifying council properties as not having 'spare' bedrooms.

The current mayor, Peter Davies, was elected four years ago as an English Democrat, but has just 'discovered' that they have been infil-

**'Ordinary people need an alternative to the pro-cuts main parties'**

trated by ex-BNP members and resigned to stand as an independent. The English Democrats say they are mainly ex-Tories! There is likely to be at least four far-right candidates.

Countering this, Mary says: "Ordinary people need an alternative to the pro-cuts agenda of all three main parties, and of the racist far right who try to scapegoat immigrants instead of the greedy capitalists and bankers who got us in this mess."



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

## First quarter fighting fund target smashed

Ken Douglas  
Socialist Party national treasurer

Socialist Party members have begun 2013 in the way they finished 2012 - by continuing the fight against the attacks of the Con-Dem government and, in the process, continuing to smash the fighting fund targets.

We raised £25,910 - 104% - in the first three months of the new year.

This month, dubbed 'Black April', sees the NHS opened up for further wholesale cuts and privatisation, the Con-Dems' attacks on the poorest through the hated bedroom tax and other changes to housing and council tax benefit coming into force.

Throughout England and Wales our members have been campaigning against these attacks. This government of millionaires is almost daily ratcheting up its measures to make the working class pay for the crisis caused by the banks and big business.

The fighting fund enables the Socialist Party to produce campaigning material on all these issues - to put forward a programme to defeat these attacks and bring down this government. We say that all workers under attack can unite in coordi-

nated strike action, initially in a 24-hour general strike bringing together public and private sector workers.

We say there is the money to pay for our services but it is locked away in the banks and the vaults of the big companies, who are sitting on vast hoards of wealth, and salted away in tax havens by the super-rich.

As well as the donations we receive from ordinary working class people in the course of our campaigning, over £10,000 was raised from the finance appeal at the recent Socialist Party congress. This is an indication of the confidence of our members in our perspectives for the developing struggle against austerity and the understanding of the importance of being able to finance our campaigning.

It also shows our confidence in the idea that only through a socialist transformation could we democratically control the vast wealth and resources in society and build an alternative to the future of misery and austerity offered by capitalism.

**You can help! Can you make a donation to our fighting fund to take us on the way to reaching our target for the next three months? You can pay via the Socialist Party website [www.socialistparty.org.uk/](http://www.socialistparty.org.uk/) donate or telephone 020 8988 8762.**

## SOCIALIST PARTY FIGHTING FUND

	£ target	£ received	January-March 2013	Final chart
East Midlands	1,550	2,091	█	█
Wales	2,300	2,975	█	█
North West	1,200	1,434	█	█
Eastern	1,200	1,378	█	█
Yorkshire	2,900	3,059	█	█
South West	1,400	1,455	█	█
London	6,100	6,329	█	█
South East	750	774	█	█
Southern	1,200	1,189	█	█
West Midlands	2,100	2,077	█	█
Northern	600	215	█	█
England & Wales	3,700	2,929	█	█
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>25,000</b>	<b>25,910</b>	█	█

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# Cyprus: Working people must not pay for crisis of euro and capitalism

Niall Mulholland spoke with Athina Kariati from New Internationalist Left (CWI in Cyprus) about Cyprus's deal with the Troika, what it will mean for working people and what is the socialist solution to the crisis

## What has the Cypriot government agreed with the Troika?

They have agreed terms that will be a social and economic disaster for the Cypriot working class and small businesses. Once again working people are being made to pay an extremely high price for the crisis of the euro and the capitalist system.

The Cypriot government, led by President Nicos Anastasiades, agreed to a €10 billion bailout package with the Troika (International Monetary Fund, European Central Bank and European Union).

Cyprus's GDP (total output) is €17 billion, so the bailout is huge. To qualify for the bailout Cyprus must raise €5.8 billion.

The agreement sees bank depositors with more than €100,000 face big levies, perhaps around 40%. As a result many small, family business-

Exiting the euro could only assist in the revival of the Cypriot economy within the context of the introduction of a socialist programme...

es will face ruin, and many middle class savings will be severely hit.

The country's second largest bank, Laiki Bank, will be closed and divided into a 'good' bank and 'bad' bank. The Bank of Cyprus will be 'restructured', taking on €9 billion worth of debts from Laiki Bank. It's reckoned that the Bank of Cyprus will not manage to find this amount of money and that the bank could face collapse as well.

Capital controls may be in place for the next month to prevent a bank run. However, it is reported that the rich spirited out vast sums, up to €2 billion, in expectation of the new levy and capital controls.

No vote was taken in the Cypriot parliament on this new draconian package because the new bank restructuring plan, in fundamentals, was previously passed by the Cypriot parliament.

## What does the deal mean for the future of Cyprus?

Essentially, as a result of these measures, Cyprus will be destroyed as a financial centre in the region and will plunge the economy into a deep recession, but that is not all.

A 'Memorandum of Understanding' between Cyprus and the EU will see mass privatisations. The state or semi-state owned telecom system, the electricity industry and the ports will all be sold off, despite the fact that all three industries are currently profitable.

It is estimated all this could wipe out up to a quarter of Cyprus's national income. Ordinary Cypriots will pay the price not the super-rich Russian oligarchs or the Cypriot elite. Years of Greek-style economic depression lie ahead.

Like Greece, the government will be forced to ask for new loans from

the Troika. Any new bailout deals will again come with vicious austerity demands. This is not tenable and raises the possibility of Cyprus exiting the eurozone, at some stage.

## How have working people reacted to events?

The mood of working people has changed dramatically over recent days. The attempt by the Troika to force the Cypriot government to impose a bank levy on small and large investors caused fury among working people and small business people. Big protests involving thousands were held outside the parliament buildings.

Initially, under intense pressure from Cypriot people, the parliament rejected the proposal. This vote was met with jubilation by many workers and small business people. It sent a positive message to working people in neighbouring Greece and across the whole eurozone and the EU who are resisting cuts.

Meanwhile the Troika put huge pressure on the Cypriot government. The ECB threatened to cut off funds to Cyprus's banks by Monday 25 March, unless a new deal favourable to the Troika was reached.

Consequently, the Cypriot parliament voted for reform of the banks, for capital controls and the creation of a 'solidarity fund' for the banks. These bills were so complicated that many MPs said they could not understand what they were voting for.

For a couple of days, we had big protests but just from the Laiki Bank employees. It was the first time in Cypriot history there was a demonstration of 7,000 bank workers!

Cypriot banks remained closed and people could only get limited supplies of cash. Real concern and even panic set in. People started to hoard food, afraid that supplies would run out.

On 25 March, when the deal was struck with the Troika, there were no protests at the parliament for the first time in days. Many people desperately want to believe that some sort of solution can now be found to the country's deep economic problems, even if it will mean 'difficult times' ahead.

But as the full extent of the deal came to light, people's feelings turned to fear and anger.

## Should Cyprus exit the euro? Is a return to the pound really a solution for working people?

Many Cypriots support the idea of leaving the eurozone and rejecting the bullying, unelected Troika and returning to the Cypriot pound.

Cyprus only joined the eurozone at the start of 2008 and so Cypriots associate the euro only with deep economic crisis.

The New Internationalist Left sympathises with the general feeling of the mass of the population who are demanding an exit from the eurozone, which has only brought disaster. Socialists also want to be rid of the bosses' euro and austerity! But we explain that exit from the eurozone, in itself, and on the basis of capitalism, is no solution for working people.

Exiting the euro could only assist in the revival of the Cypriot economy within the context of the introduction of a socialist programme for the restructuring of



Anger and fear over the bailout imposition has fuelled many protests

the ruined economy

This means banks passing into the control, ownership and administration of society (nationalisation under workers' control and administration) as well as refusal of payment of the debt.

## Are workers and youth resisting the Troika deal?

The bank workers' union called demonstrations outside parliament last week. But the right-wing leadership of the bank workers' union called off a strike set for 26 March. They claimed that they had received

A new powerful Left needs to be built in Cyprus, with the aim of forming a government based on the needs of working people

'reassurances' from the government that all job losses would be 'voluntary' and that bank workers' pensions would be safeguarded.

These union leaders have unbelievable trust in a government which, within ten days, agreed, rejected and then agreed again to Troika diktats!

Over 2,000 school students marched in protest at the Troika deal, which only offers them unemployment and poverty or emigration.

On 27 March, a protest of around 3,000 people was called by the 'Movement Against Privatisation and Austerity' campaign, in which Akel's (the Communist party) organisations and trade unions and other leftist organisations participated, including the New Internationalist Left.

Much smaller protests have been called by the nationalists, the far

right and fascists. They do not have significant support but they are trying to repackage themselves like Golden Dawn in Greece. This serves as a warning to the Cypriot working class. Unless the Left fills the political space, the fascists in Cyprus can grow, preying on deeply disillusioned layers in society.

So far, the unions' actions are not coordinated and are not preparing for wider struggles, including strikes, to stop the Troika attacks. The unions, youth and student organisations, anti-austerity campaigns and Left parties need to coordinate the struggle and discuss an alternative plan, based on the interests of working people.

## What is Akel calling for now?

Akel has called protests but not put forward a real alternative. Its MPs abstained during the 22 March vote in parliament on levying bank deposits. Akel leaders said they "did not want to attack the president" during the country's crisis!

The party claims it has a '15-point programme' to show a way out of the crisis but they refuse to make it public. Akel held the presidency up until a few weeks ago - without introducing anything like a socialist policy - so their 15-point programme is highly unlikely to be a radical departure from crisis-ridden capitalism.

The party leaders were fervent supporters of joining the eurozone and still defend it.

## What does the New Internationalist Left call for?

We call for a solution based on the needs of working people: Refuse to pay off the 'debt'; nationalisation of the banks under workers' control and administration, for the needs of society. Guarantee that the small deposits, pensions and welfare funds will be safeguarded; debt cancellation for working people, not for big business!

A programme like the above - actually any refusal to abide by the demands of the Troika - will immediately raise the question of the currency. A workers' government ought to have a plan to deal with exit from the euro and for a return to a national currency, without, however, allowing any illusions that this could provide a solution on the basis of capitalism, but that it must be incorporated within a socialist and internationalist programme.

We call for Cypriot workers to link with the workers' movements in Greece and the rest of Europe - our real allies! - not the ruling classes and governments of the EU.

A new powerful Left needs to be built in Cyprus, with the aim of forming a government based on the needs of working people. The situation facing Cypriot society is desperate; only a bold revolutionary internationalist programme can resolve the crisis in the interests of the masses.

The full interview can be read on [www.socialistworld.net](http://www.socialistworld.net)

## 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](mailto:cwi@worldsoc.co.uk)



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

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or phone 020 8988 8771, email: editors@socialistparty.org.uk.

We reserve the right to shorten letters. Don't forget to give your name, address and phone number.

Confidentiality will be respected if requested.

**Attack on health workers**

On 1 April, I only wish this was an April fool, Ann Clwyd in her role as Patients' Tsar for the Con-Dem government launched a disgusting attack on all health workers.

In the Independent, under the headline "Get back on the ward: patients' tsar tells nurses to talk less and care more", Clwyd repeats all the stereotypes of Cameron, Hunt and Co. She blames health workers for the decline of the NHS not Con-Dem cuts and privatisation.

Nothing surprising in a Con-Dem spokesperson attacking health workers you might think but Clwyd is a Welsh Labour MP!

What makes this even more unforgivable is that Clwyd chose to attack health workers, the day that Con-Dem measures to further privatise healthcare take effect. The day that many health campaigners and trade unionists have labelled the death of the NHS in England. As a Unison member I want to see my union mount a robust defence of our union members and condemn Clwyd for siding with the Con-Dems against our members and other health workers.

Unison should demand Labour withdraw the whip from Clwyd and withdraw all funding from Labour until they do so. Defend health workers!  
Defend our NHS!

**Ronnie Job**  
Unison steward, personal capacity

**Vultures**

Private health companies have got their teeth into another juicy profit-making section of Britain's health provision. Vulture fund, sorry, "private equity firm" Bridgepoint is buying Oasis Healthcare, the UK's second biggest 'independent' dental chain for £185 million, seemingly having seen off big rivals in a fat cats' auction.

Oasis's current chairman Bill Colvin will become a non-executive director of the new firm. Colvin was chief executive of Southern Cross Healthcare (SX), a private firm that owned over 700 nursing homes housing 30,000 old people.

Its debt-fuelled operations took it to financial ruin. It has since been through a 'solvent wind-down' where the government had to step in even to stop these elderly victims all becoming homeless. Colvin, not totally incidentally, made £6.6 million from previous SX share deals.

Bridgepoint owns Care UK, one of the UK's largest private health companies (see the Socialist 750). It operates 85 residential homes and a number of privately run Independent Sector Treatment Centres which are paid to treat NHS patients.

Bridgepoint's operations are largely

based on huge debt-led deals, helped out by business friendly tax arrangements. To keep companies like this happy, more and more of our health service is under attack. Big business has its mucky fingers on our teeth. Don't let these greedy profiteers take over our NHS organ by organ. End privatisation!

**Keith White**



**Glasgow demo 30 March**  
photo Jim Halfpenny

**Bedroom Tax**

Paul Gerrard's comments in these pages (the Socialist postbag, 28 March) were spot on. The bedroom tax is yet another example of creeping intrusion into the lives of ordinary people enabled and encouraged by the established political elite. This Poll Tax of our time should unite decent folk everywhere in opposition to the apologists of plutocratic oligarchy. After a decade of division is it too much to hope that the left might fight the next general election united?

**Daniel Lentell**  
Edinburgh

**Earthquakes**

The Con-Dem budget unveiled generous tax breaks for big businesses intent on 'fracking' for shale gas. A moratorium on the practice of fracking – forcing carcinogenic liquids deep underground in order to break up shale rock permeated with the global warming gas methane – has now been lifted.

The moratorium was imposed because fracking causes earthquakes: a serious tremor hit Blackpool where some trials were carried out. In the USA, scientists have linked Oklahoma's biggest recorded earthquake to the disposal of wastewater from oil production, a method used in fracking. The 5.7 magnitude quake destroyed 14 houses and injured two people. Scientists worry that as fracking continues, the magnitude of the earthquakes will rise. Gas and carcinogens enter ground water, leading

to flammable water supplies and dead zones around the fracked area, seen in the USA, and the methane gas escapes and accelerates climate change.

While bosses get tax breaks, a gas shortage in the UK, due in part to the decline of UK gas production and the continuing cold weather, mean gas prices will rise as much as £200 this year. But fracking is an extremely expensive and dangerous practice – it will not provide cheap gas and pollutes the environment.

**Pete Mason**

**Anderson's fairy tales**

Steve Housden, Liverpool's Sector Strategy Manager for construction, writing in the local paper the Echo, has joined the city's Labour mayor Joe Anderson in that unique group who believe in fairy tales, with austerity enthusiast Tory Lord Heseltine as the fairy godfather.

Housden believes his Lordship's notion that Osborne's budget is a growth budget that will 'release the energy of the cities.' That stretches credibility that would test even Steven Spielberg's genius. Osborne promises years of even more misery. Any money allocated for infrastructure will be slashed from services, plunging countless needy people into despair.

Labour council leaders are saying further cuts they will implement 'fill them with horror', underlining the Mayor's declaration that 'people will die.' The bogus promise of billions pouring into the region to remedy this crisis is delusional in the extreme and is designed to hold out false hope.

It won't work. Working people deal in reality. The fight against austerity goes on.

**Tony Mulhearn**  
Liverpool

**Disgusted**

As a Labour voter all my life, I am disgusted the party is doing nothing to fight the introduction of the 'bedroom tax.

Cameron's cronies will not be happy till the less fortunate and the unemployed, and even the vast amount of people on low income receiving benefit, are living off soup kitchens and charity shops. Under this coalition government, or should I say, Tory government, as the Lib Dems don't seem to have any say any more, this country is fast heading back to Victorian times.

Tax benefits for the rich, welfare cuts for the poor, how typical of a party who claim: "We're all in it together", while the facts are, due to their millionaire lifestyles, they've never had to budget for anything in their privileged lives. Where are the Tony Benns of this country, have we decided not to fight for social justice anymore? Sadly, I am beginning to think so,

**A disillusioned voter**

# A less than stellar party



**Nancy Taaffe campaigning in the 2010 general election** photo the Socialist

**Nancy Taaffe**

TUSC prospective parliamentary candidate for Walthamstow

Like many people I was astounded by the Parliamentary Labour Party abstention on the emergency legislation enacted to undo the legal victory won by Cait Reilly and Jamie Wilson against forced workfare, known as The Poundland Case.

This legal victory potentially could have opened the door to 230,000 jobseeker's allowance claimants who were owed £130 million for having their benefits pinched through illegal sanctions.

Just the enacting of this emergency legislation proves what we socialists say about the law. Many on the liberal left argue that some of our demands, such as nationalisation are illegal. But just look at what this rich men's government did. They didn't like the law so... hey presto!.. they change the law, and quickly, with Labour's help.

Out of 257 Labour MPs in Parliament a measly 44 voted against the government. My local MP Stella Creasy abstained. When I found out I wanted to ask her why.

Because of all the stick that she had been getting on twitter she organised two meetings in her offices. Socialist Party members went along to both. I went to the earlier one where there was also a young single mum who had had her benefit stopped.

She had taken to writing about her experiences called "adventures in workfare" on her blog.

Our discussion with Stella was like wrestling in treacle.

She believed that she had won a 'great victory' in her abstention because she had exposed a culture

of targets down at Walthamstow job centre and revealed that Iain Duncan Smith [work and pensions secretary and MP for neighbouring constituency Chingford] had denied to Parliament that claimants were being unfairly driven off benefits.

She argued that Labour now has a strengthened appeal process due to the parliamentary inquiry on sanctions which would be organised soon, sometime, hopefully.

We told her the culture of "terror and targets" was a Labour idea, that she could go into any public sector workplace and witness the effects of this policy. She didn't need to abstain on this vote to expose that.

She told us that it was 'fantastic and stupendous' that Labour had traded silence for a strengthened appeal process for claimants along with a Parliamentary inquiry.

**Treacle**

Through all that treacle I managed to see that the main reason Labour abstained is because they agree with sanctioning the unemployed.

She warned me: "I don't want you to go out of here Nancy and say that I support Tory sanctions because I don't". I wonder if all those robbed of their benefits in the past or in the future will be able to discriminate between Tory or Labour sanctions.

What did Stella Creasy's and the Labour Party silence mean? It gives a green light to the bosses to continue unabated their onslaught on the right to a day's pay for a day's work. To all of us and those watching it strengthens the need to build the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) to stand up for workers.

## "Is green growth possible?" debated

**Neil Cafferky**

Over 40 people crammed into Housmans Bookshop in north London on 27 March to hear a debate between the Socialist Party's Pete Dickenson and Derek Wall from the Green Party. The question was: 'Is Green growth possible and do we really need it?'

Pete Dickenson explained that a strategy for growth as part of a democratic global plan of produc-

tion was essential in the fight to halt environmental destruction, particularly in underdeveloped countries. Only by providing a basic minimum standard of living for all human beings on the planet could we begin to lay the basis for cooperation necessary to save the environment.

Derek Wall replied by emphasising that real change to save the environment involves change in property relations; however the ideas of the past, such as state

planning may not be as useful in the modern era.

In the discussion from the floor many different ideas were raised such as how direct democracy and global planning could work together, the issue of "far-right environmentalism" and the role of feminism in the fight to protect the environment to name but a few.

The evening ended with several copies of Pete's book 'Planning for the Planet: How Socialism Could Save the Planet' being sold.



**Planning for the Planet**  
How Socialism Could Save the Planet  
by Pete Dickenson

**Cover price: £10**  
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# Abolition of Agricultural Wages Board will result in increased rural poverty

The government is set to abolish the Agricultural Wages Board (AWB) for agricultural workers in England and Wales in October. The last obstacle to abolition was removed when in March Conservative and Liberal Democrat peers in the House of Lords combined to dissolve it. The AWB's abolition will inevitably lead to the erosion of employment terms and conditions and an increase in rural poverty.

The AWB was established in 1948 and covers around 150,000 agricultural workers. The Board is comprised of eight employer representatives, eight workers' representatives and five 'independent' members. The bosses are represented by the National Farmers Union and workers are represented by the Unite trade union.

Agricultural workers' employment rights, including tied accommodation, are determined by the AWB, which through an Agricultural Wages Order is updated annually. Even Margaret Thatcher, the Tory prime minister, maintained the AWB because, as Unite explains, power relations between farmworkers and farmers were recognised as being so unequal that a regulatory system was needed.

**Teresa MacKay**  
Rural and Agricultural Workers  
branch secretary - Unite

Scrapping the Board will see £259 million taken away from 150,000 agricultural workers in England and Wales and transferred into the pockets of large landowners and horticultural businesses.

This 'quango' cost £170,000 a year to run, and just £62,000 during 2011-2012. Abolition is therefore not about administration costs. It is ideological.

Scrapping the AWB will drive down already low wages of vulnerable rural workers with ever greater profits for the supermarkets. This is all about attacking workers' rights.

Lower wages, lower sickness entitlement, reduced holiday pay and reduced terms and conditions of employment will follow abolition in an industry where there is a skills shortage due to the poor pay and conditions, which is already experienced by agricultural workers.

Abolition of the Wages Councils in the 1980s saw wages in those industries move from average rates of pay to below average.

Scotland's parliament and Northern Ireland's Assembly have opted to retain their Boards and the Wales government is considering forming its own Wages Board. This leaves English farmers, predominantly the horticulturists who depend on migrant labour to pick their produce, as the only employers in the industry no longer bound by the AWB.

## Unfair process

The parliamentary process was aggressively pushed through. The consultation time was cut and buried on the website of the Department for Environment, Food

and Rural Affairs (Defra).

The questions were heavily loaded and it was not available in Welsh or any other languages, in an industry that depends on migrant workers at various times of the year.

Many others, particularly farm workers who live in rural areas, do not have access to the internet. In spite of this 61% opposed abolition 37% supported and 2% were undecided, which all counted for nothing as the government was continuing to call for abolition.

This is not the first time we have had to fight for its retention. We had the same battle in the 1980s and won. We may have a bigger battle on our hands this time round but it will be a battle that we will fight to the end.

## Vulnerability

I was a member of the Board for ten years where pay and conditions were negotiated by equal numbers

One-third of all agricultural workers live in tied accommodation with their families, making them much more vulnerable. Many very highly skilled workers handle extremely expensive machinery or look after large numbers of animals including their welfare.

There is no way that the National Minimum Wage (NMW) and other employment legislation can provide for this industry.

The Agricultural Wages Order (AWO) covers a graded pay scale providing a career structure which relates to an individual's skills, qualifications and responsibilities. It also covers weekly hours and overtime rates, annual holiday entitlement, Agricultural Sick Pay Scheme and Flexible Worker Grades, none of which are covered by the NMW.

The grading structure offers a clear career path. If this goes it will be even more difficult to attract young people into an industry that already has an aging workforce.

While working in the industry I found myself employed in a pack-house that was not paying the AWB rate for the job. When challenged the employer refused to put this right and it was only resolved when he was contacted by Defra and informed that he was legally bound to pay the correct rate.

As a result many of the women workers were paid two years back pay as well as everyone benefitting by the increase in the hourly rate. There is no doubt that if and when the AWB is abolished there will be many horticultural employers who will pay as little as they can get away with and it will be women that will be most affected by this.

of employer (NFU) and employee representatives (Unite) from the industry, with five independent members, appointed by government acting as arbitrators and mediators.

Collective bargaining is difficult in agriculture because of the very small number of employees in each farming business, who are often isolated and in a close working relationship with their employers.

At present the AWB negotiates workers' pay and conditions on an annual basis. The fear is that without the Board wages will stagnate, which is happening to many workers in other industries. This is even more likely to happen to agricultural and horticultural workers because of their isolation, making it much more difficult to negotiate with their individual employers.

ADHACs (Agricultural Dwelling House Advisory Committees) - which also will be abolished by the Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Bill - were introduced with the 1976 Rent Agricultural Act, making it very difficult for farmers to evict their workers as a result of redundancy or retirement. The industry has an aging workforce which could mean that ADHACs would be even more important in the future. Abolition would seriously affect the rural economy as the rates set each year within the AWO have an effect on the pay and conditions of other workers in rural areas. This in turn would affect other rural businesses such as shops and pubs in the local villages.



There will be a lobby of David Heath, Minister of State for Agriculture and Food outside **Frome library**, Somerset, on **Saturday 6 April from 10am**. This will be one of his last surgeries before the debate in parliament. Lib Dem MP Heath is spearheading the abolition of the AWB, despite supporting it when in opposition. See Unite Rural Workers on Facebook for more events.

Unite members lobbying MPs against AWB abolition

## Lakanal fire: Action needed to prevent a repeat tragedy

**David Lewis**  
Sceaux Gardens tenants' and residents' association

On Friday 3 July 2009, a devastating fire in Lakanal House in Camberwell, south London killed three women and three children.

Lakanal is a 14-storey tenement on Sceaux Gardens estate. The fire started just before 4.30pm in a ninth floor bedroom. The London Fire Brigade (LFB) arrived within five minutes of the 999 call from the resident, who escaped unharmed. The arriving fire engine alerted me to the fire - I live on the eleventh floor of Lakanal's sister block, Marie Curie.

Over the course of the next 90 minutes, falling debris sparked two further fires on the fifth and seventh floors - it was sucked into open windows by the wind and lit the curtains. The fire spread upwards and

then laterally - crossing the central lobby and stairwell, which should act as a firebreak. The people who died lived on the eleventh and 12th floors.

After nearly three and a half years, inquests into the six deaths took place from 14 January to 28 March 2013.

The jury determined a range of factors, the most important being: Under-window panelling used in a 2006 refurbishment was not fire resistant. Fire doors to escape balconies were also compromised, with replacement doors being part-glazed.

A suspended ceiling in internal communal corridors was not compartmentalised or adequately fire resistant. This allowed fire to spread to escape routes undetected; corridors to ignite; and fire and deadly fumes to trap people on the eleventh floor.

The LFB response exposed a major lack of familiarity with the building. Firefighters exhibited tremendous bravery, rescuing many trapped residents. But LFB now acknowledge that the search and rescue operation and the advice to residents to 'stay put' were flawed.

Southwark council had not completed Fire Risk Assessments (FRAs) on the majority of high rise residential blocks in the borough. A 2005 law change transferred responsibility from the Fire Authority to landlords.

People who live in high-rise dwellings need to know that our homes are fire-safe and that regulations are complied with when the building's structure is altered.

A growing number of Southwark's tenants and leaseholders believe that Southwark council can no longer be trusted with the three responsibilities of landlord, regula-



## Cuts cost lives

tions enforcement and FRAs. I think FRA responsibility should rest with the LFB once more.

Lakanal did not meet Building Act fire safety regulations. I believe that responsibility for regulations enforcement should no longer rest with councils that are also landlords.

The London Mayor's current pro-

posals for budget cuts to the LFB are also deeply worrying. Southwark and New Cross fire stations are marked for closure and Peckham, our nearest station, is set to lose one of its two engines. Personnel from all three of these stations were involved in fighting the Lakanal fire. These cuts need to be resisted.



# STRIKE AGAINST CON-DEM ATTACKS

## Build for joint action against austerity

On budget day, 20 March, members of the civil service union PCS walked out on a national strike against job and service cuts and attacks on their pay, pensions and terms and conditions. PCS vice president John McNally spoke to the Socialist about the next steps in the dispute.

The strike on 20 March was excellent. There was an impressive turnout of PCS members up and down the country. We saw picket lines in places which had never had picket lines before. We're very proud of the way that PCS members have reacted, bearing in mind it was PCS on its own.

It had a sharp impact on the government, which expected that the strike would not be well supported. It came across with the usual stuff about the strike not being very successful, but without any conviction.

Next we have a half-day strike on 5 April. The majority of PCS members will be going out at 1pm. Members in HMRC and the Valuation office will be on strike on 8 April. This is because there is a new system coming into HMRC on that day.

Management have been trying to threaten us and it is clear that they are edgy about the half-day strikes because they do cause major disruption. But we will make sure the strikes have the maximum impact.

We will continue with this action until the government is prepared to talk to us. If they think we will go away, they're making an extremely serious mistake.

I strongly support the National Shop Stewards Network lobby of the TUC on 24 April, calling on it to

name the day for a 24-hour general strike. The TUC's policy for joint coordinated action was moved by the PCS, that's been our position for a number of years now. The TUC and the trade union movement in general really need to get their act together. There can be no excuses. The government think they can isolate PCS and members are asking us why other public sector workers are not on strike.

Dave Prentis of Unison did speak about the 'Unison spring', he did say they were going to tackle the pay freeze - well spring has come and it's time to join us. The TUC should be coordinating that joint action as a matter of priority.

Chancellor George Osborne stands up in parliament and defends his benefit cuts. But this is not a strong government. These welfare cuts are an attack not just on the unemployed and disabled but on millions of low paid and middle income earners. They're trying to make us pay for what their friends in the banking industry did, but there is huge opposition.

The TUC must organise a nationwide campaign in the workplaces and in the communities to fight the welfare cuts. But the easiest way to stop these attacks is to apply the TUC policy of joint coordinated strike action.



### National Shop Stewards Network (NSSN) lobby of TUC General Council

Name the date for a 24-hour general strike!

Wednesday 24 April, from 8.30am outside TUC Congress House, Great Russell Street, London WC1B 3LS [www.shopstewards.net](http://www.shopstewards.net)

photo Paul Mattsson

### What we stand for

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

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

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

#### Our demands include:

##### PUBLIC SERVICES

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

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

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

##### WORK AND INCOME

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

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

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

##### ENVIRONMENT

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

##### RIGHTS

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

##### NEW WORKERS' PARTY

- For a new mass workers' party drawing together workers, young people and activists from workplace, community, environmental and anti-war campaigns, to provide a fighting, political alternative to the pro-big business parties.

- Trade unions to disaffiliate from the Labour Party now and aid the building of a new workers' party! Support the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition as an important step towards this.

##### SOCIALISM AND INTERNATIONALISM

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